Proposed title for the Module: Europeans’ Attitudes towards Key Climate Policies: Carbon Taxes, Costs, and Compensatory Actions

Single or repeat measurement within the panel: Single measurement on one wave

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Relevance and rationale (max. 600 words)

We propose to collect data about public attitudes towards a number of important and fast-developing initiatives in European climate and environmental policy. These are all real initiatives of the European Union, addressed for example in recent speeches by Ursula von der Leyen and included in the EU Commission’s European Green Deal. Climate policies are central to the Horizon missions.

Our proposal is highly topical for policy. Climate change, and planetary health generally, is a top concern of European leaders. Surveys show that most laypeople, in Europe and elsewhere, are also convinced about the seriousness of environmental problems, including climate change (e.g., Steg 2018). But concerns about environmental problems do not necessarily lead to support for environmental solutions, and public opposition has hindered the enactment of useful policies. Much of this opposition has been due to concerns about the impacts of environmental policies on living standards, jobs, and/or vulnerable groups (Lamb and Minx 2020; van den Bergh 2017).

Consequently, the data collection we propose has two overarching aims. First, we will study the role of cost in public attitudes towards climate and environmental policies. Little prior research has examined this important issue (Shwom et al. 2010; Bakaki and Bernauer 2017; Drews et al. 2018). We will investigate how preferences reflect cost perceptions, and how both perceptions and preferences may differ according to people’s interests as workers, consumers, and taxpayers. The costs of many environmental policies fall most heavily on particular people—especially the owners and workers in polluting industries (Mildenberger 2020). We will therefore compare the attitudes of people employed in industries for which different policies imply distinct consequences (similar to Tvinnereim and Ivarsflaten 2016, though they studied just one industry in one country).
Our second aim is to study public attitudes towards the distribution of the costs of environmental protection and potential ways of compensating for them. This issue arises most clearly with respect to proposals for putting a price on greenhouse gas emissions, in the form of new or higher taxes. Experts are generally very supportive of such taxes, but public attitudes have often been negative, in large part because of perceptions that they will be unfair and burdensome to people with low incomes (Baranzini et al., 2017; Carattini et al., 2018; Cherry et al., 2017; Harrison, 2010). Prior studies have found, however, that compensating low-income and vulnerable groups is not always a popular way of spending new tax revenues (Maestre-Andrés et al., 2019). That may be because support for policies that will benefit specific groups reflects perceptions of groups’ deservingness (van Oorschot, 2010). We therefore propose to assess how support for some policies may depend on whether they compensate deserving or undeserving groups.

Prior findings about the relative popularity of different policies, including in ESS Round 8 (on Climate Change and Energy), may have reflected how survey items alert respondents to the costs of some policies much more than others (Drews and van den Bergh 2016; Gampfer et al. 2014). Studies based on data from Round 8 have also shown that political trust moderates the relationship between concerns about environmental problems and support for policy responses (Fairbrother et al. 2019; Kulin and Johansson Sevä 2020). The data collection we propose would allow for further tests of the effects of political trust, and of whether political trust is more consequential the higher the perceived costs of a policy. This would help to fill an important gap in the literature (van der Meer and Zmerli 2017). Finally, the items we propose would make an innovative linkage between climate policy support, welfare opinions, and perceptions of deservingness.

**Suitability for the CRONOS-2 (max. 400 words)**

Our proposal builds directly on prior data collection by the ESS, and would add significant value to it. The items we propose include the three that were used in ESS Round 8 to measure climate policy attitudes, plus three new items about attitudes towards other policies. In an experimental component, the exact wording of several items would vary randomly, in ways that will allow us to assess the impact of cost considerations.

The three questions we propose to reuse from Round 8 refer to:
(1) taxes on fossil fuels;
(2) subsidies for renewable energy; and
(3) bans on inefficient appliances.

The three new policy questions address:
(4) A new tax on non-recycled plastic waste. The EU has committed to introducing such a tax at the start of 2021.
(5) Funding for a “just transition”, meaning public funds will be used to assist and help retrain workers who lose their jobs because of new climate policies. This commitment raises major questions of fairness: Should taxpayers have to pay polluters to take less environmentally damaging jobs?
(6) A “border carbon adjustment”, meaning a tax on imports of goods proportionate to the greenhouse gases emitted in the course of their production in a foreign country. This would
establish an incentive for the rest of the world to approach Europe’s high level of climate policy ambition, but could also prove extremely contentious internationally.

A series of other new items would measure: perceptions of some specific potential consequences of climate policy actions; attitudes towards several ways their governments might choose to spend the revenues from potential new carbon taxes; and support for the provision of financial support to low-income groups who might otherwise pay a price for new climate policies. Altogether, collecting these data with CRONOS-2 would substantially deepen our understanding of environmental policy attitudes.

Analyses of the results will also take advantage of key background variables measured in the ESS core module: industry of employment (“nacer2”), climate change beliefs (WRCLMCH, CCRDPRS, CCNTHUM), and political/institutional trust. The experiments we propose are simple, and suitable given the size of the CRONOS-2 samples. The comparative character of the data will be especially helpful for addressing the research goals outlined above. Perceptions of deservingness are known to vary cross-nationally, and we will be able to examine how cost and deservingness perceptions reflect individual versus national-level characteristics and circumstances.

Research team (max. 250 words)

Our team is based in Sweden, Switzerland, and Finland.

Malcolm Fairbrother is a Professor of Sociology at Umeå University and a researcher at the Institute for Futures Studies (Stockholm). He is also affiliated with the University of Graz (Austria). Using international surveys and survey experiments, he has published influential studies of public attitudes towards environmental and climate policies. He served on the committee that drafted the 2020 Environment IV module of the ISSP, and teaches a short course each year at the Barcelona Summer School for Survey Methodology.

Aya Kachi is an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Basel. She uses data from original surveys and survey experiments to assess how energy and climate policy preferences reflect ego- vs. sociotropic economic conditions and policy-related knowledge. She teaches courses on survey methodology and public opinion. She is also Co-Lead of the Energy Governance Work Package at the Swiss Competence Center for Energy Research, and Director of the Empirical Methodology Section of the Swiss Political Science Association.

Sami Mustikkamaa is a Project Researcher and a PhD student at the Department of Social Policy in University of Turku. His dissertation examines the interplay of welfare states and public preferences for climate policies. For the past three years he has been part of the Finnish ESS team, led by professor Heikki Ervasti, contributing with questionnaire translation and cognitive interviews.

Kachi and Fairbrother have collaborated at past workshops. The team possesses substantial relevant substantive and methodological expertise.
Feasibility of implementation (max. 800 words)

The items we propose would address:

A. support for a number of different policies (Items 1-6);
B. beliefs about the personal and societal consequences of climate action (Items 7-11);
C. support for different potential uses of the revenues from higher fossil fuel taxes (Items 12-14); and
D. support for financial assistance to low-income groups, linked to the costs of climate policies (Item 15).

A. The first six items refer to policies that differ in analytically useful ways. In particular, the policies’ implied costs vary, as do the implications for respondents working in different industries. “Just transition” spending would specifically benefit workers in polluting industries, while a border carbon adjustment would provide the most benefits to workers in industries that are both polluting and competing with foreign-made products. The item about a tax on unrecycled plastic waste would be similar to existing survey questions about taxes on pollution, including the ESS question about higher taxes on fossil fuels, though we expect more support for a tax on unrecycled plastic waste relative to fossil fuels.

For each item, we propose to randomly assign respondents to receive one of several different versions. Different variants present variable implications for costs—in the form of new/higher taxes or higher prices for consumers. They also differ in suggesting the cost will be paid by either the state or the respondent. Prior research suggests that many people think of public finances as unrelated to their own finances, and we wish to test whether people respond differently to cost implications of either kind. The size of the difference in the average responses to different versions of each policy support item (i.e., between respondents who are and are not confronted with a clear reference to the policy’s cost) will reveal what people perceive to be different policies’ costs.

B. Next, we propose to measure respondents’ agreement with five statements about the costs and benefits of climate action. The consequences may apply to respondents individually or to society as a whole, including potentially younger generations, and the impacts may be felt in either in terms of economics or health. Four of the statements have been used previously (in a survey by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication), while the one about “Put my own job at risk” is new. Like the items in part (A), these items will allow us to test how attitudes may vary across individuals employed in different industries.

C. Third, we then propose to explain that the revenues from (increased) taxes on fossil fuels could be spent in various ways, and ask respondents about their views of some options. One of these questions would have different (randomly assigned) versions. This experiment would assess how support for compensation measures change when they involve groups that are generally considered deserving or undeserving—based on previous research, the elderly and the unemployed, respectively. As a control group, we will refer to “low-income citizens”, which will enable comparisons to earlier research that commonly uses a similar
wording. Here, the comparative focus of CRONOS-2 becomes particularly advantageous, as earlier research indicates large cross-national differences in deservingness opinions, particularly with respect to the unemployed (Aaroe & Petersen, 2014; Petersen, 2012; Petersen et al., 2012; van Oorschot, 2006).

Prior studies suggest that a popular use of the revenues from pollution taxes is for environmental projects (Maestre-Andrés et al., 2019). A common reason for this preference, according to earlier research, is a lack of understanding that such taxes alone will have environmental benefits, by virtue of their price incentive effects. The environmental benefits of spending tax revenues on environmental programs are potentially better understood. At the same time, the beneficiaries of public spending are not always seen as deserving of the assistance they receive. The poor are often seen as responsible for their plight, and therefore undeserving of assistance, perceptions which also affect welfare policy preferences (Aaroe & Petersen, 2014; Petersen, 2012; Petersen et al., 2012; van Oorschot, 2006). But prior studies of carbon tax support have not accounted for such perceptions and it is not clear that spending tax revenues on benefits for all groups would be a well-supported option.

D.
Finally, we would explain that policies for mitigating climate change might raise the cost of living, and ask respondents whether they would support or oppose their government providing compensation for various vulnerable (low-income) groups.

Despite the random assignment of respondents to different versions of many questions, the data analysis would not be complicated. The experiments would all be crossed, and assignment would be independent for each item. Statistical power would not be problematic, as there are only a small number of treatment conditions in each case. The experiments would be valuable, well worth the small added complication of providing different versions of the questions, as they would illuminate key causal relationships.

**Dissemination plans (max 250 words)**

The three applicants will publish findings in highly ranked journals. We expect that the data generated by the items we propose will be of interest to many researchers. We will highlight opportunities to use the data not only via our disciplinary research networks, but also through positions we hold as part of interdisciplinary and international collaborations. For example, we will use networks formed in workshops previously organized by Fairbrother (on attitudes towards climate policies) and Kachi (fossil fuel policies).

Analyses of the items addressing welfare attitudes will form part of Mustikkamaa’s doctoral thesis at the University of Turku. At the University of Basel, Kachi will integrate the CRONOS survey data in two of her master’s level courses: one on public opinion in energy and climate and the other survey research methodology. The new data will also be useful for undergraduate and master’s-level theses on political opinions and attitudes.

Beyond academia, we are in contact with policymakers in Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland, and will disseminate findings to them through face-to-face meetings and blog posts. The
latter will also reach environmental advocates and the general public. The Finnish National ESS Team will publish the results in a national publication series that regularly presents key ESS findings to the Finnish public. Kachi will communicate the results related to just transition to the ILO, through a joint project on the fossil fuel industry. We will reach out to news media where interviews and/or guest commentaries can convey our findings and their implications to laypeople.

References


**DRAFT QUESTIONS**

A.

To what extent are you in favour or against the following policies in [country] to reduce climate change?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Increasing taxes on fossil fuels, such as oil, gas and coal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Increasing taxes on fossil fuels, such as oil, gas and coal, if the government cut other taxes you pay by the same amount.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Increasing taxes on fossil fuels, such as oil, gas and coal, if the government promised to cut other taxes you pay by the same amount.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Subsidising renewable energy such as wind and solar power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Using public money to subsidise renewable energy such as wind and solar power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Using public money to subsidise renewable energy such as wind and solar power, and paying for the subsidies by raising taxes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A law banning the sale of the least energy efficient household appliances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A law banning the sale of the least energy efficient household appliances, even if that makes appliances more expensive to buy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Increasing taxes on plastic products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Increasing taxes on plastic products (not including plastic products that are recycled).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Helping and retraining workers who lose their jobs because of new environmental policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Using public money to help and retrain workers who lose their jobs because of new environmental policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Using public money to help and retrain workers who lose their jobs because of new environmental policies, and paying for that support by raising taxes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Using public money to help and retrain workers who lose their jobs because of new environmental policies, with the rest of us paying for that support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Taxes on imports of goods from countries with weaker environmental laws.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Taxes on imports of goods from countries with weaker environmental laws, even if that makes those goods more expensive to buy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Taxes on imports of goods from countries where manufacturers do not have to obey environmental laws as strong as the laws here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly in favour</th>
<th>Somewhat in favour</th>
<th>Neither in favour nor against</th>
<th>Somewhat against</th>
<th>Strongly against</th>
<th>(Refusal)</th>
<th>(Don’t know)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
B.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If our country takes steps to reduce global warming, it will...</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>(Refusal)</th>
<th>(Don’t know)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 Cost jobs and harm our economy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Put my own job at risk.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Provide a better life for our children and grandchildren.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Improve people's health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Cause energy prices to rise.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C.

Higher taxes on fossil fuels would give the government more money. This money could then be spent on other things.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If fossil fuel taxes were raised in [country], would you be in favour or against spending this money on...</th>
<th>Strongly in favour</th>
<th>Somewhat in favour</th>
<th>Neither in favour nor against</th>
<th>Somewhat against</th>
<th>Strongly against</th>
<th>(Refusal)</th>
<th>(Don’t know)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 ...protecting the environment in [country]?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13A ...supporting ELDERLY PEOPLE?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13B ...supporting THE UNEMPLOYED?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13C ...supporting PEOPLE WITH LOW INCOMES (control group)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 ...reducing other taxes for everybody?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Some people think that taking stronger steps to reduce climate change would raise the cost of living in [country].</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>15A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15B</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15C</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strongly in favour</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Malcolm Fairbrother – CV

QUALIFICATIONS
University of California, Berkeley, USA
  PhD, Department of Sociology (2006)
  MA, Department of Sociology (2001)
University of Victoria, Canada
  BA (First Class Honours), Department of Sociology (1998)
Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy (2014)

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS
Umeå University, Sweden
  Professor, Department of Sociology (2017-present)
Institute for Futures Studies, Sweden
  Researcher (20%, 2018-present)
University of Graz, Austria
  Professor, Department of Sociology (10%, 2019-present)
University of Bristol, UK
  Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader in Global Policy and Politics
  School of Geographical Sciences (2007-2017)
University of California, San Diego, USA
  Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies (2006-2007)

RECENT SELECT PUBLICATIONS


European Sociological Review 32: 23-38 (second author, with Alexander Schmidt-Catran, 2016)


RECENT RESEARCH FUNDING
Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation, “Political trust and the environment: Understanding public attitudes towards environmental taxes and other policies,” 2020-2022, 5,500,000 SEK / £450,000, Principal Investigator


Sumitomo Foundation, “Understanding Public Support for Climate Policies in Japan,” 2020-2021, ¥1.08m / £8,000, Co-Investigator

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Institute for Emerging Market Studies, “Public Support for Climate Policy in China and India,” 2019-2021, HKD 125,000 / £12,746, Co-Investigator

Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences (Riksbankens Jubileumsfund), “Climate Ethics and Future Generations” 2018-2023, 40,930,000 SEK / £3.4 million, Co-Investigator


Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences (Riksbankens Jubileumsfund), “Three Worlds of Trust: A Longitudinal Study of Welfare States, Life-Course Risks, and Social Trust,” 2016-2020, 9,586,000 SEK / £790,000, Co-Investigator

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https://publons.com/researcher/1282466/malcolm-fairbrother/
Curriculum Vitae

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Education

2005 - 2012 University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign | USA | Ph.D. Political Science
Committee: Milan Svolik (Chair), Janet Box-Steffensmeier, James Kuklinski, Brian Gaines, Tracy Sulkin
Title: Diffusion, Co-Evolution and Strategic Interdependence in Comparative and International Politics: New Spatial Econometric and Event History Approaches

2008 - 2009 Princeton University | USA | Predoc (Visiting Ph.D. Student) | Dept. of Politics

2002 - 2004 Duke University | USA | M.A. Economics

1998 - 2002 University of Tokyo | Japan | B.A. Economics

Additional Education

April, 2019 Case Method Teaching Seminar
Harvard Business School Executive Education | Prof. Jim Dowd
A one-day course brought to Switzerland by the Executive MBA Program of the University of St. Gallen. The seminar covered didactic methods for case-based teaching.

Jun - Jul 2007 Empirical Implications of Theoretical Modeling (EITM)
University of California Los Angeles | USA

Employment History

08 2020 - Present University of Basel | Switzerland | Associate Professor (Tenured)
Faculty of Business and Economics

05 2015 - 07 2020 University of Basel | Switzerland | Assistant Professor
Faculty of Business and Economics

Jan - Feb 2016 Georgetown University | USA | Visiting Scholar | McDonough School of Business

2012 - 2015 ETH Zurich | Switzerland | Postdoc | GESS Department

2004 - 2005 Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) | Japan | Research Fellow
Publications

» The items indicated by “»” have been achieved during the past 5 years.

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles


Awaiting Review


» Roman Stutzer, Adrian Rinscheid, Thiago D. Oliveira, Pedro Mendes Loureiro, Aya Kachi, Mert Duygan. “Public Climate Change Counter-Action in Australia Despite Pro-Climate Collective Sentiment on Twitter” (R&R in preparation).

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Education

PhD student
Department of Social Policy, University of Turku, Finland
• Working title of dissertation: European welfare states and climate policy support
Master of Social Sciences, University of Turku, Finland
Spring 2016
Exchange Student, Maryville College, Maryville, TN, United States
Fall 2014
Bachelor of Social Sciences, University of Turku, Finland
2014

Academic work experience

Project researcher, European Social Survey (ESS) national project
Department of Social Policy, University of Turku, Finland
Sept. 2016
• Assisting with the ESS questionnaire translation, cognitive interviews and other tasks
• Drafting a research article using multilevel regression modelling and comparative survey data from ESS
• Writing reports displaying ESS results
Research assistant, Welfare State Cutbacks project
Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, Denmark
Feb – June 2016
• Detailed analysis of all pension and unemployment benefit reforms in Finland between 1973-2014
• Compiling and coding a quantitative dataset on said legislative reforms

Manuscripts and publications

Mustikkamaa, Sami (2019) Active labor market policies, deservingness of the unemployed and social class. Research article manuscript using ESS data.

Six issues of national ESS research reports (The Finns in Europe - a series of ESS research reports. https://sites.utu.fi/europeansocialsurvey/suomalaiset-euroopassa/):

Mustikkamaa, Sami (2017): Työttömien työnhaku jakaat mielipiteitä