

## POLICY BRIEF SUMMARY

# Understanding and Constructively Engaging with China's New Climate Targets

## Strategies for Effective German–Chinese Cooperation

The full version of the policy brief is available in German [here](#). In summary, it:

- **Explains the significance of China's climate targets:** China's climate policy is of great importance to Germany not only from an environmental perspective, but also in terms of economic and security policy. For global climate policy, the targets expected to be presented in autumn are crucial because, for the first time, they will stipulate absolute emissions reductions, define the path forward after China's CO<sub>2</sub> peak, and cover all greenhouse gases and sectors. (Ch. 1)
- **Places China's current climate and energy policy in context:** China is on the threshold of a profound structural transformation. Driven by a massive expansion of renewable energy, emissions have been declining since March 2024, suggesting that China's annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions may have already peaked. (Ch. 2)
- **Assesses the level of ambition of Chinese climate policy:** China has a mixed track record in implementing previous climate targets. For example, the expansion target for renewables was achieved six years ahead of schedule, whereas the emissions intensity target is likely to be missed by the end of 2025. (Ch. 3)
- **Explains the logic underlying China's climate targets:** The targets are likely to be set conservatively, as announcements by central authorities and overarching guiding principles are highly binding in China. Even if they are inadequate from a global perspective, China often exceeds its own targets in implementation. Differences of just a few percentage points are significant when it comes to the main targets, as they send important signals through the entire system. China's climate targets follow the logic of a centrally controlled planning system: conservative yet binding directives generate domestic signaling effects and demonstrate serious intent, but overall they fall short of global requirements. (Ch. 4)
- **Highlights interlinkages between Chinese, German, and European targets and outlines options for action:** Germany should create strategic clarity across the climate-trade-security nexus, expand partnerships, and calibrate cooperation in such a way as to strengthen resilience and impact. In addition, it should interpret China's climate targets judiciously instead of using them as a pretext for hesitation at home. (Ch. 5)

---

**Authors:** Barbara Pongratz, Martin Voss

**With contributions by:** Petter Lyden, Christoph Bals

**Edited by:** Nikola Klein, Jakob Borchers

**Citation:** Pongratz, B., Voss, M., 2025, Understanding and Constructively Engaging with China's New Climate Targets. Strategies for effective German–Chinese Cooperation, [www.germanwatch.org/en/93257](http://www.germanwatch.org/en/93257).

Download this document at: [www.germanwatch.org/en/93257](http://www.germanwatch.org/en/93257)

The full version of the policy brief is available in German here: <https://www.germanwatch.org/de/93257>

September 2025

**Germanwatch e.V.**

**Office Bonn**

Kaiserstr. 201

D-53113 Bonn

Phone +49 (0)228 / 60 492-0, Fax -19

Website: [www.germanwatch.org](http://www.germanwatch.org)

**Office Berlin**

Stresemannstr. 72

D-10963 Berlin

Phone +49 (0)30 / 5771 328-0, Fax -11

E-mail: [info@germanwatch.org](mailto:info@germanwatch.org)

---