

PRESS RELEASE

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EU PROJECT SHOWS WELFARE POLICIES ARE VITAL TO CLIMATE MITIGATION



In order to achieve the 1.5-degree target set by the Paris Agreement, massive cuts in carbon emissions are needed. For the EU, this requires a reduction of household carbon footprints from 2015 of almost 70% by 2030 and over 90% by 2050.

Too often, climate policies are not placed within a broader social context and policy makers neglect to see that welfare policies are vital to climate mitigation. Through a systematic literature review and an expert-driven Delphi process, the EU 1.5° Lifestyles project has identified six welfare policies that can support the sustainability transition and reduce carbon emissions:

- Working time reduction
- Job guarantees
- Income ceilings
- Universal Basic Services
- Renovation programs for energy-efficient buildings
- Free public transport



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101003880.

These policies fall into two main focus areas: **labour policies** and **public services**. Among these, working time reduction (WTR) and universal basic services (UBS) emerged as particularly interesting policy solutions to simultaneously promote social inclusion and mitigate emissions in expert delphis in Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Spain and Sweden.

Working time reduction (WTR) is a potential tool to reduce unemployment and increase social wellbeing. There is evidence that WTR policies have positive environmental impacts by breaking the cycle of work to earn to consume. Importantly, they are also expected to be effective in reducing carbon emissions, to the extent that they lead to reduced income for high earners and reduction in spending on clothing, downsizing of living spaces, and limiting car and air travel. Reducing work time can also enable a better work-life balance, and free up time for personal development, family care, or for voluntary work.

Universal basic services (UBS) are an instrument to meet fundamental needs for all while improving the efficiency of consumption and provisioning systems. Today, basic services such as food, housing, and healthcare, are unequally distributed with certain segments of the population having insufficient access to them. UBS approaches envisage that a sufficient level of access to these services would be provided by public institutions at no cost for all. Importantly, the collective forms of provisioning generally associated with UBS carry important environmental benefits as well. For instance, providing free public transport will lead to reduced carbon emissions through decreased private car use. Similarly, increased availability of energy efficient public housing can lead to a reduced carbon footprint for residents and the community.

WHY WELFARE POLICIES ARE NEEDED TO DRIVE CLIMATE ACTION

“Work time reduction and universal basic services hold real potential to simultaneously improve social justice and climate futures, something urgently needed in times of social polarization and ecological crisis.” (Prof. Doris Fuchs, Director, Research Institute for Sustainability - Helmholtz Centre Potsdam (RIFS) and University of Münster)

“In realizing 1.5 lifestyles, addressing climate inequality is imperative, necessitating the integration of climate and welfare policies for effective climate mitigation. The EU 1.5° Lifestyles project has pinpointed crucial welfare policies like working time reduction and universal basic services as potent instruments that serve not only to enhance social inclusion but also as essential drivers of emissions reductions. This will help seamlessly align societal well-being with climate action.” (Dr. Janis Brizga, Chair, NGO Green Liberty)

“Equity and fairness approaches to distributing the remaining global carbon budget are the only viable ones for a future where wellbeing is achieved for all. Well-designed welfare policies are fundamental for achieving climate targets while limiting social tensions.” (Dr. Luca Coscieme, Programme Lead Sustainable Lifestyles, Hot or Cool Institute)



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FURTHER PROJECT INFORMATION

The project's aim is to support the mainstreaming of low-carbon lifestyles in line with the aspirational 1.5°C climate target and to facilitate the transformations sought by the Paris Agreement and the EU Green Deal. For this purpose, the project develops guidance for policymakers, intermediary actors and individuals based on scientific evidence on how lifestyle choices affect individual carbon footprints, and how political, economic, and social contexts enable or constrain shifts to sustainable lifestyle options.

The uniqueness of the project approach is that it demonstrates the potential contributions of individuals and households, while clearly articulating where limited agency by households requires structural changes and political and stakeholder intervention. In doing so, EU1.5° Lifestyles connects analyses of lifestyle perspectives at the household level in the four realms of nutrition, mobility, housing, and leisure with inquiries into relevant political, technological, economic and societal structures.







To mainstream 1.5 degrees lifestyles, the project develops practical recommendations, which can be integrated into everyday life as well as into EU and national policies. Along the way, the project provides stakeholders at national and EU levels with

- a quantification of climate and health impacts on shifting lifestyles in the EU and within three additional G20 countries (Indonesia, South Africa, Mexico);
- an overview of potentials for and barriers to change at the household level, including options for transitioning to 1.5 degrees lifestyles as well as associated potential risks and opportunities;
- an assessment of structural barriers and enablers for systemic transformations necessary for 1.5 degrees lifestyles;
- assessments of scenarios for economic and welfare systems, and business models compatible with 1.5 degrees lifestyles.

To co-produce outputs and involve target group members, the project conducts citizen and stakeholder labs as well as expert delphis and develops concrete guidance for both citizens and decision-makers on transitioning to 1.5 degrees lifestyles.



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