Climate policy and pledges and the EU position
Summary of a study by Ecofys, commissioned by the Greens/EFA group

With the crucial UN climate negotiations (COP15) now underway in Copenhagen, it is clear that the EU's claim to be the leader in international climate policy does not stand up to analysis.

Much of the EU's emissions reductions to date have occurred due to coincidence (whether statistical or economic), rather than being the result of deliberate climate policies. Meanwhile, the EU's emissions reduction pledges (either the 20% or the possible 30% reduction by 2020 from 1990 levels) are not consistent with the EU goal of limiting the increase in global temperatures to below 2°C and are certainly far from the EU's leadership claims. Key findings of the Ecofys study include:

- Only around half the emissions reductions that have occurred in the EU to date have been as a result of environmental policies (with no real impact through the emissions trading scheme to date). The rest have been the result of the collapse of former soviet industries and the economic recession.

- The EU's emissions trading scheme risks being an ineffective instrument of climate policy unless the EU adopts more ambitious emissions reduction targets. With a 20% reduction target, the ETS will not act to stimulate the shift to a greener economy.

- Most industrialised countries have to step up their emissions reduction effort to meet their fair share of the responsibility to limit warming to below 2°C, based on the recommendations of the IPCC (a collective reduction of 25-40% by 2020). The Japanese pledge to reduce emissions 25% by 2020 from 1990 levels, however, is more ambitious than even the upper pledge by the EU (30% by 2020). The pledges of Australia and New Zealand could also be more ambitious than the EU 30% pledge, depending on how the rules for the accounting of emissions from land use (LULUCF) are defined. The EU is no longer a leader in this field and must step up to its 30% reduction pledge without delay in order to keep up with those pledges on the table and go far beyond to be consistent with the goal of limiting warming to below 2°C.

- The EU is responsible for at least one-third of the share of climate financing for developing countries. Based on its own effort sharing principles, employed during the climate package and which are based on GDP, the EU would have to contribute 37.7% of the financing required from industrialised countries. Based on the UN sharing model, this would rise to 45% i.e. if public financing needs are deemed to be €110 billion per year by 2020 from industrialised countries, the EU would need to contribute €49.5 billion per year of this.

- The myth that emerging economies are not willing to contribute to efforts to mitigate climate change is exploded. The study suggests that emerging economies are doing more than industrialised countries to meet their share of the effort for limiting warming to below 2°C, as outlined by the IPCC. The targets announced by some emerging economies, when combined with domestic measures that are already adopted or under preparation, could place these countries well within the 15-30% deviation from business as usual range, as proposed by the IPCC.

All of this implies that the EU will have to go far beyond its potential pledges to date to take its fair share of the responsibility under a UN agreement designed to meet the EU goal of limiting the increase in global temperatures to below 2°C.