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## **EPP DISMISS HIGHER CLIMATE TARGET AS 'PROPAGANDA'**

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The centre-right European People's Party (EPP) has slammed a call for a more ambitious greenhouse gas reduction target as "unrealistic" and part of a left-wing "propaganda" effort.

On Thursday (14 March), the European Parliament adopted a resolution on climate change, partly in response to the growing protests among young Europeans.

One amendment tabled in Strasbourg said that MEPs would support an update of the EU's contribution to tackling global warming, and raising the 2030 greenhouse gas emissions target.

The current EU goal, to reduce at least 40 percent emissions by 2030, compared to 1990, was agreed in October 2014.

But that was before the first-ever global treaty on climate change was signed in Paris, and before increasing scientific evidence showed that more needed to be done to prevent the worst effects of climate change.

On Thursday, 306 MEPs supported including in the text a call to change the reduction target to 55 percent compared to 1990.

Support came mostly from the centre-left Socialist group, the Greens, the far-left GUE/NGL group, the Liberals, Italy's Five Star Movement, and 19 EPP members.

But most EPP members participating in the vote - 135 of them - voted against. In total 240 MEPs opposed the amendment on a more ambitious 2030 target.

"The position of the [EPP] group was against the 55 percent for 2030 because it is unrealistic and only introduced by Greens and socialists to make propaganda," an EPP spokesman told EUobserver, when asked to explain how the group voted.

"The debate in the group was about joining this propaganda or not, knowing that this resolution is useless (it isn't legally binding) and the majority of the group decided that we should not play the unrealistic game of the left-wing groups," he added.

The amendment was tabled by Finnish MEP Nils Torvalds and his Swedish colleague Fredrick Federley, on behalf of the liberal Alde group.

Separately, the identical text was also submitted jointly by socialist MEPs Kathleen Van Brempt (Belgium), Jytte Guteland (Sweden), Miriam Dalli (Malta) , far-left MEP Lynn Boylan (Ireland), Green MEP Bas Eickhout (the Netherlands), and Italian Five Star Movement MEPs Eleonora Evi and Dario Tamburrano.

While the resolution is indeed not legally binding, it delivers an important political signal.

Following all the amendment votes, the text as a whole was put to a vote, and it received support from 369 MEPs, with only 116 voting against, and another 40 abstaining.

It called on the heads of state and government of the 27 remaining EU countries after Brexit "to support an increase in the level of ambition" of the EU's commitments to the United Nations in the context of the Paris agreement, and to reach this increased ambition at the EU summit in Sibiu in May.

Later this year, in September, the UN will hold a special climate summit to discuss higher climate ambition.

It is not the first time the European Parliament has called for an increase of the 2030 target.

In a resolution adopted in October 2018, ahead of a UN climate summit in Poland, a majority of MEPs already supported an updated target of 55 percent.

Sweden has already come out in support support for a 2030 target that goes beyond 50 percent.

In 2017, the new Dutch government agreed in its coalition programme that it would plea for a 55 percent-reduction target.

One of the Dutch coalition parties that supported '55 percent', is the Christian-Democrat party, which sits with EPP in Strasbourg.

Remarkably, however, the three Dutch EPP members abstained on Thursday from the amendment on raising ambition to 55 percent.

Environmental groups, not unexpectedly, praised MEPs for the outcome of the vote.

"The vote shows that a wave of youth-led climate protests starts to make politicians get serious about fighting climate change," said Climate Action Network Europe in an emailed statement.

Greenpeace added that the EU parliament "gets the message".

"With European and national elections around the corner, governments would be foolish to ignore the groundswell," the environmental lobby group said.

It signalled that the response to climate change could play an important role in the campaign for the European Parliament elections, this May.