

CAPABLE FACTSHEET

Key results and recommendations for policymakers to design socially and economically acceptable policy measures for climate neutrality

Achieving climate neutrality in the EU and globally requires ambitious and effective climate targets, and the ability to implement widely accepted policies. In this context, the Horizon Europe project CAPABLE aims to provide recommendations for designing socially and economically acceptable climate policy measures for 2030 and beyond. CAPABLE draws on economics, sociology, political science and psychology to capture climate policy's multidimensional outcomes and implications.

1. Public Support for EU Climate Policies

CAPABLE conducted surveys in 2024 and 2025 across 35.000 European citizens to investigate public opinion on a set of climate policies.

KEY FINDINGS

- * ~ 36% of Europeans can be categorized as 'Supporters' of climate policies, meaning they support a majority of the policies and oppose almost none. Whereas 21% oppose a majority of the policies and support almost none
- * ~ 33% can be categorized as 'Conditional Middle' of climate policy support, meaning they are supportive of some policies but oppose others. The remainder are consistently neutral
- * ~ 70% support EU Rail Fund creation and 55% support household insulation mandates while ~ 70% oppose new taxes on polluting behavior, such as on cars, meat and flights
- * Women, higher-educated, and younger individuals are consistently more supportive across all countries

2. Perception of the link between economic growth and sustainability

The same citizens were also asked how they perceive the link between economic growth and sustainability.

- * 60% of Europeans hold pro-growth views, seeing economic growth as necessary for stability, wellbeing, and environmental protection
- * Pro-growth support is higher in the EU countries with lower income and higher inequality



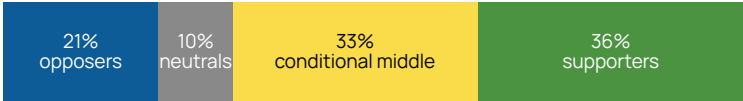
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ClimAte Policy AcceptaBiLity Economic Framework

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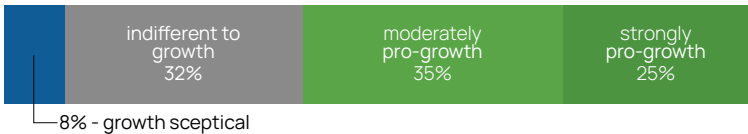
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Web: <https://capableclimate.eu>
Mail: info@capableclimate.eu
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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

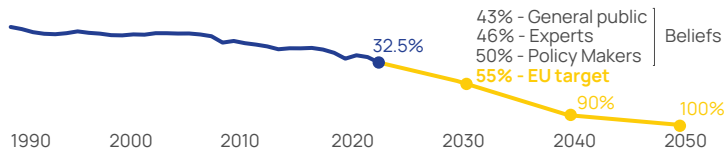
- » Design packages pairing stringent measures with household relief, local co-benefits and clear communication of efficacy to shift the 'Conditional Middle', and with them the overall majority, towards sustained support
- » Design policies considering fairness, equity perceptions, and regional contexts
- » Align revenue allocation with citizen preferences (support for vulnerable households and investments in adaptation) to increase acceptability of the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS)



- » Recognise that most citizens view growth and sustainability as compatible goals
- » Frame climate policies to highlight co-benefits for economic stability and social wellbeing

3. Credibility of the EU 2030 Climate Commitments

Credibility is fundamental to climate policy success.



KEY FINDINGS

- * Europeans give only a 20% probability of meeting the EU 55% target by 2030
- * On average, the same citizens expect only a 43% emission reduction by 2030
- * Policymakers systematically underestimate public scepticism

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Prioritise consistent, long-term climate commitments to enhance the credibility of EU commitments for citizens
- » Ensure transparent communication about progress and achievability toward 2030 targets to bridge the credibility gap

4. Carbon Pricing Performance and Expansion

Carbon pricing has been shown to be an effective tool for mitigation across the world, but there are disparities across regions and implementations.



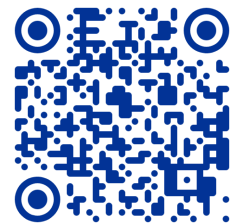
- * On average, the EU ETS achieved a 7% emission reduction in the EU even before recent price surges
- * The recent considerable CO2 permit price increase to over 100€/ton of CO2 can be attributed to enhanced policy credibility and market foresight
- * The ETS 2 provides a cost-efficient framework for buildings and transport but requires complementary subsidies for household affordability
- * The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism addresses carbon leakage and strengthens global carbon pricing, but its success depends on robust industrial policies and international cooperation

- » Reform the Market Stability Reserve to improve resilience against speculation
- » Maintain strong, consistent policy signals for market confidence
- » Transition from free allowances to auctioning to improve emission reductions with minimal adverse job impacts
- » Facilitate substantial international cooperation through climate clubs with border adjustments

5. Policymakers' role and community engagement in climate action

Policymakers and politicians are entrusted with the challenging task of translating climate science into long-term policies that will be determinant for the well-being of the next generations.

On the CAPABLE website, you can find a set of products designed to support policy makers's work in tackling climate change: two online dashboards, six policy briefs, a handbook and training materials among others



- * Climate change presence in European party programmes has increased over the last three decades, particularly for left-wing political parties
- * Local stakeholders point out the mismatch between ambitious EU-level targets and the capacity of national and regional actors to implement them, due to limited funding, reduced participation of local stakeholders as well as administrative and regulatory barriers
- * Structural barriers to citizen engagement in climate policies include: mistrust in institutions, lack of time to participate, limited information and awareness, and unfamiliarity with participatory tools

- » Strengthen multi-level policy coherence and provide institutional support to ensure better coordination and communication between EU, national, and regional governance structures
- » Enhance the flexibility of funding mechanisms for the specific needs of vulnerable regions and sectors based on stakeholders' participation
- » Build functional understanding among policymakers on the limitations, uncertainties, and unknowns of what science finds