



POTSDAM-INSTITUT FÜR  
KLIMAFOLGENFORSCHUNG

# Attitudes to climate policy in response to international cooperation failures

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M. Pahle<sup>1</sup>, A. Schwarz<sup>1</sup>, A. Ockenfels<sup>2</sup>, M. Scharfbillig<sup>3</sup>, S. Sommer<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)

<sup>2</sup>University of Cologne, Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods

<sup>3</sup>European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC)

<sup>4</sup>Bochum University of Applied Sciences, RWI – Leibniz Institute for Economic Research

# Motivation

## › From **angle of climate policy design**:

- › Climate change is a **global public good** => free-riding problem
- › **Collectively rational** to prioritize **international action**, but most action actually on **national or regional level** (e.g. EU Green Deal)
- › Fall back to national level likely because it is **feasible**, but built on the **“promise” to citizens that Paris goals** can eventually be achieved
- › What happens if citizens realize that **Paris goals bound to be failed?**

## › From **angle of individual behavior**:

- › Well known that individuals **ignore information** to feel better\*, i.e. when it would challenge their **moral convictions (“irrational” ignorance)**
- › But also **rational** to ignore information if (1) acquiring is costly and **individual action makes no difference**, or (2) one simply **does not care**
- › Information processing similar when it comes to **attitudes for public policy?**

\*CCBI seminar on willful ignorance

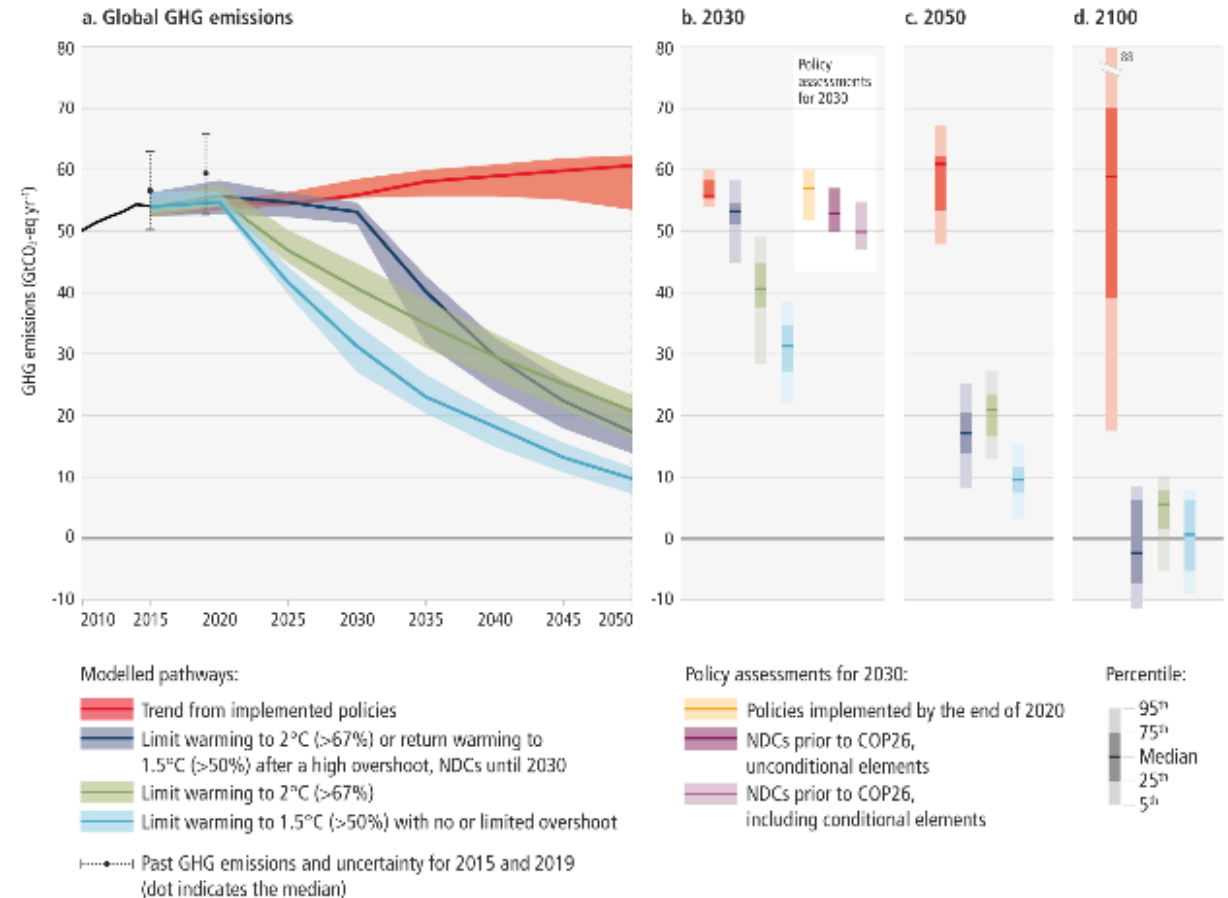
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# Pledge-Goal Gap

- Paris Agreement (2015) aimed at fostering an "upward spiral of ambition over time" to achieve its ultimate goal
- **BUT** lacks robust mechanisms to enforce common policy commitments (MacKay et al., 2015)
- Global emissions have risen since 2015, questioning the agreement's effectiveness.
- Gap between pledged (purple) and 1.5 °C goal path (blue) has significantly widened (UNEP, 2022).
- Paris goals increasingly out of reach

## Emission gap (IPCC AR6, WG3, Figure SPM4)

Projected global GHG emissions from NDCs announced prior to COP26 would make it likely that warming will exceed 1.5°C and also make it harder after 2030 to limit warming to below 2°C.



# Global Emissions Awareness and Moralisation

## Research Questions:

- (1) To which extent do individuals update their beliefs when confronted with this “sobering” information &
- (2) change their policy attitudes in response?

## Variable of Interest: Degree of Moralisation

- Climate change highly moralised issue (e.g. Wolsko et al., 2016)
- + effect on policy acceptance (Clifford and Jerit 2013; Feinberg and Willer 2013, Bain et al. 2012)
- attitude–behavior consistency (Bloom, 2013; Mogran et al., 2010; Skitka & Bauman, 2008)
- BUT resistance to change (Aramovich et al., 2012, Haidt, 2001, Hornsey et al., 2003, Hornsey et al., 2007)

## Method:

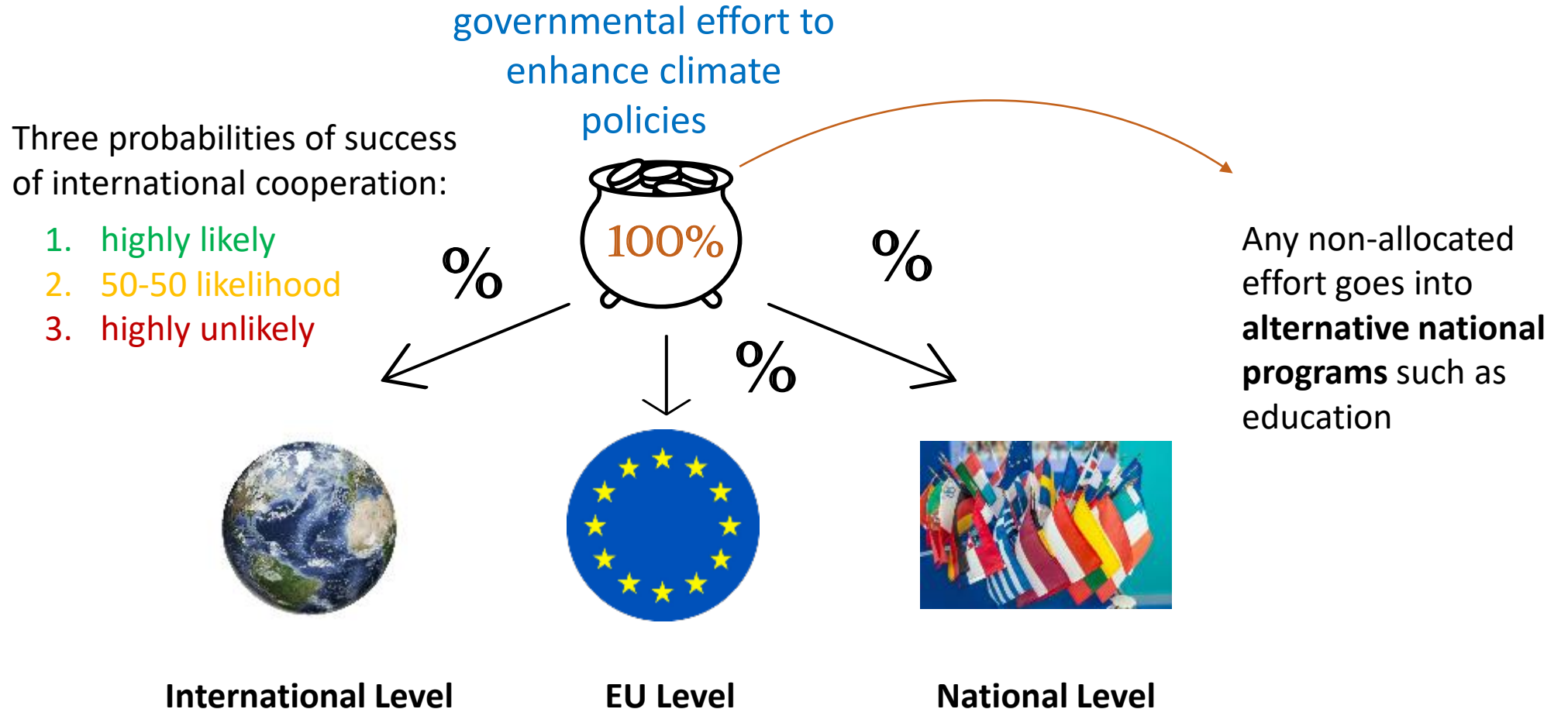
- EU-wide survey roughly ~2.000 households in each of 24 largest EU member states
- In the field from mid-July to end of August 2023
- Two experiments (information provision, incentivized behaviour)

# Information experiment

## RCT with two information treatments

### 1 Randomised Information Treatment

### 2

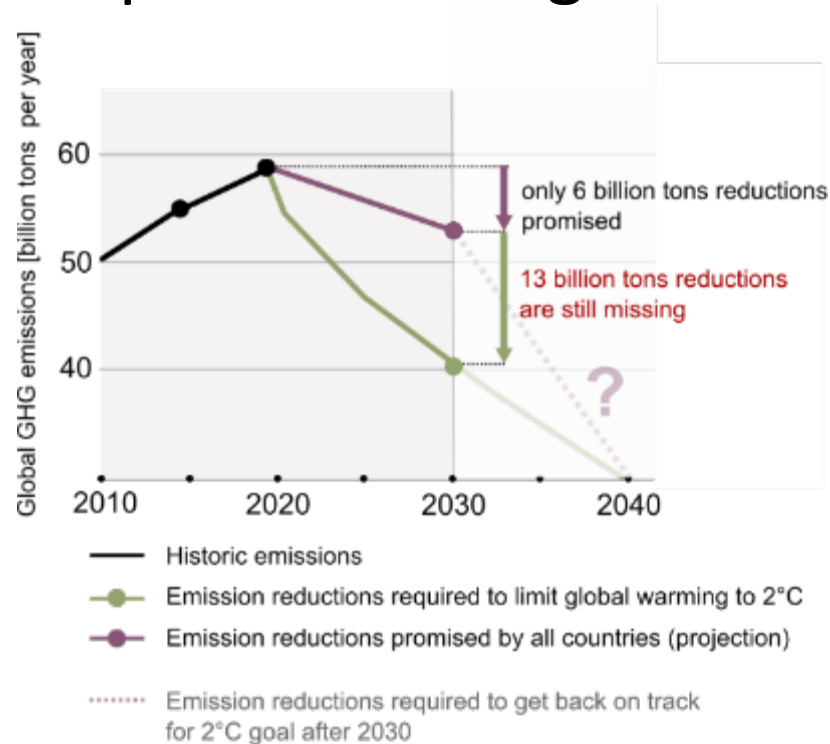


# Information experiment

## RCT with two information treatments

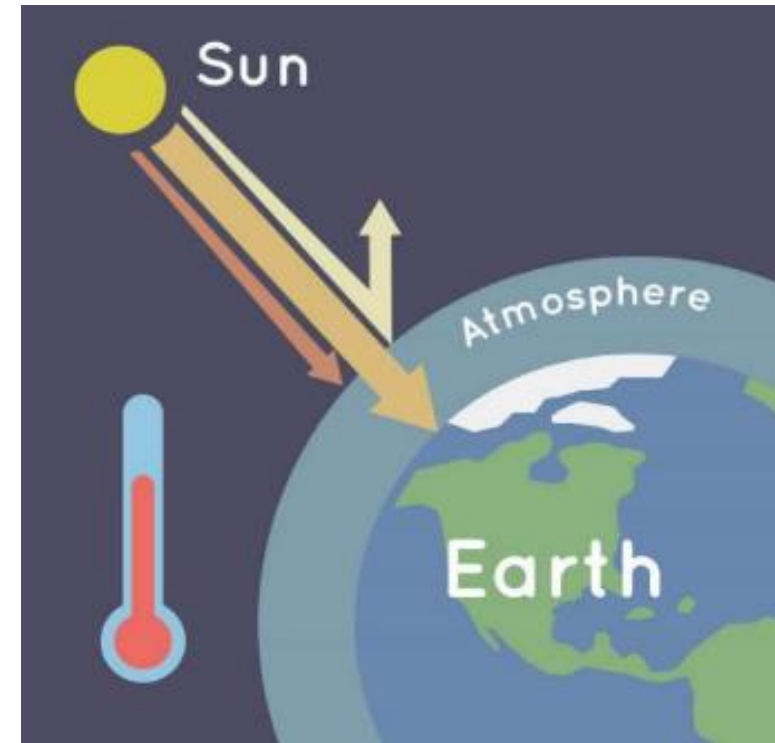
### Sobering treatment:

- › Emissions trend based on simplified IPCC figure



### Null treatment:

- › Greenhouse gas Effect Explanation



# Environmental moralisers 53% of samples

## Statement:

1. We as society should collectively reduce our carbon emissions as much as possible.
2. Governments should utilize markets and competition between firms to tackle climate change.
3. People should not impose their own views on other people even if they think what the others do is wrong.

		Moralisation (unipolar)				
		1	2	3	4	5
Attitude (bipolar)	1	Others 21 363			Anti-Moralizers	
	2				1495	
	3					
	4				Pro-Moralizers	
	5				25 476	

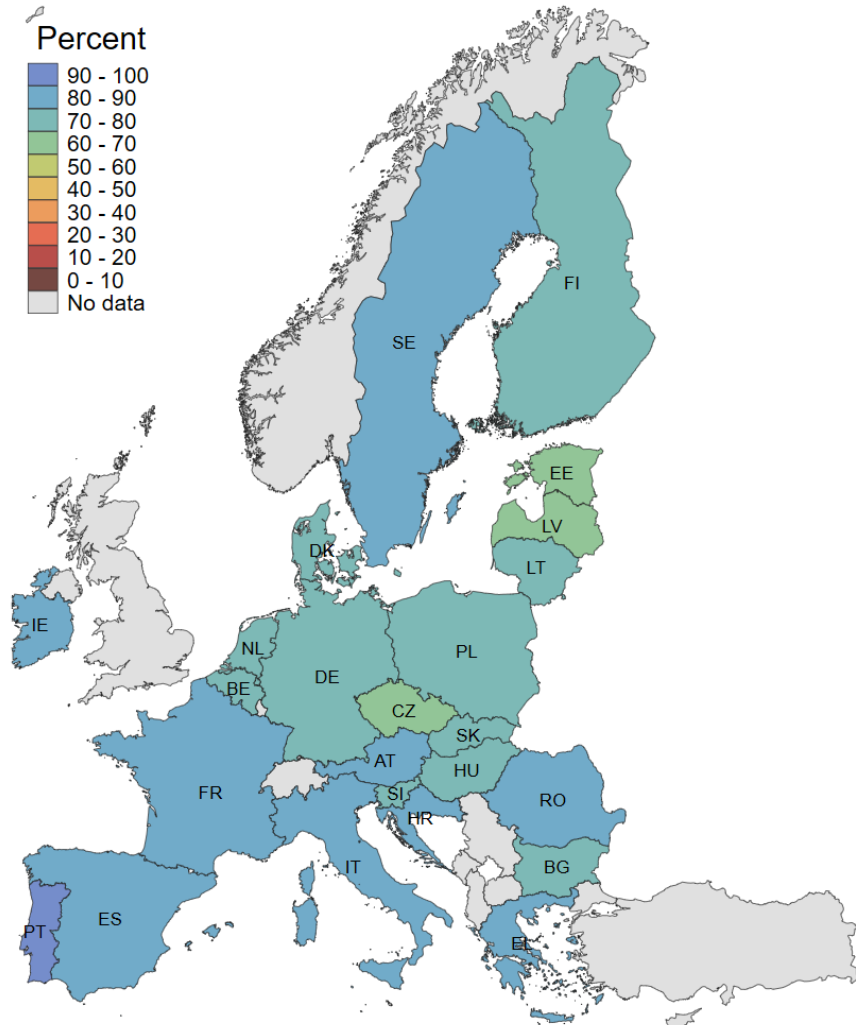
Attitude: How much do you agree with the following statement?

Moralisation: To what extent is your position on this statement based on moral principles, i.e., related to what you think is “right” or “wrong”?

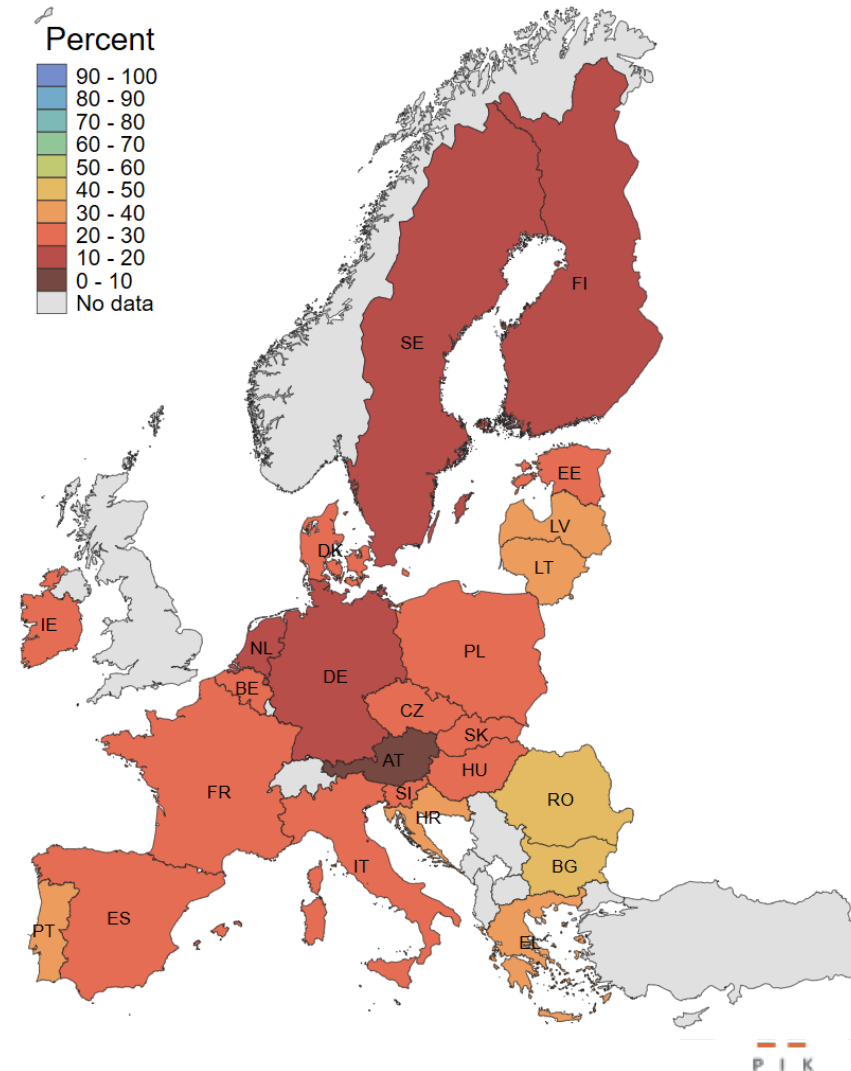
# Support for collective action BUT no faith in int. cooperation

We as society should collectively reduce our carbon emissions as much as possible.

## Collective action support



## Belief int. cooperation likely

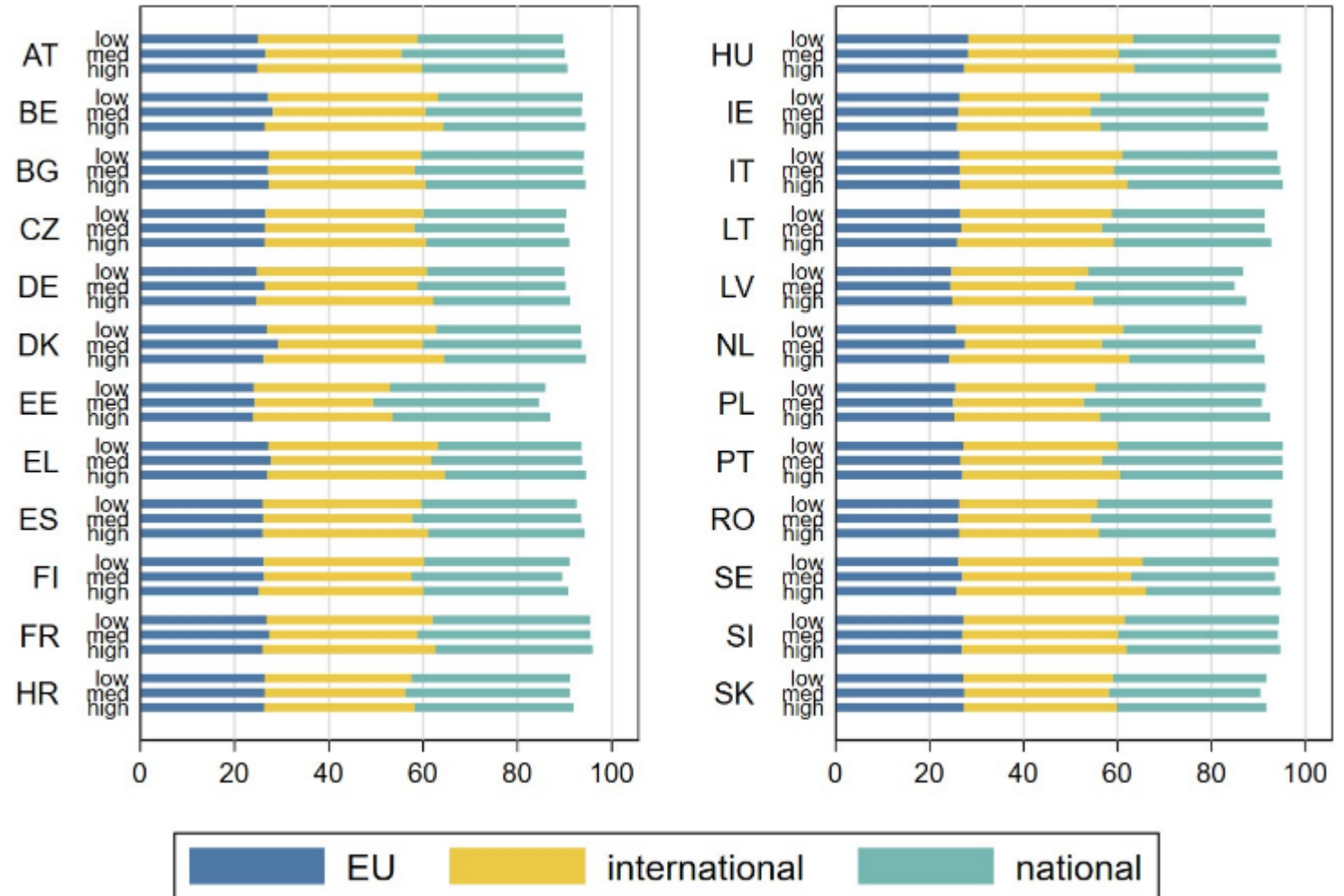




# Allocation varies little across Europe and likelihood

- Effort shares vary only slightly across countries and probabilities
- EU effort level lower than international & national level

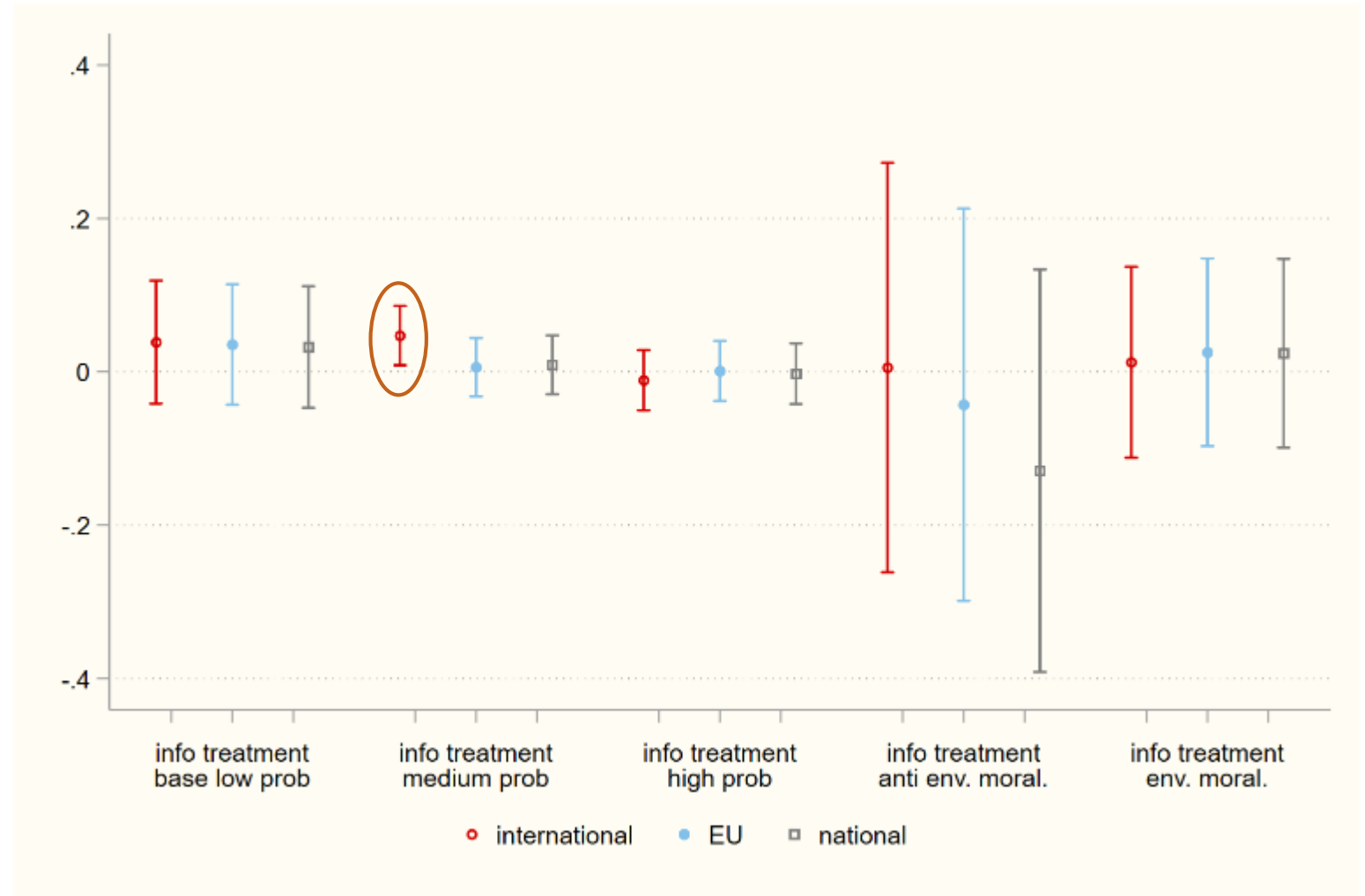
Effort allocation by country



# Information no driver, not even for moralisers

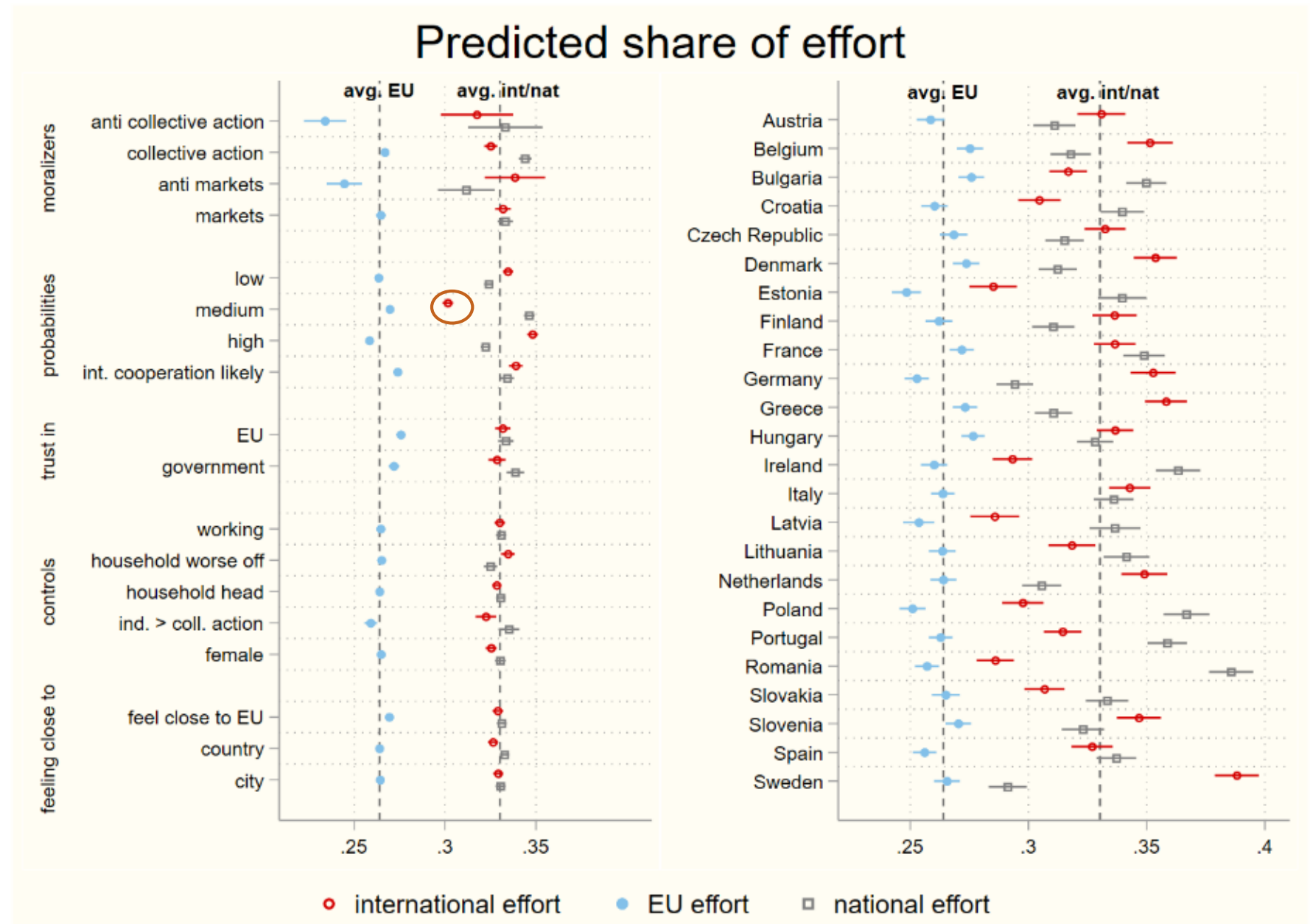
### Marginal Treatment Effects (Fractional Response Model)

- majority of **treatment effects** are **insignificant** (even for environmental moralisers)



# Country effects matter, but no clear pattern identified (yet)

- Level effects stronger
- **Anti-collective action moralizers** choose less EU effort
- **Medium probability** lower int. effort
- **Country effects** matter for choice between international and national effort



# Explanations? (preliminary)

- › **Why don't we observe belief updating / attitude change?**
  - › Population **fully aware** (nothing to update)
  - › Information ignored (**inattention**)
    - a. Information conflicts with beliefs
    - b. Emotions, concerns, and conflicting attitudes more potent drivers than information and degree of moralisation
  - › Content **too complex**, indifference to problem
  - › Effects of information in **certain countries** (not yet explored)
  
- › **Why is likelihood of success only a minor driver?**
  - › Warm glow effect
  - › Risk hedging

# Policy implications: EU climate policy



*The transition will be socially fair – or will not be. But there is also increasing misuse of social arguments.*

[EUI Climate Week, What next for EU climate policy?](#)

## › Climate policy development:

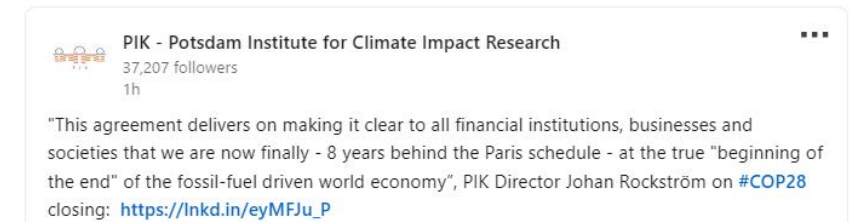
- › Is the EU doing **enough to foster international cooperation?**
- › If we take results (attitudes) at face value, **lack of congruence** between supply & demand for policy
- › Side note: **high support** for market based policies

## › (Mis)use of social arguments:

- › Growing '**greenlash**' against EU climate agenda
- › Arguments that **EU is doing too much** (and it does not help) may increasingly be (mis)used to water down ambition
- › Populists' version: *“Majority of people wants to do less, especially if they knew the truth!”*
- › Results **to counter** this on argumentative level

# COP28: Positive communication amidst limited actual progress

- › Emphasis on success so as not to cause **despair** of public?
- › May stressing the **great success** be a distraction from finding solutions for big progress?



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