



# REACHING CLIMATE - NEUTRALITY IN POLAND BY 2050

SUMMARY FOR POLICYMAKERS

**Publisher:**

WWF Poland, Usypiskowa 11, Warsaw  
+48 22 660 44 33

**Print composition:**

Agencja Wydawnicza Ekopress (fot. shkiarow/ depositphotos)

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**The authors thank for the help in working on the report, participation in the discussions and inspirations:**

Mariusz Błasiak, Bogdan Chojnicki, Maciej Cygler, Izabela Czyżyk, Monika Figaj, Izabela Gada, Wojciech Galiński, Krzysztof Jędrzejewski, Wiktor Kotowski, Katarzyna Kowalczevska, Tomasz Kowalczevska, Jerzy Kozyra, Katarzyna Kuznowicz, Dorota Metera, Bożydar Neroj, Joanna Perzyna, Łukasz Skalski, Piotr Skubisz, Dominika Sokolowska, Krzysztof Stereńczak, Ewa Sufin-Jacquemart, Aleksander Śniegocki, Jan Tabor, Bartosz Urbaniak, Jacek Walczak, Jan Witajewski-Baltvilks, Emilia Wysocka-Fijorek, Justyna Zwolińska, from WWF Poland: Agnieszka Boniewicz, Dariusz Gatkowski, Marta Grzybowska, Antonina Konarzewska, Weronika Kosiń, Oskar Kulik, Tomasz Pezold Knežević

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AMAZON Poland, Instrat Foundation, ProKolej Foundation, IKEA, ING Bank Śląski, Institute for Civil Affairs INSPRO, The National Centre for Emissions Management (KOBiZE), Polish Smog Alert, The Polish Ecological Club (PKE), Transport Exclusion Association

**The discussion was attended by:**

BNP Paribas Bank Polska, Centre for European Union Transport Projects, Ministry of Infrastructure, Polish Automotive Industry Association, WiseEuropa

**The authors thank for the help in working on the report, participation in the discussions and inspirations:**

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# REACHING CLIMATE - NEUTRALITY IN POLAND BY 2050

## INTRODUCTION AND KEY ASKS

**It is feasible for Poland to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest, this report shows. And doing so will bring significant benefits beyond climate mitigation, notably in terms of air pollution and health, energy poverty, industrial modernisation, competitiveness, mobility and jobs. But bold action in different sectors and a clear prioritisation of climate policy are needed.**

**This report analyses what must happen in the buildings, electricity, agriculture and forestry (including LULUCF) and transport sectors to achieve net zero nationally by 2050, based on discussions WWF Poland has held with state officials, civil society and businesses.**

### WWF IS CALLING FOR:

- **Poland to explicitly and officially support a national 2050 climate neutrality target**
- **Scrapping and changing any sectoral policies that are inconsistent with achieving the 2030 and climate neutrality targets**
- **EU and other publicly-funded recovery policies to be consistent with the net-zero target**
- **The public sector to lead by example in terms of setting science-based climate targets**

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The science has spoken: the world can only avoid catastrophic impact of climate change by becoming globally climate neutral by 2050 at the latest.

Unfortunately, the scope and reach of the debate on climate neutrality in Poland has remained limited. In order to change this, WWF Poland set up the “Reaching climate-neutrality in Poland by 2050” project. This summary presents the results of the project based on a comprehensive report originally published in Polish<sup>1</sup>. The report contains recommendations on how to achieve climate neutrality in Poland.

The recommendations were developed in four working groups in cooperation with over 100 experts. These experts represented several Polish government ministries and state agencies, two banks, state-owned and private companies as well as several climate-focused and sectoral think tanks. The groups were led by:

- **Buildings** – Arkadiusz Węglarz PhD – Polish National Energy Conservation Agency (KAPE);
- **Electricity** – Grzegorz Onichimowski;
- **Agriculture and forestry** – Professor Zbigniew Karaczun, Warsaw University of Life Sciences/Climate Coalition;
- **Transport** – Rafał Bajczuk, Krzysztof Bolesta, Marcin Korolec: Electric Vehicles Promotion Foundation (FPPE).

In each area comprehensive measures are needed to contribute to the climate neutrality target. To start with, policies con-

tradictory with the climate neutrality objective must be scrapped. Examples of such policies include the drainage of peatlands, blocking the development of renewable energy sources (notably: onshore wind). Moreover, transport regulations (or lack thereof) favour the use of cars and the renovations of buildings undertaken with public funds do not sufficiently prioritise climate targets. In the long term fundamental changes to entire sectors of the economy are required. These changes will need great determination and a thorough planning process.

The discussion on climate neutrality in Poland takes place in parallel with the activities of the European Commission as part of the European Green Deal and there is an ongoing debate on how to stimulate a global economy in recession. The choices we make in this area now will have an impact on future emissions.

We call for urgent measures to be taken in every sector of the Polish economy, ensuring sectoral policies are consistent with the climate neutrality target. Only then will we be able to provide a stable political and legislative framework that contributes to the global goal of climate neutrality. This will also prepare the Polish economy for the challenges of the future, such as tackling the carbon footprint of the supply chain, and the creation of a truly sustainable economy.

**It is necessary to set an ambitious, once in a lifetime goal: to build a climate neutral economy. On the following pages, we suggest how this can be done.**

<sup>1</sup> The report can be found here: <https://www.wwf.pl/ZeroemisyjnaPolska>

# BUILDINGS

## MAIN FINDINGS

- **Introduction of a zero-emission buildings standard:** mass deployment starting from 2025; optimal thermal insulation combined with renewable energy for existing buildings.
- **Photovoltaic panels on every new building.**
- **A ban on the use of coal for heating purposes by 2030.**
- **Dedicating 100% of EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) revenues to climate goals** with a priority to building refurbishment.
- **A clear link between combating air pollution from household coal stoves and climate targets.**

## CONTEXT

Buildings are responsible for approximately 38% of Polish greenhouse gas emissions. A specific problem for Poland is air pollution originating from coal stoves in over 3.5 million houses. Most buildings have an energy standard far from the level that will apply to all new and refurbished buildings from 2021. At the same time, the standard that will apply from 2021 will not allow an adequate contribution to the current (40% by 2030 EU-wide) emission reduction target. Refurbishments can reduce the energy consumption by about 35-85%.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. For new buildings:

- By 2025: mass deployment of zero-emission and positive-energy buildings.
- Higher standards for new buildings: the standards that will be applicable from 2021 are insufficient.
- Obligation to install photovoltaic panels in new buildings.
- Presenting the benefits for property owners on having zero-emission facilities.
- Connecting the building energy standard with credit worthiness: “green loans”.
- R&D and implementation projects on zero-emission building technologies.

### 2. For existing buildings:

- Public funding for deep thermal modernisation and emission-free heat sources.
- Ban on the use of coal for heating in buildings by 2030.
- Renovation bonus for the thermal insulation of historic buildings.

### 3. Cross-cutting recommendations:

- Integrating the climate neutrality target and the 2030 climate target into strategies for the buildings sector.
- A decarbonised district heating system by 2040: large-scale heat pumps, waste heat, use of surplus electricity (power to heat), geothermal energy.
- Drawing a clear link between combating air pollution (the “Clean Air” programme) and climate targets.
- Making one entity responsible for energy efficiency in buildings.
- Spending 100% of EU ETS revenues for climate purposes, with a priority for the buildings sector.
- Strengthening the monitoring, evaluation and enforcement on buildings and building materials parameters.
- Introduction of a user-friendly energy performance label for buildings.
- Educational efforts:
  - Showing consumers the benefits of thermal modernisation, promoting energy-saving attitudes, pilot projects in every municipality.
  - Helping the building sector develop expertise in the latest available technologies, placing an energy advisor in every municipality, and proposing similar courses as part of building sector training.

## OTHER BENEFITS

- Drastic improvement in air quality.
- Combating energy poverty and improvement in the living conditions of Poles.
- Labour market: at least 24,000 additional jobs in the construction sector across Poland; jobs in the renewable energy sector.
- The development of competitive industries centered around modern construction technologies.

# ELECTRICITY

## MAIN FINDINGS

- **Setting a clear path for a coal phase out by 2030:** this will facilitate energy sector transformation planning and will provide the necessary time and direction to enable the process of developing and implementing a just transition strategy in mining regions.
- **Build energy strategies which are consistent with the goal of climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest.**
- **Reject proposed plans for nuclear investments and redirect efforts into mass renewable energy deployment.** Prevent any further approvals for new gas projects, additional to those already approved.
- **Full market and regulatory opening to prosumerism.**

## CONTEXT

The electricity sector accounts for about 34% of the greenhouse gas emissions in Poland. For more than a decade Poland has been trying to maintain the dominant role of coal, while urgent decarbonisation needs arose. This has started to change due to the increasing price of EU ETS allowances, the decreasing competitiveness of domestic hard coal, and other climate policies. Citizens' growing awareness of the climate crisis and the development of renewables are also playing a key role. In the next decades we anticipate a significant rise in demand for electricity due to the increasing electrification of the economy.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Short-term recommendations:

- **A coal phase out date by 2030:** the IPCC Special Report<sup>1</sup> presents a coal phase-out date by 2030 in developed countries (including Poland) as the only chance of avoiding catastrophic climate impacts. Setting such a target will ensure political, legislative and business stability.
- Cancelling all plans for new lignite mines and hard coal power plants.
- Designing a just transition process for regions dependent on hard coal and lignite mining.
- By 2021, fully opening up the power system to small-scale prosumers by establishing a legal and statutory alliance between the state and citizens and investors.
- By 2023, designing a comprehensive strategy for improving energy efficiency.
- By 2023, building a universal system for financing the energy transition.

- Carry out an in-depth analysis of the long-term profitability of building new gas units and their consistency with the EU's GHG emissions reduction targets: at least 55% (or in WWF's view 65%) by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050 (or in WWF's view 2040).

### 2. Medium and long-term recommendations:

- Changing the energy sector to a decentralised model with the power grid as a stabiliser of (local) grids taking the form of a public service.
- Digitalisation, to increase the flexibility of the network.
- Cancelling plans for large uranium-steam units. Such investments are high-risk both in terms of delays and cost increases. These units will also not contribute to meeting the climate goals by 2030, as they will not be constructed and operational in time and in the meantime will lead to increased emissions, due to the steel and concrete required during construction.
- Research, development and implementation projects regarding energy storage.

### 3. Cross-cutting recommendations:

- Energy strategies (e.g.: NECPs) must be consistent with the future increased EU emissions reductions target for 2030 and climate neutrality in Poland by 2050 at the latest.
- Moving away and simultaneously reducing from the paradigm of electricity self-sufficiency and reducing fossil fuel imports.
- Building a strategy for state-owned utilities compliant with 2030 and 2050 climate targets as well as market changes: the growing importance of energy services, aggregators and flexibility.
- Combating energy poverty should be the domain of public policy and not an attempt for top-down price regulations (de facto subsidising electricity prices for all, including those not in fuel poverty).

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/multimedia/worlds-apart/>

# AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

## MAIN FINDINGS

- **It is possible to achieve climate neutrality in the agricultural sector** for example, by: no-till farming, rationalising the use of fertilisers, technological solutions in livestock management, and increasing the use of biogas produced from wastes and residues such as manure.
- **It is possible to stop the decline in the carbon absorption capacity of forests:** by increasing the forested area, and by increasing research and actions on absorption and the permanency of carbon storage in forests.
- **We must end the drainage of organic soils:** wetlands are still drained, which results in considerable greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- **We need to change the way we consume:** a reduction in demand for animal products, including by reducing food waste, is essential.

## CONTEXT

Agriculture is responsible for approximately 8% of GHG emissions in Poland (around 32 million tons of CO<sub>2eq</sub>), and this is increasing slightly. The absorption of the land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector is projected under current policies to decrease from about 34 million tons of CO<sub>2eq</sub> to approximately 10 million tons in 2040. In the sector we have mostly process emissions: that is associated with soil cultivation, fertilisation, livestock and forest management. Hence, it is extremely difficult to reduce them. Noteworthy, a sustainable land use sector is essential for providing ecosystem services and maintaining biodiversity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Livestock: reduction potential in 2050: more than 9 million tonnes of CO<sub>2eq</sub>**
  - All livestock farmers are required to use enzyme feed and fatty feed additives.
  - Optimisation of grazing.
  - Covered storage of natural fertilisers and the development of biogas production from wastes and residues such as manure.
- 2. Crop cultivation: reduction potential in 2050: over 28 million tonnes of CO<sub>2eq</sub>**
  - Extensive use of nitrification inhibitors and targeted use of fertilisers.
  - Conservation tillage with crop residues left in the field and plough cultivation with the use of natural fertilisers as well as harvesting crop residues should cover over 60% of the crop area in 2050.
  - Wide implementation of agroforestry.
- 3. Forestry:**
  - Incentives for converting up to 1 million ha of abandoned land into forest land.

- Maximum use of complex forest thinning and natural forest regeneration, with particular emphasis on the protection of soil cover, which will extend the carbon retention time in dead organic matter, and thus reduce emissions.
- Leaving a certain share of forests to the next cut (forests in higher age classes): a way to increase the absorption and effective (long-term) storage of carbon in the forest.
- Development of research in Poland on carbon storage and absorption in forests in higher age classes.
- Extending the life cycle of harvested wood through more permanent products, reusing and recycling.
- Phasing out wood for industrial energy production (especially electricity).

### 4. Cross-cutting recommendations:

- Integrating the climate neutrality target and 2030 target into strategies for agriculture and forestry.
- Limiting food waste, today responsible in Poland for 16 million tonnes of CO<sub>2eq</sub> annually.
- Reducing emissions in agriculture and forestry is an environmental (climate) benefit, hence its implementation should be supported with public funds.
- Implementing extensive educational activities.
- Changes in diets (both in Poland and in other rich countries): restriction of food of animal origin. A significant reduction of red meat consumption in Poland can reduce emissions by 8 million tonnes of CO<sub>2eq</sub> annually.

## OTHER BENEFITS

- Synergies between mitigation, adaptation and nature protection: natural water retention, agroforestry, restoration of wetlands (including the development of paludiculture).
- Decreasing the impact of agriculture on the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea.
- Changes in consumption: a healthier diet and a decline in the environmental footprint.
- Modernisation of agriculture, adapting agriculture to the changing needs of consumers and regulations.

# TRANSPORT

## MAIN FINDINGS

- **Electrification of transport:** battery electric vehicles, finalising the electrification of the railways, expanding charging infrastructure, zero-emission zones in cities with a simultaneous decarbonisation of the energy sector.
- **Electrification alone won't be sufficient:** changing the **modal split** in the transport sector towards railways, public and shared transit.
- **Reduction of transportation needs:** changing consumption patterns, enhanced spatial planning, working from home (where energy efficient) and optimisation of supply chains.
- **Dependence of taxes and fees on emissions:** excise tax for used cars, reduction of VAT deduction for internal combustion cars.

## CONTEXT

The transport sector is responsible for approximately 15% of greenhouse gas emissions in Poland and 28% in the EU as a whole<sup>1</sup>. Emissions in this sector were continuing to rise pre-COVID-19 due to the sharp increase in mobility. Road transport in Poland is responsible for almost 98% of the sector's emissions. Problems beyond climate policy include the mass import of old vehicles and the deteriorating share of rail and public transport in the passengers and goods moved. Bending the growing emissions curve in this sector will be a challenge, although it will also bring dramatic benefits e.g. in terms of air pollution and hence health.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Electrifying the transport sector:

- Introducing subsidies for electric cars and developing a charging network.
- Discussing banning newly registered combustion cars from 2035 (at the latest).
- A ban on registering internal combustion engine buses by 2025 at the latest.
- Cancelling support for buses powered by Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG).
- Introduction of an excise tax taking into account the emissions of imported cars.
- Reduction of VAT deductions in the case of purchasing cars with an internal combustion engine.

### 2. Increasing use of the railways and public transport:

- Zero VAT rate on rail passenger transport services.
- Priority to be given to public transport in cities' and regions' investment plans.
- Aligning infrastructural investments with EU climate targets (climate-proofing).

- Increasing the priority given to public transport in cities.
- Eliminating regulations and conditions which promote the use of individual motorised transport in cities, e.g. decisions to increase the number of parking spaces, oversized roads, insufficient availability of public transport in newly developed areas, lack of zero-emission zones.
- Introducing subsidies for local governments for the organisation of public transport, providing it is of high quality.
- Implementation of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) on key railway corridors by 2023.
- Establishment of the "Railways for the economy" investment fund.
- Lower access rates for carriers to the railway infrastructure.
- Comprehensive strategy for intermodal trains and increasing their average speed.

### 3. Cross-cutting recommendations:

- Integrating the climate neutrality target and 2030 targets into transport strategies.
- Decarbonising the power sector will be a key factor in decarbonising transport.
- Moving away from investments in inland shipping.
- Building a coalition at EU level for taxing aviation fuel.
- Establishing a National Fund for Investments in Bicycle Infrastructure: additional 5000 km of routes by 2030 and doubling the share of bicycle traffic.
- Electrification of delivery vehicles.
- Financing innovations and pilots.

## OTHER BENEFITS

- Elimination of harmful nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions and reduction of particulate matter (PM) emissions.
- Streamlining and increasing traffic safety, improving public spaces in cities.
- Increased energy security by reducing the consumption of imported crude oil by up to 90% in 2050.
- 81,000 jobs in the electric vehicles industry.

<sup>1</sup> This difference is mostly due to the relatively higher emissions in other (e.g. electricity) sectors in Poland compared to the EU average.

**OUR MISSION IS TO STOP THE  
DEGRADATION OF THE PLANET'S  
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND  
TO BUILD A FUTURE IN WHICH  
HUMANS LIVE IN HARMONY  
WITH NATURE**



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