



Press Release

Broad Public Support for Climate Protection and Renewables in the UK, Germany, France and Norway

Four-country Comparative Study on Climate and Energy Policy in Europe in the Run-up to Important Elections

Berlin, 8 March 2017 - **A clear majority of citizens is in favour of renewables, most agree that “climate change is already with us”, and public confidence in political actors is highest in Germany – these are the main findings of a survey of citizens on energy and climate policy in Germany, France, the UK and Norway.**

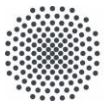
The results of a four-country comparative study were presented today at a joint press conference of the Stuttgart Research Center for Interdisciplinary Risk and Innovation Studies (ZIRIUS), the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) Potsdam, and the research platform klimafakten.de.

In a representative survey, about 1,000 citizens each in Germany, the UK, Norway and France were asked for their views on climate change and energy policy. The results are politically significant, especially given the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in France, Norway and Germany this year. Meanwhile in the UK the Brexit is also fuelling uncertainty with regard to future climate and energy policy.

The findings: people are convinced that climate change exists, but doubt scientific consensus

The vast majority of Germans (83 %) believe that climate change is a fact. Yet the proportion of climate change sceptics in Germany is surprisingly high by comparison with the other surveyed countries: at 16 %, it is considerably higher than in the UK (12 %), France (6 %) and Norway (4 %).

One reason for this could lie in the fact that three out of every four Germans think that climate change is a contentious issue in the scientific community. The respondents were asked for their view on the extent to which climate scientists agree on anthropogenic climate change. Only a quarter (24 %) of those surveyed were of the opinion that the vast majority of climate researchers believe that human-made climate change exists. In fact, over 97% of climate researchers agree on this, as revealed by several studies (klimafakten.de has compiled an overview [here](#)).



In spite of problems gauging the true level of knowledge on this subject, for citizens in all four countries climate change is already a reality. In each country 60 to 61 % of respondents agree with the statement that the consequences of climate change can already be felt.

Energy policy: high approval levels for renewables, opposition to coal and nuclear power

The survey also asked respondents about their opinions on various sources of energy, the confidence they have in different institutions, and the kind of state energy policy they would like. Renewables enjoy high approval rates in all four countries. More than 70 % of citizens have a positive opinion of solar energy and wind and hydroelectric power. By contrast, oil, coal and nuclear power have low approval rates in Germany, where they are favoured by only 28 %, 22 % and 14 % of citizens respectively.

No to higher prices and taxes

When it comes to their energy policy expectations, citizens also have clear preferences. They come out clearly in favour of a ban on energy-wasting household appliances – in Germany such a ban is supported by 61 % of respondents and opposed by just 18 %.

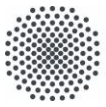
However, on the question of imposing higher taxes on fossil energy carriers like coal, oil and gas, naysayers are in the majority: 53 % of Germans are against this option. And an increase in the price of electricity is also opposed by two thirds of Germans (67 %).

Confidence in local government as an energy transition actor is highest in Germany

When it comes to the level of public confidence in important energy policy actors, there are significant differences between Germany and the other three countries. Germans have far more confidence in the architects of energy policy than the citizens of France, the UK, and Norway: the EU Commission, the government, local government and energy companies all enjoy a far greater level of trust in Germany than they do in France, the UK and Norway. And the absolute frontrunners in terms of public trust are German towns, cities and municipalities: only 5 % of Germans have “absolutely no confidence” in municipalities with regard to energy policy.

About this study

The four-country comparative survey on European Perceptions of Climate Change and Energy Preferences (EPCC) was carried out and evaluated by Cardiff University (UK), the Stuttgart Research Center for Interdisciplinary Risk and Innovation Studies at the University of Stuttgart (ZIRIUS), the Symlog Institute (France) and the University of Bergen (Norway)



with funding from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research as part of the EU programme initiative "Connecting Climate Knowledge for Europe" (JPI Climate). The representative survey of around 1,000 citizens in each of the four countries was conducted by the Ipsos MORI market research company in June 2016, directly before the Brexit vote.

Putting the survey results in context

Ortwin Renn, Project Leader of the study at the ZIRIUS Research Center at the University of Stuttgart and Scientific Director at the IASS Potsdam: "It's encouraging that the vast majority of the Europeans surveyed believe that climate change exists and that its consequences can already be felt in measurable ways today. There is a broad base of support for climate protection measures and the energy transition in Germany and the other countries surveyed. Having said that, we didn't expect the proportion of climate change sceptics to be so high in Germany. That's an alarming sign. At a time when right-wing populist movements are gaining ground, researchers need to communicate their findings more widely and explain them in a more understandable way. That is also crucial to the success of the energy transition."

For **Annika Arnold**, Research Associate at the *ZIRIUS Research Institute of the University of Stuttgart*, the data confirm the positive image of renewables: "Citizens in all four countries are convinced that climate friendly energy is important. At the same time, there is strong opposition to nuclear power, particularly in Germany. So at present, nuclear energy as a CO₂-neutral form of energy production is not a realistic alternative to fossil fuels for political reasons, especially in Germany."

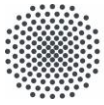
Carel Mohn, head of *klimafakten.de*, believes that climate researchers have a duty to actively seek opportunities to communicate with citizens. Public perceptions of climate research reveal a worrying gap: "Only a quarter of the population is correctly informed that researchers are practically unanimous on key questions regarding anthropogenic climate change; the rest assume that they are divided, which is actually far from the truth."

Further information:

Report about this study as a pdf to download <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/98660/7/EPCC.pdf>

The study is also presented on 8 March at 11.30 a.m. (CET) at Cardiff University. It is possible to live-stream the presentation in London

<https://www.youtube.com/user/cardiffpsychology>



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Funded by the ministries of research of the Federal Republic of Germany and the State of Brandenburg, the **Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS)** aims to identify and promote development pathways for a global transformation towards a sustainable society. The IASS employs a transdisciplinary approach that encourages dialogue to understand sustainability issues and generate potential solutions in cooperation with partners from the sciences, politics, the economy, and civil society. A strong network of national and international partners supports the work of the institute. Its central research topics include the energy transition, emerging technologies, climate change, air quality, systemic risks, governance and participation, and cultures of transformation.

The debate on climate change and its consequences needs to be grounded in hard facts. The platform **klimafakten.de** provides such facts. klimafakten.de is a non-profit initiative funded by the Stiftung Mercator and the European Climate Foundation.

ZIRIUS, the Stuttgart Research Center for Interdisciplinary Risk and Innovation Studies, is a cross-faculty research centre at the University of Stuttgart. The central task of the Center is to stimulate, coordinate and conduct research projects on the following topics: socio-technical transformation processes, sustainable development, and risk analysis and communication with a focus on environmental, climate and health risks.