



Assessment of climate change policies as part of the European Semester

Country Report France

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1 Short Summary

France's energy policy is largely based on nuclear power which explains the low GHG emission profile of the country. However, the government is currently working on a strategy for diversifying the energy mix and reducing the energy intensity of its economy. The new Energy Transition Act, which is expected to be adopted in early 2015, aims at reducing GHG emission by 40% by 2030 and by 75% by 2050 (compared to 1990 levels). It is also expected to establish multiannual carbon budgets, and measures for emission reductions, reduction of energy consumption and deployment of renewable energy.

The French non-ETS target under the Effort Sharing Decision (ESD) for 2020 is -14% (compared to 2005) and non-ETS emissions were reduced by 8.7% between 2005 and 2013 which is below the interim target for 2013. According to the latest national projections submitted to the Commission and taking into account existing measures, the 2020 target is expected to be met and even exceeded by a margin of 1.9% points.

The key policy developments of the last year (Jan. 2014 – Jan. 2015) include the work on the draft Energy Transition Act, which provides a comprehensive set of targets and measures addressing GHG emissions, energy efficiency improvements in buildings and transport, and the promotion of renewable energy. The government also introduced new environmental taxes with the Finance Act 2014 and 2015. Most notably, the government established a carbon tax on energy products that is levied since Jan 2014. France also adjusted a number of existing support schemes to speed up the energy refurbishment of buildings, the installation of charging stations for electric vehicles, and the deployment of renewable energies.

2 Climate and energy policy priorities

In 2005, France set itself a target of reducing GHG emissions by 2050 by at least 75% compared to 1990 levels (National Energy Policy Act, 2005). The regularly updated Climate Plan tracks progress towards this goal, assessing the impact of existing climate change measures in the relevant sectors (Climate Plan, 2013).

Historically, France's climate policy has been influenced by the underlying structure of its energy system. French energy policy is based largely on its use of nuclear power for electricity. The strong reliance on nuclear power, which is essentially free of direct carbon emissions, has also led to France having a GHG emissions profile that is much lower than the EU average – per capita and per unit of GDP, while the energy intensity of the French economy is in line with the EU average (EEA 2014a). France's emission targets have thus been lower than those of similarly industrialised economies.

However, the government of Francois Hollande – in office since May 2012 – pledged in 2012 to cut the share of nuclear energy in the country's electricity mix from 75% to 50% by 2025 (Parti Socialiste, 2012). This announcement is part of the wider "energy transition" debate, that Hollande initiated in 2012 and which led to a legislative proposal that was put forward in June 2014. The proposed Act is expected to be adopted by Parliament in February 2015. This draft Energy Transition Act aims at reducing GHG emissions and energy dependence, by promoting the diversification of energy sources, energy efficiency and environmental taxation. The proposal sets out specific targets for the reduction of GHG emissions: 40% by 2030 and 75% by 2050 (compared to 1990 levels), which is consistent with the political target set in 2005. 5-year carbon budgets, set by decree several periods in advance, would break down these long-term targets. The proposal further envisages an increase in the share of renewable energy from 13.4% (in 2012) to 23% by 2020 and to 32% in 2030; and to halve energy consumption by 2050 and to reduce fossil fuel consumption by 30% by 2030 (compared to 2012 levels). Next to these overarching targets, the draft Act includes specific measures on energy efficiency in new and existing buildings, clean transport, recycling, and the promotion of renewable energy. As a result of the sum of measures proposed in the draft Act, the government expects an

increase of GDP by 0.8% in 2020 and 1.5% in 2030, and up to 300,000 new jobs by 2030 compared to a reference scenario without the Act (Draft Energy Transition Act, 2014).

Since 2007, the French government has been conducting regular environmental conferences to develop national roadmaps on sustainable development policy, bringing together different ministries, parliamentarians, NGOs, and industry. These conferences started as the “Grenelle round tables” under the former president Sarkozy and have been continued under Hollande as “Environmental Conferences”. The conferences are an important driving force for the development of climate policies in France. The most recent Environmental Conference took place in November 2014 and focused on national action towards the international climate conference in Paris, sustainable transport, and health and environment. At the conference, the Prime Minister presented the government’s environmental priorities for 2015 - addressing climate change and improving air quality-, and declared the intention to publish a roadmap on energy transition in early 2015, building on the insights gained during this conference (MEDDE, 2014a; Actu Environnement, 2014a).

Finally, climate and energy objectives are also reflected in the government’s attempts to reindustrialise the country. The development of renewable energy, energy efficiency in buildings, recycling, smart grids and the development of efficient or electric vehicles are all being promoted under the framework of the 2013 Plan “New Industrial France” (Nouvelle France Industrielle). The plan defines the industrial priorities of the government. Based on these, representatives from government and industry jointly developed roadmaps in 2014 for each of the priority areas for the coming 10 years (Ministère des finances et des comptes publics, 2014).

Energy prices are still regulated in France. France will phase out regulated electricity prices by Jan 2016 for those enterprises with an apparent power of more than 36 kVA¹ (MEDDE, 2014k) (so called “yellow tariffs” and “green tariffs”). The regulated prices for households (“blue tariffs”) will be maintained. The government raised these regulated tariffs in Nov 2014, but the Commission for Energy Regulation still criticised that the increase was not enough to cover the gap between collected revenues and the costs of electricity (Actu Environnement, 2014j). Regulated gas prices are planned to be phased out between Jul 2015 and Dec 2015 (Actu Environnement, 2014k).

3 GHG trends and projections

France reduced its total GHG emissions by 12% between 2005 and 2013, with few reductions from the last couple of years. The share of GHG emissions not covered by the European Emission Trading Scheme (EU ETS) is around 77%, which is significantly above the EU28 average (see Table 1).²

Table 1 Key data on GHG emissions

		National data				EU28
		2005	2011	2012	2013	2013
Total GHG emissions	Mt CO ₂ eq	558.8	490.0	490.1	491.5	4,539
Non-ETS emissions	Share in total emissions	77%	78%	79%	77%	58%

Source: EEA 2014a; EEA 2014c

¹ Kilo volt amps, the unit of apparent power.

² The European Environment Agency has developed a complex methodology to measure progress on the Non-ETS/ESD targets of all EU Member States. This report uses the figures derived on this basis. A detailed explanation and the underlying absolute amounts are contained in Annexes 1-3 of the EEA report No 6/2014 “Trends and projections in Europe 2014. Tracking progress towards Europe's climate and energy targets for 2020” available at <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/trends-and-projections-in-europe-2014/>

By 2020, France needs to reduce its emissions not covered by the EU ETS by 14% compared to 2005, according to the Effort Sharing Decision (ESD). The latest data for 2013 show that France not only met but exceeded its annual allocation interim target under the ESD for the year 2013 by 3.0 percentage points (see figures in Table 2). National projections indicate that the country will be able to stay on this course and not only meet but exceed its 2020 target by about 1.9 percentage points with existing measures (WEM) and by about 9.3 percentage points with additional measures (WAM) (EEA 2014a).

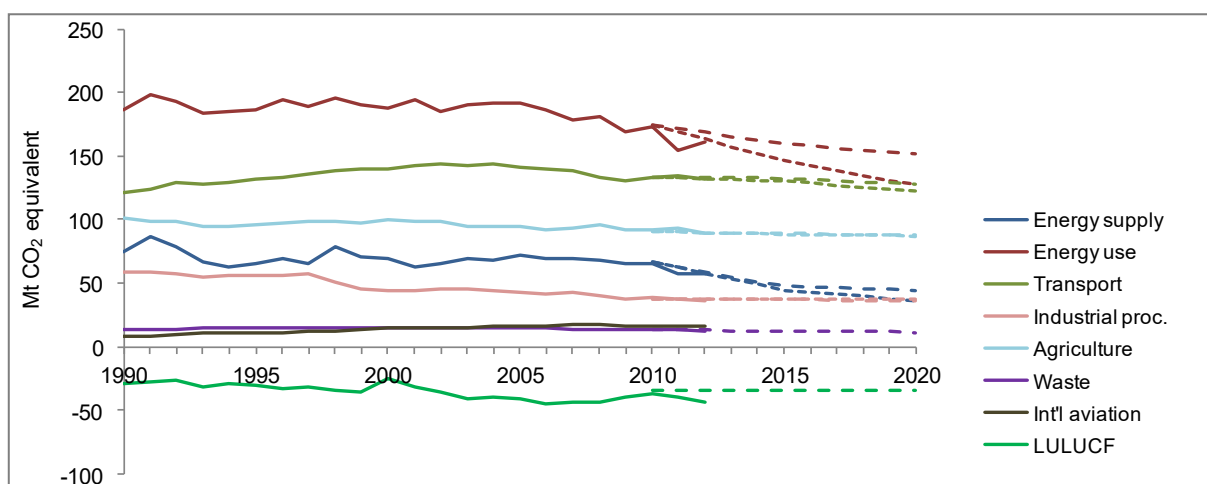
Table 2 Non-ETS emission targets, trend and projections

		Compared to base year
2013	ESD interim target	- 5.7%
	ESD emissions	- 8.7%
2020	ESD target	- 14.0%
	ESD projections WEM	- 15.9%
	ESD projections WAM	- 23.3%

Source: EEA 2014a. Green indicates target met or exceeded.

GHG emissions are mainly from the energy use sector (i.e. direct fuel consumption e.g. by households for heat generation) followed by the transport and the agricultural sectors (see figure below for historic and estimated projected emissions by sector). Projections indicate that by 2020 emissions from energy use will be slightly reduced with existing measures and significantly more so with additional ones, while emissions from transport and agriculture are expected remain relatively stable under both scenarios.

Figure 1 GHG trends and projections by sector



Source: EEA 2014a. Actual data until 2012 and projections from 2010 onwards. Dashed lines indicate the WEM projection, dotted lines the WAM projection.

4 Policy development

This section covers significant developments made in key policy areas between January and December 2014. It does so through two different perspectives: 1) progress on the policies communicated under the National Reform Programme and 2) developments in the identified national priority sectors and policy areas.

4.1 Key policies as outlined in the National Reform Programme

Member States prepare National Reform Programmes (NRPs) each April outlining the country's progress and the key policies and measures to achieve targets under the EU 2020 Strategy. These key policies and measures are summarised in the following table and their current status is provided.

Table 3 Key policies and measures as outlined by the NRP 2014

Draft Energy Transition Act	
Status in the NRP	Law proposal to be published before summer 2014
Status as per Dec 2014	The Draft Energy Transition Act was adopted on 14 October 2014 by the General Assembly and as of 21 Jan 2015 is still being discussed in the Senate (Senat, 2015). It is expected that the law will be adopted by Parliament in early February 2015 (MEDDE, 2014b).
Description of policy	See chapter 2.
Energy Refurbishment Plan for Housing	
Status in the NRP	Plan was launched in Spring 2013
Status as per Dec 2014	Being implemented since September 2013.
Description of policy	The objective of this plan is to increase the refurbishment rate of houses to 500,000 houses per year in 2017, in order to reduce energy consumption (see more in chapter 4.2.2)
Introduction of a carbon tax ("contribution climat – énergie")	
Status in the NRP	Adopted
Status as per Dec 2014	The carbon tax was introduced by the Finance Act 2014, which was adopted on 19 December 2013 by the National Assembly. Also the Finance Act for 2015 upholds the carbon tax.
Description of policy	The carbon tax was introduced by Article 20 of the 2014 Finance Act. The Act foresees a gradual increase of the rate of the domestic consumption tax on energy products (e.g. petroleum, gas) based on their CO ₂ emissions. The tax rate was increased as foreseen for 2015, but not for energy-intensive industry (see more in chapter 4.2.1).
Strengthening of the <i>bonus malus</i> system for vehicles	
Status in the NRP	In progress
Status as per Dec 2014	The support rates were adjusted by decree on 30 December 2014.
Description of policy	See chapter 4.2.5

Plan “Deployment of charging stations for electric vehicles”	
Status in the NRP	In progress
Status as per Dec 2014	France adopted the Law on Charging Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles in Aug 2014 (Law 2014-77). Other measures have been put forward as part of the Finance Act 2015, a financial support programmes and the draft Energy Transition Act.
Description of policy	See chapter 4.2.5

4.2 National policy priorities

The below sub-sections provide updates on key existing and new policies in priority sectors and policy areas of relevance to the energy and climate targets under the Europe 2020 strategy³. Each sector or policy area contains information on the most important policy instruments in operation or development.

4.2.1 Environmental Taxation

In France the implicit tax rate on energy was 162 EUR per tonne of oil equivalent in 2012, which is slightly below the EU average of 173 EUR per tonne of oil equivalent (Eurostat, tsdcc360). Moreover, the share of environmental tax revenues in overall tax revenue was 4.1% in 2012, the lowest in the EU (average is 6.1%) (Eurostat, ten00064). When comparing environmental tax revenues with GDP, France is the fourth lowest MS with revenues amounting to 1.8% of GDP in 2012 (compared with the EU average of 2.4%) (Eurostat, ten00065).

As stipulated in the roadmap for energy transition issued during the Environmental Conference in September 2012, a Standing Committee for Green Taxation was established on 18 December 2012. The committee is composed of stakeholders such as representatives of employers, trade unions, environmental NGOs and MPs. The Committee is responsible for advising on environmental tax measures planned by the government and for making proposals. Triggered by the recommendation of the Committee (Comité de la Fiscalité, 2013a), in 2014 France introduced a carbon tax (“contribution climat-energie”) on energy products. The tax rate is planned to increase over time starting from 7 EUR per tonne CO₂ in 2014 (Finance Act 2014). For 2015 the rate is set to increase to 14.5 EUR per tonne CO₂, although the rate for energy-intensive industries not covered by the EU ETS has been frozen at 2014 levels (Finance Act 2015; ActuEnvironnement, 2014b). The carbon tax corresponds to an increase by spring 2015 in the price of petrol of 2 EUR cent per litre, and for diesel and fuel oil of 4.20 EUR cent per litre (Les Echos, 2014a). The government expects to collect 4 billion EUR revenues in 2016 when the tax rate is planned to be 21 EUR per tonne of CO₂. Three quarters of the expected revenue will be distributed to companies in the form of a tax credit for competitiveness and employment (“crédit d’impôt pour la compétitivité et l’emploi”) and the final quarter will be used to fund a reduced VAT rate for refurbishing residential buildings and social housing for energy efficiency (Actu Environnement 2013a). A study published by a group of business organisations before the introduction of the tax estimated that a similar tax scenario would result in a long-term decrease of GDP of 0.4% and the loss of 64,000 jobs within 10 years (Rexecode Service, 2013).

The Taxation Committee also proposed in April 2013 to introduce a tax on F-gases (Comité pour la fiscalité écologique, 2013b), but the French government decided to postpone action until final agreement on the new EU F-gases Regulation was reached in April 2014 (Hydrocarbons21, 2013). No further action has been taken on the subject since.

³ The Consortium jointly with DG Clima identified these based on identified challenges in Country Profiles (EEA, 2014), share of sectors in total GHG emissions, and Country Specific Recommendations (2014). DG Clima has identified additional relevant issues to be reviewed for some or all Member States, including country specific energy challenges.

4.2.2 Energy Efficiency

Within the EU-28, France has the ninth least energy-intensive economy and is very close to the EU average. Energy intensity declined by 11% from 2005 to 2012 (Eurostat, tsdec360), while the final energy consumption dropped by 7% from 2005 to 2012 with the reductions coming mainly from the industrial sector and to a lesser extent the residential sector (Eurostat, tsdpc320). France is currently on track towards its indicative EU energy efficiency target concerning final energy consumption. On the primary energy consumption target, however, further effort is needed (EEA 2014a).

The draft Energy Transition Act 2014 stipulates the target of reducing final energy consumption by 20% by 2030, and by 50% by 2050, compared to 2012 levels. France already employs a variety of schemes to reduce energy consumption, but energy intensity is declining at a slower pace than in other EU Member States. Final energy consumption has not declined quickly enough yet to reach the EU energy efficiency target.

Since 2006, France has been promoting energy-efficiency measures with a white certificate scheme. The system imposes obligations on suppliers of all types of final energy to promote energy-efficiency improvements of their customers (households, local authorities and businesses). The framework and conditions for energy saving certificates are defined for a three year period. The energy-saving targets for the third period from 2015 to 2017 were almost doubled compared to the previous period, aiming now at 700 TWh of cumulative energy savings per year (MEDDE, 2013a). Previous periods exceeded their respective targets.

There is still much potential for energy reductions in the building sector, which currently accounts for around 40% of final energy consumption. The 2013 Energy Refurbishment Plan for Housing foresees the refurbishment of 500,000 houses per year by 2017 in order to achieve a 38% reduction in energy consumption by 2020 in existing buildings. Currently the rate is around 200,000 per year (Gouvernement de la France 2014). The Plan provides for enhanced financial support for major renovation works of houses through reduction in income taxes (“Crédit Impôt Transition Energétique”) and a zero percent interest loan. The total available support amounts to 1.2 billion EUR and around 46% of French households are eligible for the scheme. The government expects the creation or maintenance of 75,000 direct and indirect jobs as a result of this plan (MEDDE, 2013c). Due to the support scheme, energy refurbishment works quintupled within the first year after its introduction in March 2013 (MEDDE, 2014e). Starting from Jan 2015 financial support for refurbishment works has been made conditional on the use of certified construction professionals (“eco-conditionalite”).

As far as commercial buildings are concerned, a charter for voluntary commitments promoting energy efficiency in public and private commercial buildings was signed by the Ministers for Environment and Housing together with thirty stakeholders, including shopping centers, real estate companies, banks and universities in October 2013. Although the charter sets no energy-saving targets, it commits the signatory parties to declare a self-determined target for energy saving and to communicate their progress regularly.

For the industrial sector, voluntary agreements and financial support schemes are in place. For instance, the government offers Green Loans for improvements in the energy efficiency of production processes. For the period 2014-2017, 340 million EUR are available under that support mechanism (MEDDE, 2014f). For small and medium enterprises, low interest “Eco Energy” loans (at 2% interest rate) are available for between 10,000 and 50,000 EUR for energy efficiency improvements (MEDDE, 2014g).

Combined heat and power installations are eligible for the Feed-in tariff system (see chapter 4.2.3), if their capacity does not exceed 12 MW.

4.2.3 Renewable Energy

The share of renewables in gross final energy consumption was 13.4% in 2012, which is above the indicative 2012 target of 12.8% set by the Renewable Energy Directive (RED). The average annual growth rate in renewable energy was 4.6% between 2005 and 2012. Thus, an annual growth rate of 6.9% is still needed between 2013 and 2020 to reach the 2020 target of 23% (EEA 2014a). The share of renewable electricity generation in final electricity consumption increased by one fifth from 13.8% to

16.6% between 2005 and 2012, while the share of renewable heating increased by more than a third from 12.2% to 16.9% (Eurostat, SHARES 2014).

France thus needs to increase its efforts, also if it is to achieve its target set out in the draft law on energy transition to increase the share of renewable to 32% by 2030. The main barriers to the deployment of renewable energy are the lack of stable support, especially in the case of wind and solar energy, high grid connection costs for wind energy, and administrative hurdles (Keep on Track 2014).

For renewable electricity, a feed-in tariff system is in place which covers the generation of electricity from wind, solar, geothermal, biogas and hydropower up to a maximum capacity of 12 MW (except for wind energy), for 15 to 20 years, depending on the technology. A special annual cap applies to solar power: when exceeded, installations are subject to a reduced tariff. The scheme is financed through a contribution that is charged on top of the electricity bill of final consumers. For companies, the contribution is currently capped at 598,000 EUR per consumer. For energy-intensive companies that consume more than 7 GWh per year, the amount of the contribution is limited to 0.5% of their added value (Senat, 2014; RES Legal, 2014). There is currently a debate on how to reform the contribution system as a deficit of around 5 billion EUR was generated by the end of 2013 (Actu Environnement, 2014n).

France has a tender system for the construction of medium scale renewable energy plants. These tenders aim to help reach the target capacity which is established in multiannual investment plans (Multiannual Investment Programme 2009-2020; RES Legal 2014). Like the Feed-in Tariff, the costs for the scheme are covered by end consumers. In 2014, France awarded a 3.5 billion EUR tender for 1,000 MW of offshore wind power. This is an important contribution towards a 2020 target declared by the minister of ecology of 6,000 MW offshore wind capacity, covering 3.5% of energy consumption (MEDDE, 2014h; Reuters, 2014). By the end of 2014, there was no offshore wind capacity installed at all, except for demonstration projects. As for photovoltaics, the government awarded tenders to medium-size installations (100-250 kW) in three rounds in 2014, for a total installed capacity of 121.7 MW (MEDDE, 2014i). A new call for tenders was published in December 2014 for the installation of 400 MW of photovoltaic installations with capacities above 250 kW (CRE, 2014).

For renewable heating, France offers subsidies, tax reductions and loans. The 2008 established Heat Fund (*Fond Chaleur*) provides subsidies for biomass, geothermal and solarthermal plants with a heat production of over 1,000 tonnes of oil equivalent per year. Over the period 2009-2013, the Fund has provided 1.12 billion EUR for almost 3,000 installations. According to the Ministry, this has created around 5,000 jobs (ADEME 2014). The Ministry of Ecology announced that it would double the funding over the next three years (2015-2017) (Les Echos, 2014b). Another subsidy scheme, the "Better Living" Programme is available for low-income households to support thermal renovation of homes. This scheme offers a subsidy of 3,000 EUR (homeowners) or 2,000 EUR (landlords) if the energy performance is improved by 25 or 35% respectively as a result of the works, and covers almost all renewable heating technologies. Additionally, the government provides loans of up to 30,000 EUR with a 0% interest rate ("Éco-prêt à taux zero") to landlords, for the installation of heating systems of hot water systems that use renewable energies. Over 250,000 of these loans were provided over the period 2009-2013 (MEDDE, 2015a).

To encourage the installation of certain renewable technologies (both electricity and heating), deductions from income tax are made (*Crédit Impôt Transition Energétique*). The technologies covered include wind, hydro, solar thermal, heat pumps, and biomass, but exclude solar PV. For 2015, the deduction rate has been increased from 15% or 20% (depending on the works) to 30% for any eligible work, and is no longer dependent on the income level of the household (Finance Act 2015). From 1 Jan 2015 the deduction only applies to works carried out by certified professionals (reconnu Garant de l' Environnement, Decree on Ecoconditionality).

Some regional or local governments additionally make grants available for the installation of solar power (Enerplan 2014). Additionally, a reduced VAT rate of 7 % applies to services, equipment and delivery of renewable energy sources.

4.2.4 Energy Networks

In November 2014, the transmission system operator (TSO) RTE published its ten-year grid development plan for public consultation until 19 December 2014. This document outlines the grid development projects planned by the TSO within three years as well as the main transmission grid expansions to be considered in the next decade. Altogether, RTE established a list of 365 projects, including the construction of an additional 4 GW grid connection for offshore wind energy installations and 10 GW of additional interconnection capacity. The investment needs are estimated at around 1.5 billion EUR per year, including 1 EUR billion for grid development and 400 million EUR for the renewal of existing grid infrastructure. These investments must meet the requirements of the Regional Climate, Air Quality and Energy Plans, which set out the regional targets regarding among others the reduction of GHG emissions and the development of renewable energies (RTE 2014).

The French cross-border transmission capacity is around 9% of its production capacity. This is close to the 10% interconnection target recommended by the EU. Currently, there are 43 interconnections with neighbouring countries. In December 2014, France and Spain declared that they wanted to establish a common strategy to enhance interconnection capacity among them. A new interconnection line is planned to open in the first quarter of 2015, with a capacity of 2,800 MW. That would mean a doubling of the interconnection capacity between the two countries. So far, progress on interconnections has been slow, mainly due to citizen protest on the French side (Reuters, 2014b). As for gas, there is currently only one gas pipeline connection between Spain and France, which can only transport 5.2 billion cubic metres per year. A new pipeline (called Biriadou) with a capacity of 2 billion cubic metres per year is expected to be completed in 2015. Additionally, the planned pipeline project MIDCAT is expected to become operational after 2017 and would add another 14 billion cubic metres per year (Euractiv 2014). However, no progress on this project has been reported.

Furthermore, a number of projects of common interest have been accepted by the European Commission, including interconnections with Ireland, Spain, Italy and England. France also claims to be studying possibilities for increasing interconnections with Belgium, Germany and Switzerland (NRP 2014).

4.2.5 Transport

GHG emissions as well as energy consumption from transport have in general increased between 1990 and 2012. While GHG emissions dropped after 2005, this positive trend has reversed since 2010. Moreover, the proportion of these emissions in France's total emissions increased to 26% in 2012 (Eurostat, tsdcc210 and tsdpc320). Average emission rates for newly registered cars are low in France with a level of 117.4 gCO₂/km (2013 data). This value is the fifth lowest in the EU and has decreased by 23% between 2005 and 2013, similar to the EU average rate of reduction (Eurostat, tsdtr450). Fuel taxation in France is above the EU average: the road fuel excise duties on petrol are the ninth highest among EU MS, and the excise duties on diesel are the eleventh highest (EEA 2014b). However, diesel is currently charged around a third less than petrol. In April 2013, the Committee for Green Taxation published a notice on this tax difference between diesel and petrol, highlighting that the taxation gap did not take account of environmental objectives. The government announced in November 2014 that a key priority of 2015 would be to reverse this prioritisation of diesel over petrol, also as a means to improve air quality. As one measure, the carbon tax (see above) leads to a higher price increase on diesel than on petrol due to the higher carbon content of diesel. Additionally, the government decided to charge an additional 2 EUR ct/litre on diesel starting from 1 January 2015 (Actu Environnement, 2014c). The government is expecting total revenues of 1.13 billion EUR from the 2 cent tax on diesel (Actu Environnement, 2015b).

For cars that emit more than 190 gCO₂/km, an annual ownership tax has to be paid (ACEA 2014). Company car tax is also based on CO₂ emissions. France also applies a distance-based road toll for certain parts of its road network (CE Delft 2012). An important measure to incentivise the purchase of low-GHG emitting cars is France's 'bonus-malus' system. Based on the CO₂ emissions of the purchased car, the government offers a bonus payment (credit) on the purchase of low-emitting cars, and levies an additional fee (tax) on the purchase price of high-emitting vehicles. The government regularly adjusts emission levels for eligible cars. As of 1 Jan 2015, a bonus only applies to the purchase of cars emitting less than 60 gCO₂/km amounting to 4,000 EUR, or to 6,300 EUR for

less than 20 gCO₂/km, but may not exceed 20 or 27% respectively of the purchase price. The premium for hybrid cars has been reduced from 3,300 EUR in 2014 to 2,000 EUR for 2015 (Decree on the aid for the purchase of low-polluting vehicles, 2014). A tax of up to 8,000 EUR applies to the purchase of cars emitting more than 130 gCO₂/km (Finance Act, 2014).

As part of the Draft Energy Transition Act, the government furthermore plans to introduce an additional bonus payment (“superbonus”) for replacing old diesel cars (at least 13 years old) with electric cars (3,700 EUR), hybrid cars (2,500 EUR) or vehicles meeting the EURO 6 emission standard (500 EUR) (Actu Environnement, 2014d). This premium would be in addition to the existing bonus scheme. The policy still needs to pass Senate as part of the Energy Transition Act, expected to be adopted in February 2015 (Actu Environnement, 2015a).

For several years (since 2007) the French government has also been working on the implementation of a so-called “eco tax” on HGVs, based on distance and applicable to around 10,000 km of national highways. However, just before the tax was to enter into force, the project was abandoned in mid-2014 after it had encountered strong opposition, first and foremost in Brittany’s food and agriculture sector. In September 2014, the government proposed a truck toll (“peage du transit”) as an alternative, which would have only applied to around 4,000km of the road network (Actu Environnement, 2014e; Decree 2014-1099). But the government also dropped this alternative due to public opposition (Actu Environnement, 2014f). The objective of such a tax was to finance the maintenance of road infrastructure, to encourage shippers to favour more environmentally-friendly means of transport, such as railways, canals or sea routes and to collect revenues for clean transport projects. Once introduced, the environmental tax on road transport was expected to have yielded 1.15 billion EUR per year (MEDDE, 2013b). The government finally decided as a last resort to extend the above-mentioned increase in taxes on diesel also to transport enterprises, which were originally to be excluded from the charge (Actu Environnement, 2015b). The government also announced it would consider the introduction of the Eurovignette, as already in use in some other EU Member States to tax HGV transit (Actu Environnement, 2014g).

The abandonment of the eco tax and the HGV toll has led to a delay in a call for proposals for public transport projects in French cities, originally issued in May 2013. In December 2014, the minister of Ecology finally announced the 99 beneficiaries resulting from that call. The government will provide 450 million EUR – stemming from revenues of increased taxes on diesel - as support to total public investment amounting to 5.2 billion EUR. Most of these projects concern bus, tram or metro transportation, aiming at promoting more climate-friendly transport modes (Actu Environnement, 2014h).

Another priority of the government for 2015 is to establish a system of vehicle identification based on emissions. This could be a first step for restricting the use of high-emitting vehicles in certain air protection zones. While such measures would primarily aim at improving air quality, they may also have positive impacts on GHG reductions. The city of Paris, for instance, is already considering banning diesel vehicles completely from the capital starting in 2020, doubling cycle lanes by 2020, increasing the network of electric charging stations, as Paris’ mayor announced in December 2014 (Actu Environnement, 2014i).

The promotion of electric vehicles has been a priority over the last years. The 2009 National Plan on Electric Vehicles and Rechargeable Hybrid Vehicles set a target of establishing 75,000 charging stations by 2015, and 4 million by 2020. According to the draft Energy Transition Act, France aims to establish 7 million charging points by 2030. These are ambitious targets given that in 2014 there were only 10,000 such stations in place, hence still far from the target originally set for 2015 (MEDDE, 2014c). Although the government has made 50 million EUR available through the “Investment for the Future Programme” to local communities over the last years, only 8 million EUR have been used (Actu Environnement, 2014m). However, France has undertaken a number of measures in 2014 to address this shortcoming. In July 2014, France adopted the Law on Charging Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles, which allows the installation of charging stations on State grounds free of the fee that is normally charged for the occupation of publicly owned grounds (Law on Charging Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles, 2014). As an immediate action, France is also granting a tax credit of 30% on the installation of charging points from September 2014 to December 2015 (Finance Act, 2015).

Furthermore, the funding window under the “Investment for the Future Programme” has been extended until Dec 2015 and the scope of eligibility has been expanded (MEDDE, 2014j).

5 Policy progress against Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) issued 2013

The EU Commission provides Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) for each MS for consideration and endorsement by the European Council. The recommendations are designed to address the major challenges in relation to the targets of the EU 2020 Strategy. In the following table, the CSRs relevant for climate change and energy are listed, and their progress towards their implementation is assessed.

Existing CSRs	Progress
Strengthen electricity and gas interconnection capacity with Spain; in particular, increase the gas interconnections capacity to fully integrate the Iberian gas market with the European market.	<p>In December 2014, France and Spain declared that they wanted to establish a common strategy to enhance interconnection capacity between them. A new interconnection line is planned to open in the first quarter of 2015, with a capacity of 2,800 MW, which would double the existing interconnection capacity between the two countries. So far, progress on interconnection lines has been slow, mainly due to citizen protest on the French side (Reuters, 2014b).</p> <p>As for gas, there is currently only one gas pipeline connection between Spain and France, which can only transport 5.2 billion cubic metres per year. A new pipeline (called Biriadou) with a capacity of 2 billion cubic meters per year is expected to be completed in 2015. Additionally, the pipeline project MIDCAT is planned and expected to become operational after 2017. This would add another 14 billion cubic meters per year (Euractiv 2014). However, no progress on this project has been reported.</p>
broaden the tax base, in particular on consumption; phase out environmentally-harmful subsidies.	<p>France introduced a new carbon tax in 2014, which is set to increase gradually over time. The share of environmental taxation in GDP is still low and excise duties are not indexed with inflation. The introduction of a distance-based tax on HGVs failed in 2014. France is beginning to tackle the preferential tax rate for diesel compared to petrol – as a first measure, an extra 2ct/litre tax will be levied on diesel in 2015 (see section 4.2.5).</p>
While maintaining affordable conditions for vulnerable groups, ensure that regulated gas and electricity tariffs for household customers are set at an appropriate level which does not represent an obstacle to competition.	<p>Energy prices are still regulated in France. France will phase out regulated electricity prices by Jan 2016 for those enterprises with an apparent power connection of more than 36 kVA (MEDDE, 2014k) (so called “yellow tariffs” and “green tariffs”). The regulated prices for households (“blue tariffs”) will be maintained (. The government raised these regulated tariffs in Nov 2014, but the Commission for Energy Regulation still criticised that the increase was not enough to cover the gap between collected revenues and the costs of electricity (Actu Environnement, 2014j). Regulated gas prices are planned to be phased out between Jul 2015 and Dec 2015 (Actu Environnement, 2014k).</p>

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