

# **How Climate Change Affects Democracy, and Economic and Social Justice**

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**ESDN**

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# How climate change affects democracy and economic and social justice

## Four examples of different kinds of challenge to democracy:

Is representative democracy with national elections every few years fundamentally unsuited to long-term decision-making on issues that affect the whole planet?

How to maintain democratic consent for a decades-long transition to climate neutrality that will affect all of society and the whole economy, but for which there is no working model yet?

How to manage a major systems change when democracies are rocked by major crises such as energy poverty caused by Russia's war?

How to have a democratically inclusive transition when those most exposed to climate change and environmental damage are the most marginalised and least likely to vote?



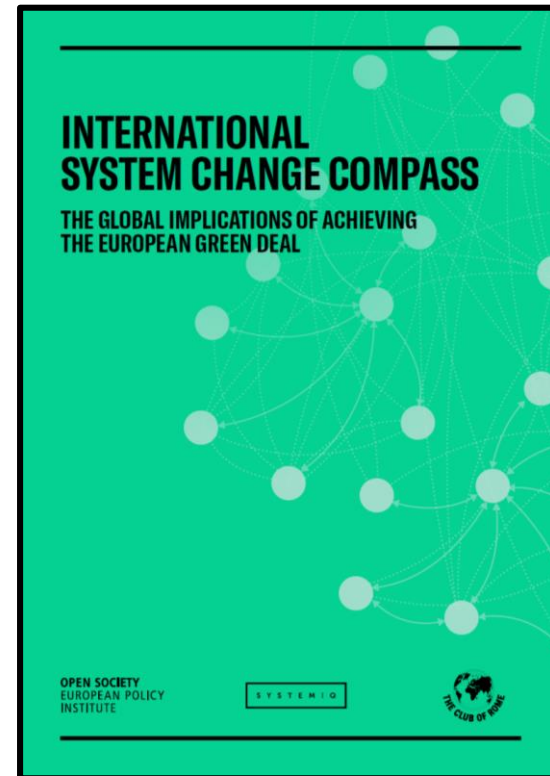
**This unprecedented transition has to sustain democratic consent over decades**

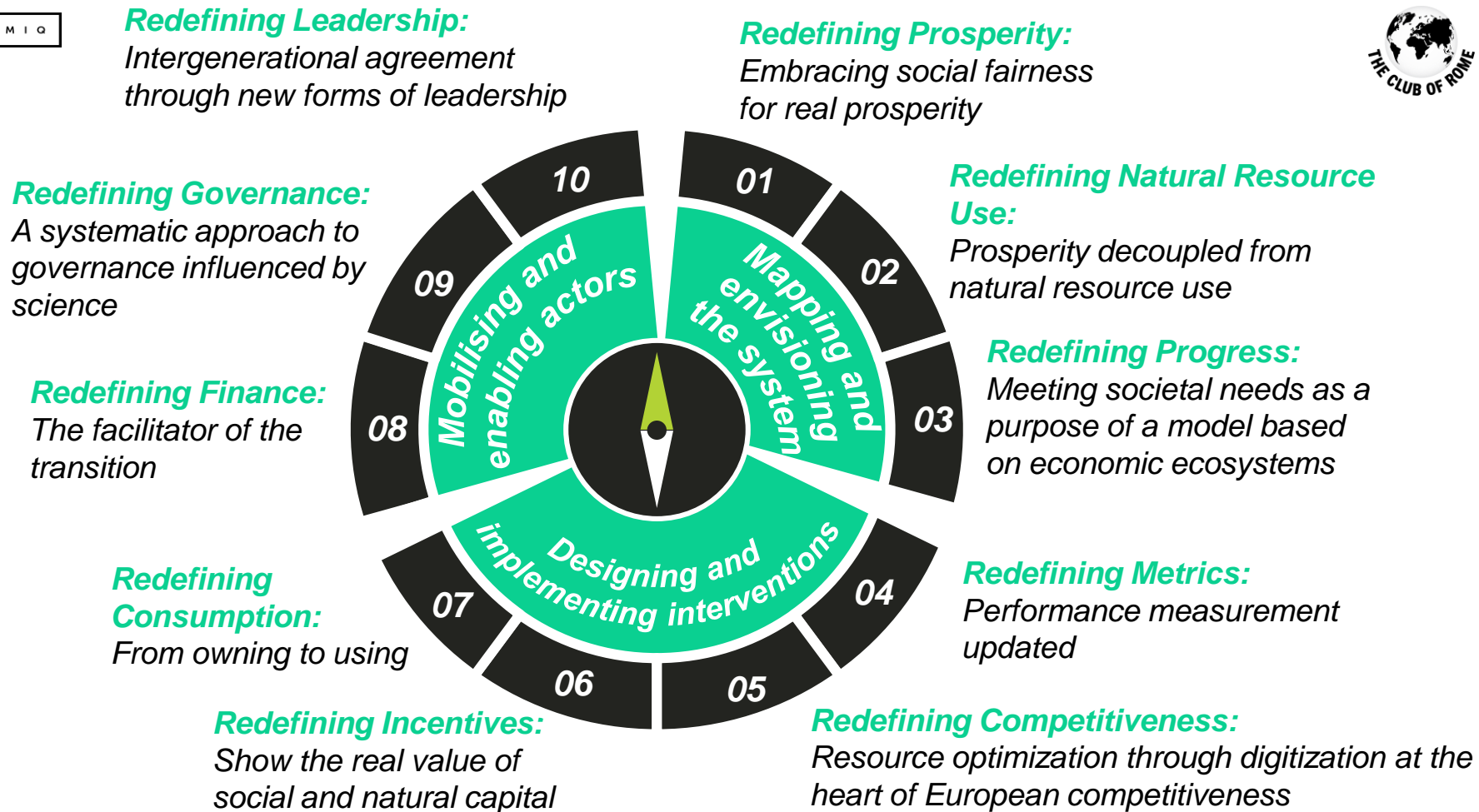


**Unlike after 1989, there is no existing low-carbon economy to show people the successful model that could be their future.  
And the transition is global.**

# From incremental to systemic change

- Goal: Build an economic model that can sustainably increase well-being within planetary boundaries
- How: Transform the fundamentals of socio-economic systems
- Outcome: European economy meets societal needs within planetary boundaries, both for Europe and other regions







# Research findings

Strong consensus on the *goal*  
of stopping climate change –  
but far less on *how*

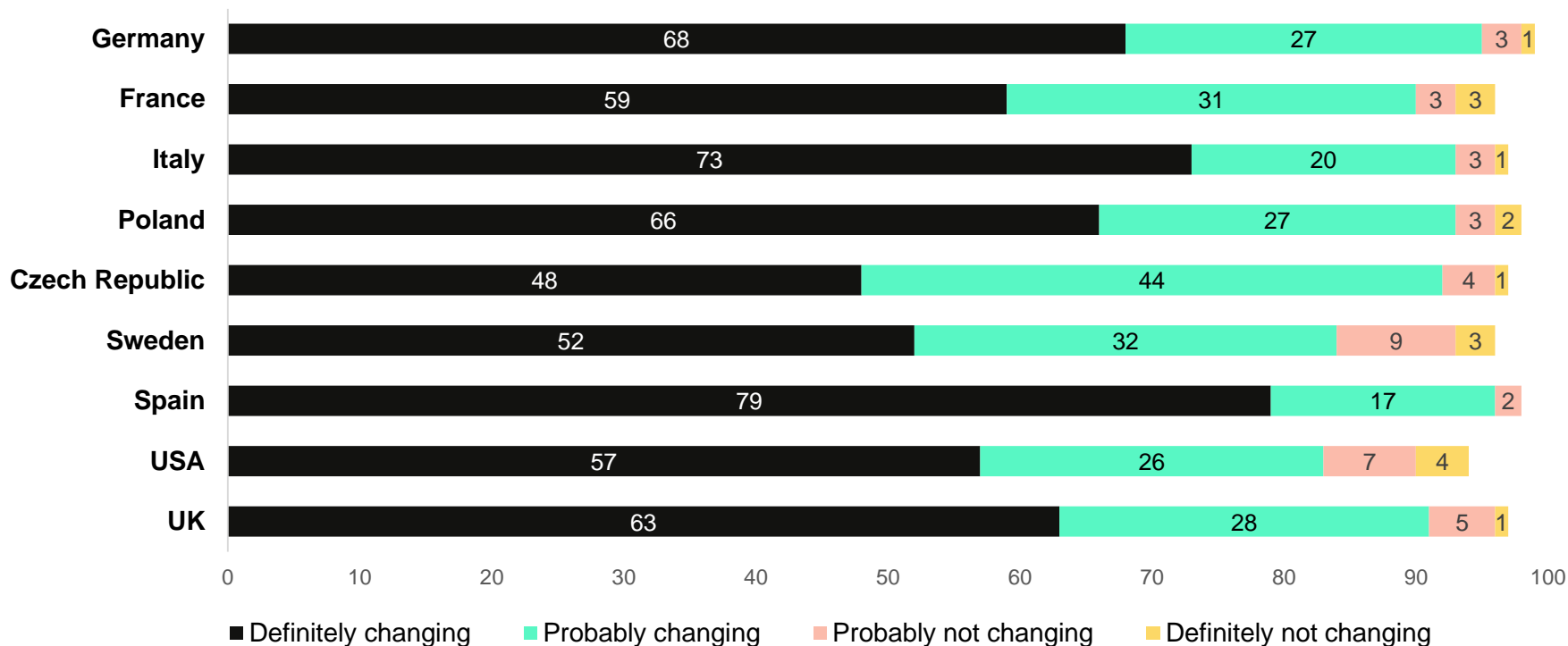
Research on public attitudes to climate action and economic policy in 8 European countries (DE, ES, SE, FR, UK, PL, CZ, IT) and the US in 2020

- People are aware of climate change and support climate action BUT
- they underestimate the impact that climate change will have on their lives
- they do not anticipate the scale of the transformation needed.



# People are aware of climate change...

Q: Do you think the world's climate is changing?

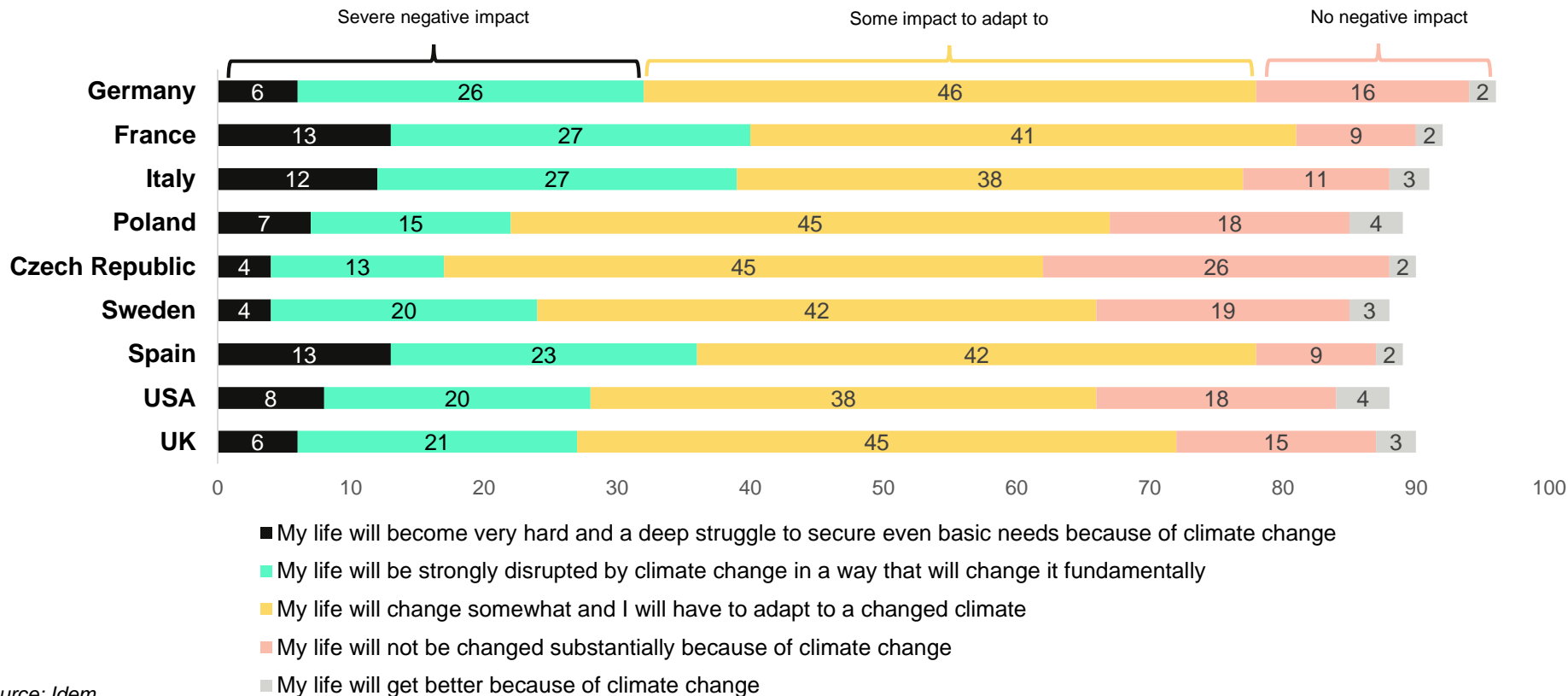




# Only a minority thinks that climate change will affect their lives severely if nothing is done

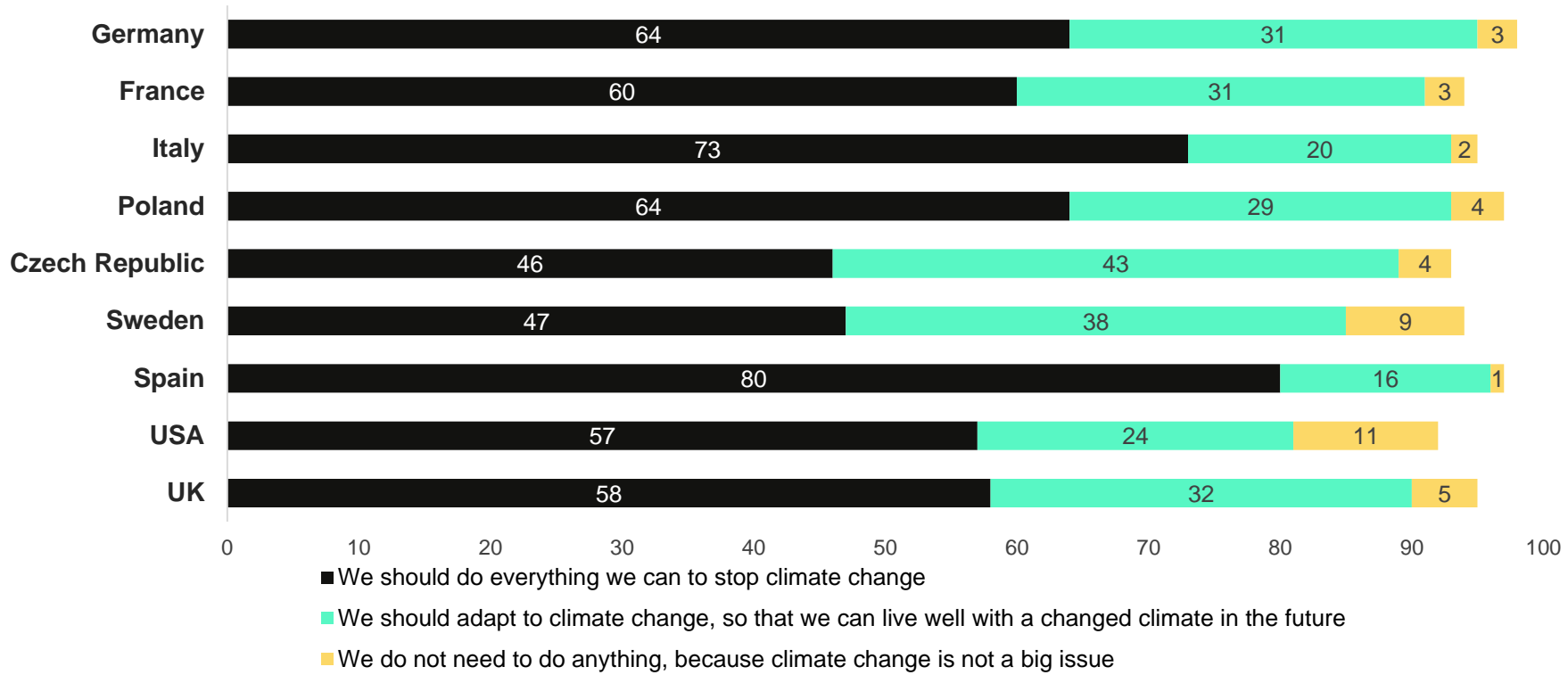


Q: If no action is taken to address climate change, to what extent do you think your life will be changed by 2035?



# People want climate action...

Q: Taken together, what should people do to respond to climate change overall?



# ... but many are not able to identify the most impactful personal actions one could take...

Q: In your opinion, of the following, which is the best thing one could do to address climate change personally?

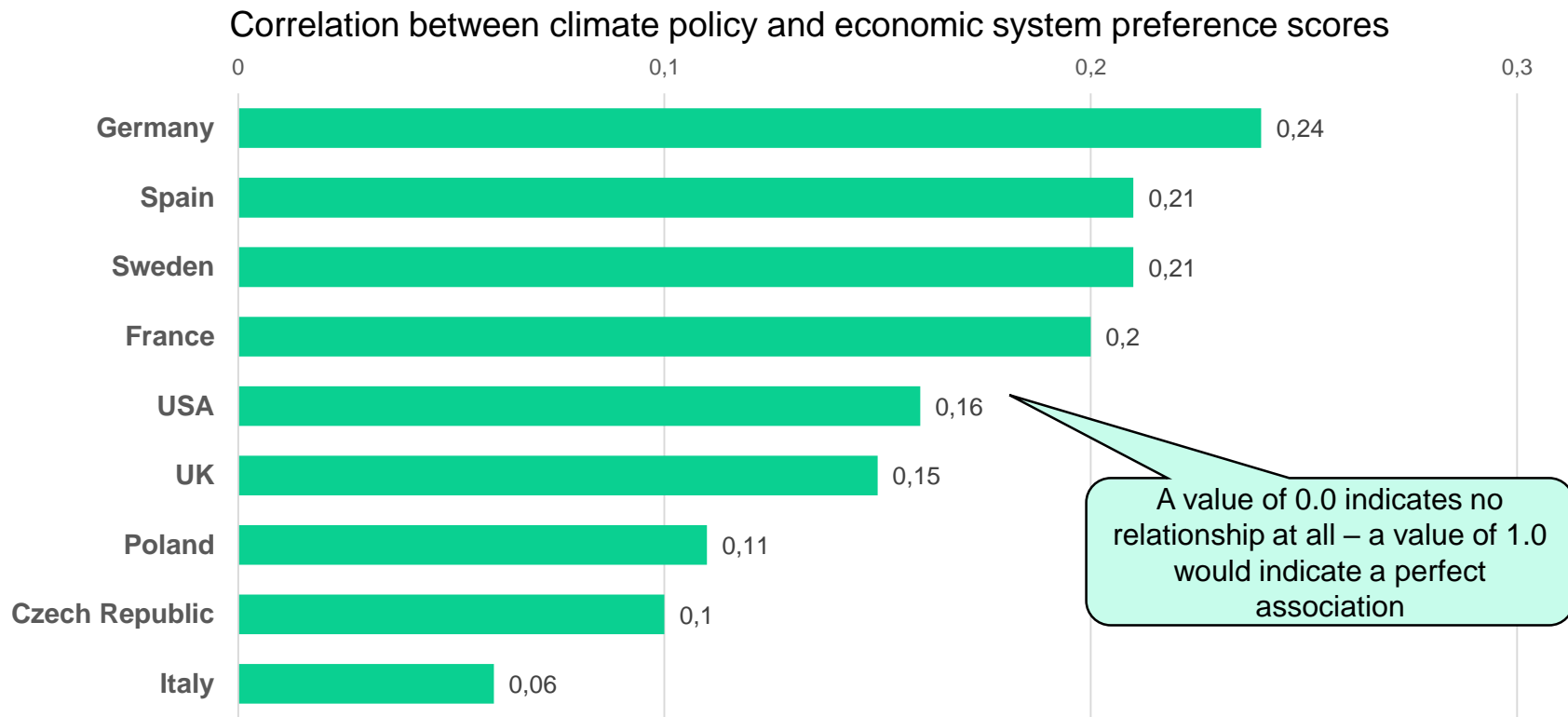
	Germany	France	Italy	Poland	Czech Republic	Sweden	Spain	USA	UK
Reduce waste and recycle more	28	38	55	58	52	35	60	37	40
Take fewer flights	27	18	3	6	11	19	4	3	13
Support organizations that fight climate change	10	11	14	9	12	8	12	10	11
Drive cars less	13	9	7	8	10	8	4	12	12
Vote for parties that address climate change	10	7	5	6	6	12	9	10	9
Get electricity from a Green energy supplier	5	5	10	5	2	7	8	12	9
Nothing, because climate change isn't a big problem	4	5	2	5	5	7	1	10	5
Only buy organic food	1	6	2	1	1	2	2	2	1
Only buy second-hand clothing	1	1	1	2	0	2	1	1	1

# ... and support for government action is ambivalent

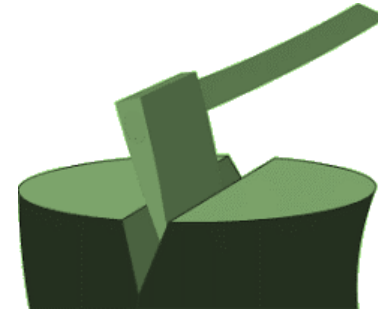
Q: Which of the following policies should your government pursue to best address your concerns about climate change, if any at all?

	Germany	France	Italy	Poland	Czech Republic	Sweden	Spain	USA	UK
Make public transport free of charge	34	29	22	25	25	24	23	10	27
Allow communities of households to generate their own energy with shared renewable energy sources	8	17	28	28	16	14	27	22	16
Only give out government funding to environmentally sustainable businesses	14	20	18	9	18	9	15	14	14
Apply a tax on all carbon emissions	12	7	11	13	8	10	15	15	12
Apply a higher tax on all flights people take	12	7	4	3	6	10	3	4	8
Increase the number of nuclear energy plants	4	6	2	9	10	15	4	8	6
Increase the price of meat by adding a special meat tax	7	2	2	3	2	4	3	4	3
The government should not pursue any of these policies	2	2	2	4	3	4	2	10	4

# Views about climate policies and the economy overall are not coherent



# The Green Wedge



- Support for climate policies is fragile
- Dissent will be exploited to preserve status quo
- The Green Wedge risks derailing climate action

# A Fair Energy Transition for All

ENERGY TRANSITION: EVERYBODY IS AFFECTED  
SO **EVERYBODY SHOULD BE HEARD!**



Project led by:



Network<sup>of</sup>  
European  
Foundations

Funded by:



IKEA Foundation



STIFTUNG  
MERCATOR

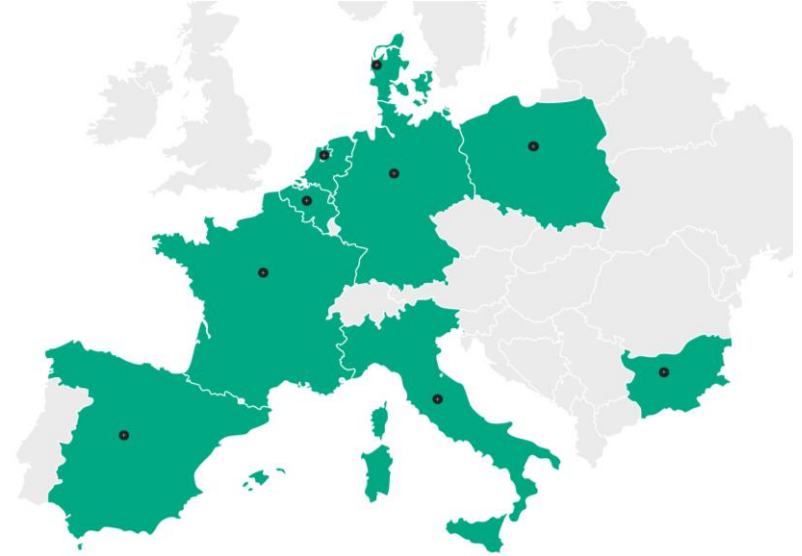
OPEN SOCIETY  
EUROPEAN POLICY  
INSTITUTE



# A Fair Energy Transition for All

## Key findings

- Vulnerable people are aware of the dangers of climate change and believe in need for action
- They don't always see the links between climate change and energy
- They don't know how they can participate in the energy transition
- They emphasise the need for the energy transition to minimise inequalities
- But they do not have the means or power to take action



**900** citizens all over Europe involved  
**150** experts on national and European levels consulted  
**90** focus groups in 9 European countries

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**Do we need less democracy or  
more?**

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# People don't see the scale of change coming

Don't wait for government action

Get ahead of political leadership  
and conventional investors

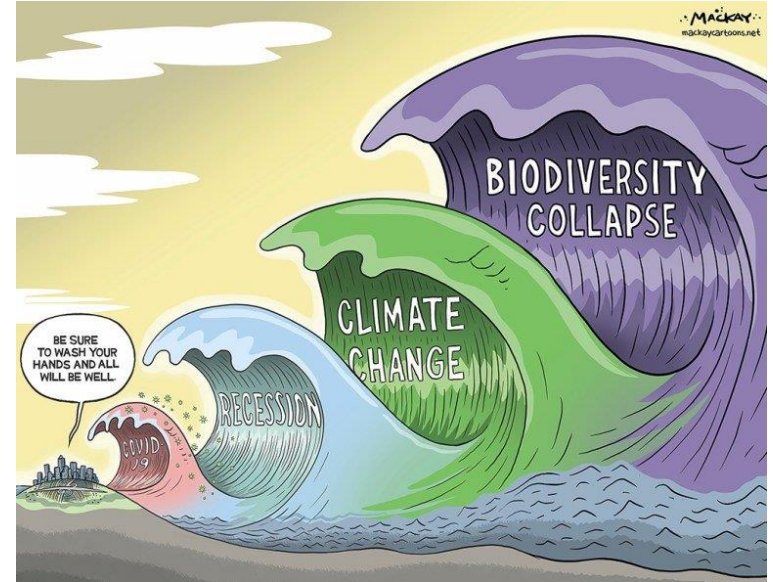


Image source: The COVID-19 Tsunami. Source: mackaycartoons.net

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# The power of positive examples – perhaps greater than grand vision



*Green mobility in Ljubljana.* © Nea Culpa



*Leuven plans to be a climate-neutral city by 2050 through 13 specific programmes.* <https://roadmap-en.leuven2030.be/>

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# People want to do more, but don't know what would make a difference

→ Empowerment through opportunities to act



*Ènostra's members celebrate the opening of a wind power plant in Gubbio, Italy. (c) ènostra*



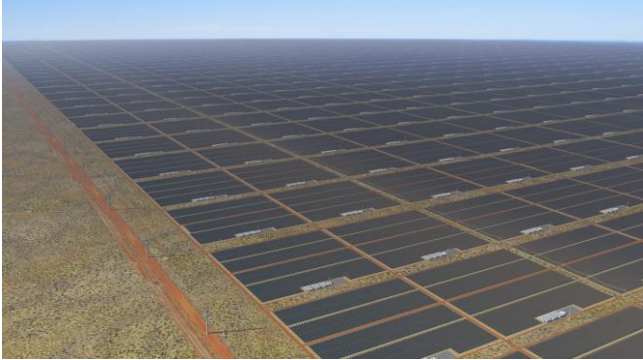
*Beauvent's members celebrate the installation of a wind turbine in Bornem, Belgium. (c) Beauvent cv*

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# Inspire action through demonstration, even at small scale



*The world's largest solar farm in Northern Territory, Australia*

© Sun Cable Pte Ltd



*Solar panels at Van Marcke's European Distribution Centre in Kortrijk, Belgium. (c) Beauvent cv*