

# From backlash to buy-in: Why acceptance matters in making sustainable development policies work?

WEBINAR  
WG Sustainable Development

## Context

Across Europe, climate and sustainability policies are increasingly seen as prone to triggering public backlash. Examples are protests against fuel subsidy cuts, heated debates over building energy reforms or intense opposition against renewable energy projects. Yet at the same time, the urgency to act and implement sustainability policies is growing. This creates a critical tension: governments must act decisively but also ensure public support for their decisions. Research shows that societal acceptance is not primarily driven by awareness or attitudes, but by how policies are designed and communicated. Thus, measures that are perceived as effective, fair, simple, and visibly beneficial stand a much better chance of gaining democratic support and delivering real impact.

This webinar explores how policymakers can better navigate this challenge by integrating societal perspectives into policy design and explains the importance of understanding societal expectations and concerns when shaping sustainable development measures. Professor Dr. Cornelia Betsch will present key findings from a joint study by the University of Erfurt and the German Council for Sustainable Development, introducing five core principles that can help increase acceptance and ultimately making sustainability policies more successful in practice. For this, it is important to understand what drives people's behavior and decision making with regard to climate protection and sustainability. Based on extensive empirical evidence, David Melches from More in Common Germany will shed light into these pivotal aspects for successful policy making.

## Agenda



**15 June**  
**13:00 - 14:00 CEST**  
**Via Teams**

- 13:00** Opening remarks by WG co-chair - **Jürgen Janssen** (German Council for Sustainable Development)
- 13:05** **Five principles for acceptance of sustainability policies** - **Prof. Dr. Cornelia Betsch** (Institute for Planetary Health Behaviour, University of Erfurt)
- 13:20** **Societal perspectives on climate protection** - **David Melches** (More in Common Germany)
- 13:35** Questions and discussion with participants
- 13:55** Closing remarks by WG co-chair **Jürgen Janssen**