

Press Release No. 20/2011

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Greenhouse gases well below the limit Germany already achieves Kyoto target in 2010

Although emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) rose slightly in 2010, Germany's overall volume of 960 million tonnes continues to undercut the Kyoto target value. A total volume of 40 million tonnes GHG, or 4.3 percent over the previous year's, were emitted according to preliminary calculations by the Federal Environment Agency. The sharp rise in CO₂ emissions owes largely to the economic recovery and cool weather. 2010 emissions undercut levels in 2008. As a result of the development of renewable energies, nine million tonnes CO₂ were saved compared to the previous year. "We must now continue to promote energy-efficient and low-emissions technologies," said the President of the Federal Environment Agency, Mr Jochen Flasbarth. This can lead to an upswing in climate protection efforts as well as economic growth.

With a total emissions volume of 960 million tonnes, Germany is well below the Kyoto 2008-2012 target value of 974 million tonnes. Last year's emissions sank by 23.1 percent over 1990 levels, due mainly to the higher consumption of fuels. More lignite and hard coal as well as natural gas were used to produce electricity, resulting in a spike in CO₂ emissions. As a result of the cool weather, consumption of hard coal and natural gas for heating rose. Consumption of hard coal also increased because of growth in steel production, namely by 34 percent over the 2009 crisis year.

Use of petroleum by industry, trade, commerce and the service sectors also increased, as it did in households. The growth in freight transport resulted in a slight rise in emissions in the transport sector. The trend away from gasoline towards diesel fuel in passenger cars continued. The consumption of kerosene in aviation decreased slightly in 2010, presumably as a result of flight cancellations brought on by the eruption of the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull.

In contrast to the CO₂ trend, methane and nitrous oxide emissions decreased (minus 1.1 percent and minus 3.9 percent, respectively). The downward trend in CH₄ is due largely to reduction measures taken in the waste management sector. Agricultural methane emissions sank mainly as a result of declining cattle populations.

Nitrous gas emissions in the chemicals industry signalled a clear drop. Following a partial retrofitting of flue gas scrubbers in 2009, there were considerably lower nitrous oxide emissions despite accelerated production in 2010.

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Emissions of fluorinated GHG, that is the perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) as well as sulphur hexafluoride, had divergent development trends. Whereas PFC emissions dropped slightly by 0.5 percent, HFC emissions rose by 1.3 percent as a result of increased applications in cooling and air conditioning technologies. Emissions of sulphur hexafluoride, which is mainly used in glass insulation and protective glass, grew by 6.7 percent. The significant rise in emissions is due to a greater disposal rate of old sound-proofed windows and heightened use in the metals industry.

Dessau-Roßlau, 12 April 2011