

Towards a Green Success Story?

Five measures that could help Germany in international climate policy

BY FRANZISKA BRANTNER

The socio-ecological transformation of the European economy is the existential task of our time. If we fail to halt climate change, we threaten our prosperity, our social cohesion and our political freedom. Hence, we must align our economy with the goals of climate neutrality. The following five measures could help Germany to become a pioneer in international climate policy and regain its credibility as an environmental champion within the European Union.

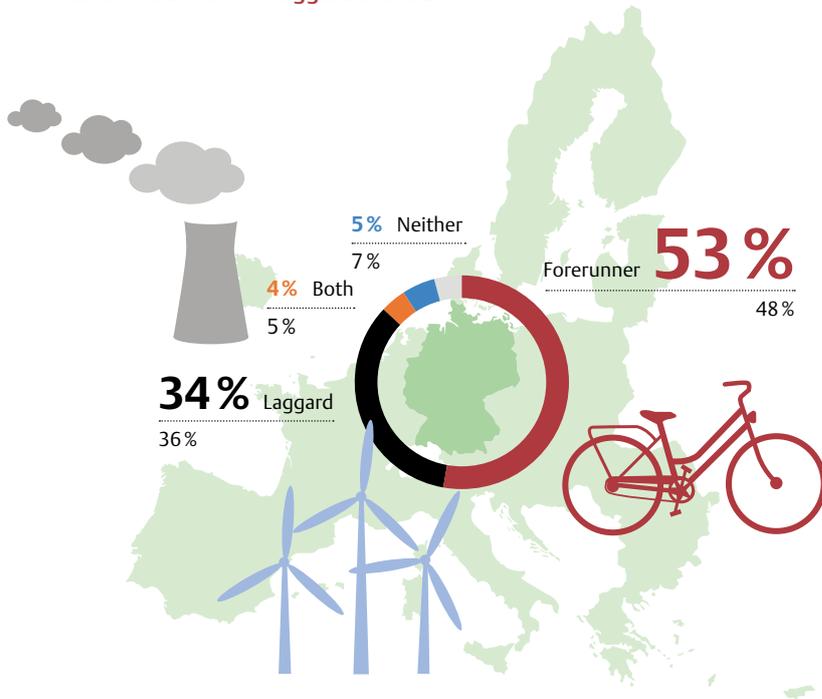
1. Establish a climate alliance with the United States and 'Paris partnerships' with interested countries, especially in the Global South and in close cooperation with our European partners. Climate change is a common threat to the international community. Hence, the European Union and the United States must step forward and create a transatlantic climate alliance. By setting ambitious targets and standards and by investing in a green economy, they could lead the way towards climate neutrality. Furthermore, 'Paris partnerships' can support countries in the Global South in transforming their economies and adapting to the dire consequences of climate change, which will affect them in particular. Elements of such partnerships could include joint guidelines for climate-friendly economic stimulus

programs and uniform product standards to promote key green technologies. In addition, institutionalized exchange processes and dialogue formats should involve all relevant groups of actors, especially civil society, business, science, culture and municipalities, accompanied by regular evaluations and feedback loops. Based on interim successes, the level of ambition can successively be increased or the partnership can be extended to other sectors. This way, Germany could jointly create the necessary conditions to successfully implement the Paris Agreement on a global level.

2. Aim for a more coherent overall foreign climate policy. As Europe's economic powerhouse, Germany must work hard to achieve such a coherent approach through a climate-compatible realignment of European trade policy, an effective supply-chain law, the restructuring of development aid and banks and sustainable financial policies. Transformation requires that multilateral institutions and international structures also support it, which is why the COP26 is only a starting point for a more ambitious international climate policy.

3. Make climate protection a competitive advantage. To enforce a fair level playing field for European and international companies and to protect them from unfair, climate-destroying competition,

Concerning climate policy, do you see Germany as a forerunner or a laggard in the EU?



we need a carbon border adjustment mechanism for countries that continue to produce in a climate-damaging way. This will tax imported goods according to the CO₂ emitted during their production. This mechanism provides a strong incentive for third countries to transition to low-emission economies if they want to continue to interact with the European market without disadvantages for their companies. The EU could use potential revenue from such a mechanism to fund climate partnerships in the concerned countries.

- 4. Push for implementation of the European Green Deal and achieve the European climate targets together with France.** With the Fit for 55 package, the European Commission has now presented a suitable package that the member states should quickly discuss and adopt. Germany must play a leading role in this process together with France, which will hold the EU Council presidency from

January 2022. The end of the combustion engine in the EU in 2035 can be a clear signal for other countries to also switch to zero-emission transport. Ideally, this Green Deal could be the blueprint for transformations in other regions. The EU Emissions Trading System could eventually be expanded into a global trading system within the framework of the proposed climate alliance with the United States.

- 5. Invest in ecological and digital modernization.** Companies are in the black with green products. The market for environmental technologies is booming, and German companies should be at the forefront of this ambitious transformation of the economy, especially with regard to the economic recovery after the COVID-19 crisis. German and European industry needs clear framework conditions and government support to expand investments in climate-neutral production and turn green tech into an export hit. Investments create new knowledge and new technologies. New production methods can accelerate planning and construction processes and thus conserve resources. With digital and data-driven innovations, Germany can better reduce energy and resource consumption and become a leader in future technologies. To this end, we should promote and prioritize digital applications and solutions that contribute to resource conservation. Such innovations lay out the possible way towards ecological modernization and will secure Germany's and Europe's role as a green industrial hub in the long run. Yet, it will be crucial that this process takes place in a socially responsible manner, that citizens are supported by means of an energy allowance, and that we invest massively in further training so that employees are fit for new, sustainable jobs.

If we succeed in this socio-ecological transformation in all its dimensions, it can become our international success story. ✂

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