

Germany Leads G8 Climate Ranking

Mankind must confront climate change decisively. But where do we stand? Germany, the UK, and France lead. The United States has promised much. Canada and Russia are in retreat. Overall, action is "insufficient", reports the 2009 edition of the WWF/Allianz G8 Climate Scorecards.



Did they deliver?

A year ago, the leaders of the G8 met the G8 Summit 2008 in Japan. The G8 Climate Scorecards 2009 show whether they delivered on their climate promises or not (Photo: Reuters)

With the Copenhagen climate talks looming, the blame game has begun. China condemns Japan's climate plan, France demands that Canada and the United States do more to stop global warming, Europeans squabble among each other.

But where does each country really stand in the battle against climate change? No government will commit to a Copenhagen treaty until it knows who is advancing, and who is retreating. It is time for a snapshot of the reality behind the rhetoric of climate change politics.

The Climate Scorecards 2009 ranks the G8 world's richest nations' based on their past, present and future (planned) climate performance. The report also assesses, without ranking, the 'G5' major developing countries—Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa.

"The leaders of the G8 plus 5 are the captains of this planet – it is up to them to show leadership, set the new course, and prevent the Earth turning into another Titanic," argue Joachim Faber, Allianz board member, and James Leape, director general WWF.



Animation: G8 Climate Scorecards 2009

Click on the image to see how each country performed (Animation: Allianz)

The key benchmark is whether G8 countries are on track to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 95 percent from 1990 levels by 2050. Countries are scored based on three indicators: "improvements since 1990", "current status", and "policies for the future". Each indicator is weighted equally.

This throws up some interesting contrasts. While Russia is ranked first for reducing emissions since 1990—due to the collapse in Soviet-era industry—it is ranked last for future policies, which are almost entirely absent.

The United States, meanwhile, scores well for future policies since the Obama administration came to power. "There has been more action in the U.S. on climate change in the last four months than in the last three decades," the report concludes. However, America has the highest per capita emissions among the G8.

France doesn't emit nearly as much as the U.S. but relies heavily on nuclear power. Because of the environmental and security concerns, the WWF does not consider electricity generated by nuclear power a sustainable option. The study thus scores it as if it was generated by the cleanest fossil fuel, natural gas. This affects France and Japan. Without the adjustment France would rank first with Germany, Japan's ranking would not change.

The rankings are as follows (click to see each country's performance)

- 1) **Germany**
- 2) **United Kingdom**
- 3) **France**
- 4) **Italy**
- 5) **Japan**
- 6) **Russia**
- 7) **United States**
- 8) **Canada**

A Poor Example

Individual rankings aside, the overall G8 efforts are "by far insufficient" to prevent dangerous global warming, the study concludes.

Most G8 economic recovery packages have "missed the opportunity for greening the global economy", although the Obama administration's plans are an exception.

Since 1990, emissions have been steadily increasing in Canada and the U.S., accounting for over half of all G8 emissions. More recently, they are also on the rise in Russia and Italy.

Only France, Germany, Russia and the UK have reached or are close to their Kyoto targets, more by accident than design many would argue: Russia and Germany because of collapse of Cold War-era industry; the UK because of an enforced switch from coal to natural gas; and France because of its embrace of nuclear energy, anathema to many environmentalists.

Only Germany has increased the share of renewable energy significantly.

Future policies are inadequate, with most G8 countries "either too silent or actively block(ing)" United Nations or EU level climate negotiations. Only Germany is consistently supporting renewable energy, while only Japan has implemented adequate vehicle efficiency standards.

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This begs the question: given the G8's poor example, what will the rest of the world, particularly the major emerging economies, do about climate change?

Emissions from the G5 nations of Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa are about the same as that of the G8 and will rise significantly in the near term. But all five countries have presented or are preparing national strategies to reduce emissions. Mexico has announced it will cut emissions by 50 percent by 2050.

If implemented, many of these policies, such as energy efficiency targets in China and India, or reduced deforestation targets in Brazil, will have significant impacts on national and global emissions.

In a way, the Climate Scorecards are like an annual school report. But with climate change there is no retaking the exam. Unless the international community acts now, our climate will change massively and irreversibly.

editor: James Tulloch

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