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Germany slips down the climate protection ranking

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An annual climate protection ranking was published during the climate conference in Warsaw, Poland. The Climate Change Performance Index was prepared by the non-governmental organisations Germanwatch and Climate Action Network Europe. It evaluates the efforts countries are making to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Germany has fallen from the 8th to the 19th place in the ranking. The top positions were taken by Denmark, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. Poland has moved up to 45th position, and thus came ahead of two other EU member states: Greece (47th) and Estonia (55th). The ranking covers 58 countries, which are responsible for over 90% of CO2 emissions. This is the first time Germany has found itself out of the top ten in the history of this ranking, while as recently as 2008 it was ranked second. The reason for this fall was the negative evaluation of the German climate policy.

Commentary

- According to the authors of the ranking, Germany is no longer a leader in European climate policy. Berlin was delaying its support for the reform of the European emission trade system ('backloading') for a long time and blocked the EU car emissions law . In the opinion of Germanwatch experts, over the past year Germany has not participated in the European debate on reducing emissions in a constructive manner. In 2011, following the catastrophe at the Fukushima nuclear power plant, the German chancellor announced the launch of an energy transformation (*Energiewende*), which included the immediate decommissioning of eight nuclear power plants and accelerating the development of renewable energy sources (RES). The unintended effect of this strategy is an increase in energy production by coal power plants and higher emissions of greenhouse gases. Over the past two years, the share of brown coal in electricity production has risen from 23% to 25.6%, and the share of hard coal from 18.5% to 19.1%. Greenhouse gas emissions were 1.6% higher in 2012, and around 2% higher in 2013. The costs of RES development turned out to be higher than estimated, and therefore the government was forced to reform the RES support system and slow down the development of green sources of energy (relevant amendments to legislation will take effect in 2014). In 2012, the share of electricity produced from RES was 22.9%.
- Germany has been strongly engaged in fighting global warming since the beginning of this process in the 1990s. The country has become the centre of global climate diplomacy and a key manufacturer of green technologies. Bonn has been the venue of

the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) since 1996 and, since 2011, of the International Renewable Energy Agency's (IRENA) Innovation and Technology Centre. According to government data, the share of the green technologies sector in Germany's GDP will grow from 11% at present to 15% in 2025. This image of Germany as a climate protection leader may change in coming years, as proven by the recent fall in the ranking. Berlin is currently putting more and more emphasis on job protection in traditional industry, which could move its production abroad in the search for lower labour and energy costs.

- The SPD and the CDU in their coalition talks are still unable to agree on the issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Social Democrats insist on more ambitious goals being set to this effect, for example, through the adoption of a climate protection law and raising the share of RES in electricity production to 75% by 2030 (the CDU is insisting on setting the target at 50%). Faster emission reduction will spell reduced profits for industry and the owners of coal and gas power plants, and may result in Germany being deindustrialised, which is what the politicians fear most.