

Toolkit

How to Talk with Policymakers About 1.5-Degree Lifestyles

2022

zoe institute for
future-fit
economies

OneEarth
LIVING

 **Hot or Cool**

 **CLIMATE
outreach**



1.5
degree
lifestyles



Credits

Authors

Vanessa Timmer (OneEarth Living), Lydia Korinek (ZOE), George Marshall (Climate Outreach), Christoph Gran (ZOE), Laure-Alizée Le Lannou (ZOE), Lewis Akenji (Hot or Cool Institute) and Lisa Mastny (OneEarth Living).

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Section 1

Overview



How to use this toolkit

You likely are reading this because you want to keep planetary warming within 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

You may already know that this requires shifting to low-carbon ways of living.

In fact, lifestyle and behaviour changes are an untapped opportunity for impactful climate action: scientists estimate that such changes can result in emission reductions of as much as 40-70%. This means action by people, supported by policy, infrastructure and technology.

You can use this toolkit to talk with others about 1.5-Degree Lifestyles.

This toolkit is for European Union (EU) officials, for individuals from civil society, media, business or other groups that are engaging the EU, and for anyone seeking to advance low-carbon living.

You are in good company.

EU leaders and officials already see lifestyle and behaviour changes as key to achieving EU climate targets.

“We need to change how we treat nature, how we produce and consume, live and work, eat and heat, travel and transport.”

— European Commission President
Ursula von Leyen, 2020¹

“We are in a climate and environmental emergency. The European Green Deal is an opportunity to improve the health and well-being of our people by transforming our economic model.”

— European Commission Vice-President
Frans Timmermans, 2019²

You may find that talking about this area is hard. Big changes are ahead for many of us. But we know what doesn't work in communicating about low-carbon ways of living: Sacrifice and guilt stories. Blaming individuals.

You could be turning to us for help. This toolkit draws on evidence and research in climate change communications and on the expertise of a panel of policymakers.

So, what can you expect? With the toolkit, you can:

- Try out six different narratives that tell the story of 1.5-Degree Lifestyles.
- Find out the latest research and evidence.
- Compare the evidence with current EU commitments and action.
- Explore tips on what to say and what not to say.
- Discover principles for effective and trusted communication.
- Learn to speak with policymakers from across the political spectrum.
- Link to the concerns and values of those you talk with.
- Respond effectively to counter-arguments.

This toolkit aims to help you strengthen your climate action by making the policy case for 1.5-Degree Lifestyles. Dive in, experiment with communicating, and let us know what you discover!

Check out more on our website at

<https://1point5lifestyles.zoe-institut.de>.

- Discover policy opportunities for advancing 1.5-Degree Lifestyles, and examples.
- Connect with us and with others.

“To achieve [1.5-Degree Lifestyles], the mindsets and narratives of people will have to be changed both through mobilising education and culture, and through changing the way this story [of lifestyle change] is told.”

– Panelist at a ZOE Policy Lab



Key takeaways



Defining 1.5-Degree Lifestyles

We define 1.5-Degree Lifestyles³ as sustainable ways of living that are aligned with the 1.5-Degrees Celsius (°C) target set under the Paris Agreement on climate change. The 1.5°C target reflects the level of ambition that is scientifically determined as necessary for societal transformation.

Although it is increasingly unlikely that we will reach the goal of keeping global temperature rise below 1.5°C unless rapid and concerted action is taken, the lifestyle target has been designated in keeping with the obligations that national governments have signed on to with the Paris Agreement.

The challenge is to rapidly transform to 1.5-Degree Lifestyles in ways that are inclusive and equitable and that ensure individual and societal wellbeing.

“Humans are the centre of global climate change... 1.5-Degree Pathways assume substantial changes in behaviour.”

– Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2018⁴

Summary of Talking Points

The following is the narrative arc summarising the key findings in this toolkit. Use this to shape how you talk with others about 1.5-Degree Lifestyles. This is a helpful overview that serves as a quick guide to the key points to make.



Find an explanation in the speech bubbles for why we include certain elements. Create your own version of this core narrative by drawing on the tips in this toolkit.

Establish the EU's own goal.

✦ The EU is strongly committed to delivering the 1.5-degree climate target.

Highlight how lifestyle and behaviour changes are required to achieve that goal.

✦ Expert opinion argues that this target cannot be achieved without a transformation to more sustainable ways of living.

Reinforce with a credible reference.

✦ The latest IPCC report highlights that lifestyle and behaviour changes – supported by policy, infrastructure, technological developments and regulations – can result in 40-70% reductions in demand-side greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Focus on the opportunity.

✦ Shifting to 1.5-Degree Lifestyles is an untapped opportunity to urgently achieve emission reductions.

Acknowledge the challenge.

✦ This is challenging and requires creative policy solutions. Yet it is entirely possible.



Use this blank space for your notes

Tap into the value of policy-makers to apply their skills to meaningful work.

✦ The skills and experience of policymakers (like you) are essential for achieving this.

Reinforce that promising models exist.
Emphasise co-benefits.

✦ There are excellent models for effective programmes that often bring wider co-benefits, especially for health, wellbeing and economic development

Note that this issue is aligned with the core aims and actions of the EU.

✦ The EU has always been concerned with improving people's quality of life – and sustainable lifestyles support multiple aspects of current policy, including education, childcare, energy, jobs and mobility.

Underline that this issue involves everyone and requires a cross-cutting EU response.

✦ Efforts towards achieving 1.5-Degree Lifestyles targets therefore can be integrated across EU economic, environmental and social policy.

Note that EU leadership wants action to grant permission to work on this issue.

✦ Leading members of the European Parliament and Commission have called for positive action to support sustainable lifestyles – as have senior policymakers and think tanks.

Reinforce with a quote to give legitimacy and urgency from the top.

✦ Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission President, noted in her 2020 State of the Union speech, “we need to change how we treat nature, how we produce and consume, live and work, eat and heat, travel and transport.”



Provide back-up so the policymaker can make the case to their own colleagues.

There are multiple reasons why you, as a policymaker, can support sustainable lifestyles

Link lifestyles to the objectives of the target policymaker.

Sustainable lifestyles are fundamental to achieving your departmental objectives.

Connect to values that the policymaker cares about.

Sustainable lifestyles reflect your values (recognising values on both the left and right of the political spectrum).

Highlight opportunities.

Sustainable lifestyles bring opportunity to your region.

Ground the argument in the policymaker's own context.

And they reinforce and support your national culture.

Point to the EU and global surveys that demonstrate people wanting to take action on climate in their own lives.

People are ready to live sustainably, and you can play a key role in helping them. In 2021, more than three-quarters of people in 24 countries say they want to consume less to preserve the environment for future generations.⁵



Don'ts

- ✗ **Don't ground arguments in a moral imperative** of what we “should do”, or our “responsibility” to change our life.
- ✗ **Don't individualise the problem** and blame people for not “choosing” to live low-carbon lives.
- ✗ **Don't use emotionally charged language** of guilt, fear, or shame, or suggest that policymakers are to blame for inactivity on climate action.
- ✗ **Don't speak from a single political or social perspective** that does not reflect the personal identity and values of the policymaker you engage.

Do's

- ✓ **Ground all arguments** in the existing climate targets.
- ✓ **Provide the strong policy context** that achieving European climate targets must include lifestyle considerations; that this is not an option but a requirement to meet our goals.
- ✓ **Encourage policymakers to see this as a stimulating challenge** requiring their skills and experience.
- ✓ **Be diplomatic in your language** and acknowledge the efforts that policymakers are already making in addressing climate change.
- ✓ **Tailor messaging to the personal concerns**, values and identity of individual policymakers.
- ✓ **Recognise the importance of trust.**
- ✓ **Talk about “standard of living”**, “quality of life” and “ways of living” as well as lifestyles and behaviour change.
- ✓ **Emphasise that improving people's ways of living** has always been a founding principle of the EU, and therefore sustainable lifestyles are not something new but are an inherent part of the institutional mission.
- ✓ **Actively seek out language and evidence** that sustainable lifestyles are a progressive social improvement cutting across a wide range of policy objectives including health, economy, agriculture, transport, housing, consumer rights and resilience.



Orient yourself with this list of Do's and Don'ts when you are talking about 1.5 Degree Lifestyles

Don'ts

- ✗ **Don't frame the conversation only in environmental terms;** avoid using environmentalist framing such as “eco” and “planet”.
- ✗ **Don't present 1.5-Degree Lifestyles as a radical change** in behaviour or a diminishment in living standards or traditional cultures.
- ✗ **Don't frame 1.5-Degree Lifestyles in messaging and visuals** in terms of aspirational luxury products or buildings that are beyond the means of people on low incomes.

Do's

- ✓ **Emphasise that many existing and traditional lifestyles** already embody 1.5-degree principles, especially in terms of rural sustainability, shared transport and traditional diets. 1.5-degrees can therefore be seen as an extension of existing patterns and a validation and reinforcement of established cultures and local communities.
- ✓ **Present sustainable lifestyles as being readily accessible** and viable for people of all income groups.
- ✓ **Emphasise the economic advantages of low-carbon lifestyles,** especially for people on lower incomes, and for supporting local businesses and local communities.
- ✓ **For culturally sensitive issues, present lifestyle change as a reasonable moderation and balance.** For example, the benefits of shifting to more plant-based diets can be argued in terms of reducing excess consumption of junk food and meat, while encouraging only occasional traditional meat eating as special and appreciated.
- ✓ **Adapt your language to the context** and make strategic choices about which terms and phrases you use.



Orient yourself with this list of Do's and Don'ts when you are talking about 1.5 Degree Lifestyles

Summary: six promising narratives



Draw on any of these six promising storylines to communicate with policymakers about 1.5-Degree Lifestyles. The storylines build on key values and metaphors to engage your audience. These are the summaries – you can pull directly from the full descriptions found in the storylines section below.





Narrative 1

Balance and Connection

Advancing a society that restores our balance with nature, builds community and fosters fulfilling meaningful lives for everyone.

Values

fulfilment, community, equity, nature stewardship



Narrative 2

Mature Innovation

Supporting sustainable living through cutting-edge creativity that offers people “better” rather than “more.”

Values

fulfilment, security, community, equity, nature stewardship



Narrative 3

Security and Comfort

Creating good stable ways of living that foster resilience, energy savings and independence; avoid waste; and run on clean renewable energy.

Values

security, nature stewardship



Narrative 4

Health and Quality of Life

Nurturing full thriving lives for everyone in a society that cares and that puts health, wellbeing and communities first.

Values

fulfilment, community, equity



Narrative 5

Locality and Identity

Sustainable living is nothing new – it’s what we have always done in [your country] and we can learn from and promote our traditional ways of living.

Values

tradition, community, identity



Narrative 6

Leadership

A key European Union aim is to promote the values and wellbeing of its citizens. The EU pioneers bold policy to enable sustainable ways of living and inspires other regions to do the same.

Values

fulfilment, community, equity, nature stewardship, responsibility, security, tradition

Toolkit Structure



You can explore this toolkit in any order. Jump to the section that is useful or sparks your interest! You can also take the journey we designed.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Key TakeAways & Guide to this Toolkit	What is needed? Research on 1.5 Degree Lifestyles	EU Commitment, Actions and Gaps	Effective Communication & Linking to Values	Six Narratives Balance & Connection Mature Innovation Security & Comfort Health & Quality of Life Locality & Identity Leadership	How? Build trust, Respond to counter-arguments, next steps
→	→	→	→	→	→
	Start with the latest research and evidence. Find out what’s needed to achieve 1.5-Degree Lifestyles.	Compare this with what the EU is already committed to and doing. Explore the gaps.	Equip yourself to talk about 1.5-Degree Life-styles. Learn principles for effective communication. Speak to the values of policymakers.	Next, dive into the heart of the toolkit. Test six promising narratives to talk about lifestyles.	End with the how: engaging in a trusted way, responding to counter-arguments, and next steps.

Toolkit methodology

The development of this toolkit draws on the latest research on 1.5-Degree Lifestyles and effective climate communications, and on insights from the advisory group of experts. It is also informed by conversations with a communications working group, and through a scan of official EU documents.

The working group met three times between May 2021 and January 2022 and was composed of 13 mid- to high-level policymakers from various Directorate-Generals in the European Commission (DG AGRI, DG CLIMA, DG R&I, DG GROW, JRC, DG EMPL) as well as representatives of the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the OECD. The conversations within this trusted space enabled us to get insights into the core values and to find out which narratives resonate with the policymakers.

We conducted a framing scan of 17 official EU documents and speeches. The Public Interest Research Centre's (2018)⁶ methodology was adapted to identify the interpretive frames that are currently in place.



Section 2

Research and EU Gaps



What is Needed: 1.5-Degree Lifestyles research insights



With every day that passes, the world inches closer towards exceeding the 1.5-degree climate threshold. As emissions return to pre-pandemic levels, the global carbon budget for staying within 1.5-degrees of temperature rise will be exhausted even before 2030. The current EU average carbon footprint of 8.2 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂eq)⁷ per person is far beyond the level required to remain within the carbon budget.⁸ To achieve the necessary rapid emission reductions, Europe has to complement the deployment of renewable energy and efficiency improvements with deeper transformations.

“Whilst the destination of a sustainable and fair society may be clear, the pathway to get there will be tough and very hard work. Don’t create the illusion with people that it’s going to be easy. If you tell them it’s going to be easy now, they will be disappointed later. Better prepare them for what is going to be a tough transition. We need everyone to come along, we need everyone to do their part.”

— Frans Timmermans, Vice-President,
European Union, 9 June 2021⁹

An essential part of this transformation is addressing dominant lifestyles and consumption patterns. Achieving the 1.5-degree target requires **scaling down the per capita emissions related to household consumption to 2.5 tonnes of CO₂eq by 2030 and 0.7 tonnes of CO₂eq by 2050.**¹⁰

Humanity faces many reinforcing crises: a climate and ecological emergency, biodiversity loss, inflation and rising costs of living, polarisation, war and social injustice. At the same time, a window of opportunity is opening: the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the growing will-power for ambitious climate action and social justice, and the call for energy independence create a unique context for systemically transforming our ways of living.

The following are key insights from research to guide communications and action.¹¹

Lifestyle changes are required to achieve 1.5-Degree climate targets.

- **Households account (directly and indirectly) for 72% of greenhouse gas emissions.**¹² As the IPCC states, lifestyle changes represent an untapped potential for shifting demand for energy and resources through behavioural and cultural changes, along with technological and supply-side solutions:

“Lifestyle and behaviour changes supported by policy, infrastructure and technological developments can result in 40-70% reductions in demand-side greenhouse gas emissions by 2050... Demand-side mitigation response options are consistent with improving basic wellbeing for all.”

— IPCC, 2022¹³

- **Food, mobility, and housing**, with the latter also including heating/cooling and electrical appliances, are all central for the way we live. **The key consumption areas with the highest climate relevance are interconnected and need to be addressed in a holistic manner.**

Deep and rapid transition is needed at the level of systemic change.

- **The reduction path is steep.** According to the report by the Hot or Cool Institute on 1.5-Degree Lifestyles, the lifestyle-related carbon footprints of the highest emitters in developed countries have to decline 80-93% by 2050, with emissions reducing around

7% annually from now on and halving by 2030.¹⁴ This is reflected in Figure 1 in which lifestyle carbon emissions need to fall from 4.6 tonnes per capita per year to 0.7 by 2050. This is beyond voluntary action, nudging or incremental change.¹⁵

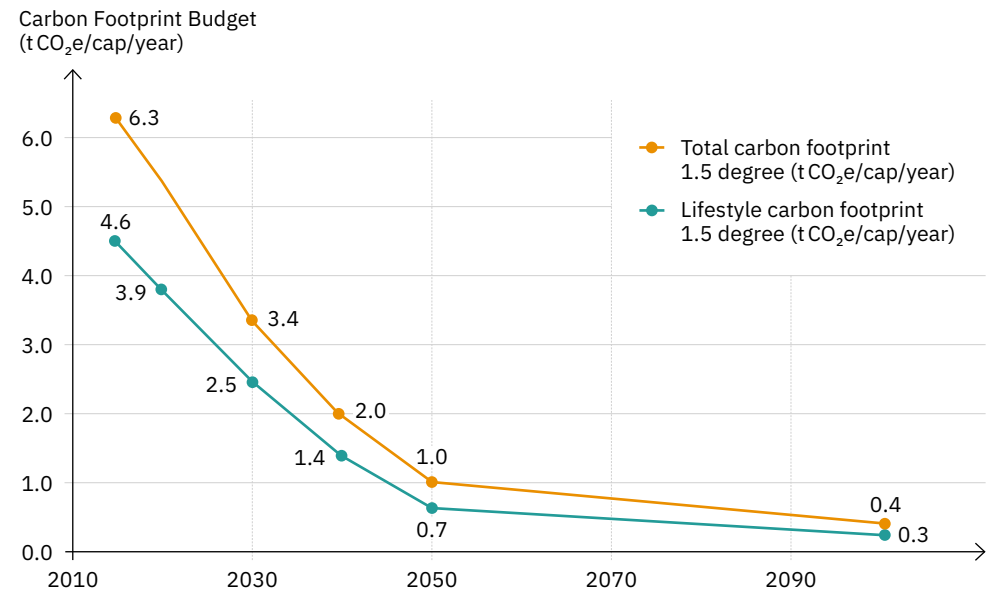


Figure 1: Lifestyle carbon footprint compatible with 1.5-degree target

Source: Hot or Cool Institute (2021) 1.5-Degree Lifestyles: Towards a Fair Consumption Space for All.

- **The transition to 1.5-Degree Lifestyles requires systemic change**, including a strengthening of enabling infrastructures and living environments, and a phase-out of fossil fuel infrastructures.

Wellbeing is at the heart.

- **Our ways of living need to build community and ecological wellbeing.** Instead of measuring societal progress based on continuous growth in the use of materials and energy, we should instead measure progress based on the ability for everyone to live a decent and meaningful life within the means of the Earth's living systems.¹⁶

Context and policies shape our ways of living.

- **Our lives are shaped by our context.** We know that living sustainably is not just a matter of personal choices. Individual lifestyle behaviours depend on institutional settings, cultural frameworks, infrastructures and political-institutional frameworks. A public transit system supports us taking the bus rather than driving our car. Plant-based options in stores and restaurants allow us to swap meat for other protein sources. Renewable energy systems help us heat our homes in low-carbon ways.
- **Calls for protecting individual freedoms hide the pivotal role of governments in framing the societal and cultural contexts that shape people's ways of living.** Neo-classical economics reinforces the notion that governments should not intervene in individual lives because people always act out of self-interest to maximise their utility. Consumption preferences are taken as given. This assumption

disguises the pivotal role of governments in framing the societal contexts in which people, households and communities consume, and that shape individual preferences.

- **Stand-alone consumer power is limited because consumer decisions are conditioned by what is available, and are incentivised by governments.**¹⁷ For example, governments have been subsidising airline industries and investing heavily in airline infrastructure.¹⁸ As a result, domestic flights are often substantially cheaper than the equivalent journey by train.
- **Government policies shape individual choices and daily practices.** Consequently, governments need to assume a central role in shaping consumer choices towards sustainable lifestyles. The successful example of the tobacco industry sets a historical precedent. The substantial decline in individual use of cigarettes since the beginning of the 2000s was not solely due to individual choices.¹⁹ Changes in individual choices were framed by government policies, such as raising taxes on tobacco products and implementing legislation to control smoking in public spaces.²⁰
- **Don't individualise the problem.** People's actions add up, but our individual actions are limited and are often "locked-in", giving the individual little room for manoeuvring. Transforming our ways of living is really about changing our culture, policies, economics, markets and infrastructures. We can still place people at the heart. Bold policy-making and business solutions require the support and involvement of people in all their roles: as citizens, consumers, voters, workers, parents, volunteers, community members, etc.

Who is responsible? Governments, business, people and communities.

- **Lifestyle changes are a joint responsibility, with government and business taking the lead reinforced by the active involvement and support of people and communities.** People and their communities identify climate as a priority and call for action.²¹ This provides the social mandate for transformative climate policies, which in turn incentivise businesses to develop low-carbon options, both of which enable low-carbon behaviours by people and reinforce climate concern and action.

Sufficiency and better living are possible by living well with enough.

- **Technology alone will not fix our climate and other ecological challenges of resource scarcity, pollution and biodiversity loss. We need to avoid and reduce carbon- and energy-intensive consumption and create a culture of sufficiency.**²² Efficiency gains that technology provides are not keeping pace with the demand of growing population and expanding consumption.
- **Life is about more than what we consume.** Our relationships, health, trust within our community, sense of purpose and meaning, belonging, joy, education, time and social connection are central to living happy, healthy lives.²³

- **This is beyond the greening of consumption: it's about better living.** Research on fundamental human needs reveals that our needs extend beyond food, water and shelter to other needs including protection, affection, understanding, participation in society, creation, identity, idleness and the freedom to choose.²⁴ We need to create compelling visions of fulfilling lives lived within the means of the Earth that are based on common values.

Equitable, inclusive and fair transitions are essential.

- **The most significant determinant of a person's carbon footprint is income.**²⁵ Today, the richest 10% of the global population is responsible for almost half of total consumption-related emissions, while the poorest 50% accounts for only about 10%.²⁶ The high-consuming individuals have a significant opportunity to achieve demand-side climate mitigation.²⁷
- **To be effective in tackling greenhouse gas emissions, climate policies need to be explicitly designed in a way that is fair, equitable and inclusive.**²⁸ To be equitable, these policies should strengthen the prospects of the most vulnerable groups to live a good life while reducing the carbon-intensive consumption patterns of high-income groups. This is also about centring decision-making power in inclusive ways and providing marginalised populations with access.

Our ways of living are diverse and change over time.

- **There are many ways to live 1.5-Degree Lifestyles.** There is no universal sustainable way of living. It varies across people and countries in their vastly different places, contexts, and communities and across their different needs and aspirations. 1.5-Degree Lifestyles can be wide-ranging and diverse, as long as they stay within ecological boundaries.
- **Our ways of living change over time.** People grow up, move homes and jobs, become parents, retire, etc. They start new chapters in their lives – sometimes by choice and sometimes by necessity. Societies and communities change, too. These changes bring different opportunities and different perspectives. Key life changes are unique windows of opportunities for supporting shifts to 1.5-Degree Lifestyles as habits and behaviours are already in flux.²⁹

People are ready for change.

- **More than 70% of 30,000 people surveyed by GlobeScan in 24 countries are strongly or very strongly interested in consuming less to preserve the environment for future generations.**³⁰ This concern about overconsumption has increased since 2019, particularly during the pandemic.
- **Many people recognise that significantly changing the way we live is required to address climate change.** In a November 2021

study by the Cardiff University Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformation, between 65% and 82% of people across Brazil, China, Sweden and the United Kingdom (UK) agreed that “to tackle climate change we as a society need to drastically change the way we live and how society operates.”³¹

- A Eurobarometer study from May 2022 highlights that a great majority of Europeans are willing to take action in the face of the ongoing geopolitical and energy market crises related to the conflict in Ukraine. More than half of respondents said they are ready to switch off lights when they leave rooms (73%), unplug unused electronic devices (61%) and reduce room temperature (52%), while 44% of Europeans are ready to use alternatives to private cars, such as walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing.³²

To tackle climate change we as society need to drastically change the way we live and how society operates ...



Changes are possible.

- **Inspiring examples exist of effective large-scale behaviour change initiatives.** These include long-term electricity savings in Japan³³, in Juneau (Alaska, US)³⁴ and in Brazil³⁵; and reduction in wasted food in the UK.³⁶
- **To reach critical mass, we only need 25% of the population to change viewpoints.**³⁷ This is not the elite, but it is about a quarter of the population that are consistently changing their behaviour and influencing others.
- **Governments and businesses are able to take bold policy and market action when they have a strong social mandate from people to do so.**³⁸ We can instigate a positive feedback cycle through the active engagement and buy-in of citizens.

Policy ideas for transitioning towards equitable and sustainable ways of living

Do you want to find out which policy instruments have great potential to get our societies on track to meet the 1.5-degree target while improving wellbeing and equity?

Check out the following ZOE Institute resources:

- Sustainable Prosperity Database, an open-source database with ideas for transformative policy options:
<https://sustainable-prosperity.eu>
- 1.5-Degree Lifestyles website, where you can find concrete policy recommendations for equitable 1.5-degree lifestyles:
<https://1point5lifestyles.zoe-institut.de>
- Policy Brief on Equitable 1.5-Degree Lifestyles:
<https://1point5lifestyles.zoe-institut.de/equity>
- Policy Brief on Housing in a Climate-Neutral Europe:
<https://1point5lifestyles.zoe-institut.de/housing>

See also the Energy Sufficiency Policy Database, which compiles and categorises numerous sufficiency policy instruments for all sectors, collected from various sources:

<https://energysufficiency.de/en/policy-database-en>

The critical role of lifestyle changes in delivering on EU climate policy

The EU is committed to achieving ambitious climate targets. Lifestyle changes are an important part of becoming climate neutral in Europe.

The EU is determined to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. As part of the European Green Deal, with the European Climate Law and the Fit for 55 package, the EU has put in place ambitious climate targets and comprehensive legislative initiatives to support the green transformation in all policy areas.

The targets of **achieving climate neutrality by 2050** and **reducing net greenhouse gas emissions at least 55% by 2030** are clearly defined at the European level; what remains unclear is how to get there. As illuminated above, the science is very clear: **a transition to sustainable lifestyles is indispensable for achieving these targets.**

EU policies already define and shape lifestyles.

The EU has a long history of shaping consumers' rights around the four fundamental freedoms that are the cornerstones of the European Single Market: i.e., the unrestricted movement of goods, services, capital and persons. As part of EU consumer policy, empowering consumers and effectively protecting their safety and economic interests have become essential goals of EU policy. Thus, improving the way that people live has always been a central



concern for EU policy, especially around health, housing, mobility and economic opportunities. So, **sustainable lifestyles can be integrated into a strong existing policy framework.**

Under the European Green Deal, changes towards more sustainable production and consumption patterns are already under way. But major gaps remain.

With the Fit for 55 package, the **EU is already doing good and important work** in this area, as shown below. However, there are also some **serious gaps that need to be addressed**. For example, it is indispensable to couple current legislative efforts with socio-cultural and structural changes to achieve the necessary changes in the ways of living. Likewise, targeting the luxury consumption of high-income groups provides a wide window of opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In this section, we highlight the gaps that have emerged in comparison to the key research insights and based on our framing analysis, and show ways in which EU policy can address these gaps.

EU climate targets

The EU has two strong climate targets:

1) Achieving net domestic reduction of at least 55% in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 levels by 2030 (legally bound by the European Climate Law) and **2) Achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.**

To achieve these targets, the **EU determined a roadmap to carbon neutrality by 2050**. This can be found in the European Green Deal.³⁹ The important legislation of the European Green Deal is regrouped in the Fit for 55 legislative package. The **Fit for 55 package** has three important aims:

1. expanding the European Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) to other carbon-intensive sectors of the economy (maritime sector, road transport, buildings) by 2025;
2. targeting 40% renewable energy in all EU Member States by 2030; and
3. ensuring that the agriculture, transport and buildings sectors cut at least 30% of their greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.⁴⁰

Current EU policies are not sufficient to achieve the necessary emission reductions.

The EU has one of the highest environmental standards in the world. With the European Green Deal and the Fit for 55 package, the EU is a world pioneer in climate action. However, with revived economic growth post COVID-19, planned climate policies would result in emission reductions of less than 36% below 1990

levels, at around 3.1 gigatonnes of CO₂eq; this is only slightly better than the levels observed in 2020.⁴¹

As shown in Figure 2, this scenario is far off from the emission reduction targets of a 55% reduction from 1990 levels by 2030 and complete decarbonisation by 2050. It remains to be seen whether the Fit for 55 package is sufficient to initiate the change necessary for 1.5°C compatibility.

2024 will be a decisive moment to achieve the 1.5-degree course.

The current von der Leyen Commission has set the course towards 1.5-Degree compatibility with the EGD and the associated Fit for 55 package, as explained above. The scientific findings make it clear that the current climate policy must not lose ambition, but on the contrary must be accelerated. Providing a strong policy framework for sustainable lifestyles has enormous potential to contribute to the achievement of climate goals.

The preparation phase for MEPs and new candidates for the European election in May 2024 has already begun. This election will be crucial for achieving the EU's climate commitments. As a candidate for the European Parliament elections in 2024, you will find key insights below how the current EU policy framework can be strengthened to enable equitable and sustainable lifestyles for EU citizens. This toolkit also provides you with practical communication tips and insights and creative narratives to tell the story of sustainable lifestyles. Solid arguments about the scientific findings about this issue can help to persuade in difficult conversations.

Sustainable lifestyles: a crucial component

To reach the 1.5-degree target, systemic and infrastructural changes are needed in EU food, housing and mobility systems.

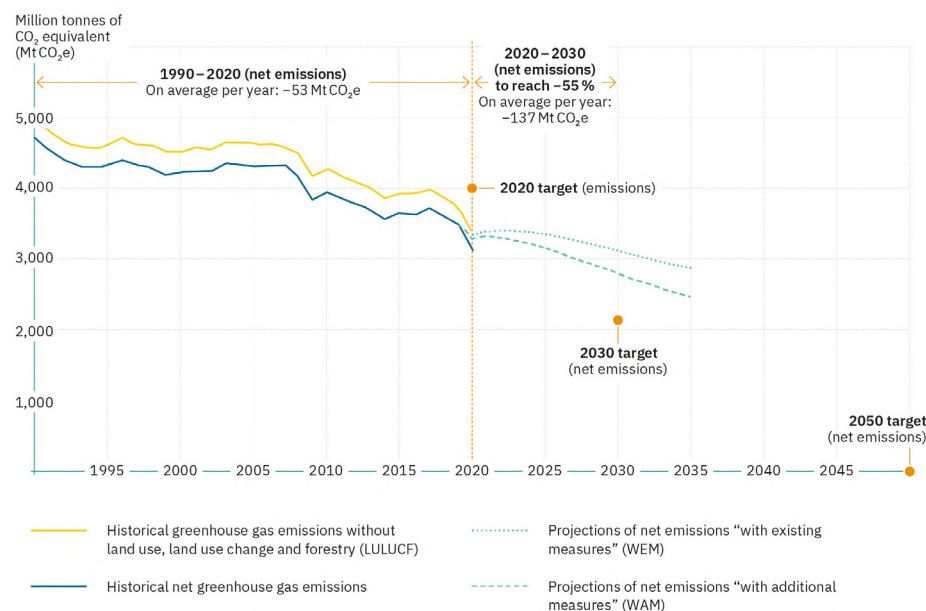


Figure 2: The rate of the emission reductions ahead in the EU

Source: Förster et al. (2021)⁵⁸

The EU currently has an average carbon footprint of 8.2 tonnes of CO₂eq per person.⁴² This is far beyond the level required to remain within the carbon budget compatible with the 1.5-degree target⁴³. **To sufficiently reduce average carbon footprints, the EU must scale down per capita emissions related to household consumption to 2.5 tonnes of CO₂eq by 2030 and 0.7 tonnes of CO₂eq by 2050.**⁴⁴

Lifestyle carbon footprints of the highest emitters in rich countries must decline by 80-93% by 2050, reducing around 7% per year from now on and halving emissions by 2030.⁴⁵ This will have profound effects on what and how individuals and societies consume, particularly when it comes to food, housing and mobility.⁴⁶

Leading EU politicians and current EU policies recognise the importance and potential of lifestyle change as part of climate action.

To achieve these goals, **consumption-based carbon footprints will have to fall from a European average of 8.6 tonnes of CO₂eq⁴⁷ to an average of 2.5 tonnes of CO₂eq by 2030.**⁴⁸ The hotspot areas of food, housing and mobility are particularly significant, collectively accounting for around 75% of consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions.⁴⁹

That lifestyle changes are indispensable for achieving the targets of the European Green Deal is well recognised by leading politicians and policymakers. As we note above, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has noted, *“we need to change how we treat nature, how we produce and consume, live and work, eat and heat, travel and transport.”*⁵⁰

The necessity of lifestyle changes is also recognised in the REPowerEU plan to accelerate the EU’s clean energy transition and increase Europe’s energy independence:

*“The latest IPCC report highlights that **changes to our lifestyles and behaviour can help significantly lower our energy consumption.**”*⁵¹

Lifestyle changes also have direct economic benefits. Due to their low cost of implementation and their downward pressures on energy prices, models in the European Commission’s long-term strategy in 2018 projected that the **costs of the green transition can be decreased by one-third when substantial lifestyle changes are taken into account.**⁵²

EU policy to promote lifestyle change cannot rely solely on individual action based on voluntary behaviour. It requires infrastructural changes and adequate policy framing.⁵³

While motivating behavioural change through active mobility and the shift to public transport (as foreseen in REPowerEU’s “Energy Save” Plan) is a good and necessary first step, systemic approaches that go beyond voluntary actions are needed to ensure long-term effects.

With the Fit for 55 package, the EU has created a policy framework for the transition to more sustainable practices in the areas of food, housing and mobility.

The EU has set impressive precedence in its aims to alter average lifestyles towards sustainable consumption choices. These policies can be found in the section of the Fit for 55 package's lifestyle sectors: agriculture (food), mobility (transport) and buildings (housing).⁵⁴

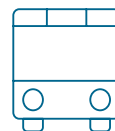
On top of this, the European Commission's REPowerEU plan motivates national initiatives, notably in the areas of transport and buildings, to reduce energy consumption and includes suggestions for improvements to the Fit for 55 package to save energy. The major legislation yet to be implemented in these three sectors is summarised below:



Agriculture

“Choice editing” policies: labelling sustainable foods, reducing VAT on sustainable products to make them cheaper, restricting advertising on high-carbon food items (see Farm2Fork strategy).

Supply-side policies: reducing the use of pesticides, promoting urban farming, providing direct support to farmers to increase value creation, internalising the cost of emissions in the production process (see Farm2Fork strategy and Common Agricultural Policy).



Transport

By 2030: 30 million zero-emission cars, high-speed rail traffic to double, scheduled collective travel for journeys under 500 km to be carbon-neutral, zero-emission marine vessels market-ready (see Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy).

By 2035: all vehicles to be zero-emission, rail freight traffic to double, fully operational Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) for sustainable and smart transport with high-speed connectivity (see Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy).



Buildings

Infrastructural changes: Renovating buildings with insulation, better heating/cooling systems, low-carbon electricity, greater use of renewables for heating buildings, more energy-efficient appliances (see EU Renovation Wave Groups).

Source: European Commission, “Farm to Fork strategy,” https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en; European Commission, “The CAP reform’s compatibility with the Green Deal’s ambition,” 20 May 2020, https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/news/cap-reforms-compatibility-green-deals-ambition-2020-05-20_en; European Commission, “Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy,” https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12438-Sustainable-and-Smart-Mobility-Strategy_en; European Commission, “Renovation Wave,” https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficient-buildings/renovation-wave_en.

The Fit for 55 policies are a crucial first step to achieve the 1.5°C aspirational target of the Paris Agreement; however, they will be insufficient to achieve the required target of reducing high-income footprints in the EU by 91-95% by 2050.⁵⁵

This is because current policies are framed in terms of individual action, and not yet with a holistic vision of what constitutes a sustainable lifestyle.⁵⁶ A sustainable lifestyle is a cluster of habits and patterns of behaviour embedded in a society and facilitated by institutions, norms and infrastructures that frame individual choice to minimise the use of natural resources and generation of wastes, while supporting fairness and prosperity for all.⁵⁷

Gaps and opportunities for the EU to advance 1.5-Degree Lifestyles



Policymakers must take the boldest and most transformative steps to bridge the emissions gap. We highlight three key policy considerations for EU policymakers.

Gap #1: Socio-cultural and structural changes for 1.5-Degree Lifestyles

Mass behavioural change is only possible if coupled with adequate policy framing. This is because demand-side mitigation policies facilitate mainstream sustainable living options.

The EU's Green Deal is based on "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."⁵⁹

Our framing scan of recent official EU documents highlights **that the Commission's current approach is primarily centred around efficiency, technological improvements and circularity.** Developing global infrastructure and supporting the green and digital transition is crucial to adequately address climate change. **It will, however, be insufficient to reach our global climate goals if not coupled with socio-cultural and structural changes in mass individual consumption.**⁶⁰




The EU's Farm2Fork Strategy adapts a socio-cultural and behavioural approach to mainstream more sustainable and healthier diets.


Socio-cultural changes mean that citizens are aware and act on sustainable living options cognisant of planetary health and human wellbeing – understanding decent living standards not

in terms of consumption but in terms of human needs.⁶¹ For example, climate policies comprising Farm to Fork lend themselves to this socio-cultural and behavioural approach.⁶²

Demand-side mitigation policies create cost incentives (reducing VAT on sustainable products) and raise awareness of the environmental and health impacts of food products (labelling sustainable foods, restricting advertising on high-carbon foods). This further shapes consumer behaviour in favour of sustainable and healthy plant-based options.

Socio-cultural and structural consumer editing policies are crucial if the EU is to achieve its climate targets, for four reasons:

- 1  They **provide adequate policy framing to impact mass consumption choices.** Behavioural choices that consume less energy make it easier for every sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the short and medium term.⁶³ Individuals can save immense amounts of carbon (as much as 15 billion tonnes by 2060) simply by forgoing air travel or avoiding meat.⁶⁴
- 2  In the current post-pandemic era, the resource efficiency agenda has fallen into the “joint-decision trap” of favouring status quo and incremental policies; however, socio-cultural behavioural policies **ensure that there is no loss of momentum in climate policies** (easy behavioural changes, long-term effects) and **open up the space for innovative approaches.**
- 3  Socio-cultural and behavioural changes towards a sustainable living model are **linked to better and healthier living for EU citizens.**⁶⁵

- 4  The **shift in behavioural policy is in line with what people want.** According to recent consumer research, 70% of people in middle-high income countries believe overconsumption is putting our planet and society at risk.⁶⁶ Governments need to change the messages, change the incentives, internalise costs and ultimately change the consumption logic of the economy itself, to align with the change that people are yearning for.

Gap #2: Just and equitable 1.5-Degree Lifestyle policies

Income is the primary determinant of greenhouse gas emissions.⁶⁷ In the EU, there is a 6:1 gap between low-income and high-income groups: the poorest half emits about 5 tonnes of CO₂e per person, while the richest 10% emit about 30 tonnes of CO₂e per person.⁶⁸ On average, a person in the top 10% of the global income distribution earns €87,200 (\$122,100) per year.⁶⁹

Following the findings of Chancel, as expressed in per capita terms, the low-income groups in most European countries have almost reached the 55% reduction target for 2030 (Figure 3).⁷⁰ Middle and high-income groups are, however, well behind in achieving set climate targets.

Current EU strategies miss deep equity considerations. There are gaps in EU strategies to support low-income groups and in designing lifestyle policies that focus on people’s basic needs. There is also a lack of EU policies that tackle luxury emissions.

The European Green Deal recognises the importance of a just and inclusive transition given that the most vulnerable are also the most exposed to the harmful effects of climate change. However, there are **gaps in the EU's active procedure to support lower-income groups and in designing lifestyle policies that place the essential needs of people at the core.**⁷¹

Examples of this gap include the EU Renovation Wave in the buildings sector, which does not acknowledge potential impacts for lower-income groups. In theory, renovated buildings benefit

lower-income groups because they experience higher energy costs relative to income.⁷² However, in practice, there are risks that landlords take advantage of renovations and increase rents for residents, meaning that this group is likely to be displaced. As such, a policy framework is needed to ensure that energy-smart buildings are accessible to lower-income groups.

In addition, there is a **lack of EU policies that tackle luxury emissions and thereby address the potential of the wealthiest groups in society to contribute significantly to climate change mitigation.** It is crucial that these gaps be filled and that justice and equity (by tackling the lifestyle habits of the wealthiest 10%) are given priority in EU climate policy.⁷³

Just and equitable climate policies are crucial if the EU is to achieve its climate targets, for many reasons. Here are two:

- 1 **Targeting the luxury emissions of high emitters will not have negative repercussions on meeting essential human needs.** As the IPCC states, climate action needs to be focused on reducing the consumption and mobility of top 10% polluters by exploring the good life consistent with sustainable consumption.⁷⁴
- 2 **It will ensure strong political action needed to achieve EU climate targets.** This is because **one-size-fits-all homogenous climate policies create the risk of societal backlash** (e.g., “gilets jaunes” backlash in France), which disincentivises strong and fast climate action.⁷⁵ Designing and implementing climate policies that target the luxury consumption of high-income groups provides a wide window of opportunity for greenhouse gas emission reduction in the EU.

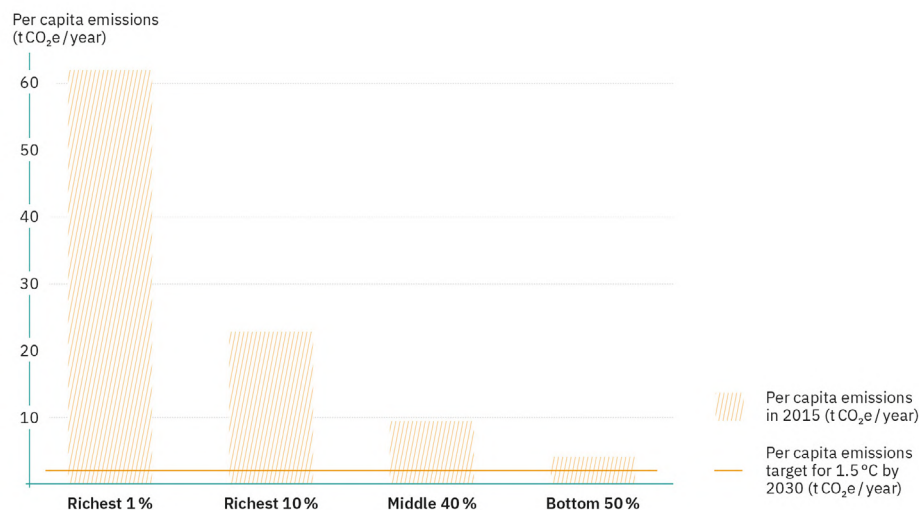


Figure 3: Carbon emissions by income group in the EU

Source: S. Tomany et al. (2021) based on Oxfam (2020)⁸⁰

Gap #3: Context-adapted 1.5-Degree Lifestyle policies

Current EU strategies do not take into account the diversity of sustainable lifestyles according to socio-cultural and geographical context.

Sustainable lifestyles are shaped by local contexts. **To have effective lifestyle policies, it is crucial to understand the environmental impacts of consumers' behaviours in their adequate context.** For example, universal climate policies that promote the use of electric vehicles may not be sustainable in some regions where the electricity grid is based primarily on coal-fired power.⁷⁶ The framing scan conducted by the ZOE team for this toolkit highlights that European Commission documents often omit a diversity of actors and contexts. Instead they use universal and broad categories such as Member States, citizens or consumer when designing and implementing climate-related policies. These categories, however, condition policies to a vision of a universal sustainable lifestyle that does not exist.⁷⁷

In this sense, it is important that lifecycle assessments are evaluated when designing climate policies so that they can be implemented in a context-appropriate and effective manner. Climate policies are a roadmap and not a blueprint. They are “an extended open hand to [...] be a part of the discussion of how we are going to reorganise our society in a just way, so that it reflects the values we stand for”.⁷⁸

Transformative impulses from the top, coupled with bottom-up approaches in decision-making processes, ensure context-appropriate climate policies.

Inviting the active engagement of different groups into the decision-making process can be an effective strategy to motivate people to transition towards sustainable lifestyles. The EU has been taking important, yet incremental, steps in this direction.

Examples include the European Bauhaus project, an initiative that was launched by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. This initiative benefits from a “mission framing” from the top level and sparks bottom-up, creative and interdisciplinary approaches. In this way, the project aims to bring people together to co-create and help build sustainable, inclusive and aesthetically pleasing living spaces.⁷⁹

A limited number of projects adopting a similar approach exist at present. As such, bottom-up and context-appropriate approaches to designing and implementing climate policies provide a wide range of opportunities for greenhouse gas emission reductions in the EU.

Section 3

Effective Communication



How to be a good communicator: principles that work

Understand existing attitudes

All communication has a starting point: what people already believe and their readiness to accept new information challenges. As far as possible (and appropriate), communication should validate the existing attitudes of your audience and show that climate action builds on and reinforces those attitudes.⁸¹

Actively seek out and evaluate existing attitudes. This can be done through formal research, structured interviews or informal conversations. However, remember that every interaction is an opportunity to learn more about existing attitudes. For example (see below for recommendations for being a trusted communicator), ensure that you ask questions and listen without judgement to the persons you are engaging with about their views and concerns. Some interactions are more valuable for gauging opinion than for changing opinion, so be prepared to go into listening mode.

Use your analysis of existing attitudes to identify strategic targets—people who will be sympathetic to your messages, or who may have the strongest affinity with your objectives.

Start with people's values and identity

A large and growing evidence base consistently shows that values and identity have a deep and profound influence on attitudes⁸²

– this is as true for policymakers as for any other member of the general public. Therefore, good communication should respect and validate people's existing values, recognising and reflecting diversity in values, particularly around political worldview. Policymakers should be encouraged to reflect on how actions on lifestyles are consistent with their wider values.

In the EU, regional identity also plays a major role in attitudes and policies. Good communications shows how sustainable lifestyles can protect and build regional cultural identity.

Use the power of stories

Carefully select your words and language. There are no “magic words” that transform disinterest into passionate concern. However, carefully constructed narratives can connect across the political spectrum, using words and language that are inclusive (rather than alienating) and framing messages in terms of people's values.

Include stories from “people like me.” Anecdotal accounts from peers are powerful. Stories about how “people like me” are changing their ways of life convey a social norm that can lead to wider change, as well as build a sense of confidence and self-efficacy in being able to have an impact.⁸³

Use this analysis to hone your messaging for specific audiences.

Build messaging around existing attitudes – and where possible, reiterate and repeat existing attitudes and reinforcing stories.

Speak to the different interests and concerns of different audiences

Rather than just using environmental words and images, appeal to other contexts surrounding people's lives. Issues such as health, economic security, and easing the pace and complexity of life are powerful entry points for engaging people.⁸⁴

This is especially valuable where there are co-benefits – for example, arguing how sustainable lifestyles can achieve other objectives – such as health, comfort or security – for which there is strong established support. For example, convey that low-carbon dietary and transport choices are often also healthier, and that low-carbon infrastructure and housing (in terms of insulation and clean heating) can result in a better quality of life.

Integrate with all policy fields and engage across departments

Reinforce the message that climate change is an overarching issue. It is important to reiterate that climate change is not only an environmental issue, but that it crosses all policy areas.

Policy engagement should not be limited to the obvious areas of environment and energy, but should extend across all departments and policies, and bridge them.

Use imagery and case studies to tell powerful stories

Share examples. Although policy language is often dry, technical, and numeric, policymakers and particularly parliamentarians are energised by practical examples and stories of implementation. This makes policy feel real and tangible.

Use good visuals. The “visual language” used to communicate lifestyles is also crucial. Good visuals can profile ordinary “relatable” people and show how sustainability can be integrated with and improve their lives. Visuals and stories should not focus on unusual, elite or ideological motivated groups.

Promote positive social norms and communicate through trusted messengers

Engage trusted messengers. People are far more likely to trust messages from people they perceive as “being like them”, and so trusted messengers are essential for effective communications. This toolkit contains advice for messengers on how to increase their authority and trustworthiness, and it may also be valuable to identify and recruit peer messengers, particularly for specialist policymakers.

In particular, policymakers are far more likely to respond and take action on sustainable lifestyles if they perceive that other policymakers are actively engaged. Therefore, good communications should always amplify and demonstrate the views of other policymakers and reveal how the issue is seen as important in a policy context.

Connect fully with people

Allow people to name and acknowledge their feelings – anxieties, ambivalence, aspirations, grief, hope, despair, joy and motivations.⁸⁵ Open up, be honest and have candid compassionate conversations. Recognise and celebrate people for their actions, while encouraging them to keep going.⁸⁶ It’s ok not to be perfect. Change isn’t easy. Strengthen people and connect them. It’s much easier doing this together. We need each other and need support.

Speaking to the values of policymakers

Values guide us when we are new to an issue. We link to what we already think about when we make important choices.

Values-led messaging is an effective approach for you to build support and engage people. You need to consider the full spectrum of values.⁸⁷

You can be effective in framing lifestyles when you:

- Lead with common values through values-led messaging.
- Build messaging and narratives that bridge to people's political values, especially centre-right values such as balance, security and stewardship of nature.
- Speak from a “values-up” rather than a “numbers-down” perspective – focus on values rather than statistics (see box on p. 41).
- Take a values approach to policymaking by identifying core values, and apply a values lens to policies and communication (see Joint Research Centre Values and Identities: A Policymakers Guide for more).⁸⁸

The following analysis of the values of policymakers is drawn from meetings with the EU policymaker working group for this project, and from over 20 interviews with senior policy makers in the European Commission and politicians in the European Parliament.⁸⁹

General values

There are a set of values that are widespread in society. However, not all values are equal: there is strong evidence⁹⁰ that people are most inclined to support climate policy when that policy is framed in terms of intrinsic and “self-transcending” values (e.g., health, fairness, protecting nature) rather than “self-enhancing” values (e.g., social recognition, personal wealth or ambition).⁹¹

Promising values you can tap into include:

- ▶ **Fulfilment** – a dignified, meaningful, fulfilling life.
- ▶ **Community** – a sense of belonging and interdependence with others.
- ▶ **Equity** – living in ways that are just and fair, and a recognition of our equal right to a good life and to equality of opportunity.
- ▶ **Identity** – aligning with our deeply held beliefs.
- ▶ **Nature stewardship** – living in balance with nature, with a responsibility and duty to protect what we love for future generations, and not be wasteful.
- ▶ **Responsibility** – living with respect for the wider community needs and concerns.
- ▶ **Security** – collective sense of comfort, safety and stability of society, community and the self.
- ▶ **Tradition** – valuing the routines, customs and beliefs of our culture extended over generations.

These general values also align with the six promising narratives to talk about lifestyles, as outlined in the next section.

Career values

Policymakers are highly educated, usually fluent in several languages, with an international perspective and a strong career path. Effective messaging should therefore speak to these values – validate the education, address transboundary and international impacts, and indicate how action on climate change, and life-style specifically is a growth area within which they can develop a specialty, a profile and a legacy.

Subject speciality

Policymakers work within specific themes and disciplines, which have their own culture and identity. Specialists in finance may have different concerns and values to those working in welfare. Consider the values and culture of the department and speciality of those you engage, and construct communications that validate and speak to those values.

National identity

The EU enshrines the importance of national identity and cultural divergences. Policymakers identify with their own country, even when they are working across Europe. Some will work with specific MEPs or delegations and be strongly focused on particular national outcomes. If you are a policymaker, consider in communications the way that certain policy measures will work (or not work) in your own national circumstances. Seek out examples from your own country or region.

Political identity

Repeated research has found that political identity has a strong influence on people's attitudes to climate change and their choice of climate solutions.⁹² Therefore, consider the political identity of your audience and look carefully for cues in their response and questions that indicate where their core political values might lie.

Generally speaking, people of progressive / left-wing values are more likely to be very concerned about climate change, more supportive of major government intervention and expenditure on the issue, and more concerned about the impact on social rights and equality.

People of conservative values are more likely to be sceptical of apocalyptic language, more optimistic about climate outcomes, and more supportive of technological and market-driven solutions. Powerful values for people on the political centre right include: balance, intergenerational duty, security, responsibility, health, integrity, duty to protect the environment, community well-being and fairness.⁹³

Values-up, rather than numbers-down: Facts and figures are not enough

Numbers on their own don't communicate a story. People have a hard time judging the size or meaning of numbers. It is not an either/or, but in general the ratio of numbers to narrative should be low. It's best to embed numbers in a story to tell what is happening and what can be done about the problem. We can instead lead with common values. When we approach people as seeking fulfilling meaningful lives, together with others, with responsibility and justice, and as caring stewards and protectors of the Earth, we tap into how they already think about making important choices in the world.

Source: A. Corner, G. Marshall and J. Clarke, 2016, Communicating Effectively with the Centre-Right About Household Energy-Efficiency and Renewable Energy Technologies, Climate Outreach, Oxford, <https://climateoutreach.org/reports/centre-right-renewable-energy>.



Six promising narratives to talk about lifestyles

We want narratives that support bold climate action. There is an EU commitment to supporting 1.5-Degree Lifestyles. The research insights provide a sense of the challenge and what is needed. You have an opportunity to communicate about climate action and emphasise the role of lifestyle solutions.



Try these six promising narratives we created to help you talk about sustainable ways of living. Share with us what you find!

These storylines combine insights from our discourse analysis, interviews, survey, and literature review, as well as our interactions with EU policymakers. They are also inspired by and draw on other framing and communications initiatives.





Narrative 1

Balance and Connection

Advancing a society that restores our balance with nature, builds community and fosters fulfilling meaningful lives for everyone.

Values

fulfilment, community, equity, nature stewardship



Narrative 2

Mature Innovation

Supporting sustainable living through cutting-edge creativity that offers people “better” rather than “more.”

Values

fulfilment, security, community, equity, nature stewardship



Narrative 3

Security and Comfort

Creating good stable ways of living that foster resilience, energy savings and independence; avoid waste; and run on clean renewable energy.

Values

security, nature stewardship



Narrative 4

Health and Quality of Life

Nurturing full thriving lives for everyone in a society that cares and that puts health, wellbeing and communities first.

Values

fulfilment, community, equity



Narrative 5

Locality and Identity

Sustainable living is nothing new – it’s what we have always done in [your country] and we can learn from and promote our traditional ways of living.

Values

tradition, community, identity



Narrative 6

Leadership

A key European Union aim is to promote the values and wellbeing of its citizens. The EU pioneers bold policy to enable sustainable ways of living and inspires other regions to do the same.

Values

fulfilment, community, equity, nature stewardship, responsibility, security, tradition



Narrative 1

Balance and Connection

Advancing a society that restores our balance with nature, builds community and fosters fulfilling meaningful lives for everyone

Values

fulfilment, community, equity, nature stewardship





Narrative 1

Balance and Connection

A good society supports everyone to live meaningful and fulfilling lives. It recognises the intimate interdependence we have with nature and each other.

We are not on that track. Our society and economies don't put the happiness of people in the centre. This is a story of separation from the Earth and from one another. On the current track, it is seen as normal to dominate nature and to extract and conquer for our benefit. We are in battle with each other and other life forms. The aim is growth at all costs. The impact is dangerous: we are destroying communities and the ecosystems that sustain us.⁹⁴

The weather is out of balance – we can see this clearly all around Europe, with seasons coming at unexpected times and extreme and unpredictable weather patterns. We need to restore that balance.

Instead of a life-destroying civilization, we can become a life-sustaining civilization.⁹⁵ We can restore our balance with nature and reconnect with each other. We can embrace a common reverence for life and for clean air and water.

On this track, we value a purposeful, happy life. We value healthy ecosystems. We value circular, restorative economies. We value strong policies that enable sustainable living. We value collective wellbeing in communities. We value co-operation. We build societies that are beautiful and enriched by art and culture.

Getting on this track means we need to rethink our whole societies – how we live and work, what we think of as the “good life” – in order to tackle the climate crisis.

This transition needs to be fair. Those with high-carbon lifestyles need to rein in harmful consumption so that everyone can live a dignified life

and meet their needs. More equal societies address social tensions and are more stable. Public acceptance of bold climate action increases.

The current distribution of emissions is fundamentally unfair. The richest 10% of the population is responsible for 50% of the greenhouse gas emissions released between 1990 and 2015. We need a balanced climate policy that is fair and that requires the more developed countries to take a proportionally larger role in reducing emissions, while supporting less-developed countries to adopt local carbon technologies as they develop and improve their standard of living.

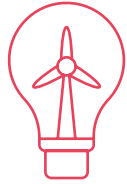
As policymakers, we need to have a balanced approach. It is important to ensure a balance across government, business and citizen action. Personal lifestyles are an essential component of a balanced approach that shares responsibility and agency.

Examples

“The New European Bauhaus initiative calls on all of us to imagine and build together a sustainable and inclusive future that is beautiful for our eyes, minds, and souls.” – European Union, 2019⁹⁶

“We need to strike an appropriate balance between affordable and safe energy, and efforts to combat climate change.”
– MEP Herbert Reul, 2013⁹⁷

“[The COVID-19 pandemic has] reignited the debate on what kind of economic growth is desirable, what actually matters for human wellbeing in a world of finite resources and on the need for new metrics to measure progress beyond GDP growth.”
– European Commission, Strategic Foresight Report, 2020⁹⁸



Narrative 2

Mature Innovation

Supporting sustainable living through cutting-edge creativity that offers people “better” rather than “more.”⁹⁹

Values

*fulfilment, security, community, equity,
nature stewardship*





Narrative 2

Mature Innovation

It's common sense to not be wasteful. Yet in the current "take-make-waste" linear economy, waste is the end point. We take raw materials from the Earth. We transform them into products for our everyday lives. We use them briefly and then throw them away. We can't keep this up on a planet with finite raw materials, energy and labour. We are living beyond our means.

Consumption is costing us more than we think. We are providing goods that break quickly or become obsolete. This makes daily life stressful and expensive. It has significant impacts both upstream and downstream by contributing to pollution, waste and carbon emissions.

We need innovation to redesign the way we provide goods and services for our lifestyles. Climate change impacts the way we travel, the food we eat, how we heat our homes, what we buy and how we live. This is a design challenge. We need leaders to get things done for the benefit of all.

We need demand-side solutions from both governments and companies that facilitate people to live sustainable lives. This means a second industrial revolution that is in harmony with nature. Together we can provide the energy, water and waste infrastructure that facilitate sustainable lifestyles. We can define the efficiency and size of buildings and homes. We can enable access to healthy food. Digital and green innovation can support these sustainable ways of living. We can inspire new aspirations of a meaningful life.

We hear it from young people. The youth climate movement is asking adults to behave as adults. They ask us to secure our common futures, conserve nature and be responsible. We raise children to not waste

things or consume too much. We have an opportunity to innovate to avoid harmful, excessive consumption, enabling us to have more options available for the future. We can innovate for "better" rather than "more." This innovation takes us beyond technical solutions and efficiency. It is about asking "how much is enough to live well?" and designing for sufficiency.

Sustainable living needs to be accessible, affordable and desirable. These big innovations are possible when we apply ourselves to support happier, healthier lifestyles for all.

Examples

"Our aim is to provide companies with a more positive view of what lifestyles could be like in the future, encouraging new ideas about how business can offer people 'better', rather than 'more'. A surplus of good, actionable ideas is essential in all progress."

– World Business Council for Sustainable Development, *The Future of Home*, 2019¹⁰⁰

"It takes a lot to afford the basics needed for life and there's pressure on top to keep up with trends and purchase new stuff. Products wear out or break faster than they should and it's back to square one with time and money wasted and lots of excess stuff to deal with. What we buy also has an impact we don't want. It's when products are produced that often the most pollution is created along with waste and the carbon emissions driving climate change. Consumption is costing us more than we think."

– Cara Pike, *Smart Shift: Communicating About Sustainable Consumption*, 2019¹⁰¹



Narrative 3

Security and Comfort

Creating good, stable ways of living that foster resilience, ensure energy savings and independence, avoid waste and run on clean renewable energy.¹⁰²

Values

security, nature stewardship

Other supportive values: resilient, reliable, stable, cleanliness



Effective communication



Narrative 3

Security and Comfort

We all seek lives of comfort and stability. Our community wellbeing and social order depend on reliable energy.

Fossil fuel energy provided this security over the past decades. Coal, oil and natural gas led to a prosperous era. These resources are now running out and are expensive and dangerous to extract. Energy supply is being weaponized. Russia is cutting gas supply to Europe. Europe needs to rapidly ensure strategic energy autonomy and European energy security.

Coal, oil and natural gas also pollute our air. Climate change is threatening what we love: our parks, fishing, fresh vegetables, an early morning coffee, a family meal.¹⁰³ Our health and our personal investments are at risk.

Energy supply from trusted sources is key. The priority is switching to renewable energy and less polluting options. This is the energy we need. It's common sense to harness energy that goes on forever – renewable energy from the sun, wind and waves. These local sources bring energy closer to home.

We can't be completely self-reliant. It makes sense to join forces in solidarity with each other and with other countries to make the energy transition possible. We must coordinate contingency measures and co-ordinate our efforts, as was seen in effective responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We can increase resilience by localising energy supply chains. These local supply chains also provide jobs in our community. By cutting gas use and transitioning to renewables we can safeguard supply to house-

holds and essential users like hospitals and key industries. If we take pre-emptive action before Russia potentially turns off the taps, the disruption will be managed and the economic shock will be contained.

As policymakers, we can also think about our own behaviour and that of our fellow citizens and ways we can contribute to our collective security. As you can imagine, switching our energy sources is not enough. We need to support living with fewer wasteful emissions. Energy savings means we make it safely through winters and avoid energy shortages. We can also cushion rising prices and address social tensions.

Reducing demand involves everyone. Public and private sectors have the greatest potential to consume less. Households can be supported by policy to play their role. Let's ensure that no household is left cold for the winter. As we protect private households and essential services from any rationing measures, the private sector will likely need to step up.

Policymakers play a key role in setting the context for all of us to live well within the Earth's limits. By being smart about curbing excessive consumption, we can have enough for everyone to live full, meaningful lives.

We can support getting back to the essence of a good life: buying the things we really need, supporting home-grown manufacturing, wasting less food and less energy in our houses and transport. There are many solutions to live good clean lives while still sustaining the natural systems we depend on.



Narrative 3

Security and Comfort

Warning

Be careful about over-emphasising energy independence and freedom that insulates a country from the rest of the world. This can reinforce self-serving nationalism and prejudice towards others.

Examples

“To make it through the winter, assuming that there is a full disruption of Russian gas, we need to save gas to fill our gas storages faster. And to do so, we have to reduce our gas consumption. I know that this is a big ask for the whole of the European Union, but it is necessary to protect us... The quicker we act, the more we save, the safer we are... I know that these are testing times. But we also know, by experience now and with the crisis that we have gone through, that testing times require that we are well organised, well coordinated on a European level, that we show strong unity and that we show solidarity.”

– European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Statement on the “Save Gas for a Safe Winter” Package, 2022¹⁰⁴

“From now on, I will ask public bodies and all companies that can to consume less. We will create a program and try to use lighting less in the evenings. We are launching a load reduction and sobriety program... We have to prepare for a scenario in which we have to give up Russian gas completely.”

– French President Emmanuel Macron, 2022¹⁰⁵

“Russia uses energy as she uses food, as a weapon of war... We have to prepare for a scenario of total gas cut-off by Russia... We are going to try to pay attention collectively, in the evening to the lights when they are useless, we are going to make a plan for the public administrations, we are going to make a sobriety plan in which we are going to ask all our compatriots to commit, and we are going to make a sobriety and load shedding plan – it is gas and electricity we are talking about here – with our companies... A plan means constraints, choices... We are already beginning to consume a little less than last year. It’s good to pass this course, it’s good for the climate and the independence of France... it is the hunt for waste.”

– French President Emmanuel Macron, 2022¹⁰⁶



Narrative 4

Health and Quality of Life

Nurturing full, thriving lives for everyone in a society that cares and that puts health, wellbeing and communities first.¹⁰⁷

Values

fulfilment, community, equity

Other supportive values: wellbeing, inclusion, care, nurturing





Narrative 4

Health and Quality of Life

Unchecked climate change and destruction of nature impact our health. They also threaten the health of our communities.

We suffer from increased risks of pandemics, asthma, heatstroke, allergies and anxiety. The health risks are highest among the most vulnerable, and our youngest and oldest people. They are highest among those who live in more polluted areas, often not by choice. We feel these impacts in our communities: poor air and water quality, litter, pollution, flooding, waste, loneliness.

There are practical steps we can take to care for our communities.¹⁰⁸ We can improve public transport. We can shape neighbourhoods to support walking and cycling. We can create welcoming public spaces and parks. We can reduce food waste and support plant-rich diets. We can support long-lasting, good-quality products and services. We can get off our addiction to fossil fuels and switch to less-polluting renewables for our energy. We can adapt to climate impacts such as flood risk. These actions improve our health and quality of life.

Our health depends on a healthy planet and on healthy ecosystem services. To heal the Earth, we must heal ourselves. We heal through strengthening our ability to sustain natural systems. We heal by restoring and nurturing connections in our community.

This is about a society that puts health and communities first. Our ultimate goal is not harmful growth but wellbeing and supporting full, thriving lives for all.

How to use this narrative

You can expect that this narrative resonates with people because of health concerns from the COVID-19 pandemic and because of concerns about the rising cost of living due to inflation.

Warning

You will need to expand the use of the word “wellbeing” beyond the health care sector. That is often the first connection that people make when they hear that word. In this context, you want to expand the concept to overall wellbeing as the goal of society.

Examples

“Every solution we offer creates a better, kinder, more fulfilling and compassionate life for humanity and all the creatures that inhabit our extraordinary home. In other words, there is no reason not to do them now. The economy of the future is the healing of the world, and that is regeneration... The current socioeconomic system is stealing the future – climatically, biologically, culturally, ethnically and generationally... Reversing degeneration is the only way we can regenerate climatic stability, social well-being, human health, biodiversity.”

– Paul Hawken, *Regeneration*, 2021¹⁰⁹

“The gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials... it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”

– Robert F. Kennedy on GDP, University of Kansas, 1968¹¹⁰



Narrative 5

Identity and Locality

Sustainable living is nothing new – it's what we have always done in [your country], and we can learn from and promote our traditional ways of living.¹¹¹

Values

tradition, community, identity





Narrative 5

Identity and Locality

Sustainable living is nothing new in our country. Historically, we have always cared for nature and our environment, as our survival depended on it. Our architecture, landscape and way of life have long been built around a careful use of resources and a close relationship with nature. In the past, meat was a luxury and many of our national dishes used fresh seasonal fruit and vegetables.

There is much we can learn from traditional ways of living, and from the older people in our society. There is a lot that we can share with other countries about these traditions.

In many ways the pace and pressure of modern living has pulled us apart and fractured the bonds that hold us together. The need for us to return to sustainable ways of living is a real opportunity for us to strengthen and rediscover our way of life and invest in our communities.

We can travel to the unknown places in our country, build on and value what our own country has to offer. We can support our own farmers and rediscover our own cuisine, and enjoy our unique landscape.

Renewable energy is an opportunity to invest in local energy production. Energy efficiency is an opportunity to restore and rebuild our historic buildings and make them fit for purpose in the 21st century. The challenges of climate impacts are an invitation to restore our forests, our landscapes and our relationship to the land.

We can build on our past to renew our present, and pass on our valuable traditions for the future.

How to use this narrative

Within the EU structure, policymakers and politicians have a strong sense of national identity and accountability to their national electorates. This narrative is designed to speak to the national values of individual politicians and policymakers. It talks across society, recognising the national regional identity that gives people a sense of pride, while avoiding nationalism. It will have particular appeal to audiences with conservative values who are sometimes alienated by the language of global responsibility and radical change.

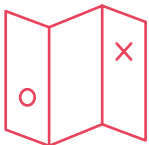
Warning

This narrative needs to be carefully nuanced for different national identities. Different countries will have different attitudes towards their traditional ways of life, and it is important to avoid romanticising poverty or social inequality through the narratives. This being said, all cultures have an interest and pride in their heritage – both natural landscapes and the built environment, and the narrative that reflects and validates that heritage speaks strongly to positive intrinsic values of collaboration.

Example

“We are called Conservatives with good reason. We believe in conserving what is best – the values of our way of life, the beauties of our countryside [that] has shaped our character as a nation.”

– Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, speech to Conservative Party conference, 1989¹¹²



Narrative 6

Leadership

A key European Union aim is to promote the values and wellbeing of its citizens. The EU pioneers bold policy to enable sustainable ways of living and inspires other regions to do the same.

Values

fulfilment, community, equity, nature stewardship, responsibility, security, tradition





Narrative 6

Leadership

The fossil fuel economy has reached its limit. Europe is ready to move to a new economic model that will continue to bring prosperity to the region.

Both the climate crisis and the ongoing energy crisis exacerbated by the conflict in Ukraine signal that Europe must quit fossil fuels faster, and that policy change is necessary. It is too expensive to wait for the inevitable transition. By acting now, we can adapt, prepare and adopt new sustainable business models and ways of living. We can do things another way and choose a better, healthier and more equitable path for the future.

The EU has always been concerned with improving people's quality of life – and sustainable lifestyles support multiple aspects of current policy, including education, childcare, energy, jobs and mobility. Efforts towards achieving 1.5-Degree Lifestyles targets therefore can be integrated across EU economic, environmental and social policy.

Europe is ready to lead the way and to be a model for other regions around the world. “This is Europe’s man on the moon moment,” says EU president Ursula von der Leyen.¹¹³

The EU has ambition to show leadership, credibility and solidarity at the global level. As European Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans noted in 2021: “We aim to make Europe the world’s first climate-neutral continent in 2050. As we do so, we challenge everyone to beat us to it: in a global race to zero, we all win.”¹¹⁴ We are making EU targets on renewables and energy efficiency even more ambitious. The EU has pledged to cut its net emissions by 55% from 1990 levels by 2030. This includes changing how we live and consume.

We take care of our citizens. In particular, low-income citizens must be supported in the face of rising costs for energy, food and other goods. We must aim to do this without relaxing the EU Green Deal goals. Von der Leyen observes: “[W]e want to really make things different. We want to be the frontrunners in climate friendly industries, in clean technologies, in green financing. But we also have to be sure that no one is left behind.”¹¹⁵

In the face of regional insecurities, the EU is showing leadership by doubling down and making energy and food production even more sustainable, resilient and independent. “With Russia’s war in Ukraine interrupting the continent’s gas supply, Europe has extra incentive to rapidly increase the production of renewable energy and install more heat pumps, solar panels, and offshore wind turbines,” Timmermans said.¹¹⁶

The EU is underpinning its climate commitments with robust legislation to show that we mean action. The proposed “Fit for 55” package of energy and climate laws is breathtaking in scale and will have an impact on every citizen of Europe, in almost every aspect of their lives. The scope is so huge because the target is so tough.

European citizens are ready to support regional action by changing their lifestyles to help protect the climate and the planet. Von der Leyen says “Our goal is to reconcile the economy with our planet, to reconcile the way we produce, the way we consume, with our planet and to make it work for our people.”¹¹⁷



Narrative 6

Leadership

Examples

"[T]his is our generational task... this is about securing the wellbeing, not only of our generation, but also of our children and of our grandchildren... And Europe is ready to lead the way."

– European Commission President
Ursula von der Leyen on delivering the
European Green Deal, 2021¹¹⁸

"We have the skills and the technology to do it. All it takes is clear-sightedness and the courage to finally say farewell to a 150-year-old, carbon-based, take-make-dispose society."

– European Commission Vice-President
Frans Timmermans, 2021¹¹⁹

"We're going to ask a lot of our citizens. We're also going to ask a lot of our industries, but we do it for good cause. We do it to give humanity a fighting chance."

– European Commission Vice-President
Frans Timmermans on announcing the
"Fit for 55" climate plan, 2021¹²⁰

"The aim is to put the economy on a new level, not to stop it."

– EU diplomat.¹²¹

"The EU has always been at the forefront of climate action and we will continue to lead by example. Protecting our planet for future generations requires a strong common global action."

– Czech environment minister
Anna Hubáčková chairing a meeting of
EU environment ministers, 2022¹²²

"The EU alone cannot save the climate. However, we can be a role model. We can show that it is possible to reduce emissions and protect the climate while at the same time have a thriving economy. This is one of the best levers to make others follow us."

– MEP Karl-Heinz Florenz, 2012¹²³

How to be a trusted communicator

Extensive research shows that trusting the communicator is of major – and sometimes decisive – importance in the formation of views on climate change. Trust is based on a sense that the communicator is knowledgeable, honest, and above all shares the values and concerns of the target audience and is empathetic to their context, needs and emotions.¹²⁴

The following recommendations come from interviews with professional NGO and industry lobbyists for advice on how best to build relationships with others including EU politicians and policymakers.¹²⁵

Understand motivations and the importance of validating worldviews

Building trust depends, above all, on understanding your audience and reflecting and validating their values. When meeting someone, try to put yourself in her shoes and understand her motivation. Ask “what can I use to make our conversations more human and less sterile?” Look at her resume and seek points of contact in terms of education, knowledge, and even hobbies and sports, which you can use as a starting point to connect authentically.

Listen and ask questions

Being a good communicator is a two-way process. It requires listening, building bridges and responding. If you are in regular contact with somebody, avoid the temptation to charge straight

into a policy discussion and invest in the relationship, take the time to ask them about themselves and engage in active listening.

Be careful with “environmentalist language”

Environmentalists are often distrusted as communicators, especially on economic issues. In interviews MEPs and senior policymakers said, “the comments that are always coming up are that environmentalists are stupid, extreme, and exaggerate their case,” “they don’t understand business so they harm it” and even, “it is like listening to communists telling us how to run businesses,”¹²⁶

For this reason, tailor the messaging to the perspective and worldview of the audience and adopt the narratives recommended in the section above.

Consider how you dress

Observe the person / people you want to speak with and dress or present yourself as closely as possible to their style. Style of personal dress and manners is especially important for people of conservative values.

Offer something useful from the relationship.

Policymakers are often overworked and in need of wider support, especially with managing information. Ask them, “What do you need and how can we help you?” You may invite detailed technical questions and then provide high-quality tailored advice in the form of short briefing papers immediately after meetings or aggregate or summarise complex positions.

Bring in outside communicators.

Recognise that you may not personally be the best communicator for a given audience and you may wish to bring in external communicators. As one campaigner reports: “My most effective meetings have been where I facilitate a meeting with someone else: someone from the coal face, a business leader, or someone who can show how they will be affected by the policy.”

- The most trusted communicators are always those who share the values and experience of the audience. For example, policymakers can more easily connect with other policymakers or people who share their professional expertise. Often people trust messengers from their own country.
- Speaking to the values of policymakers can sometimes create a tension for communicators, especially for campaigning NGOs, who may feel that this may lead them to compromise their own values. At this point they may wish instead to bring in external communicators.
- Bringing in external communicators allows you to be seen to be facilitating a process of policy formation, rather than pushing your own view. This also allows you more independence to contribute to the discussion from your own perspective.

For example, meetings could be organised with:

- Other policymakers
- Lobby groups in Brussels or in their home country
- Representatives of industries from their own country
- Scientists and “impartial” experts, especially in non-environmental issues such as health or economy.

Take policymakers out of the office

Consider the location of your communication. Policy issues like climate change often become dry, abstract and technical. Policymakers deal with data and reports all day. Like all people they engage best with things that they can see with their own eyes, taste and smell, and understand through the medium of a story. Help them to stretch their legs, get out of their office and meet people who can tell them entertaining stories about sustainable living.



Managing counter arguments: ideas on how to respond

Despite your well-intentioned efforts to bring attention to lifestyle solutions and to support shifts to 1.5-Degree Lifestyles, at some point these efforts will be met with resistance. People may oppose being “told what to do” in their everyday lives or may deny the value of individual (or any) action on climate. Of course, a key approach to communicating effectively is not ‘telling’ but ‘guiding’ the conversation.¹²⁷ At its most aggressive, this resistance may take the form of organised backlash from those who are advantaged by the status quo.¹²⁸

Counter arguments are likely to come in two forms;

- rejection of the “means” of changing lifestyles (i.e., the efficacy of the actual policies in reducing lifestyle emissions), and
- rejection of the “ends” (i.e., the need to influence lifestyles in order to achieve carbon targets, or even the importance of climate change).

In reality, these two forms are closely related. Although few policymakers or politicians are now prepared to be seen publicly questioning climate science, many former sceptics now focus their criticism on the importance or relevance of specific climate change policies. Similarly, a reluctance to accept interference in personal lifestyles may lead people to question the policy importance of emissions reductions.

Principles for dealing with counter arguments

1. Listen, respect, reflect

In all your responses, listen, ask questions, recognise their concerns and welcome their challenge. As with all good and trusted communications (see section above), listen carefully to people's criticisms and ask them questions to seek to draw out the key reasons for their concern. Do not make assumptions.¹²⁹

2. Ask: "what is the underlying reason for people's resistance?"

In your interactions, listen carefully for people's underlying concerns, and in your responses recognise and respect those concerns and speak directly to them.

Attitudes to climate change are shaped by people's identity and values, and especially by their political worldview. It is therefore very likely that people's arguments are grounded in a political worldview. In your replies, speak to those values, or seek trusted communicators who share their worldview.

3. Tailor responses to specialities

Critics are likely to be approaching the issue from the perspective of their own professional speciality; for example, finance, business, social rights. Therefore respond in a way appropriate to the speciality – addressing financial challenges with financial arguments and so forth – rather than applying a standard "environmental" argument.

4. Welcome the challenge

Do not respond in a way that portrays critics as obstructive, or inconvenient. Rather, regard challenges as valuable, worthwhile and an essential part of good policy formation. Welcome them, say "Thank you for your honest feedback, we need to be confident we have the best policy and this conversation is exactly what we need to get the best possible policy." In your further responses make efforts to address those concerns.

Remember that while some critics are obstructive, others may have entirely legitimate and valid concerns that need to be aired. Whatever their motivation, all critics are voicing and reflecting wider issues that emerge when policies are applied. They can therefore be seen as a test bed for policy design and useful for fine-tuning / adjusting implementation.

Dealing with arguments concerning the “means” of changing lifestyles – criticism of the lifestyle interventions as a means to achieve policy goals

Despite the strong scientific consensus that lifestyle measures are unavoidable for achieving the 1.5-degree target, there is still widespread resistance to intervening in people’s lifestyles. Politicians are keenly aware that such measures may be unpopular and come with an electoral risk. Here are several arguments and possible responses.

An important thing to note is that the guiding principles above still apply. The art of conversation lies in listening and exploring another person’s perspective. Counterevidence can end up reinforcing positions. Be sensitive to context. Engage in an open dialogue while bringing these suggested responses forward.

Argument ←

 **We can achieve 1.5-Degree Lifestyles through greener products and the market.**


Rather than interfering in peoples lives, we can encourage them to shift to greener alternatives and recycle more.

Argument ←

 **We should encourage people to change through choice.**


Why can’t we just encourage people to change their behaviour voluntarily, or “nudge” them, rather than focusing on strict policies and regulations around things like carbon budgets or frequent flyer levies? Those are too much of a burden for individuals.

Response ←

 Right! Shifting markets, especially in a short time scale, requires a combination of regulation, policies and demand-reduction measures. We can see from the experience of EU regulation in appliance energy efficiencies that combining regulation with consumer choice generates rapid change. That is great.

The main thing I am wondering is how to maintain those gains in carbon emission reductions. I often see that improvements in resource productivity have been historically offset by increases in demand or by a growth in the total number of products. The concept is called the “rebound effect.” As you may know, for example, recycling only has a small impact, compared to the purchase of a new product. I am asking myself how we can engage and support people to reduce their use of resources and the generation of waste from the get-go.

Response ←

 Incremental solutions are not enough, and they provide cover for ongoing unsustainable activities. Both “carrots” and “sticks” are needed to effectively address the climate crisis.

Argument ←



We can achieve targets through a technological solution.

The shift to renewable energy, efficiency gains and electrification of transport are adequate to achieve climate targets through technological solutions without having to affect people's lifestyles. Europe is the technological centre of the world, so we should enable our technology entrepreneurs, engineers and scientists to lead the low-carbon transition.

Dealing with challenges about the “ends” of climate policy

Although greatly diminished over the past 20 years, there is still a small but influential minority of policymakers, politicians, and business people who may accept that the climate is changing but do not accept the level of associated risk. For more discussion of the “discourse of denial” and responses to backlash, see: Lamb et al. (2020); Urban Sustainability Directors Network Sustainable Consumption Toolkit (2019), VicHealth (2018).¹³⁰ Some typical arguments are:

Response ←



Technological innovations are critical to create less impact on the planet. Human ingenuity is already playing an exciting role in supporting new, low-carbon lifestyle opportunities.

However, widespread research shows that we can only achieve targets when these technological solutions are combined with demand reduction. The IPCC study shows that a large part of emissions lies in consumer practices and lifestyle choices. In some key areas, in particular diets and air transport, there are currently limited technological options and we have to influence people's consumption preferences.

(For people voicing concerns about social equity) Moreover, some low-carbon technologies such as electric vehicles are inaccessible to people with lower incomes.

Argument ←



There's no problem here.

Climate change isn't really a problem, or will resolve itself over time, so we don't really need to prioritize taking action. And even if it is happening, lifestyles aren't the main contributor to the climate challenge.

Response ←



The climate science is out there, and there's plenty of data and evidence to back it up. Moreover, there are many examples of real-life stories and personal accounts of people facing and dealing with the impacts – possibly in your own community. Recent studies show that lifestyles make a big contribution to emissions, and play an important role in achieving the 1.5-degree target. It's important to connect the dots between the activities we undertake in our everyday lives and the wider climate impacts.

Argument ←



It's not my problem.

I'm only responsible for a tiny share of emissions, compared to big fossil fuel companies and the world's wealthiest, high-consuming individuals. Does it really matter if I take action or not?



Response ←



We must all collectively reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 if we want to reach our 1.5-degree target. We all have a part to play. But we want to be smart about the actions we take, making sure that they're high impact enough to make a difference. Not accepting our shared responsibility contributes to the "free rider" problem, or the idea that we'll rely on someone else to actively lead on climate change mitigation.

Argument ←



Isn't this a step backwards?

Shifting to more sustainable ways of living will restrict our opportunities, impair our quality of life, and slow general prosperity and economic development. Reducing fossil fuel use will destroy jobs and have costs for hard-working families. Also, how can you tell struggling families to consume less, when they don't even have their basic needs met?



Response ←



The emphasis here is on achieving a good quality of life for all while recognising and respecting planetary limits. Sustainable lifestyles also open up new economic opportunities. The shift to 1.5-Degree Lifestyles has equity at the heart and accommodates the understanding that some people will need to consume more, while others will need to consume less of the high-carbon activities and differently; it is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Those with the highest impact will likely need to make deeper changes in their lives than others, and yet will have good quality of life and gain health and wellbeing in doing so.

Argument ←



Do we really need to do more than we already are?

There's so much happening on climate action today. Just look at recent advances in lowering emissions, declaring "climate emergencies" and setting ambitious climate or net zero targets. Do we really need more stringent or new types of additional action?



Response ←



We need concrete pathways for taking action, in all relevant areas, to guarantee that we achieve our ambitious targets and that current advances will be sustained into the future. We can't just rely on talk – we need increased action, on all fronts..

Argument ←



It's not up to the individual.

Governments and businesses have the responsibility and they need to take action first – we should not be asking hard-working families to make sacrifices. Also, government has no right to interfere in people's life choices.



Response (two-fold) ←



Climate action is a form of a social contract between governments, businesses and the public. Qualitative research by Climate Outreach reveals the widespread willingness of individuals to take action if they feel that they are part of a wider, fair and universal social commitment.¹³¹

(One formulation of this would be:

This is what the government is doing
This is what the government is demanding that businesses do
This is what the government is helping communities to do
And this is what the government is asking individuals to do)

Also, climate action is a positive opportunity. There are many co-benefits of individual action in achieving wider policy goals – for example, around health, air pollution and livelihoods.

Next steps

You can use this toolkit as a foundation for conversations and communication on 1.5-Degree Lifestyles. It is designed for you to adopt the tips, language and values-led narrative approach.

Telling the story about 1.5-Degree Lifestyles becomes powerful when we build common compelling narratives together that are repeated by many of us over time.

You can be a part of building our capacity to communicate, including through:

- Promoting strategic communications and training,
- Developing and sharing resources that help us frame lifestyles, and
- Coordinating for quick-response campaigning and framing.

Concrete actions you can take include creating joint strategic communications initiatives, hosting communications workshops and courses, and developing guides tailored to your audiences.

Join forces with those of us who are working on advancing 1.5-Degree Lifestyles. We can engage together in real-time communications coordination during “windows of opportunity” and respond rapidly with clear messaging and stories.

You likely have your own ideas of how to move this work forward. We are keen to hear about them and to support you as we develop this lifestyle communication further.

This is a time of competing communication and narratives. It matters how you talk about these issues in support of bold climate actions. The way you communicate makes a difference – you are a powerful voice for solutions that ensure sustainable fulfilling lives for all.



Endnotes

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Contact us

Christoph Gran – christoph.gran@zoe-institut.de

Lydia Korinek – lydia.korinek@zoe-institut.de

Vanessa Timmer – vanessa@oneearthweb.org



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