



**BRINGING THE EU TOGETHER
ON CLIMATE ACTION**

After Survey Analysis



Unify project has received funding from the LIFE Programme of the European Union. The information and views set out in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Commission.

UNIFY : Bringing the EU together on climate action After Survey Analysis

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The survey was conducted as a part of the "UNIFY: Bringing the EU together on climate action" Project funded by the LIFE programme in the period March-May 2022 in EU member states with specific emphasis on 10-member states – Denmark, Germany, France, Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Portugal, Spain, and Croatia.

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OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE SURVEY

The survey was conducted as a part of the Life Unify project, funded by the LIFE programme in the period March-May 2022 in 10 EU member states – Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain.

The questionnaire aims to gather input on the three key axes of the project (National Energy and Climate Plans, National and EU Long-term Strategies, EU budget) while also assessing stakeholders' beliefs and attitudes towards the EU and the Member States' climate action.

A "Before" survey has already been conducted at the beginning of the project period (January-March 2020). The original goal was to compare these results with those obtained with this "After" survey at the end of the project period. However, such a comparison has largely not been possible.

The dramatic socio-economic and political changes occurring within the project period are the main reason for this. The COVID-19 pandemic started right after the "Before" questionnaire was conducted in March 2020. Due to the pandemic, the overall economic situation in the European Union changed substantially; as an answer to the economic and climate crisis, several new financial instruments were established, among them the Recovery and Resilience Fund. The announcement and adoption of the European Green Deal – with its new climate targets and the processes related to the legislative framework to put them in place, most notably the 'Fit for 55' package – added to the complexity of making comparisons between 2020 and 2022 survey results. Finally, the war in Ukraine and the 'REPowerEU' package also shaped the political landscape during the final months of the LIFE Unify project, when the "After" survey was conducted.

Further, there has been a noticeable difference in the number of responses – for the "Before" questionnaire, we collected close to 900 responses, and for the After questionnaire, only around 430 responses. This could be attributed to the fact that the "After" questionnaire was not only conducted at the beginning of the third year of the pandemic but also at the beginning of the Russian aggression on Ukraine and the beginning of the economic and energy crisis. Even though the EU responded to the crisis with the proposal of several new legislative measures in the form of RePowerEU, the questionnaire did not touch upon this topic, which likely made it less relevant for stakeholders.

The "Before" questionnaire had 25 questions divided into the following five sections:

- General Questions on Climate Change consists of 4 closed questions
- On climate change and National Energy and Climate Plans consisting of 6 closed questions
- On climate change and National & the EU Long Term Strategies consisting of 5 closed questions
- On climate change and the use of EU funding for increased climate action consisting of 3 closed questions
- A general section consists of 7 closed questions

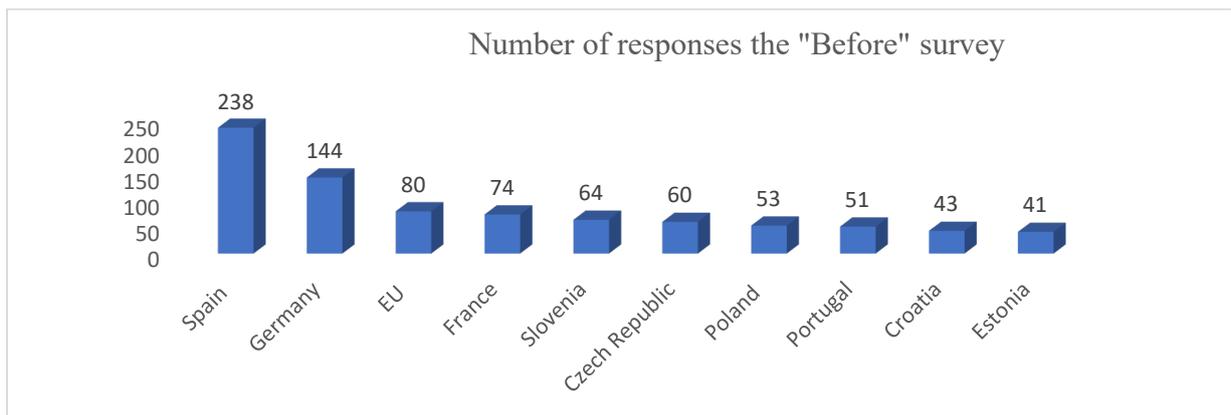
Overall, the "Before" questionnaire received 866 responses

The "After" questionnaire has had 31 questions divided into the following six sections:

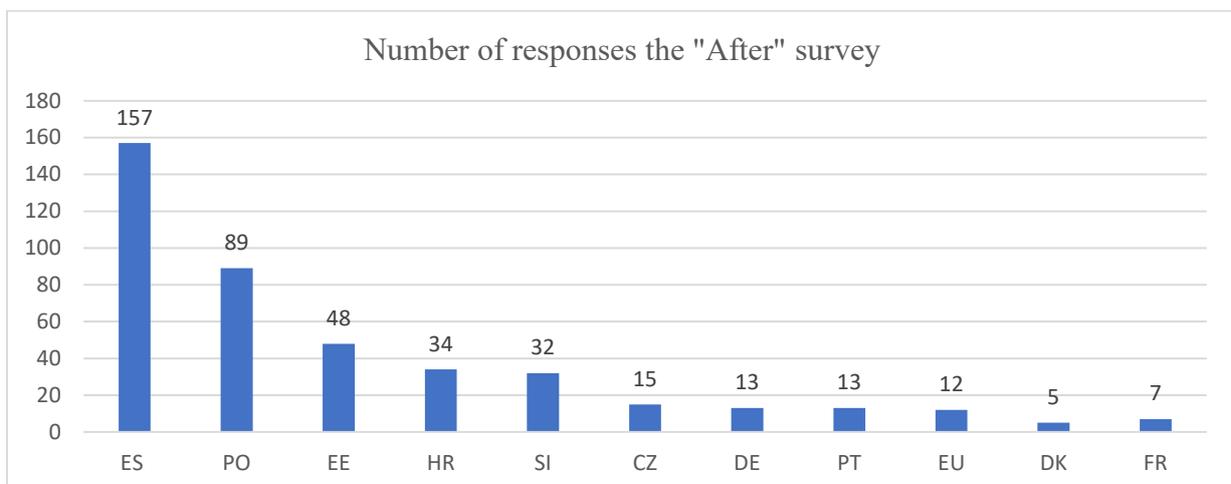
- General Questions on Climate Change consists of 4 closed questions
- On climate change and National Energy and Climate Plans consisting of 10 closed questions
- On the European Green Deal consists of 2 closed questions
- On climate change and National & the EU Long Term Strategies consisting of 4 closed questions
- On climate change and the use of EU funding for increased climate action consisting of 6 closed questions
- A general section consists of 7 closed questions

Nevertheless, the results of the "After" survey will provide a glance at the feedback of relevant stakeholders on the key political developments that occurred in LIFE Unify's main working strands, as well as about the impact of LIFE Unify project activities on their consciousness and work.

A comparison in the number of responses in the "Before" and the "After" survey shows that responses from Spain are the most numerous. It should be noted that in Spain, Poland, Estonia, Croatia, Portugal, and France, surveys were conducted in national languages and separately from the EU questionnaire that was conducted in English and included not only the EU level but also Germany, Slovenia, Denmark, and the Czech Republic.



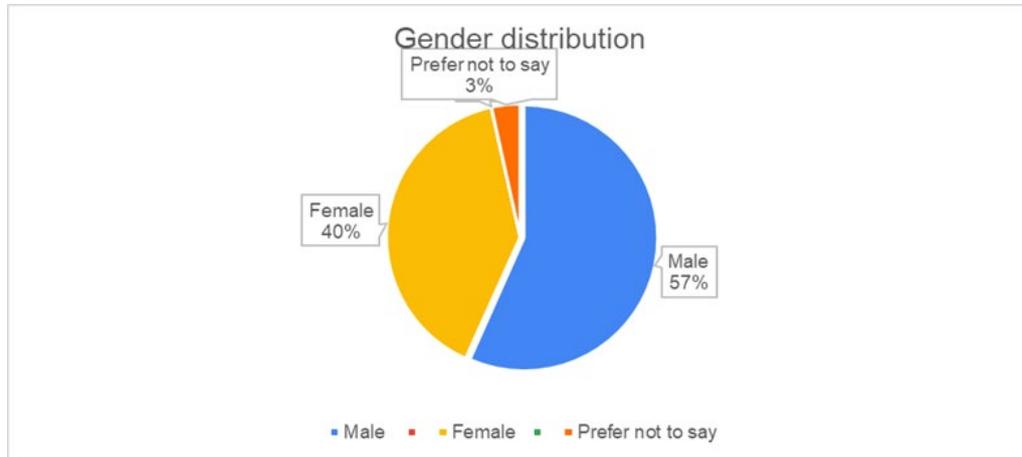
Picture 1 number of responses in the "Before" survey conducted in 2020.



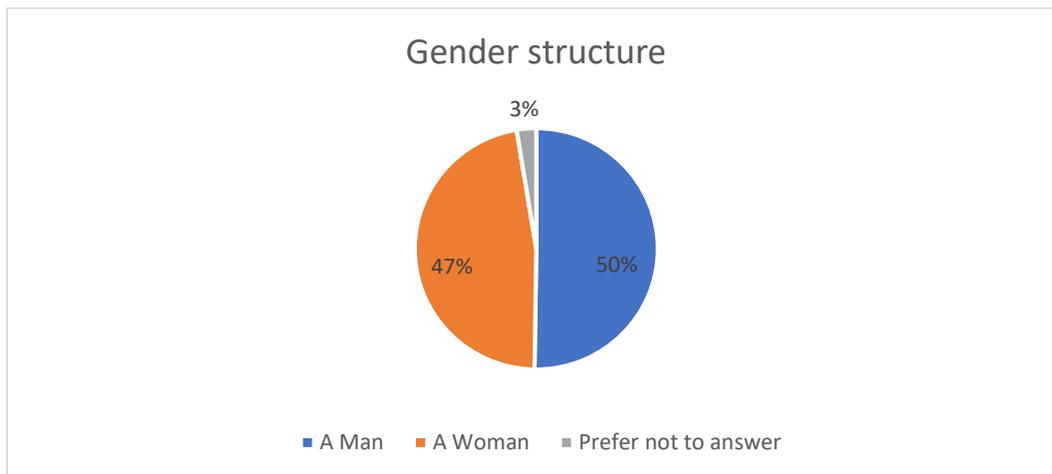
Picture 2 number of responses in the "After" survey conducted in 2020.

PROFILES OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

On gender distribution, there was a slightly higher number of responses from men (57%) compared to women (40%). The exception is Poland – where the question was not asked, and the data is unavailable.

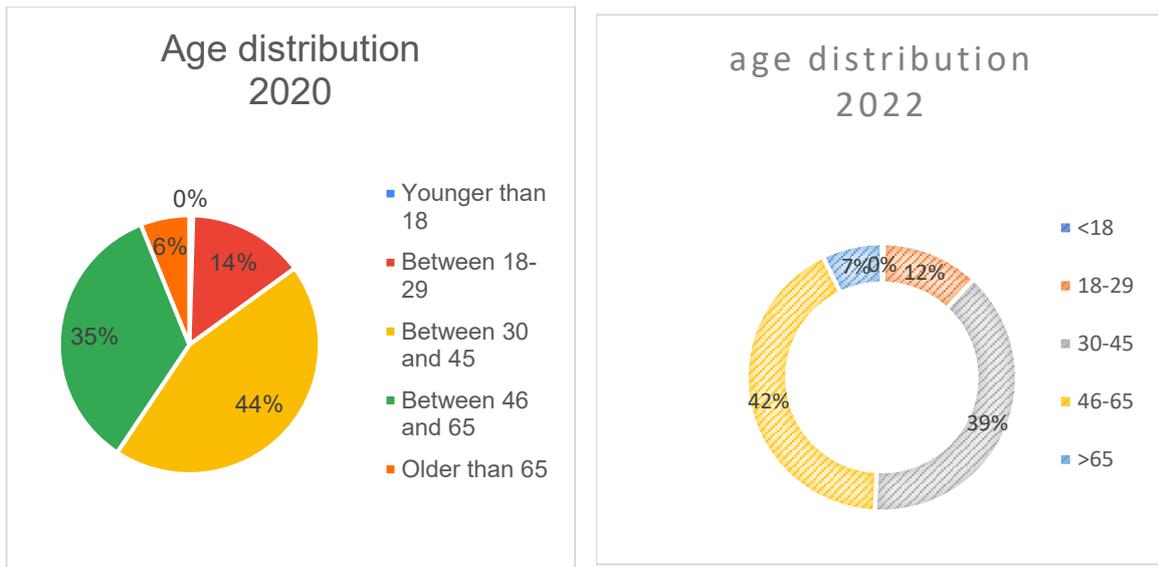


Picture 3 gender distribution in the "Before "survey (2020)



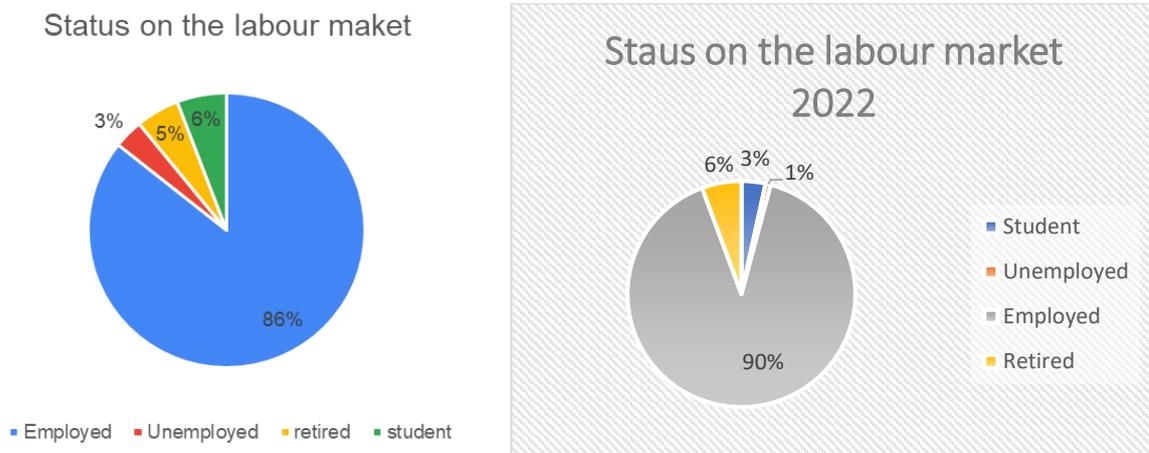
Picture 4 Gender distribution in the "After "survey (2022)

As for gender distribution, there was a slightly higher number of responses from women (50%) compared to men (47%). This distribution is slightly different compared to the data in 2020, when 57% of respondents were men. The difference could also be attributed to the fact that in 2020 Poland did not ask the gender question.



Picture 5 on the left age distribution in 2020 and on the right age distribution in 2022.

As for age distribution, in 2020, the majority of respondents were in the age group between 30 and 45 (44%) and between 46 and 65 (35%), while in 2022, the majority of respondents were in the age group between 46 and 65 (42%) and 39% were in the age group between 30 and 45. In 2020 and 2022, an inconsiderable number of respondents were younger than 18.



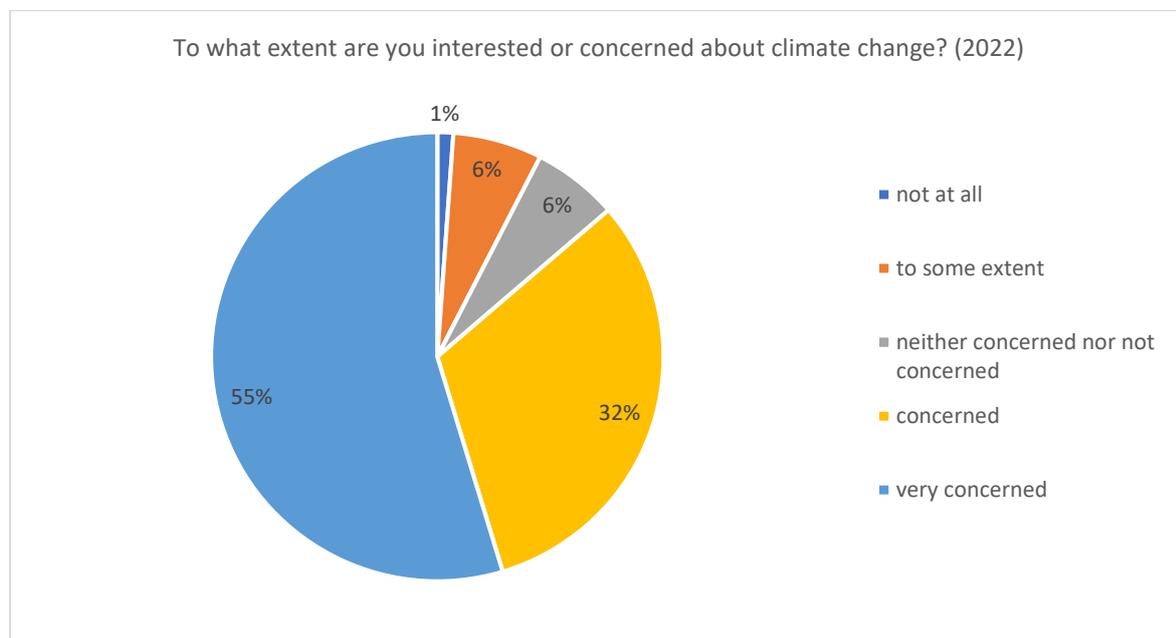
Picture 6 status on the labour market; left "Before "survey in 2020 and right "After "survey in 2022

In terms of the status on the labour market 86% (2020) and 90% (2022) of the respondents are employed, 3% (2020) and 1% (2022) are unemployed, 6% (2020) and 3% (2022) are student and 5% (2020) and 6% (2022) are retired.

GENERAL FINDINGS

In both the "Before" and the "After" questionnaire, respondents were asked *How concerned or worried are you about climate change?* In 2020 answering the "Before" questionnaire, almost 80% of the respondents were either concerned or very concerned; in 2022, 86% of the respondents were either concerned or very concerned.

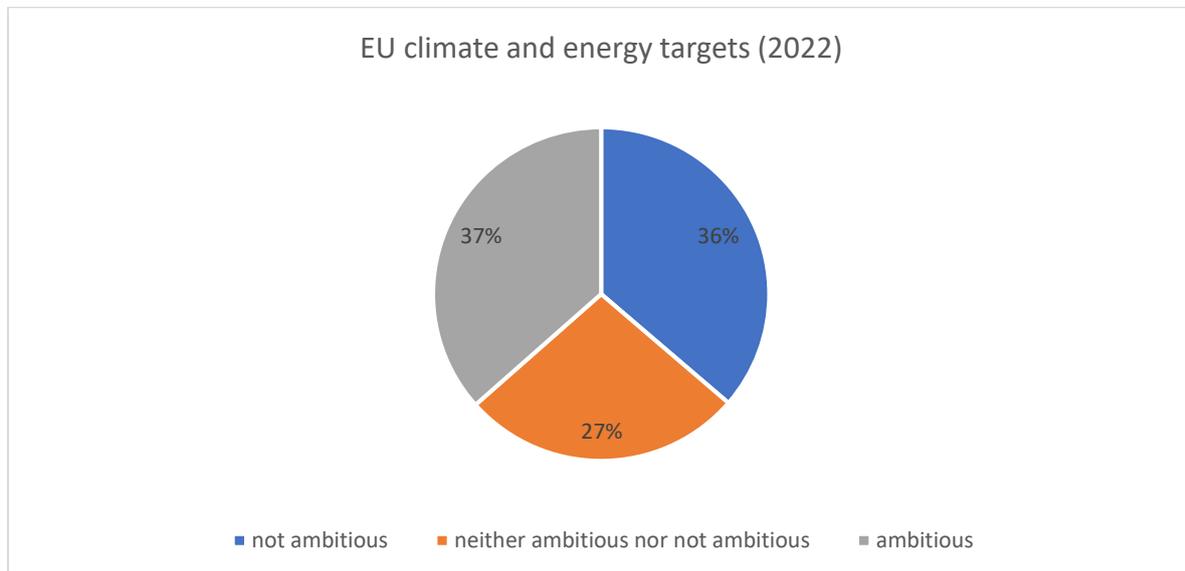
In particular: at the **EU level, 77% (2020) and 100% (2022)** of respondents are **very concerned** about climate change, and the same percent of them (2020) and 100% (2022) feel that the EU is not doing enough in the fight against climate change, Numbers from 2022 should be interpreted with caution considering that number of respondents is considerably smaller than in 2020. the situation is similar **Germany, where 73% (2020 and 2022) of respondents are very concerned** about climate change, and 71% (2020) and 100% of them think that the EU is not doing enough in the fight against climate change. In **France 64% (2020) and 100% (2022)** of the respondent agrees that the EU is not doing enough as well as **54% (2020) and 91% (2022) in Slovenia.** In **Croatia, 42% (2020) and 32% (2022)** of respondents are **very concerned** about climate change. A similar situation is in **Spain, where 44% (2020) and 52% (2022)** of respondents are **very concerned and** feel that the EU is not doing enough in the fight against climate change. In the Czech Republic, 75% (2020) and 80% (2022) of respondents are very concerned, and 60% (2020) and 87% (2022) of them feel that the EU is not doing enough. In Estonia 27% (2020) and 38% (2022) in Portugal 62% (2020) and 54% (2022), in Poland 50% (2020) and 64% (2022) are very concerned about climate change.



Picture 7 extent of concern about climate change in the "After" survey 2022

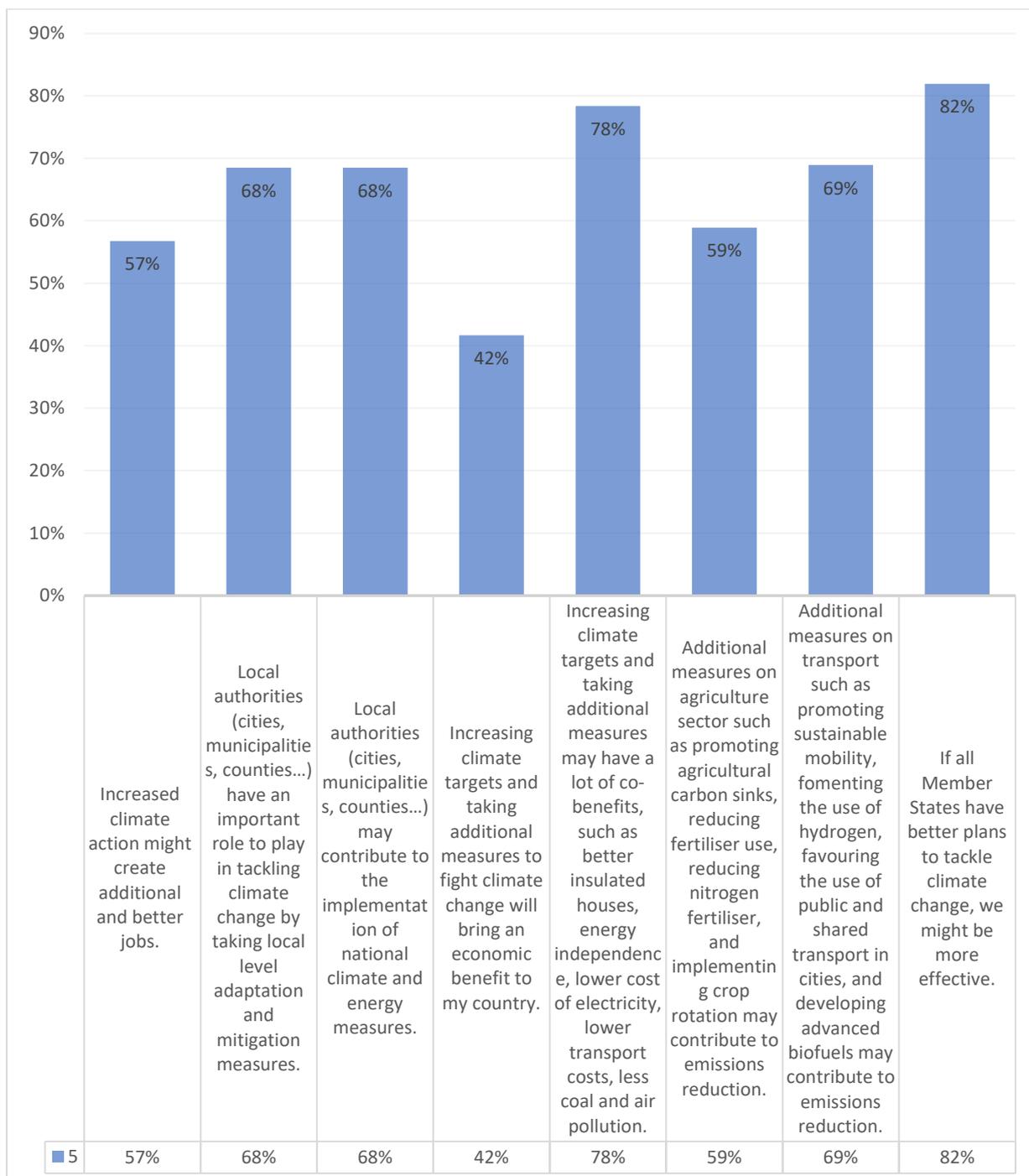
In the 2020 questionnaire, to the question to assess the EU's 2030 climate and energy targets by 2030 based on their knowledge, where 1 meant that targets are too not ambitious at all, and 5 that they are too ambitious, the majority of respondents at the EU level assessed that targets of 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions; at least 32% share for renewable energy; at least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency are not ambitious. As we know EU

increased these targets in 2020 and set new, more ambitious targets of at least 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, at least 40% share for renewable energy, and at least 36-39% improvement in energy efficiency. Respondents in 2022 were more leveraged, and responses to the question on the ambitiousness of EU targets showed that an almost equal number of respondents feel that targets are both too ambitious and not ambitious enough.



Picture 8 Ambitiousness of Eu climate and energy targets in the "After "survey 2022

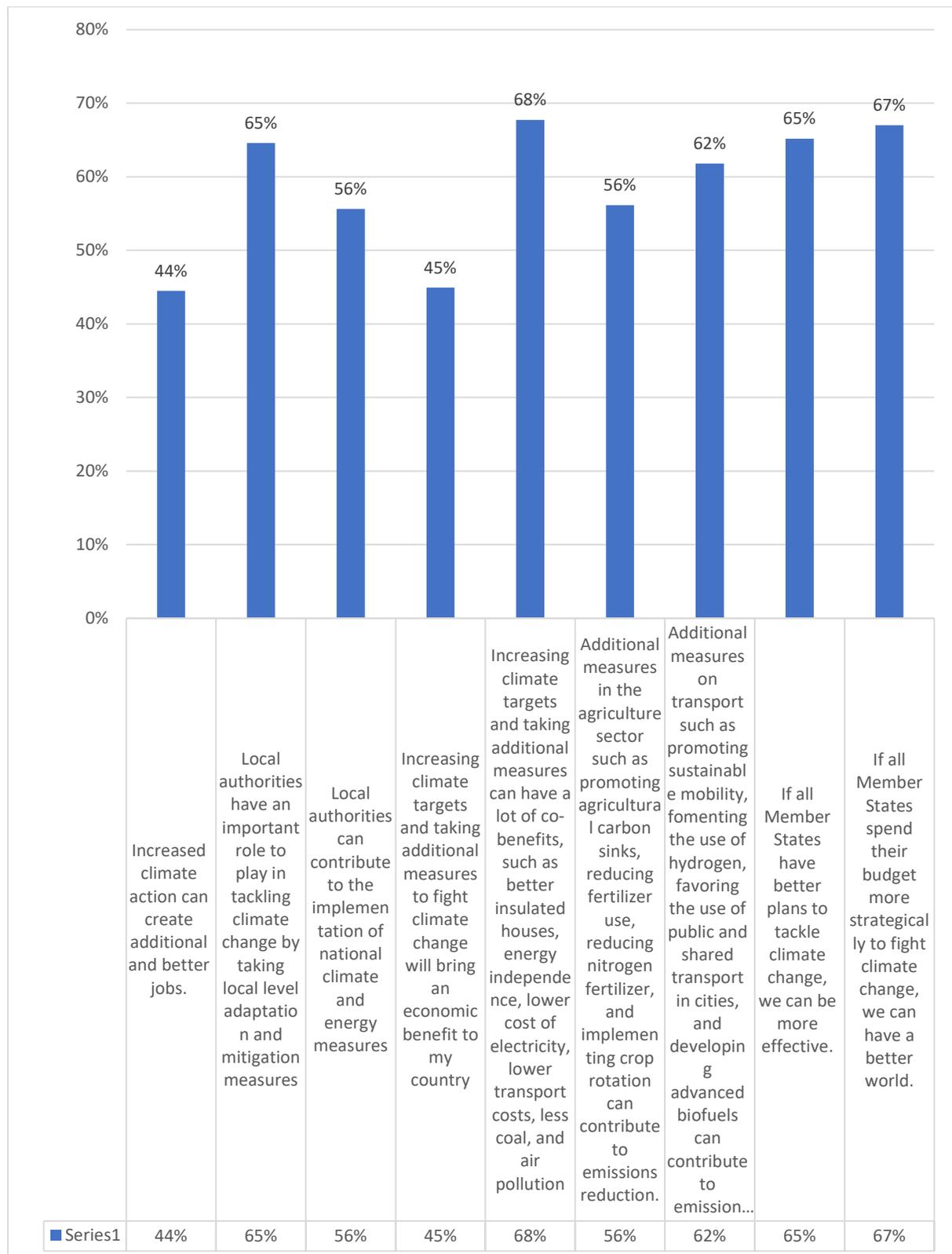
When asked to rank the statements covering different topics and approaches of the Unify Project on a scale from 1 to 5 according to how they feel about them, in 2020 82% of respondents on the EU level believe that *If all Member States spend their budget more strategically to fight climate change, we could have a better world* and only 42% completely agreed with the statement *Increasing climate targets and taking additional measures to fight climate change will bring an economic benefit to my country.*



Picture 9 rank the statements covering different topics and approaches of the Unify Project in the "Before "survey 2020

When asked to rank the same statements covering different topics and approaches of the Unify Project on a scale from 1 to 5 according to how they feel about them in 2022, 68% of respondents believe that *Increasing climate targets and taking additional measures can have a lot of co-benefits, such as better insulated houses, energy independence, lower cost of electricity, lower transport costs, less coal, and air pollution* and 67% of them believe that *If all Member States spend their budget more strategically to fight climate change, we could have a better world* in comparison with the statement *Increasing climate targets and taking additional measures to fight climate change will bring an economic benefit to my country*. This decline in responses regarding the belief that more strategic budgeting could help create a

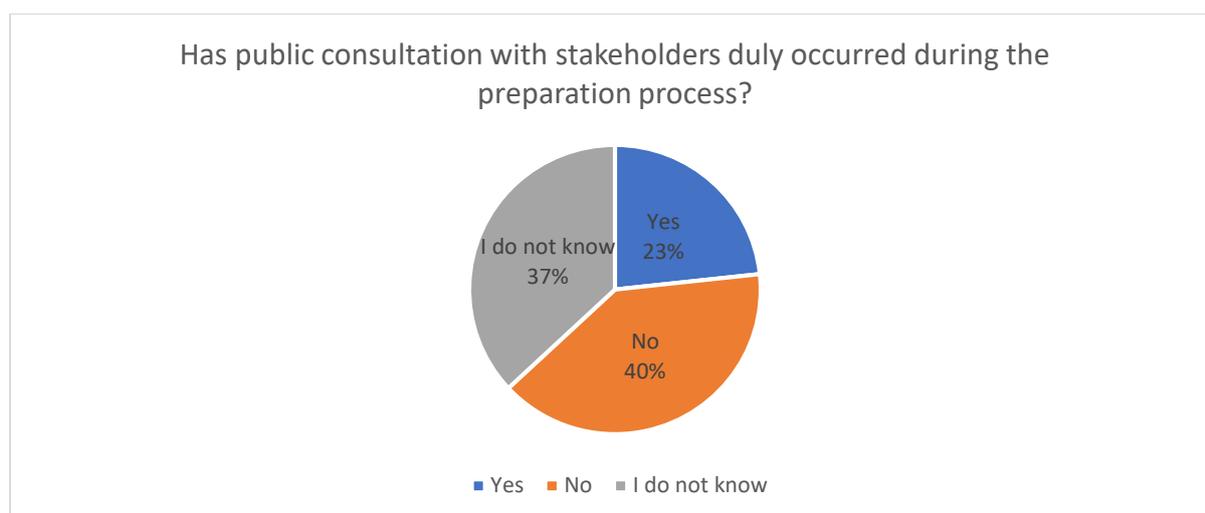
better world could be attributed to the overall political situation where people are more pessimistic regarding their future than they were in 2020.



Picture 10 rank the statements covering different topics and approaches of the Unify Project in the "After "survey 2022

ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATIONAL ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLANS

In 2020 NECPs were in the preparation process, and many countries submitted their plans to the European Commission by the end of 2019 and were still in the developing process early in 2020 when the "Before" questionnaire was conducted. In 2020 questions regarding NECPs were clustered around the level of inclusion of different stakeholders in the developing process and in the public discussion on the NECPs. In total, 68% of respondents answered that they were familiar with the process of developing and adopting the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs). In all included countries, above 50% of respondents were familiar with the process. In 2022 stakeholders were asked to assess the quality and inclusiveness of public discussion in the development phase and to assess how the planned measures are being funded as well as to the best of their knowledge assess the probability that NECPs will reach their set targets. According to the responses in 2022, only 23% of respondents think that the consultation with stakeholders was adequately organized, and 40% of respondents feel that public debate was not organized duly. On the other hand, 50% of respondents do not know whether the comments submitted in the public discussion were accepted. Still, none of the respondents believe that all the relevant comments have been included entirely, and 13% believe that most relevant comments have been included but not all, while 33% believe that most of the relevant comments and suggestions received in the public discussion have been disregarded.



Picture 11 opinion on the organization of the consultation with stakeholders – NECP; "After" survey in 2022

When asked about the sources of the funds, 44% of respondents answered that implementation of the measures planned under NECP would be funded mainly using EU funds, and 21% stated that their country would be equally using EU funds and state budget funds to fund NECP measures. Approximately the same number of respondents, 43%, stated that planned policy changes and measures are, for the most part, still not being implemented. This is not surprising considering that in 2020 on the readiness of the countries' regulations to implement planned measures, 73% of respondents answered that they believe that their respective country's regulations were not ready to implement all measures envisaged by their National Energy and Climate Plans.

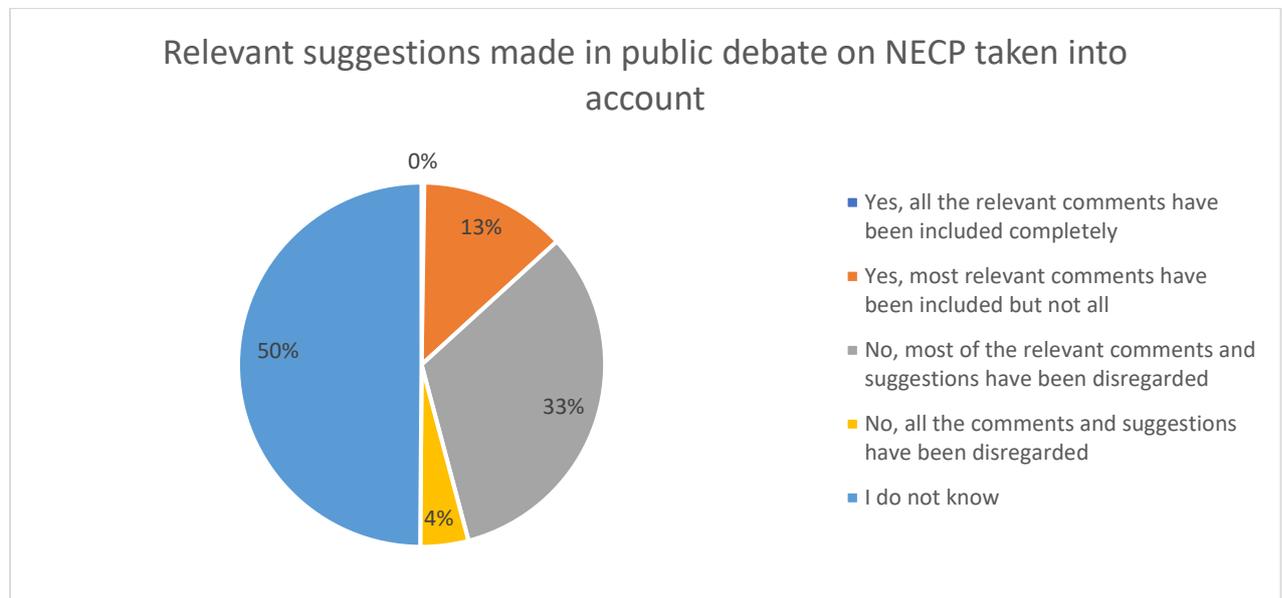
When asked whether they believe that their country's final NECP is aligned with the EU's 2030 climate target, again, 33% of respondents answered that their country's NECPs are aligned with previous 2030 targets but short for the new one, and only 6% answered that they believe that their country's NECP targets go above EU targets. These findings are consistent with the

ones in 2020 when 54% of respondents who were involved with the NECP drafting process believed that national climate goals envisaged in their NECP are not aligned with the EU goals.

In 2022 49% of the respondents believe that it is not probable that their country will in this decade implement all policies and measures planned in your National Energy and Climate Plans by 2030. On the other hand, 13% are more optimistic and believe it is probable to some extent. For the comparison in 2020, 26% of the respondents answered that it is not likely that their country will reach its climate goals, and 33% answered that it is in equal measure probable as it is not probable that their countries will reach their planned target goals.

Considering the political situation in the last two years it could be concluded that respondents who might have been indecisive on the probability of their country reaching the targeted goals until 2030 in 2020 are more pessimistic in 2022, and that is one of the reasons why in 2022 almost half of the respondents believe that their country will not reach their targets by 2030.

According to the results of the questionnaire, the revision of the NECP has begun in some countries, but respondents are mainly not included in the revision process.

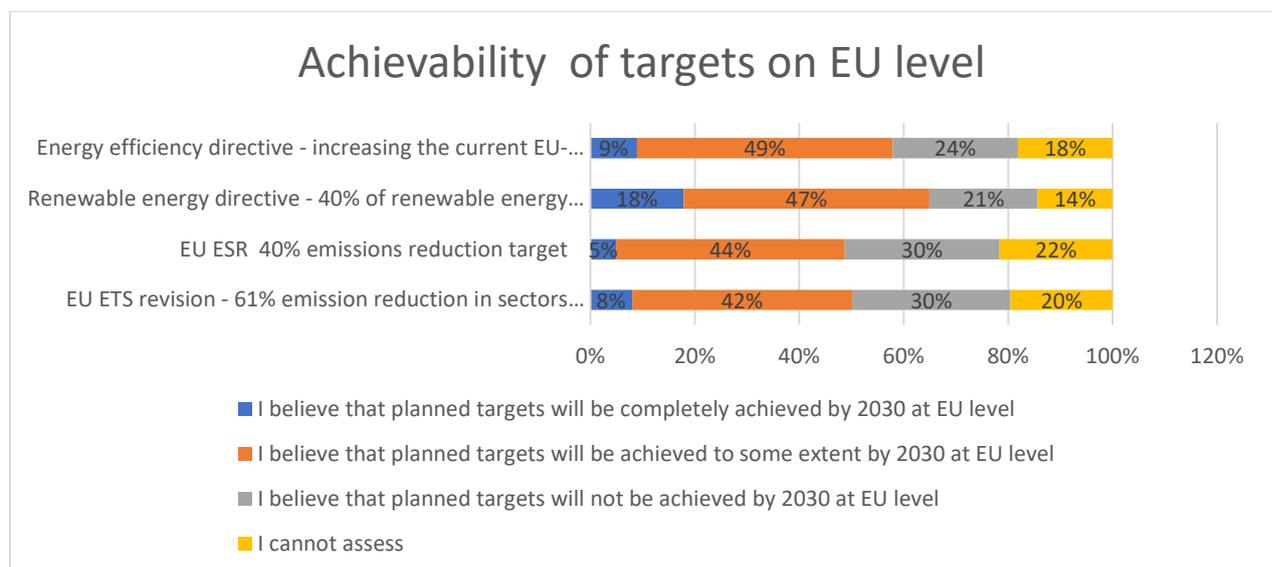


Picture 12 opinion on relevant suggestions made in public debate on NECP taken into account; "After "survey 2022

ON EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

According to the European Commission Communication, the European Green Deal “is a new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use.” All 27 EU Member States committed to turning the EU into the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. They pledged to reduce emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels, to get there. In our survey, we asked respondents to describe European Green Deal in one sentence. Sentences among which they could choose were “an attempt to create a solution in which industry will carry a major burden of transition towards sustainable societies”; “an attempt to create a solution in which citizens will carry a major burden of transition towards sustainable societies”; “an attempt to create a solution for climate crisis based solely on technical solutions and further industrialization”; “an attempt to create a solution for climate crisis based on equity and equality principles and inclusion of all citizens”. 32% of our respondents view the European Green Deal positively as an attempt to create a solution for the climate crisis based on equity and equality principles and the inclusion of all citizens. And 24% of respondents think the European Green Deal is an attempt to create a solution to the climate crisis based solely on technical solutions and further industrialization. Additionally, 13 % think that citizens will be the ones who will carry the main burden of the transition toward sustainability.

When asked to mark the level to which they believe that targets will be achieved at the EU level for the following areas: 61% emission reduction in sectors concerned by the EU ETS revision by 2030; 40% emissions reduction target by the EU ESR revision by 2030; 40% of renewable energy sources in the overall energy mix and increase in the current EU-level target to 36% for final, and 39% for primary energy consumption; respondents mainly believe that these targets will be achieved to some extent. For all targets, between 42% and 49% of respondents believe they will be achieved to some extent. Differences between targets are not significant, but it should be noted that respondents are more confident that targets will be achieved in renewable energy and energy efficiency; namely, 47% of respondents believe that 40% of renewable energy sources in the overall energy mix could be achieved by 2030 and that energy efficiency in final and primary energy consumption could also be achieved by 2030 according to the set targets.



Picture 13 Achievability of targets on EU level; "After" survey 2022

ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATIONAL & THE EU LONG TERM STRATEGIES

The fourth part of the questionnaire questioned respondents' attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge of the process of drafting and adopting National long-term strategies.

Three questions in this part mainly assessed the probability that their country will implement measures envisaged in your Long-Term Strategies by 2050. 40% of respondents believe that it is not likely and only 16% believe that it is likely that their countries will achieve goals set in the nLTS. When asked to assess how likely their country will implement measures envisaged in its Long-term Strategy by 2050 in 2020, most respondents thought it was not likely. The findings in 2022 are collaborated with the findings from 2020.

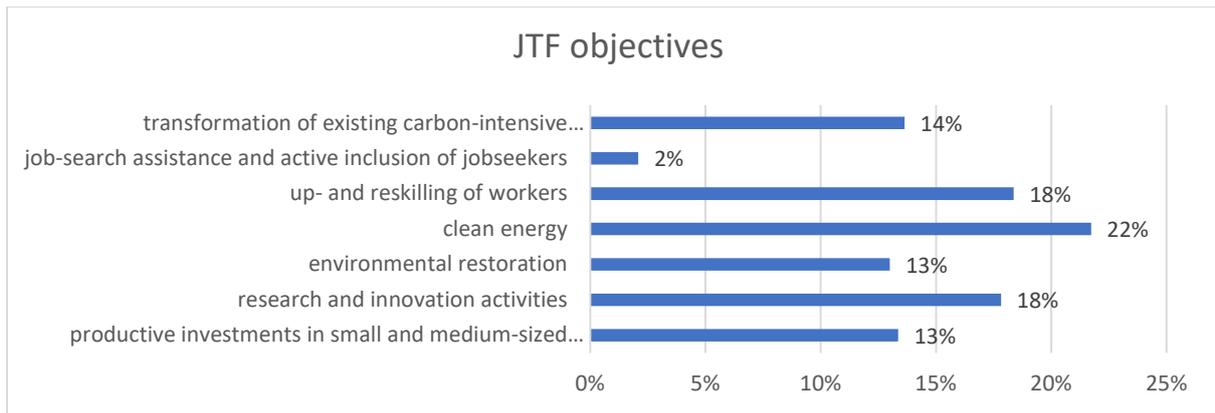
ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE USE OF EU FUNDING FOR INCREASED CLIMATE ACTION

Similar to the questions in 2020, respondents were given a list of 11 common policy objectives that will be funded in 2021-2027 and asked to prioritize the three most important ones, in their opinion.

In 2020 all respondents prioritized: energy efficiency, clean local public transport, and sustainable land use and agriculture. In 2022 respondents prioritized: "Greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net-zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility;" which contains two of the priority topics from 2020. The second and third areas in 2022 were "A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all territories and local initiatives" and "Reskilling and upskilling people for the transition to a green and digital economy."

To speed up the energy transition and ensure that it is as inclusive as possible, the European Commission established the Just transition mechanism, and the Just transition fund is one of its main pillars. Commission believes this Fund will be "a key tool to support the territories most affected by the transition towards climate neutrality, providing them with tailored support." The idea behind the Fund is to alleviate the socio-economic costs triggered by climate transition and to support the economic diversification and reconversion of the territories concerned, helping people to adapt to a changing labour market.¹ Having this in mind, respondents were asked to prioritize Just transition fund objectives. Not surprisingly, the highest priority is the clean energy objective, followed by the transformation of existing carbon-intensive installations when these investments lead to substantial emission cuts, job protection, upskilling and re-skilling of workers, and research and innovation activities. (Picture)

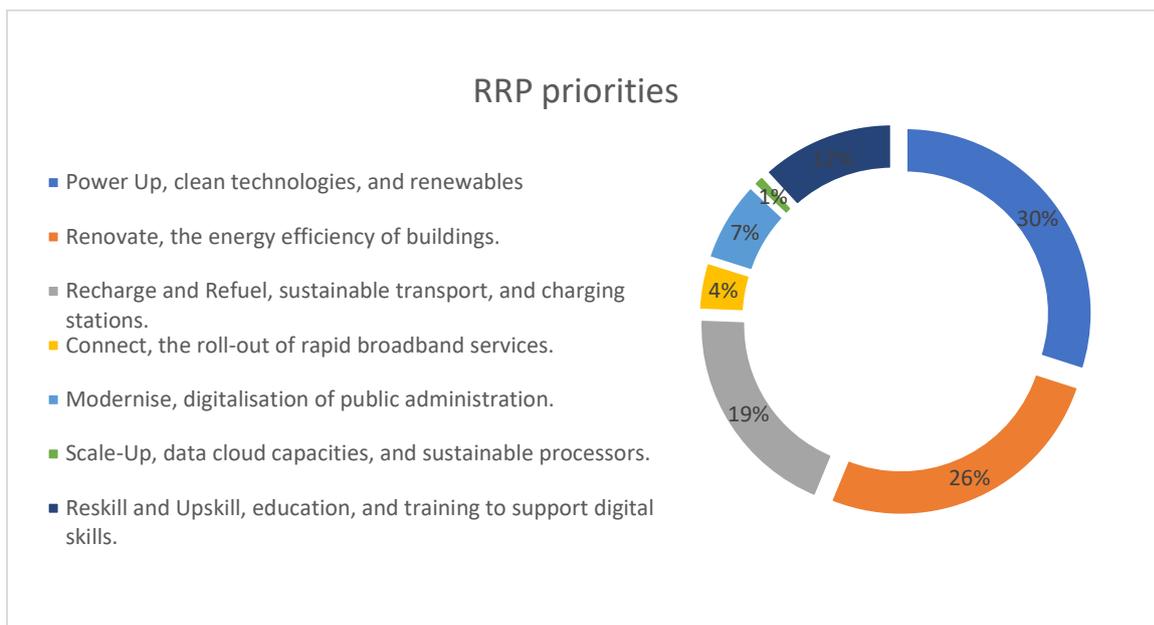
¹ (https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/finance-and-green-deal/just-transition-mechanism/just-transition-funding-sources_en).



Picture 14 Just transition fund objectives prioritized in the "After" survey 2022

Together with EU funds from the Cohesion Policy, Member States count on additional European input resulting from the unexpected irruption of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Next Generation EU is a short-term financial instrument for 2021-2024, and the resulting Recovery and Resilient Plans (RRP) have taken a prioritized position in the financial agenda of member states. The EU Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) requires that a minimum of 37% of expenditures from this funding must be allocated to climate investments and green reforms (renewable energies, sustainable mobility, efficient industry, and building renovation). RRP were gradually approved in 2021, and the question was do they know if their country's final document was aligned with the EU climate target. The results show that national RRP align with the set target. RRP should include investments and reforms considered the 7 main action areas proposed by the European Commission. Respondents were asked to prioritize the areas that, in their opinion, should be prioritized in their country to foster a prompt, green, and just recovery.

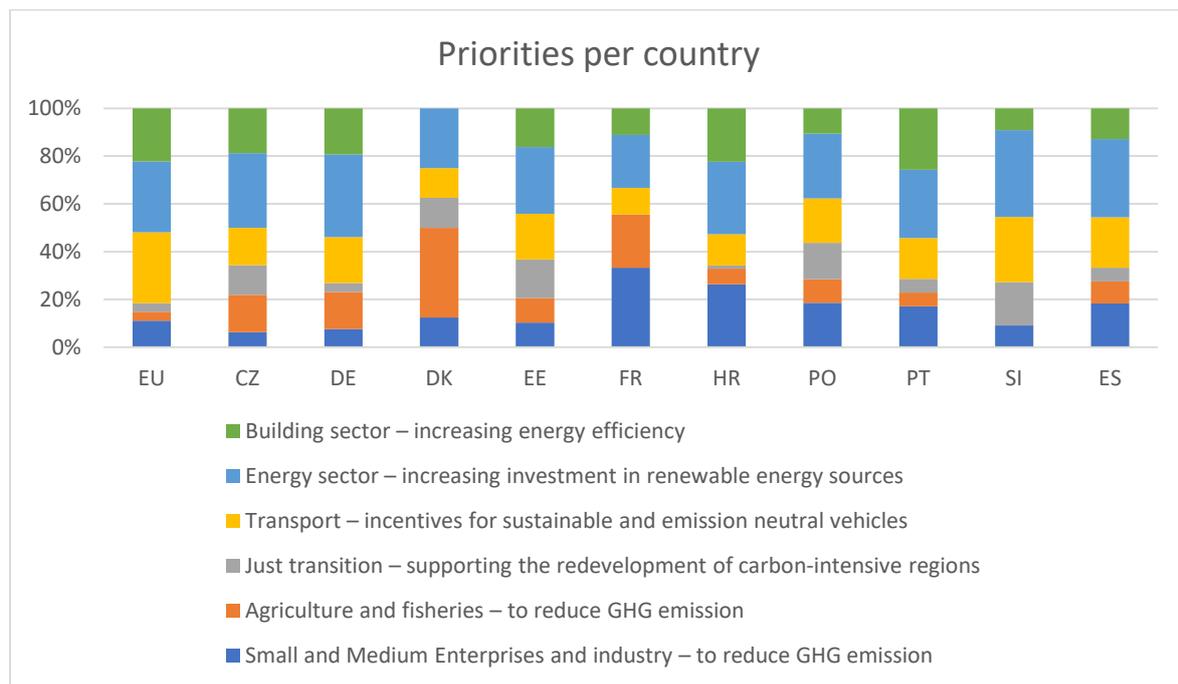
According to the results, 30% of respondents marked clean technologies and renewables as their highest priority, followed by renovation, energy efficiency (26%), and sustainable transport (19%).



Picture 15 Recovery and resilience plan priorities in the "After" survey 2022

Considering that these plans are countries' roadmaps towards recovery post-covid between 2021 and 2024 and considering the urgency with which they were drafted and adopted and with which funds were disbursed to countries, respondents were asked do they know how far its policies and measures have started to be implemented in their countries. According to the results, around 20% of respondents marked that the most urgent policies and measures have started to be implemented.

When asked to rate sectors at the national level that should benefit the most from the new EU financial framework energy sector was rated as the priority in all countries, followed by the transport and building sector. These findings are consistent with the ones from 2020 when overall three top-rated sectors for the next financial period were the energy, transport, and building sector



Picture 16 Cohesion policy priorities in the "After" survey 2022