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PhD Thesis
Public Preferences for Environmental Policies and Behavioural Changes

Abstract

Environmental problems, such as climate change, are generally perceived as serious issues by the public in European countries. However, people tend to assign them a low policy priority and disagree with the introduction of some policy instruments, such as carbon tax. Few people also behave in an environmentally friendly way and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. What are the preferences of the inhabitants of several European countries regarding climate mitigation policies and behavioural changes? What makes these policies more acceptable for the public? Would people from these countries be willing to accept climate mitigation policies or behaviour, and if so, under what conditions? This thesis aims to answer these questions by applying a theoretical framework that integrates attitudes and perceptions with preferences.

In the empirical part of the thesis, we analyse data from several questionnaire surveys on public responses to climate policies and climate-related behaviours in several European countries. The thesis contains four empirical studies focusing on: i. public preferences for climate mitigation policies; ii. public preferences for policy instruments to reduce GHG emissions; iii. consumers' preferences for electric vehicles; iv. consumers' preferences for more sustainable and healthier lifestyles. All the empirical studies use discrete choice experiments in order to evaluate the changes in preferences of people upon the implementation of a new policy or provision of information and to predict consumers' behaviour with respect to new goods or lifestyle changes. Furthermore, the objective is to examine the effects of attitudinal factors and sociodemographic characteristics on these preferences using a hybrid choice model, which is quite novel in sociological research.