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Austria is centrally located in Europe and is regarded as being a front-runner when dealing with environmental issues. Adopted in 2001, the National Emissions Ceilings Directive (NECD) (Directive 2001/81/EC) addressed the rising level of 5 pollutants, NH₃, NO_x, Non-Methane Volatile Organic Compounds NMVOC, PM_{2.5}, and SO₂.

Certain emission ceilings were set for the years 2010 and 2020. In 2013, the European Commission adopted the Clean Air Package for Europe which aims to accomplish 2020 targets set in the NECD (2001/81/EC) and further improve the air quality by 2030 under the updated NECD (2016/2284/EU).

The updated NECD (2016/2284/EU) entered into force in 2016, including stricter targets for emission levels for 2030. It calls for the implementation of National Air Pollution Control Programme (NAPCP) along with enforcing regular reporting of emission inventories. Austria's current status of compliance with regard to the 2010 ceilings show that levels of NH₃ and NO_x exceed the ceiling limits significantly (European Environment Agency, 2017). The 2010 ceiling limit for NH₃ was 66Gg and it was found that levels increased from 2010 to 2015 from 66.

53Gg to 66. 80Gg. Similarly, for NO_x, the limit was set at 103 Gg and was found to be significantly higher at 149. 42Gg but decreased in 2015 to 131. 74Gg. In the case of NMVOC, PM_{2.5} and SO₂, the emission levels are well within in the limits, showing a good status of compliance (EEA, 2017).

Austria has made certain reduction commitments for 2020, as per the old NECD and for 2030 as per the NECD (2016/2284/EU). Latest emission levels <https://assignbuster.com/austria-updated-necd-20162284eu-the-updated-necd-20162284eu/>

show that Austria's on track to meet its future emission reduction commitments for 2020 for NO_x at 102. 91Gg with the ceiling limit being 106. 5Gg and remarkably lower for PM_{2.5} and SO₂. The reduction commitment for both, respectively is 16.

38Gg and 19. 20Gg while projected limits are 14. 56Gg and 13.

97Gg (EEA, 2017). While looking at NH₃ and NMVOC, the projected levels are much higher than their reduction commitment which will prove to be difficult. NH₃ level being 70. 29Gg with a reduction commitment of 64. 057Gg and NMVOC level projection being 107.

73Gg with a limit of 103Gg (EEA, 2017). The reduction commitments made for 2030 are much lower than the projected levels in the case of NH₃, NMVOC, NO_x, and PM_{2.5}. Only for the SO₂ emissions, the projected emissions stay notably below the reduction commitment, the levels of other pollutants are crucially higher (EEA, 2017). Austria's future emission reduction commitments are can be seen as rather ambitious and will have to struggle to meet the reduction commitments for NH₃, NMVOC, NO_x and PM_{2.5} in 2030. The Czech Republic has similar reduction targets with comparison to their projected levels and they are able to meet most of them by 2020, except NH₃ (EEA, 2017).

Their reduction targets for 2030 are significantly higher than those of Austria and it reflects on their projected levels where only PM_{2.5} will meet the targets. It is interesting to note that Czech Republic misses their target for in SO₂ in 2030 and it could perhaps reflect on their dependence on fossil fuels for energy generation, a primary source of SO₂ (EEA, 2017). The reduced <https://assignbuster.com/austria-updated-necd-20162284eu-the-updated-necd-20162284eu/>

emissions of SO₂ in Austria is also a result of the country signing the 1985 Helsinki Protocol, under the CLRTAP Protocol, which involved committing to reducing the SO₂ emissions by 30%. According to a report by the European Marketing Research Centre (2014), in a Maximum Technically Feasible Reduction Scenario (MTFRS), the benefits to crops would be 7M€/year as compared to in a Current Legislation Scenario (CLES), where the benefits would be 1.8M€/year. In the case of benefits to materials in a MTFRS in 2030 is 0.

5M€/year which is not much higher than in the case of CLES where the benefits are noted to be 0.4M€/year (EMRC, 2014). It is noted that an MTFRS would not generate a higher net monetised health benefit when compared to a CLES. It is worth mentioning that in the MTFRS, the number of deaths and lost working days decreases in the year 2030 significantly (EMRC, 2014).

Economic incentives can bring about innovative technology improvements and a change of behaviour in businesses and industries (Klaassen and Forsund, 1994). According to the Austria Air Quality Catalogue, Austria has used effective regulatory measures to curb emission levels such as imposing licenses requiring the utilisation of best available technology for stationary sources of pollutant such as industries. There has been significant investment in renewable energy in the form of wind and hydroelectric energy to compliment the steady shift from dependence on coal (Eurostat, 2017).

In addition, national emission standards are enforced such as the Industrial Emissions Directive, 2007. The introduction of unleaded fuel and a three-way catalytic converter in the 1980's along with Euro rating led to the reduction
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of motor vehicle emissions and SO₂ levels (AAQC, n. d). The European Energy Efficiency Directive (EC, 2012) has been implemented providing subsidies and rebates. In addition, there is consistent monitoring, enforcement and fines. The major source of PM_{2.5}

in Austria is from household and institutions. To address indoor air pollution, Austrian Eco label awards are given for cooking and heating devices that comply with the required standards. Along with incentivising for use of labeled products, a nationwide awareness programme 'Correct Heating' is in action, educating the public on heating with wood (AAQC, n. d). Agricultural emissions must be addressed to reduce the levels of NH₃. Some approaches include promotion of biogas production and sustainable agricultural practices (European Environmental Bureau, 2017).

In my opinion, the NECD targets for 2030 can be seen as rather strict but with comparison to the 2020 targets, it is much required. According to an EEB report (2017), the 2020 can be seen as a weak attempt to curb pollution levels. From my understanding, the targets for 2030 might be harder to achieve but to reduce the negative impact on public health and the environment. Austria will struggle to meet targets and will need to implement additional effort. The flexibilities under the NECD (2016/2284/EU) such as three-year averaging, allow for leeway and might be a major flaw in the NECD. This can be checked through the NAPCP which will require public consultation.

The National Emission Reduction Commitments are merely the bare minimum that Austria must meet and it should aim to meet WHO standards on air quality sooner, rather than later.