MY CAR, MY HOME, MY JOB
How to reconcile climate policies with people's needs and how to generate consensus

POLICY DOCUMENT
DECEMBER 2024

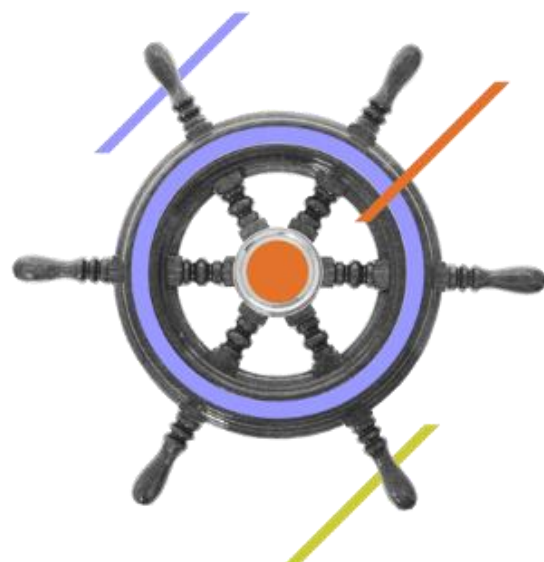Giulia Colafrancesco

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By 2030, the European Union must achieve a net CO2 emission reduction target of 55%, which, to date, will require a huge step up in the current decarbonisation rate. It is necessary in order to keep the global temperature below the 1,5°C compared to preindustrial level, as agreed by the Union and its Member States in the Paris Agreement.

To address this challenge, the EU is devising policy toolkits that Member States will need to take seriously and swiftly implement, conscious of an electorate that is deeply aware of the necessity of an ecological transition in the fight against climate change and that would support concrete measures to cut emissions[1]. However, **to gain consensus across the whole political spectrum, climate policies need to serve other purposes aside reducing emissions: climate issues are entrenched within the structure of our society and therefore climate related policies need to have broader ambition and wider reach**. Hence, political consensus is tied hand in hand with climate policies ability to tackle also economic disparities, inequalities and designing industrial policies that look at regions and areas of (actual and potential) crisis and increase quality of jobs. Anything less leaves climate policies exposed to actors with an interest in manipulating the idea behind a socially sustainable transition.

Climate policies cannot but tackle also structural imbalances of our social and economic system, which has been the trigger for exploring, in this work, how to reconcile the policy level with society's needs. Political forces have an opportunity to push forward an ambitious political vision that answer to the need of a society ready to be part of this transformation – if given the right chances and conditions. People involvement and participation in designing a new socio-economic model that enhance our common goods will eventually reverse a dangerous trend of abstentionism that has caught on at national and at European level.

The explorative work conducted during the past six months has helped understanding some of the complexity and contradiction that characterises our time, where a shared need for profound transformation is not met with political action nor social consensus. The analysis of more than 4000 answers to our questions posed during our qualitative research phase (i.e. online diaries) and screening of more than 7 million social media posts allowed to identify recurrent elements at the core of people's needs such as cooperation and dialogue across stakeholders, strategy coherence, education, social awareness, the need for socially responsible policies and a call to reducing complexity. The qualitative data collection delved into people's everyday life, bringing to the surface all the commonplaces and contradictions that characterise the climate conversation: facts (costs and other obstacles related to certain transition processes), incomprehension and political inconsistency.

There is a clear lack of policies able to smoothly guide people when faced with the high costs of the transition, a tight timeframe and other barriers. **What we see instead, is a narrative and a political strategy very randomly organised that gives society information disjointed from the overall picture, which contributes to the general feeling of helplessness and eco-anxiety.** Disregarding this aspect means that climate objectives will never be seen as opportunities and political proposals, especially those with a tight timeframe, will always be met with scepticism and fear. Political

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[1] Abou-Chadi et al_2024_Debunking the Backlash.pdf

proposals, on their side, need to clearly frame what is expected from people and other stakeholders, according to their ability to contribute.

A context thus outlined, revealed the need to deconstruct our society and start a difficult work of rebuilding it within well-defined socio-economic categories: specific needs require targeted policies, which in turn demand a matrix capable of showing how and to what extent specific groups can contribute to achieving climate and social goals. A clear narrative and overall strategy (referred to as "framework of reference") based on common principles underlying people's perception and reality (coherence, cooperation, education, etc.) ensures that such specific policies are understood and find space within the bigger narrative of a socially just green transition.

Finally, the work conducted so far showed that there is an important space to foster smart and responsible communication around climate change and decarbonisation processes. **If media and politicians can fill this space, using the same principles highlighted above, people will finally be able to understand what's their role in this transition and how important is each and every contribution within the general framework.**

We firmly believe that this structural work will be essential to understand how public consensus on important policy packages, such as the Green Deal, is formed and to foster and spread wider responsibility around our common good. This document is a first contribution to support policy makers in finding the right tools to interpret the needs of our society along the process of transition away from fossil fuel, as well as building a consensus based political proposal and a shared framework of reference based on the principles outlined in this document. Further, it opens a season of social studies aimed at exploring social, economic and cultural drivers of behaviours in relation to climate action: a matrix in the form of a taxonomy of society to design needs-based climate policies and a consensus gap index to monitor support of Europeans towards climate targets.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change is a key factor to describe and understand the multiple crises that we are witnessing nowadays across the world and within our societies. Climate issues are deeply interlinked to the most important processes in international relations, finance, industrial and social innovation; and in creating capacity and resilience to respond to its increasing impacts at a global scale. **Within climate issues lie, therefore, a responsibility to go beyond the remits of its adaptation and mitigation objectives, and face society's most rooted problems and challenges.** Decarbonising our economies to face the threat of climate change is not an easy task, but we cannot shy away from tackling distributional issues and inequality, setting free from the strong interests tied to the oil and gas industry. The latter is not only the major contributor and catalyst of the climate crisis itself, but it also profits from keeping society bound to a culture of overconsumption that is causing the problem in the first place.

On the other hand, those forces that have so far been the strongest advocates for climate issues, need to take clear stances on structural social and security issues that, especially in the past few years, have been adding pressure on society, the economy and global peace.

At EU level, political elections last June saw the vast majority of Europeans voting for parties committed to the green transition, but it also highlighted a clear increase of the conservative and populist side in Parliament: the Green Deal in this scenario will probably endure. However, increasing its ambition and accelerating its implementation has become an even bigger challenge. Since its creation, the Green Deal has had to overcome backlash and cumbersome negotiations, yet, according to the European Green Deal Barometer[2], the biggest challenge of all to turn the Green Deal into approved legislation, remains national pushback. In September 2023, Germany blocked plans for more stringent insultation standards and the bill on phasing out oil and gas heating has brought the governing coalition close to collapse. In Italy we have seen the government pushing hard to water down the EPBD Directive and continues to direct funds towards gas infrastructure, while Poland has been filing complaints with the Court of Justice on EU's 2035 ban on combustion vehicles, among others[3].

Europe expected a rise of far-right parties, historically more climate sceptical, in the EU Parliament and it was particularly driven by the results in France and Germany. In France, National Rally obtained 30 seats, and their victory led President Macron to call for new national elections that took place at the end of June. In Germany, Alternative for Deutschland secured 15 seats while the centre right parties gained the majority, thus endorsing a second Von der Leyen mandate. In the Netherlands, Belgium and Austria's far right parties increased their consensus while in Italy the balance of power between the right and the centre left held on, and the most anti-Green Deal parties were slightly downsized compared to 2019. In Poland and Spain the respective leaderships of Tusk and Sanchez managed to secure the majority of seats, hence reinforcing the European People Party and the Socialists and Democrats. In the Nordic countries, centre-left and green forces performed quite well. Ultimately Von der Leyen managed to secure a second mandate with the Greens support but considering the different majority in the Council it won't be a smooth sailing for climate and environmental laws. Undoubtedly, weakened or not, the renewed EU political leadership will have to

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[2] https://ieep.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/European-Green-Deal-Barometer-2024-4th-edition.pdf
[3] https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/resistance-green-policies-around-europe-2023-09-27/

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deal with the social aspects of climate change which will become increasingly relevant in the upcoming years due to climate and social drivers such as extreme weather events, wars, and rising inequalities.

Ultimately, political feasibility of climate policies will only increase if politics can ensure more equity in designing and implementing them. The decarbonisation process will inevitably need to give priority and encourage social investment in public spending and generate, therefore, the consensus necessary to move the EU towards a Green and Social Deal, viable at all levels of subsidiarity.

2. METHODOLOGIES, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The project started in May 2024 and is resulting in this policy document, a first contribution to finding the right tools to interpret the needs of our society and solve its structural problems along the process of transitioning away from fossil fuels. It benefitted from inputs and contributions of various stakeholders in the countries under analysis that enriched this project with various expertise and perspectives.

The objective of this project is to understand people's inclination and challenges to public support of the transition process, starting from people's individual needs **(my car, my home, my job)** and understanding what consensus can be generated around the Green Deal and the Fit for 55 package. It was based on the following hypotheses:

- People are mostly aligned with the ecological and energy transition[4].
- People are not in principle against change and are not against climate policies, however acceptability of climate policies stems from broader representation of needs from different social groups within the political agenda.
- When policies are design/thought for specific sectoral targets but with little consideration of their socio-economic implications, they are mostly perceived in opposition to people's needs and priorities.
- Politicians could be interested in building a proposal that would capture voters support by offering solutions that are representative of their needs[5].
- A concrete and needs-based recipe for decarbonization, that stretches across different social groups, could find wide public acceptance, and could deliver on climate goals[6].

Recent studies confirm that people are mostly aligned with the decarbonisation process and that they are not initially against climate policies[7]. When it comes to implementing important sectorial policy packages, these are however met with scepticism and, at time, opposed. **Policies should be**

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[4] https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3229
[5] https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/4D76FEDA813739711DCB40EC102744AF/S0003055423000308a.pdf/div-class-title-the-political-consequences-of-green-policies-evidence-from-italy-div.pdf
[6] Fast track or Slo-Mo? Public support and temporal preferences for
phasing out fossil fuel cars in the United States
Adrian Rinscheid a,b, Silvia Piantab,c,d and Elke U. Weberb
[7] Abou-Chadi T; Jansen J.; Kollberg M.; Redeker N. Debunking the Backlash. Uncovering European Voters' Climate Preferences. Jacques Delors Centre. March 2024

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better equipped at translating individual needs into collective ones and increase political consensus. On the other side, **politicians might be interested in building a political proposal that would capture the attention of a bigger part of the electorate because it can answer to their needs.** This project wanted to share with decision makers tools and recommendations to build a political proposal that reflects people's needs.

The data collection has been conducted in Italy, Germany, France and Poland and consisted of two main parts: a quantitative and a qualitative data collection. Our analysis comprised more than 4000 written responses and screening of more than 7 million social media posts.

Table 1 – Summary of quantitative data conducted by KANTAR through online diaries

Italy	1057 answers	4927 words
France	1011 answers	71978 words
Germany	1047 answers	53111 words
Polonia	1123 answers	58813 words
Total	4238 answers	233429 words

Table 2 – Volume of raw data collected by La Sapienza research group

Country	Number of posts	Average number of posts per day	Number of posts (filtering with keywords search)	Average number of posts per day (filtering with keywords search)
France	28088	432,123	309	4,753846
Germany	40061	616,323	413	6,353846
Italy	66330	1020,46	580	8,923077
Poland	16165	248,692	1441	22,16923

Table 3 – Volume of raw data, excluding duplicate posts adding a month after the EU elections collected by La Sapienza research group for Italy

	Number of posts	Total Engagement	Average number of posts per day (over two months)
Facebook	1 220 399	56 694 894	18775,37
Instagram	42 167	53 202 361	648,7231

The quantitative data collection has been conducted by the Center of Data Science and Complexity for Society (CDCS), La Sapienza University of Rome, during the pre- and post-election period. It focused on an analysis of trends and narratives regarding key decarbonisation topics (buildings, transport and employment) on social media. For Italy, the analysis aimed at showing if and how people talk about decarbonisation issues on different social media platform and analysed the level of polarisation. The research group also analysed news and political outlets data in France, Germany, Italy and Poland pre and post EU elections. Due to the short timeframe to implement this project and the volume of data analysed, it was not possible at this time to undertake the same kind of analysis for France, Poland and Germany as has been done for Italy. For future research, it is recommended to expand this analysis also to the other countries and explore how to collect data on how information is disseminated and conveyed on other social media platforms.

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The second has been carried out by KANTAR for ECCO, through the tool of online diaries. The research involved 18 people per country, in 4 days online discussions regarding two of the main topics respectively (home, car, jobs) and selected to represent a wide variety of social groups. This way, 12 people provided answers on each topic. In this context we observed and explored their experiences, their daily context, the barriers, and the areas of satisfaction/dissatisfaction linked to their homes, their jobs and their means of transport. The aim was exploring a more detailed set of citizen needs vis-à-vis climate-friendly mobility, work, and housing topics.

If climate policies want to generate consensus, they need to also tackle our overall socio-economic challenges and build a sociopolitical vision worth transitioning to. Exploring and reflecting on emerging climate narratives and diving deeper into the root causes of modern and social political tensions will be necessary to build such a vision. However, an in-depth literature review which could build a comprehensive theoretical framework to support these findings, is beyond the scope of the project and this policy document.

It is worth mentioning one of the latest research studies from the French think tank IDDRI and the Hot or Cool Institute, on a social contract theoretical framework, with interesting implications for this document[8]. In their framework, a social contract is built on different pacts which define rules, promises and expectations that we have implicitly and collectively agreed on and that constitute the boundaries of individual autonomy, where each one of us can pursue a good life. Within this space individuals perceive and exercise agency in managing their own lives, but they also develop expectations for collective action towards common goals and collective wellbeing. The shape of this autonomy, therefore, and the actual level of agency within, impacts on how people think and act and how much they are willing to contribute to society.

3. INITIAL INSIGHTS FROM EUROPEANS' LIVED EXPERIENCES

3.1 MY CAR, MY HOME, MY JOB: ROOM FOR CLIMATE ACTION

The work that ECCO has conducted, questioning respondents on degree of agency and needs within decarbonisation sectors has given an insight not only on the level of "maturity" of that sector and whether we can aspire to more ambitious action, but also where the space of action is located (individual vs collective) and therefore where policies should be directed to support it or enhance it. In the face of a general support to the energy transition and a deep awareness of the necessity to undertake it, 62% of the EU electorate (including the UK), declared that climate action is too expensive and 58% declared uncertainty in wanting to invest more into the transition process or they are completely opposed to it (Project Tempo data). Political strategies and policy proposals are currently stuck in this conundrum. This project has the value of exploring people's everyday life and catching areas of opportunities for progressive political forces to take a stance on specific topics and gain consensus. This is echoed in the following quotes from the online diary exercise.

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[8] "Towards a 21st century social contract, how did we get there?"

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"Climate changes are one of the main challenges faced by the contemporary world."

(f, 30, PL)

"Given my desire to start a family, it is an important topic to me, so that my children can grow up in a healthy and sustainable environment"

(F/young/DE/combustion car/rented flat)

"Poland being the country based on coal is facing a great challenge of the transition. So far, the main problem is employment in the sector. Last year I went to Bogatynia to Lignite Mine and Turów Power Plant to learn there that the employment in the power plant and mine of employees and their family members is around 70% of the local community. Closing down the mine by 2044 will be one of the greatest challenges for all the future governments."

(m, age, PL)

"You should set important and realistic goals, but never lose sight of the fact that you want to get the citizens on board and not scare them away."

(m/young/DE/combustion car)

In this and the following sections we will explore in more details where these areas of opportunities could be and what are the initial policy implications.

MY CAR

In the transport sector, across countries and social groups, the main critical points primarily concern public transports and their insufficient coverage and efficiency, the inadequate infrastructure for alternative mobility solutions and poor mobility choices for people living in non-urban areas.

Electric vehicles are understood to be the future of mobility, but currently they do not fully convince everyone. Measures that have been already put in place both at EU and national level have impacted mostly those who live in large cities, where stronger limits have been put in place. But they are still perceived as partial, especially by the more progressive left-wing participants for whom the objective should be to reduce the number of cars and not simply switch type of engine.

"Here, the charging infrastructure is very poorly developed, and nobody feels responsible! Is it the energy companies or car companies or the state that should be doing it?"

(f/adult/DE/electric car)

However, more controversial opinions were also expressed, especially on the more restrictive and onerous measures. For instance, people with lower education and lower economic status, indicated measures to convert older vehicles to greener or electric ones, without adequate financial support, as those that penalizes the poorest to favor car makers. Others, pointed out to lack of consistency when policies support e-SUVs (too big, heavy, ultimately not sustainable), or charging EVs using non-renewable energy sources.

"The luxury e-cars currently rolling through the streets use huge amounts of energy that is currently not produced purely from renewable sources."

(m/young/DE/no car)

"I had the opportunity to clash with them when I was "forced" to change car. Which is fair as far as pollution is concerned but unfair as far as the lack of sufficient incentives, because I think that if a person owns a polluting and old vehicle, it is because he probably cannot afford a new one."

(m/young/IT/car)

Across countries, people feel most involved in the transport sector, where they are called to make choices on their everyday movements. This sector has been the easiest to approach and to establish a worthwhile dialogue with participants from various backgrounds. Due to this, individuals feel they have more agency and that they are having the greatest positive environmental impact, even with small changes. This helped us identify the transport sector as the most mature field and even in the importance of its role within the decarbonisation process.

"Thinking about my part to play in the transportation industry's transition, all I can do is keep using bicycle, I think that by doing this, on my own, I help the environment by lowering CO2 levels."

(f, 45, PL)

"I too in my own small way can reduce emissions, if only by choosing the means by which I move around"

(f, adult, IT, no car)

From our qualitative analysis, individuals are open for change when it comes to their means of transport and ready to do their part, as far as the effort required is not too cumbersome. Most people that took part in this project state that they are willing to modify some of their behaviours and opt for greener solutions. Some have already started to contribute, by limiting their car usage, buying an e-vehicle, etc. **Participating in the transition in the transport sector is often seen, across countries, as something feasible for the individual, who can contribute even through small actions and little 'sacrifices'** (e.g. avoid unnecessary car trips, choose sustainable alternatives, etc.).

That said, there's also part of the audience who takes a more passive stand (i.e. in Poland) or are rather disillusioned by the transition (e.g. the PHEV owners in France, who experienced the limits of the technology).

When I decide to buy a new car, tax incentives for low-emission vehicles could allow me to choose an electric or hybrid model, helping to reduce my environmental impact. If buses and trains were more frequent and reliable, I could use them more often to get to work or for my daily commute, reducing the need to drive my car. If the rates for cars were higher during peak hours, it could encourage me to avoid these busy hours and opt for public transport or other alternative modes of travel.

(France)

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I am ready to take active action for this transition by opting for greener modes of transport, such as public transport or cycling, whenever possible. I am also ready to invest time and energy in learning about sustainable transportation options and in encouraging others to do the same.

(France)

We dismantled many parking spaces to the detriment of cars and built bicycle parking spaces for them. The success was that rents for garage parking spaces exploded.

(Germany Transports)

I find switching to e-cars relevant. I can definitely imagine that in the future if I buy a new car at some point or don't want to drive my gas engine anymore. Personally, I also like the environmental zones in cities. You just have to see if they don't restrict too much, but I think the benefits outweigh them, as do more cycling and pedestrian zones.

(Germany Transports)

All in all, respondents' needs and expectations as regards the transition in the transport sector are multi-fold and involve all means of transport. They mainly concern:

- Development of a more efficient public transport network - to cover both urban and non-urban areas, offer convenient travel passes and connecting neighbouring municipalities to the city.
- Improving cycling infrastructures, promoting car and ride sharing schemes.
- Making e-vehicle more accessible both in terms of availability of user-friendly charging stations and diversity of types of electric cars to reduce their costs.

It was also clear that people, especially those on the left side of the political spectrum, need "discouraging/harsher" measures when it comes to reducing speed limits in city centres, reinforcing traffic bans, limiting mass and size of vehicles.

MY HOME

In the building sector, **despite a general, cross-country adherence to the idea of living in a comfortable home and to reduce their energy expenses, obstacles – mostly of a practical nature – also emerge, which may be a barrier for many.** First of all, high initial investment costs are a barrier to people that do not have the financial means to meet initial expenses as well as the need to adjust the infrastructure of buildings to new technologies and difficulties stemming from reaching agreements with other home-owners, when living in building blocks.

"My feeling is slightly mixed in that on the one hand I know that it is right and necessary to modernize current homes because we would all benefit, both ourselves and the environment in which we live, and on the other hand I am concerned about the cost and especially the deadlines, by which I mean that having dates by which I have to do something, especially if it involves a certain level of expense, worries me, makes me anxious"

(m, adult, IT, single house)

The need for more sustainable solutions clearly emerges when participants describe their ideal heating system, detailed as ecological, powered by renewable energy sources, offering high efficiency and comfort, cheap and reliable, possibly smart and able to be controlled remotely.

"To be honest, I'm very confused and overwhelmed. I don't have the feeling that I'm being taken by the hand and told, here are steps 1 and 2, start with them... I feel kind of helpless."

(f/adult/DE/owned house)

"I'm in favor of switching heating systems to non-polluting energy. But the notion of cost is central. If tax incentives in particular are significant, I think the movement can be set in motion and benefit as many people as possible."

(m, 49 y.o., FR, flat)

This is followed by low level of bureaucracy and strict controls, which means **simplification**, on the one hand, in order to achieve clarity (e.g. a reference framework and summary with the most important information, documents needed, a timeline of what to do and when) and to streamline procedures (guaranteeing fast and secure access to funding). On the other, **supervision** to enforce regulations and control (especially in Italy – where the many scams and speculation associated with the Superbonus have lowered citizens' confidence).

Often, regulations are published in complex, technical documents, making them difficult for the general public to understand. In addition, there may be a lack of resources dedicated to raising awareness and educating owners about regulatory changes, resulting in low levels of awareness and compliance. Education and awareness programs to inform homeowners of the benefits of energy efficiency and the steps they can take to reduce their energy consumption"

(f, 70, FR, flat)

In the **building sector**, although people retain a certain level of agency, autonomy and responsibility for choices that concern their own homes, the collective dimension is far more important than in the transport sector. The role of society and institution outside the control of the individual is deemed essential to achieve collective progress towards climate targets. Some of the barriers to an increased level of agency include high costs of renovation and energy efficiency interventions, lack of guidance and independent expertise which could support the individual in making the right choices.

"My feeling is slightly mixed in that on the one hand I know that it is right and necessary to modernize current homes because we would all benefit, both ourselves and the environment in which we live, and on the other hand I am concerned about the cost and especially the deadlines, by which I mean that having dates by which I have to do something, especially if it involves a certain level of expense, worries me, makes me anxious"

(m, adult, IT, single house)

Owners are ready to participate in the transition, but at their own pace and possibilities. While **tenants see very limited possibilities for action** apart from basic energy saving measures or missions of advocacy within their entourage, **owners see the need to participate**, and some have actually already taken steps in this direction (installing solar panels, improving insulation, upgrading

independent heating systems, etc.). That said, **concerns related to cost and – especially in Poland – no clear regulations or incentives may impede their action, making them feel helpless.**

"For the time being I cannot make any investment due to lack of funding. Funding is the key aspect for me."

(f, 38, PL, single-house)

For me it is a very topical issue and a priority because my home is currently still heated with city gas through a normal boiler. My priorities are to improve the overall efficiency of the house with the replacement of the boiler to be able to use renewable sources such as photovoltaic and the replacement of the windows with the new generation ones that insulate the house to have a lower exchange with the outside world.

(Italy)

What scares me are the costs revealed in the article and some quotes that I had in the past. Without economic incentives from Europe and/or the state, I find it really expensive for all families. The return on expenditure is amortized over too many years.

(Italy)

Although participants agree with the principles and intentions of new regulations (in particular EPBD and other more national specific), their scope for action is lower, hampered by some key factors: the complexity of the topic (of which they have less mastery), the lack of information on benefits and regulations and the high cost involved which is hard for the individual to sustain.

The only exception concerns a small niche of higher income, high-tech, and pioneering participants who are also willing to act on their own – confident not only of the positive impact on the environment, but also of having made a choice that will lead to a return on investment in the long run.

Respondents' needs as regards the transition in the building sector focus mainly on three directives:

1. **Guidance**, which include both political and technical guidance, with availability of professional and independent consultants for owners that want to know, first and foremost, what has to be considered when renovating a house and what are the best technologies and systems available and for what specific house or flat. Further guidance and assessment should also be provided on insultation of roofs and walls, replacing windows etc. In this sector respondents also feel that there's a need for specific strategies for older buildings (e.g., historic buildings in Italy, old wooden houses in Poland, etc.). Especially in Poland, respondents (both owners and tenats) – mainly with lower level of education - express the needs to be informed and educated on benefits of modernizing homes and heating systems, through tips about how to save energy, use smart home technology, etc.

2. **Reassurance,** which does not necessarily mean a slower transition process, but again more clarity on costs, incentives and support systems available and a timetable (both to access possible incentives and to conduct retrofitting works). An action plan with progressive (and moderate according to some) steps to achieve climate goals in the building sectors feels like a tool that would put people in a position to be able to participate in the process. Respondents also feel that stability of the housing market should be guaranteed, especially for tenants that could see their monthly rent increased.

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3. **Comprehensive financial support,** in the form of financial incentives, low-interest loans, subsidy programs, tax relief measures. Opinions, however, differ on the targets to be supported: either the lower incomes only (especially for those politically on the left) or also the middle classes or even all individuals (for those more to the right). It is broadly agreed that extra support should be given to the most vulnerable groups (e.g. the unemployed, the elderly).

MY JOB

When it comes to their jobs, respondents across countries have spontaneously highlighted trends related to home-office and co-working spaces, shortage of skilled labour, low and high salaries drifting more and more apart and increased pressure from competing markets to name a few. **People mainly felt the impact that macroeconomic and political phenomena in the past few years had on the employment sector and on particular industries, however, they struggle to identify roots causes and solutions**.

Although the principles and concept of a Just Transition are predominantly unfamiliar, people relate to the spirit of social cohesion and dialogue to prevent division and social unrest within the transition process, the principle of equity and respect for human rights within the employment sector, implementation of new and high-quality jobs as well as opportunities for training and education.

However, they have also identified barriers, voiced primarily by respondents working in industries at risk:

- **Problems with re-training employees** for new roles, which may be challenging and time consuming.
- **Loss of jobs** and possible periodic spikes in unemployment.
- **Transformation costs**, which are feared to be high and unbearable for some sectors of economy or for some companies, especially medium-small – this may result in reducing employment or increasing prices of products and services.
- **The governance of the transition** – lack of a consistent plan, change of regulations, the high level of bureaucracy, etc.
- **Increase of social inequalities**, impoverishment of society, declining economy.
- **Fear of lobbyism**, especially by high emission industries impacted by carbon restrictions (e.g. textiles, oil, coal mining, etc.).

More generally, **opinions are fuelled by an almost complete lack of knowledge** – the lack of information on the possibilities involved, on available solutions and support offered leads to a sense of scepticism and, mostly in Poland, of threat.

The **employment sector** was the most problematic, not only because it's not clear to people what the link is between climate change, ecological transition and rebuilding our employment model, but it is also a sector that feels completely out of people's reach, where agency is completely out of their sphere of autonomy.

"I feel less responsible for the labor market than for the home, that is, I think I can do little myself"

(f, adult, IT, fitness)

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"I don't have any role, and I don't see what role I could have. My actions would be personal, not professional, and I'm already doing that, turning off lights in unoccupied rooms, using less water, consuming less in general, taking public transport or walking as a priority…"

(m, 55 y.o., FR)

In the employment sector, we found that – across countries - respondents were a bit lost as to what their role could be, beside adopting – also in the workplace – the usual sustainable behaviours, keeping a positive mindset and being open for change and new jobs. **Their little involvement in the process stems from the fact that they're not the players in it, but the recipients**: people feel they don't have any control, they don't feel invested with responsibility, and they are not in charge of changes, job losses, etc. They limit themselves to adapt to decisions that are taken from the top/institutions. This perception restricts their ability and willingness to act, and triggers questions about the role that unions need to embody as well as the reasons why there's been such a detachment between workers and their representative bodies. Overall, respondents feel that **it will be crucial to be able to reassure and support those most at risk, to ensure security and stability in employment market.** It is thus key to **develop a more effective communication on the implication of the transition** in the employment sector and to strike a balance between striving for environmental goals and keeping stability of the labour market or supporting people/industries affected by the change.

In this regard, Spain's 2019 Just Transition Strategy it's a good example of how governments can guide workers through the transition, setting up frameworks to regulate aid and exceptional costs in coal regions as well as addressing detrimental impact of coal mine closures on labour markets. Another example of virtuous initiative in this sector is the Scottish Just Transition Committee, which managed to bring together employees from the oil and gas sector and environmental NGOs to discuss their needs in relation to the transition process.

Despite this attitude and mounting concerns, most respondents have rather optimistic expectations about future employment perspectives. Overall, **there's wide consensus on the fact that energy transition will lead to loss of jobs in some traditional sectors but the development of new opportunities in green and innovative sectors**, creating higher quality jobs and better employment conditions.

"I think that work undergoes, like so many other fields, a transformation over time, and so if some figures disappear in part or completely others arise. It occurs to me that a few decades ago we thought that advent of the Internet would catastrophically wipe out any form of employment in publishing, private radio, discography. Instead, today we all listen to web-radios, buy and listen to so-called liquid music, read digital versions (updated in real time) of our newspapers and favorite books"

(m, elderly, IT, admin)

"I'm not worried about lost jobs for several reasons. Firstly, the ecological transition isn't going to happen overnight. What's more, it's not a choice but a necessity. Secondly, it's time to train the next generation in new trades, such as electric vehicle maintenance or machine programming. New trades will be created, that's the way things will evolve."

(m, 35, FR, freelancer)

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Therefore, **respondents' needs as regard to the transition of the employment sector, revolve strongly around a more effective, simple and tangible communication on employment and just transition, as well as education on benefits and impacts of the decarbonisation process on companies and workers**. Others relate to financial support for businesses at risk and rewards for those that put in place "green actions", as well as training and professional re-orientation, to allow society to adjust to changing labour market conditions.

4. HOW EUROPEANS – AND ESPECIALLY ITALIANS – DISCUSS THE ENERGY TRANSITION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The analysis of social media activity around climate change and the ecological transition reveals a significant gap between the information being offered by political parties and news outlets and the growing demand for more reliable, relevant content from the public. Despite the substantial volume of posts made by these entities in the months leading up to and following the EU elections (May-July 2024), the topics of decarbonisation, climate change, and energy transition were notably absent from mainstream political and media discourse.

In the period surrounding the EU elections, posts from news outlets and political parties surged in volume, as shown in Table 2. However, when data was filtered using key terms related to climate change, transport, buildings, and employment in the context of the ecological transition, this volume dropped sharply. This indicates that while there was an uptick in general posts during a high-alert time such as the EU elections, the critical issues of climate change and energy transition were largely sidelined in favour of other topics.

A closer look at Italy's social media activity paints a clearer picture of this disconnect. As seen in Table 3 (covering the period from December 2022 to August 2024), the volume of posts on Facebook from a broader range of sources—including groups and verified profiles—saw a significant increase in activity around climate-related topics. This surge was particularly noticeable in the two months surrounding the EU elections. Despite the overall increase, the gap between the political-media sphere and the broader social media activity of individuals remained stark. Political communication on climate change and the ecological transition appeared misaligned with the interests and information needs of the public.

The contrast between the low engagement on political pages and the rising interest from the public suggests a deeper issue: the supply and demand for information on climate change are out of sync. Data analysis shows that only a small fraction (about 1% for France, Germany, and Italy, and about 8% for Poland) of the posts from political and media outlets addressed climate change in any meaningful way. Furthermore, there was minimal change in the volume of relevant posts before and after the EU elections, which points to a lack of political resonance around these critical issues.

One explanation for this discrepancy is rooted in the business models of social media platforms and the types of content that attract user engagement. Topics like climate change, despite their importance, often receive less interaction than more sensational or immediate subjects. As a result, they are given less prominence in the information streams of major news outlets and political entities, which prioritize content that drives higher user engagement.
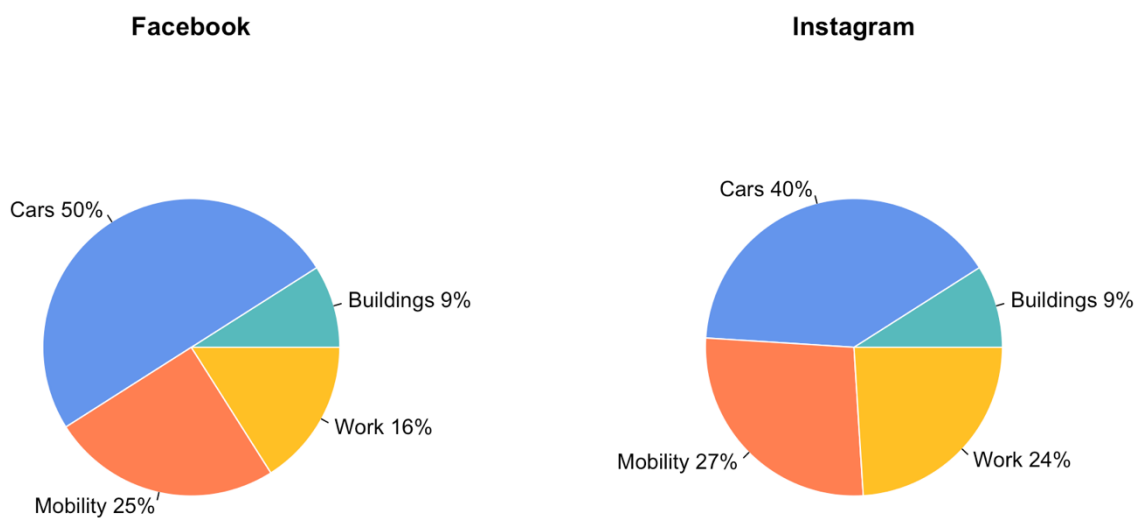
In conclusion, this analysis highlights a troubling mismatch between the demand for information on climate change and the inadequate supply of reliable, engaging content on this crucial issue. Despite the urgency of the ecological and energy transition, social media activity around these topics remains limited, particularly from key political and media sources. This gap represents both a challenge and an opportunity for those who seek to raise awareness and drive action on climate change in the public sphere.

> *"In general, I think it would be great to have a schedule/timeline where you can see all the plans/specifications/regulations that will be coming our way in the next few years. I find it very difficult to always have to collect everything together by myself."*
>
> *(f/adult/DE/IT sector)*

When we look at Italy, data shows that the debate and the volume of information around the topic of transport and mobility is far higher than for the other topics, which resonate with the higher level of awareness observed in the qualitative analysis. All in all, transport and mobility in Italy is an attractive sector for a structural conversation between institutions, civil society and other stakeholders, as well as push forward for progressive policies. Topics such as "electric cars" are attracting more active engagement (thus attention) than they were doing before whilst others such as "public transportation" are gathering less active engagement.

Figure 1 – What Italians discuss on social media: Pie Charts of Popular Topics, Normalized by Search Volume. Source: La Sapienza University of Rome

Facebook

Cars 50%
Buildings 9%
Work 16%
Mobility 25%

Instagram

Cars 40%
Buildings 9%
Work 24%
Mobility 27%

The topic of a fair and just transition, as understood from the qualitative part, is mostly linked to the topic of training, upskilling and reskilling. Training and education appear in 18% of posts on a fair and just transition, while interestingly in Italy, mobility and technological neutrality topics are linked to competitivity, biofuels and employment, and they marginally reflect what came out from the qualitative data collection.

The sentiment analysis for Italy has been conducted thanks to a deep learning algorithm trained on Italian text which labels each post as having either a *negative* or *positive* sentiment. In the following Figure 2 is displayed the proportion of posts in the two sentiment categories per each topic. On Facebook the topics conveying the most positive sentiment belong to the categories "pedestrian

areas", "critical materials" and "heat pumps", while topics such as "speed limit", "technological neutrality" and "clean air" are the ones that generate more negative sentiments. At the same time, these are the same topics that are posted more frequently by political figures. For instance, we have noticed how the topic of technological neutrality is debated on Facebook mainly by Matteo Salvini. The situation is quite similar in the case of Instagram.

Figure 2 *– Sentiment Analysis of Positive and Negative Reactions to Transition Topics on Social Media*
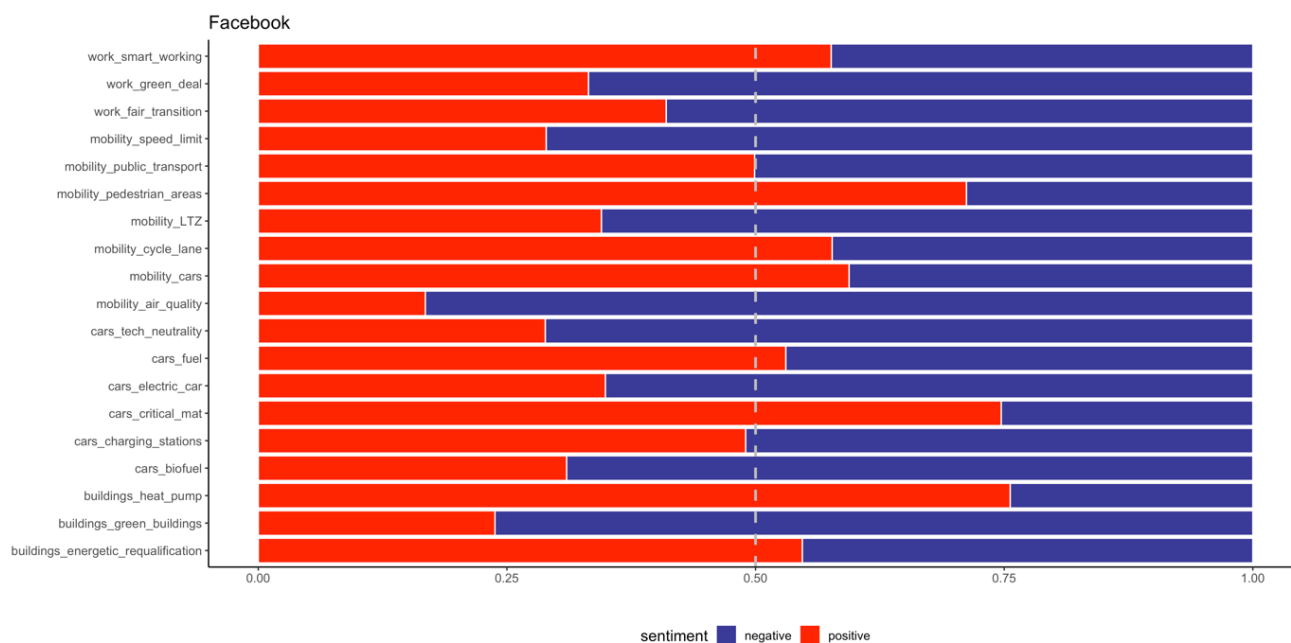
Since the beginning of 2023, the volume of posts related to climate change has significantly increased on both Facebook and Instagram in Italy. This growth is accompanied by a rise in total engagement, indicating heightened public interest and involvement in climate-related discussions. The increase in engagement, particularly on Facebook, suggests that users are becoming more actively involved in the debate over time. **The online climate change debate in Italy is growing in both volume and engagement, reflecting increased public interest**. There are distinct thematic trends, with some topics gaining more attention and engagement over time. Hashtag analysis highlights key themes and areas of public interest, though some topics suffer from noise and irrelevant posts. Expert-driven keyword mapping supports the data-driven findings, providing a comprehensive view of the debate. Sentiment analysis reveals a mix of positive and negative opinions, with certain topics eliciting strong reactions. User reactions indicate significant controversy in discussions, especially about Buildings and Cars.

What has clearly emerged from this report for Italy, when coupled with the qualitative findings and the level of people awareness on climate change and the green transition, is that the level of information is at a peak and people are deeply interested and involved with issues of climate change and energy transition. However, this information is steered by specific personalities on media and social media, giving, at times, a twisted perspective on people perception of climate change related topics on social media.

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BOX 1: HOW EUROPEANS GET INFORMED ABOUT THE ENERGY TRANSITION

Our qualitative analysis has shown that it's important to provide access to useful information beyond technical regulatory text, particularly on practical applications, government actions and regional initiatives. Such information could be brought in through a variety of sources and channels. During our data collection, we asked people to share their source of information and below we've given a breakdown of the most relevant and consulted by sector.

My car: respondents use different kind of sources to gain knowledge on energy transition in the transport sector

- Websites of the Ministry of Ecological Transition, of the European Commission
- Social media, Podcasts, Youtube
- Celebrities and influencers, especially in Poland, who play a role in promoting green transport solutions and a conscious lifestyle
- TV and Print media/news (e.g. Tagesschau, Handelsblatt, Nature and Science, Spiegel in Germany, National Geographic, Nature, Lifegate in Italy)
- Political discussion broadcasts on TV (e.g. Maischberger, Markus Lanz and Anne Will in Germany)
- Word-of-mouth with friends, colleagues

My home: **main information sources on the topic are energy providers, general media and WOM**

- Sources directly related to the building sector: **websites of energy providers and real estate developers**
- **WOM** – a topic often discussed with family and friends
- **Articles** on newspapers and a variety of magazines (e.g. Lifegate)
- **Institutional and scientific sources**: European Commission official website, CNRS, National Geographic, etc.

My job: the lack of information on current regulations is common in all countries. Respondents are unaware of any regulation concerning employment in the context of energy transition, beyond general energy saving measures adopted by some companies and shift to greener options (e.g. photovoltaic, e-fleet). The topic seems to be very little talked about in the media. Significantly, even when respondents tried to browse online and learn about them during the study, they struggle to find any clear information and directives.

> *"I never heard of regulations on employment sector, I thought it was a general policy adopted by some companies out of solidarity or on their own initiative"*
>
> *(m, adult, IT, pharma)*

Lack of knowledge also applies to the concept of Just Transition. Most respondents had to consult the web to learn about it – mostly websites associated with the European Union. The concept, however, is positively received, even if it feels quite generic/abstract: the impact that the transition will have on employment, what it aims to do and how the process will be carried out, remain unclear.

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5. INITIAL POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the work conducted this far confirms that for climate policies to be perceived as meaningful and to be able to overcome implementation barriers, they must be pertinent to a narrative and overall strategy (referred to as "framework of reference") based on people's common principles and perceptions around the transition process. Based on what respondents have shared during the online diaries experience, we believe that this framework should be built around the following statements:

1. **Cooperation and dialogue across all stakeholders:** this is key for achieving a positive outcome of the energy transition process – including EU, government, local authorities, businesses, NGOs and civil society.
2. **Avoid inconsistencies** that risk demotivating citizens, especially the less involved in the topic, and those which nullify any kind of positive effort, e.g., building new coal fuelled electric plants etc.
3. **Increase education and social awareness** – educating society can contribute to higher approval of the changes and less resistance to new regulations, social awareness may engage and motivate more people to act.
4. **Develop measures that are socially responsible**, unifying and not further dividing society - avoid overly penalizing the individual, destabilizing the market, etc.
5. **Reassurance regarding financial efforts**, that should be within reasonable limits and ideally linked to fast amortization (e.g., lower energy costs)
6. **Reduce complexity**: easy and structured information, guidance and training

Further to this, people ask for more and reliable information in order to understand and interpret the world but also to be able to make the best choices. From our conversations with the respondents, across countries, we observed an electorate that can come together under the ban of ambitious climate policies, especially in the transport and building sectors. The latter are sectors where we found the highest awareness in relation to changes necessary both to mitigate the effects of climate change and to answer to social needs related to safety, health, economic development and fight against inequality. However, this awareness is mostly not supported by a clear and reliable stream of information from civil servants and some of the most important news outlets. Nonetheless, this has not jeopardised people's awareness on the necessity to undertake a social and ecological transition.

The vision and promises of the new EU Parliament and the new EU Commission will need to align to the expectation of an electorate that wants to understand, explore and reflect on the social, economic and ecological dynamics that have been brought up by the energy transition. Interpreting what's happening in an alternative way compared to the mainstream narrative in relation to climate topics and their impact on our society and democracies is essential for building a political proposal able to take into account the challenges that different social groups encounter in the transition process.

In this section we dive deeper into the qualitative data analysis. The aim is to understand what the emerging needs-related policy elements across countries are and also which ones are specific to certain social groups in the sectors considered in this study. **We see very few if no political proposal that so far has managed to match people's needs with the right mix of incentives and there's not yet been an attempt to approach decarbonisation through targeted and differentiated policies. So far, climate policies have had mainly regressive effects, which have not been successful and have put strain especially on average, working-class individuals.**

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In this section, we draw from the substantial volume of findings from the qualitative data, to highlight the elements needed to construct targeted and differentiated climate policies **with three examples, that would introduce the kind of more in-depth research work needed to design such policies.** . We have identified some key macro social categories, summarised in the table below and, within a selected sector, we tried to understand what the connective threads across countries are and what are the emerging policy elements.

Male/Female-Young-Lower class	**Building**
Male/Female-Adult-Middle Class	**Transport**
Male/Female-Large Industry	**Employment**

5.1   MY CAR: NEEDS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

In Europe, the middle class has reportedly been central to social cohesion, the economic paradigm and policy, however, there are recent concerns on its disappearance both for economic and cultural reasons[9]. When we focus on male/female adults belonging to the middle class, **it's clear how affordability of new electric vehicles and shifting to other means of transports is today an issue that affects agency, consensus and ability to act not only for the poorer people**. The multiple crisis we have witnessed in the past few years, contributed to an impoverishment of the middle class, that now feels like they cannot afford switching to an electric vehicle and sometimes even travelling by public transport is cumbersome (both for costs and for infrastructure) and they are asking for support and action.

They are also asking, across countries, improvements in public transport infrastructure both in urban and rural areas as well as infrastructure to accommodate other means of transport (especially with respondents that already use a bicycle). Generally, people that fall in this category have had "contact" with the "electric vehicles world", both because they had chances to try them or because in their communities or circle of friends, there's someone that was able to share an experience with them. Therefore, they are also less sceptical about it, but they ask for more technical and detailed information, covering the all-value chain surrounding this product (source of materials and components of an e-vehicle).

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[9] https://espas.secure.europarl.europa.eu/orbis/system/files/generated/document/en/Middle-Class-Concerns-and-European-Challenges.pdf

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Table 4 – *Improving Transportation: A Proposal from Middle-Class Adults*

Category	Details
Electric Cars and Charging Stations	**Electric Cars**: - Mandatory for large companies - Income-based incentives - Affordable pricing initiatives **Charging Stations**: - X stations per 1,000 city vehicles - Required for large company parking lots
Public Transport	**Investments**: - Expanded bus and railway services - 24/7 tube operations **Shuttle Services**: - Available for public employees
Bans	**City Center**: - No gasoline cars allowed - Entry bans for high-emission vehicles **Alternatives**: - Cars and bikes alternate in city centres
Bikes	**Infrastructure**: - Enhanced bike lanes and networks - Wider lanes for safer use **Programmes**: - Electric bikes for elderly - Coherent bike lane networks in cities
Law and Taxes	**Incentives**: - Discounts for e-vehicles, youth incentives - Tax benefits for eco-friendly vehicles **Regulations**: - Abolish kerosene tax exemption - Standardised charging card payment

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Targeted support and improving clarity and consistency of measures are key to fostering compliance. The objectives set by the EU to transition to a clean and sustainable mobility, such us the 2035 stop to sale of combustion engine cars, it's a tool to make sure that the industry is pushed to produced not only expensive electric vehicles, but also more affordable models. Therefore, the political proposal for this sector should take into consideration this bigger picture, frame it in a coherent and non-ideological narrative and, in this space, provide targeted incentives that protect people (and the industry) from discrimination in the face of collective processes. Overall, respondents have therefore asked for policies that:

- ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF THE LOWER AND MIDDLE CLASS, people who want to take part, but do not have the resources: subsidise purchases of e-vehicles through financial incentives to avoid discrimination.
- REWARD SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIORS (for everyone) - those who invest more in the transition should get recognition/privileges, e.g. tax exemption, rewarding schemes through app, contests, etc.
- EDUCATE SOCIETY TO OVERCOME CURRENT CONFUSION OR DOUBTS ON E-VEHICLES – increase trust in the technology and awareness of the benefits of electromobility (also vs. other technology like hydrogen), debunking the myths related to the cost of owning an electric car and battery being harmful to the environment, difficult to dispose of, etc.
- ENSURE GREATER COHERENCE OF THE MEASURES THAT ARE PROMOTED, smart planning based on the actual needs of a given region to avoid wasting financial means.
- CONTROL AND SUPERVISION, assuring transparency of administrative activities, preventing abuse, ensure effective use of public finance (esp. Poland and Italy).
- Guarantee a LOW LEVEL OF BUREAUCRACY, easy and understandable rules that everyone can follow.

5.2 MY HOME: NEEDS OF LOW-INCOME POPULATION

Quality of housing for some young Europeans is not meeting the expectation of a decent place where to fulfil one's life aspirations[10]. Respondent that are identified as male/female, young and with lower incomes, **tend to sacrifice a lot of the comfort (both in winter and summer) to reduce their costs. Energy efficiency features are not within the criteria chosen for the place to rent or buy.** Young people tend to care more about the environment, and they acknowledge that priority should be given to renewable energy, efficiency and the energy transition, but feel that they have fewer means to pursue it. The majority already puts in place daily actions to protect the environment within their capacities and would invest more if they had more financial resources. Considerations about funding and costs are very widespread and young people do not see it as feasible to buy an apartment during their youth so they feel they have no voice over renovation investments. Overall, they are aware of the need to counter climate change for future generations and see the benefits of educational programmes namely on energy and waste savings. They imagine a future where they can live comfortably but in an environmentally friendly way. The issue of redistribution and the unequal responsibility for climate change impacts emerges very strongly in most responses: they

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[10] https://youth.europa.eu/go-abroad/travelling/what-home-young-europeans_en

acknowledged the differentiated responsibility that poor and rich people have in having caused the problem and in solving it.

Table 5 – Affordable Housing Solutions: A Proposal from Young Low-Income Participants

Category	Details
Financial Incentives	- Tax deductions for solar panel installation. - Fiscal incentives for energy-efficient cooling system installations. - Reimbursement for reduced energy consumption.
Energy Consumption Control	- Reduced energy costs for families with incentives for independent heating. - Automatic thermostats; temperature control for tenants. - Price caps per square meter based on energy rating. - Standards for energy efficiency in industrial buildings, offices, and new building solar panel mandates. - Enforced heating temperature caps.
Requirements	- Free energy performance diagnostics to guide rental or purchase decisions. - Compulsory energy standards in residential and commercial buildings.
Education	- Public awareness on energy efficiency, including school programs. - Community education initiatives on energy-saving practices.
Sustainable Materials	- Investments in research and design for thermal insulation. - Promotion of sustainable building materials.

B: WHAT'S IN THIS FOR THE POLICY MAKER?

In the EU, the gross value added generated by the construction sector was between 5 and 6% of GDP in the period 2010 and 2021[11] and it continues to be a huge economic catalyst at national level, especially for Italy, France and Germany. For example, in Italy, rises in investments, have been triggered by fiscal incentives in the period 2020-2022[12]. However, without the EPBD, positive impacts will most likely decrease due to reduction in incentives. The EPBD Directive has caused colourful debates at national level, mostly funded on imprecise data and information, as well as claims for reducing the ambition of its measures in the name of social sustainability. **However, the current emission trend for the building sector is not aligned to 2030 climate objectives, let alone social ones, considering rising trends of phenomenon such as energy poverty** (in 2023, 10.6% of Europeans were unable to

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[11] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/digpub/housing/bloc-3a.html?lang=en
[12] https://eccoclimate.org/it/approvata-la-direttiva-case-green-vantaggi-per-leconomia-italiana/

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keep their homes adequately warm[13]). The EPBD Directive is an effort to provide clear rules and a medium-long term development trajectory[14]. It also attempts to organise at national level, incentive systems that are often structurally weak and fragmented, providing instead clarity, stability and simplification. In fact, respondents have asked for policies that include:

- GUIDANCE, EDUCATION AND REDUCTION OF COMPLEXITY, e.g., consultancy on energy saving measures for owners, help in planning work, clear set of standards to follow, etc.
- FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR LOWER INCOMES; (In the opinion of right-wing participants these should also be extended to the middle class).
- Refund mechanism/bonus in case of low consumption of energy.
- REASSURANCE ON DEADLINES, on avoiding disruption on the real estate market, on avoiding speculation, etc.
- GUARANTEED CONTROL OVER HOUSEHOLDS' TEMPERATURE and therefore consumption through the installation of smart thermostats, and giving tenants the possibility to increase or lower the temperature. Incentivise autonomous heating in apartments buildings.
- Provide FREE ENERGY PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS to guide people when choosing a new apartment.
- STRICTER REQUIREMENTS from regulations: fix price ceiling per square meter based on energy class.
- Make energy performance standards mandatory.
- Mandatory installation of solar panels in new buildings
- Investing in sustainable materials and thermal insulation.

5.3 MY JOB: PERSPECTIVES OF INDUSTRY WORKERS

In this example we grouped narrative and policy elements from respondents that declared they are working in large industries, which includes sectors that are already undertaking big changes due to the decarbonisation process, such as the automotive sector. Overall, it can be noticed that the perception of the relevance of climate change impacts on individuals varies greatly independently of the sector of employment, but it is more related to the job function (i.e. one of the respondents works in HR for an automotive company, however, didn't feel threatened by changes in that market) . Many workers, even if they are currently employed in a sector that will be affected by the energy transition, are not personally concerned about losing their job. However, many consider climate action relevant when they think about their children or grandchildren's future. **The issue of intergenerational fairness is therefore well understood. In general, it emerges that AI and digitalization are seen as a much bigger threat to job security than climate instability**. While it is evident that there will be job cuts due to digitalization, when it comes to climate, some of the respondents also see the benefits for certain sectors and the possibility of green jobs creation in others. Most respondents are very interested in the health-related benefits that can derive from reduced fossil fuels combustion and would like to act more daily to save energy. Nonetheless, they

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[13] https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/markets-and-consumers/energy-consumers-and-prosumers/energy-poverty_en

[14] https://eccoclimate.org/it/case-green-efficienza-energetica-per-gli-immobili/

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consider that their role is quite limited as a single person. The problem of extreme weather events and climate impacts is acknowledged and some of the employees report that their companies are setting up adaptation plans.

It is worth noting that many respondents highlighted a lack of information from the EU and national authorities on regulations in the field of employment and the energy transition. As stated before, many respondents identify the concept of just transition with positive connotations, however, it is at the same time perceived as utopic and difficult to implement. For some it is too radical, for others it can result in unfair practices, but there is a general feeling of not-knowing enough to be able to share an informed opinion. People have further highlighted a lack of data to assess the evolution of the job market and the impacts that climate change will have on it. Many highlight that States should play a bigger role in regulating companies' energy transition and consider the global dimension of climate policies. Without State intervention some fear that companies won't act and that the costs will be transferred to final consumers.

Overall, although some stated that current regulations should be more specific, many are satisfied with current regulations and would like to see simplification or more transparency on what has already been decided. Participants have mostly a positive outlook on the evolution of the job market and are not afraid of losing their jobs; instead, they are more focused on new possibilities and innovative ways of working (smart working, short work week). Some also highlight the urgent need to reduce inequalities and the unfairness of climate change responsibilities which disproportionally affect ordinary people compared to the wealthy, but they struggle to imagine how this can be translated into actual policies and actions that would change our employment model for the better within the transition process.

Table 6 – Green Jobs for the Future: A Proposal from Industry Workers

Categoria	Dettagli
Incentivi Finanziari	- Incentivi per famiglie a basso reddito e per le aziende. - Incentivi per energie rinnovabili (solare e eolico). - Necessità di maggiori investimenti per la transizione. - Detrazioni fiscali ed esenzioni; maggiore chiarezza sulle sovvenzioni fiscali.
Creazione di Lavoro	- Ruolo della pubblica amministrazione nella creazione di lavori "green". - Potenziamento delle competenze per colmare le lacune lavorative. - Formazione in istituzioni pubbliche per nuovi posti di lavoro. - Settimana lavorativa corta e supporto statale per ridurre le disuguaglianze.
Politiche Pubbliche	- Le aziende dovrebbero allineare i prodotti alla transizione verde. - Rilocazione delle industrie verdi in aree economicamente svantaggiate. - Obbligo di ridurre l'impronta di carbonio per le aziende. - Semplificazione della burocrazia, in particolare per le PMI.

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	- Garantire una tempistica strutturata per la transizione e accelerare l'implementazione a livello UE/nazionale.
Educazione	- Riqualificazione e aggiornamento per i lavoratori disoccupati. - Sensibilizzazione sul risparmio energetico e sul ruolo dell'UE nella transizione. - Supporto educativo per i paesi più poveri.
Ricerca e Comunicazione	- Maggiori dati sui benefici della transizione per i cittadini. - Ricerca su come ridurre i costi dell'energia e della transizione. - Comunicare chiaramente i benefici della transizione. - Organizzazione di assemblee pubbliche per ascoltare i cittadini e spiegare le politiche. - Maggiore trasparenza e accesso alle informazioni.

C: WHAT'S IN THIS FOR THE POLICY MAKER?

On February 2023, the EU Commission presented the Green Deal Industrial Plan, in an effort to transform industry and the economy, while supporting the transition to climate neutrality. The Plan is expected to impact the EU social landscape, but the uneven distribution of resources and capabilities across social groups, sectors, regions and MSs, are likely to generate negative effects and externalities. **These complex issues are going to be tackled only by climate policies that function as economic and social policies as well, mirroring the intricate web of interconnections between society, the economy and climate impacts**[15]. In reality, any industrial strategy along this transition process should couple climate policies with welfare states and social support measures to contain job losses and communities' breakdown. **If decision makers won't take this opportunity to revise their social agenda through building cohesion and reducing inequality within societies and across regions, it could lead to social unrest and backlash.** Similarly, success will be also measured by the ability of Trade Unions across the EU to support the green transition through bottom-up participation and appropriate policy solutions.

The ecological transition is an opportunity to rethink the structure of our economy and employment market and for policy makers to incorporate people's need in their strategies and policies, including:

- **Spreading the risks associated with the GDIP** so that it doesn't fall mainly on vulnerable people.
- **Collecting information and analysis on the social and economic impacts of the transition on the productive system**, highlighting links between the different parts of the supply chain (both existing and new ones, especially if they are key to decarbonising existing supply chains).

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[15] Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2023 An ambitious implementation of the Social Pillar. ETUI

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- **Re-skilling and up-skilling the workforce**, with particular care for those skills and jobs that are not going to be automatically transferred from one sector to the other.
- **Mapping potential areas of crisis** and way to intervene for wide requalification and economic diversification.

Above all, **there is an opportunity to build a comprehensive social plan that will accompany our industries and economy through the decarbonisation process, a plan that aims at generating wealth through demand for common goods and based on a real inclusion and participation strategy for all members of our society.**

6. CONCLUSIONS ON POLITICAL FEASIBILITY AND NEXT STEPS

In June 2024, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, published a study on the challenges of understanding people while scaling climate change adaptation solutions.

"Several factors prevent countries from implementing and accelerating climate change adaptation solutions. Lack of financial resources and the uncertainties associated with future climate risks are just two of them. But these aren't the only barriers. Specifically, the psychological and socio-cultural drivers of behaviour are often left unaddressed.

In other words, we ignore the factors that drive how, when, and why people make decisions and take action when designing and implementing adaptation solutions"[16].

With this project, we wanted to highlight how much this is true also for climate change mitigation solutions. One of the main takeaways is that people's awareness on energy transition and on climate change is at a peak, however, the background knowledge and principles supporting policies is not built on reality. The gap between policy and people's needs is clear, and within this gap there are elements that are common across countries and their social groups and elements that are instead national and "group" specific. **Investigating these nuances further will be essential also to understand where EU and MSs action is more effective in their different levels of subsidiarity. We also see the need to prioritise, within climate policies, social investments in public spending, where MSs retain most of the responsibility, but where the EU can surely play a bigger role**[17].

It is unmistakeable that policies need tools able to bring to the front people's needs vis-à-vis the background ideological and interests-based "noise" that is watering down any attempt for climate and people friendly progress. To overcome this "noise", progressive decision-makers will need to value people awareness towards the need of an ecological transition. This implies a huge effort from all stakeholders involved, to deploy new and available tools to give answers to people's real needs at all levels (information, education, communication, technical, fiscal ect.) and, therefore, increasing consensus for a progressive political strategy able to encompass all of these dimensions.

Therefore, **we invite progressive forces to collectively take on this challenge as well and become the agent of change that society need to overcome the threat that climate change represents to our society and the environment we share.** We believe that it's their responsibility to build a framework of reference that resonate in its narrative with people requests for coherence, simplicity and responsibility. This comes in part from the EU overall political direction, but in part needs to be a national political proposal where people can contextualise their role in this transition and see themselves represented in specific political choices. Once this framework is consolidated we need to start a serious investigation on how to organise society so that policy can be guided in better responding to people's needs.

We think that a taxonomy of society can serve this purpose.

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[16] https://www.iisd.org/articles/deep-dive/behavioural-science-climate-change-adaptation-solutions
[17] For more information: https://www.etui.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Social%20policy%20in%20the%20European%20Union-state%20of%20play%202023_2024.pdf

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Creating a comprehensive taxonomy of society based on socio-economic and cultural indicators, and understanding how these categories align with political orientations and views on climate issues, is crucial for building policies that are both effective and inclusive. By categorizing society in this way, we can better represent the diverse groups that exist within it, especially those who have felt overlooked or abandoned by current political structures. Many people across different sectors and communities may have unique concerns and needs, particularly when it comes to the climate transition. Understanding these nuances will ensure that policies are tailored to those who need them the most, while giving visibility to often-marginalized voices.

For example, the path to decarbonisation isn't one-size-fits-all. An electric car may not be an immediate solution for everyone—some people will continue using combustion engine vehicles for years to come, while others will have access to alternative means of transport. Some will receive incentives to transition to affordable electric cars, while wealthier individuals who can already afford the shift won't require public subsidies. The goal is to create a transition that considers where people are at and provides solutions that match their needs, ensuring fairness and sustainability across the board.

This is where the taxonomy comes in: it allows us to identify and categorize people based on their specific socio-economic situations, political views, and their unique needs related to sectors crucial for decarbonisation, such as transportation, energy, and housing. With this information, we can design policies that directly address these needs and gaps, ensuring that no one is left behind. If existing policies don't meet the needs of certain groups, we can use the insights from the taxonomy to develop new, more inclusive measures.

To complement this, a *Consensus Gap Index* will be a powerful tool to track and measure public support for climate targets both at the EU and national level. By understanding where consensus exists—and where it's lacking—we can adjust policies in real-time, ensuring they remain responsive and relevant to public sentiment. This index will also highlight areas where additional public engagement and education might be needed to build stronger support for the transition.

Together, the taxonomy and the consensus gap index will provide a clear, dynamic framework for developing policies that are not only well-informed but also responsive to the evolving needs and perspectives of society. This approach ensures that climate policies are more inclusive, equitable, and capable of achieving the widespread societal buy-in that is crucial for a successful and just transition.

APPENDIX 1: DETAILS ON SOURCE OF INFORMATION BY COUNTRY AND MACRO SOCIAL GROUPS

(In orange are the categories that can be compared across the four countries)

France	
Female, adult, upper-middle	Le monde
Female elderly upper-middle	Council of the EU
Female, adult, middle class	UN, national geographic, Nova.news, European Commission, tout l'europe.eu, European parliament, Euractive, Cairn.info, Novethic, Le Réseau Action Climat
Female, young lower class	Le Journal, Nova.news, first online, Ministère de la Transition écologique, Council of the EU
Female, elderly, lower class	Fluids and Lubricants, Corradi
Male, young, middle class	Youtube
Male, elderly upper-middle	UNDP, Ministère de la Transition écologique, Agence de la transition ecologique (Ademe), EU Commission, Nova.news, First online
Male, young, lower class	First online, novethic
Male, adult, upper-middle	Council of the EU, Nova.news, First online

Germany	
Female, adult, upper-middle	bmz.de (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development), Frankfurter Rundschau, gebaeudeforum.de
Female elderly upper-middle	bmz.de (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development), Council of the EU
Female, adult, middle class	Bing.com (video), eur-lex, enev-online.de, aul-nds.de
Female, young lower class	Federal Ministry for the Environment, gebaeudeforum.de, haufe.de, deutsche-handwerks-zeitung.de, ZOE Institute for Future-fit economies,
Female, elderly, lower class	European Commission

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Female, young, middle class	Federal foreign office, bmz.de (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development),
Male, young, middle class	Die bundesregierung, Welt, Merkur.de, Adac.de, bmz.de (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development), giz.de, Global Compact.de, Council of the EU, Federal Ministry for the Environment, tagesschau.de, Scientific Journals (Nature, Science),
Male, elderly upper-middle	CO2 Online, oekozentrum.nrw, Haus&Grund, baunetzwissen.de, bau-welt.de, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, deutschlandfunkkultur.de, wirtschaft-entwicklung.de (Partners in Transformation), European Commission
Male, young, lower class	Council of the EU, wikipedia
Male, adult, upper-middle	bmz.de (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)
Male, adult, middle class	BR24, EHA.net, Energie-Atalas, EU Commission, Wikipedia

Italy	
Female, adult, upper-middle	EU Commission
Female, adult, middle class	Enel Plenitude, Greenpeace, EU Parliament, EU Commission, Council of the EU, temi.camera.it
Female, young lower class	Iren, EU Commission, EU Parliament, MDPI, Nature, Breaking Italy YouTube channel, temi.camera.it, Council of the EU
Female, elderly, lower class	Lifegate, soldionline, laVoce, euronews, my project casa, il sole 24 ore
Male, elderly upper-middle	Immobiliare.it, EU Commission, Council of the EU, EU Parliament,
Male, young, lower class	Council of the EU, EU Commission
Male, adult, upper-middle	Enel Green Power, Terna, EnelX, CNR, lifegate, esg360, Sorgenia
Male, adult, middle class	BT Energy, Enel Green power, QuiFinanza, La Stampa
Male, elderly, middle class	Geopop on Youtube, economiacircolare.it, agendadigitale.eu

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Poland	
Female, adult, middle class	European Parliament, European Environment Agency, orlen.pl, lepszapolska.pl, sprawiedliwa-transformacja.pl, forsal.pl, bankier.pl, EU Parliament, gramwzielone.pl
Female, young lower class	stockwatch.pl, eon.pl, WWF
Female, elderly, lower class	sprawiedliwa-transformacja.pl
Female, young, middle class	energia.sgh, cire.pl, eur-lex
Male, young, middle class	Scientific publications, eur-lex, Council of the EU
Male, young, lower class	Audytomat, e-swiadectwa.com
Male, adult, upper-middle	Youtube, sprawiedliwa-transformacja.pl, ILO, eur-lex, sip.lex.pl
Male, adult, middle class	EU Parliament, sprawiedliwa-transformacja.pl, klimat.rp.pl, Youtube, National Geographic, Wikipedia, audytomat, Polish Government website, Youtube
Male, elderly, lower class	Government website, wyborcza.biz, pilkington.com, EU Parliament, energetyka24.com, sprawiedliwa-transformacja.pl, wysokienapiecie.pl
Male, Young, upper-middle	Youtube

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