



RETOOL

Strengthening Democratic
Governance for Climate Transitions

RETOOL Project Newsletter 5th Issue

RETOOL project is on a journey of research and dialogue to open conversations on climate democracy and provide fresh perspectives on existing practices and innovations across key domains to deepen the understanding of the relationship between democratic governance and the climate imperative. It aims to identify new frameworks to address the climate crisis's complexity, urgency, and long-term impacts and contribute to the strengthening and revitalising democratic governance in Europe more broadly!

RETOOL project x How Green is Your Deal? podcast

We are excited to announce a new collaboration between the RETOOL project and the podcast [How Green is Your Deal?](#), by GreenDeal-NET.

You can find the first two episodes on [Youtube](#). Find all the podcast series [here](#).



Episode 1

How Green is Your Deal x
RETOOL project:
Democracy: solution or
obstacle to climate
transitions?



Episode 2

How Green is Your Deal x
RETOOL project: Giving
citizens a voice:
European climate
assemblies

NEW RESEARCH

Research Article

Policy integration in the EU under crisis: shifting the balance between renewable energy expansion and biodiversity protection

Stefan Četković ✉, Tomas Maltby & Aron Buzogány

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[Policy integration in the EU under crisis: shifting the balance between renewable energy expansion and biodiversity protection](#)

Since 2019, the European Green Deal (EGD) has sought to harmonise efforts across several sectors towards a long-term goal of carbon neutrality. In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the 2022 REPowerEU Plan positioned decarbonisation as a key means to reduce dependence on imports of Russian fossil fuels. Central to achieving this goal is reforming the permitting processes for renewable energy projects, particularly regarding environmental rules and principles. We trace how the EU has addressed the challenge of balancing renewables and biodiversity concerns by identifying and explaining the effects of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 on policy integration. Drawing on the processual approach to policy integration, our study identifies three phases of integration of biodiversity concerns into EU

renewable energy policy. The most recent phase disrupted ongoing efforts towards policy integration initiated by the EGD and shifted the balance towards accelerated renewable energy deployment over biodiversity concerns. Employing insights from the EU crisis literature and focusing on the effects of the crisis on actor-level factors of policy integration (capacity, core beliefs, commitment), we unpack how the crisis contributed to reducing policy integration of biodiversity into renewable policy.

Narrative and quantitative analysis of democratic principles in the Shared Socioeconomic Pathways

Georgios Xexakis , Dimitra Spatharidou, Ioanna Bala, Natasha Frilingou, Konstantinos Koasidis, Christina Tigka & Alexandros Nikas

npj Climate Action 5, Article number: 24 (2026) | [Cite this article](#)

Table Implied assumptions of the SSP narratives in terms of core democratic characteristics

Democratic characteristics	SSP1: Sustainability	SSP2: Middle of the road	SSP3: Regional rivalry	SSP4: Inequality	SSP5: Fossil-fuelled development
Participation	High	Medium	Low	Low	High
Representation	High	Medium	Low	Low	Medium
Knowledge and expertise	High	Medium	Low	Medium	High
Accountability	High	Low to medium	Low	Low	Medium
Deliberativeness	High	Low to medium	Low	Low	Low
Effectiveness	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Low to medium
Justice	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low to medium

[Narrative and quantitative analysis of democratic principles in the Shared Socioeconomic Pathways](#)

Although climate action is highly intertwined with governance structures, climate policy modelling science has been argued to insufficiently reflect political processes. We analyse the evolution of democratic governance embedded in the Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs) that are heavily underpinning modelling studies. Using the Narrative Policy Framework in the SSPs storylines, we find underrepresentation of narratives explicitly centring on democratic principles such as participation, accountability and justice, despite their importance in envisioning legitimate and inclusive transitions. An evaluation of quantitative indicators within the SSP framework under the same democratic principles shows divergence from the patterns implied by the storylines. Finally, analysis of scenarios assessed in the 6th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change shows that regions scoring high in democracy-related indicators tend to perform well in mitigation, aligning with empirical evidence. These findings highlight opportunities to enhance the SSP framework to inter alia more adequately incorporate political processes.

Research Article

Differences within global movements: insights from FFF climate protests in Western and Eastern Europe

Aron Buzogány , Dániel Mikecz  & Piotr Kocyba 

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[Differences within global movements: insights from FFF climate protests in Western and Eastern Europe](#)

Research on the global climate movement underlines the importance of learning and diffusion processes for adopting similar master frames and movement tactics. At the same time, participation research suggests regionally different patterns of mobilisation and protest behaviour. Due to different historical socialisation processes, Western and Eastern European citizens show differences in political activity despite some signs of convergence. This article examines the sociodemographic characteristics and attitudes of climate activists from Eastern and Western Europe. Using protest surveys of Fridays for Future participants in 15 Western and Eastern European countries, we show significant differences between them. Western European climate activists tend to have stronger leftist attitudes, while in Eastern Europe apolitical stances are more common along with higher confidence in market solutions to solve environmental problems. Such differences are likely to affect the cohesion and success of the global climate movement.



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EVENTS

Participation in the Joint Sessions workshop: "Making Europe Green Again: Implementation of the European Green Deal in Turbulent Times", April 2026

Our consortium partners attended the European Consortium for Political Research Joint Sessions workshop, "Making Europe Green Again: Implementation of the European Green Deal in Turbulent Times", directed by our project Coordinator Diarmuid Torney and Jana Gheuens at the Universität Innsbruck.

The workshop brought together researchers from EU Climatic and RETOOL projects, along with a range of other researchers working on EU climate politics and the European Green Deal.



RETOOL Expert Focus Group & 16th Postgraduate Research Symposium in Environmental Law, hosted by University College Cork (UCC), 21-22 April 2026, Ireland

Our project partner Nina Koistinen from the University of Eastern Finland, attended the expert focus group in Dublin that gathered actors closely familiar with the Irish climate litigation landscape to discuss whether and how climate litigation has affected various aspects of democratic governance, including accountability, participation and public debate on climate change. The diverse perspectives shared during this session provided essential qualitative data that will help shape our upcoming findings.

Nina also attended the 16th Postgraduate Research Symposium in Environmental Law, hosted by University College Cork (UCC). She delivered a presentation on the topic of her ongoing research on the project regarding the Irish case study, where she shared the early contours of the case study and some preliminary findings based on the expert inputs received during our workshop.



Participation in the European Network for Public Administration (ENPA) conference, 22-25 April, Bucharest, Romania

Our project partner Jeff Rosamond attended the European Network for Public Administration (ENPA) conference in Bucharest last week, where he had the pleasure of introducing the RETOOL project to the public administration community. During the event, Jeff presented ongoing research into the rise of delegated and implementing acts in EU climate governance and the resulting political implications, co-authored with our project partners Claire Dupont and Brendan Moore.

The presentation sparked insightful feedback and fresh ideas, which will be invaluable as the team continues to analyze the growing trend of executive-led decision-making across the European Union.



Presentation at Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence (REVEL), April 2026

Our project partner Nina Koistinen from the University of Eastern Finland, attended an event of REVEL a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence, and she gave a presentation entitled "Legal contestation and EU climate governance: mapping climate litigation before the European Courts of Justice".



Contact us

Send us an email for any questions or to express interest in the RETOOL research.

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