Climate change germany

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Climate change is leading to long-term impacts on agriculture in Germany, more intense heatwaves and coldwaves, flash and coastal flooding, and reduced water availability. Debates over how to address these long-term challenges caused by climate change have also sparked changes in the energy sector and in mitigation strategies. Germany"s energiewende ("energy transition") has been a significant political issue in German politics that has made coalition talks difficult for Angela Merkel"s CDU.[1]

Despite massive investments in renewable energy, Germany has struggled to reduce coal usage. The country remains Europe"s largest importer of coal and produces the 2nd most coal in the European Union behind Poland, about 1% of the global total. Germany phased out nuclear power in 2023,[2] and plans to retire existing coal power plants by 2030.[3]

German climate change policies started to be developed in around 1987 and have historically included consistent goal setting for emissions reductions (mitigation), promotion of renewable energy, energy efficiency standards, market based approaches to climate change, and voluntary agreements with industry. In 2021, the Federal Constitutional Court issued a landmark climate change ruling, which ordered the government to set clearer targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.[4]

Germany aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. It has set provisional objectives of reducing emissions by at least 65 percent by 2030 and 88 percent by 2040 compared to 1990 levels.[5]

As of 2021[update] Germany is the 6th heaviest cumulative emitter at about 100 Gt.[9] In 2016, Germany"s government committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% to 95% by 2050.[10]

In 2020, a group of youths aged 15 and 32 filed a suit arguing that the Federal Climate Protection Act, in force since 18 December 2019, inadequately protected their rights to a humane future for being to weak to contain the climate crisis.[11] Among the complainants are German youths living on islands that are experiencing more frequent flooding.[12]

On 29 April 2021, German Constitutional Court issued a landmark climate change ruling that the government must set clearer targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.[4] The court called the current government provisions "incompatible with fundamental rights" since it placed the burden of major emissions reduction onto future generations. The court ruling gave the government until the end of 2022 to set clearer targets for reducing greenhouse emissions starting in 2031.[4]

The suit filed by the youths form part of a broader movement of youth activists around the world using street and online protests and lawsuits to pressure governments to act against climate change.[12]

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In August 2022, Germany"s Chancellor Olaf Scholz has met Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to sign a deal to establish hydrogen supply chains with Canada.[13] Germany hopes to be free of Russian gas by the middle of 2024.[14]

The North Sea provinces of Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony have a high vulnerability to storm surges and high-impact river flooding. The Baltic province of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania is less vulnerable to storm surges, but at higher risk to loss of biodiversity and loss of topsoil and erosion.[19]

As a highly industrial, urbanized economy with a relatively short coastline compared to other major economies, the impacts of climate change on Germany are more narrowly focused than other major economies. Germany"s traditional industrial regions are typically the most vulnerable to climate change. These are mostly located in the provinces of North Rhine-Westphalia, Saarland, Rhineland-Palatinate, Thuringia, Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein and the free cities of Bremen and Hamburg.[19]

The Rhineland is historically a heavily industrial and population-dense area which includes the states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland Palatinate, and Saarland. This region is rich in iron and coal deposits and supports one of Europe"s largest coal industries. In the past, sulfuric acid emissions from Rhineland coal plants contributed to acid rain, damaging forests in other regions like Hesse, Thuringia, and Saxony.