FACTUAL SUMMARY REPORT

ON THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE EU CLIMATE TARGET FOR 2040

Disclaimer: *This document should be regarded solely as a summary of the contributions made by stakeholders in the open consultation on the EU climate target for 2040. It cannot in any circumstances be regarded as the official position of the Commission or its services. Responses to the consultation activities cannot be considered as a representative sample of the views of the EU population.*

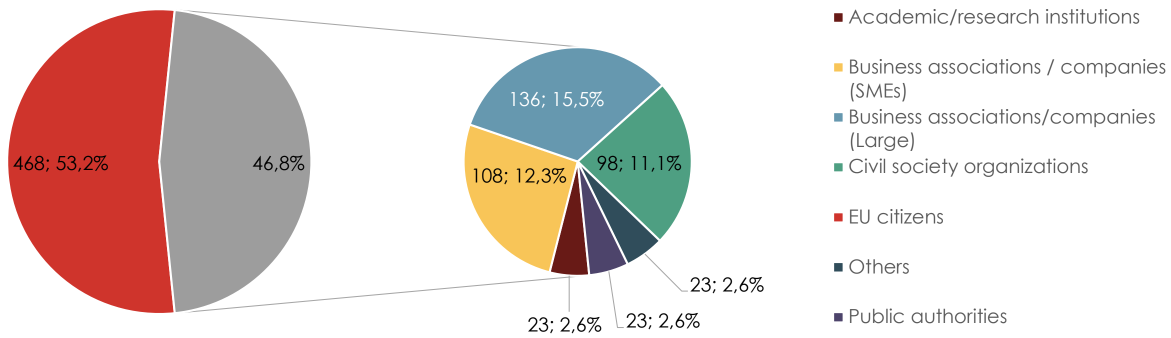
1. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

As part of the initiative to define the climate target for 2040, the EU carried out a public consultation. The public consultation ran from the 31st of March 2023 till the 23rd of June 2023. The objective of the public consultation was to gather views from a wide range of citizens and stakeholders.

2. OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES

A total of 903 responses were received in the public consultation. Among these, 23 (3%) responses were classified as a single campaign (see Section 4). In addition, one response was identified as a duplicate, so that a total of 879 responses were included in the analysis.

Figure 1 Responses by stakeholder group

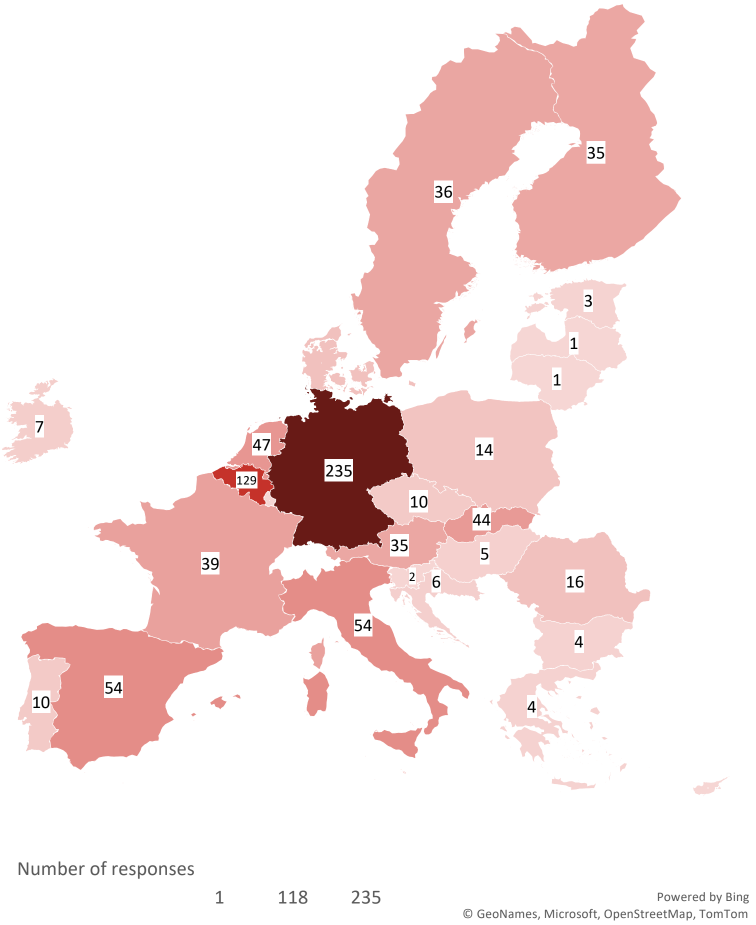


n = 879

Out of the 879 responses, 480 (55%) were provided by individuals (EU citizen: 468, non-EU citizen: 12), and 399 (45%) were received from organisations (see Figure 1). Most organisational responses came from companies and business associations: Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and business associations representing SMEs (108, 12%) or large companies (>250 employees) and associations representing them (136, 16%). An additional 98 (11%) responses came from civil society organisations.[1] Furthermore, 23 (3%) responses were received from academic/research institutions and an equal number of 23 (3%) responses from public authorities. Also, 23 (3%) responses were classified as “Other”.[2]

[1] Clusters the responses from NGOs (68), environmental groups (20), trade unions (9), and one consumer organisation (1).
[2] Includes the responses from non-EU citizens (12).

Figure 2 Geographical distribution of responses by EU Member States



n = 811

The frequency of responses varied greatly between EU Member States (see Figure 2). The largest number of responses came from Germany (27%), followed by Belgium (15%) (also representing EU-level stakeholders).

3. Results from the public consultation

The public consultation included two sections, a general section (17 questions) and an expert section (18 questions).

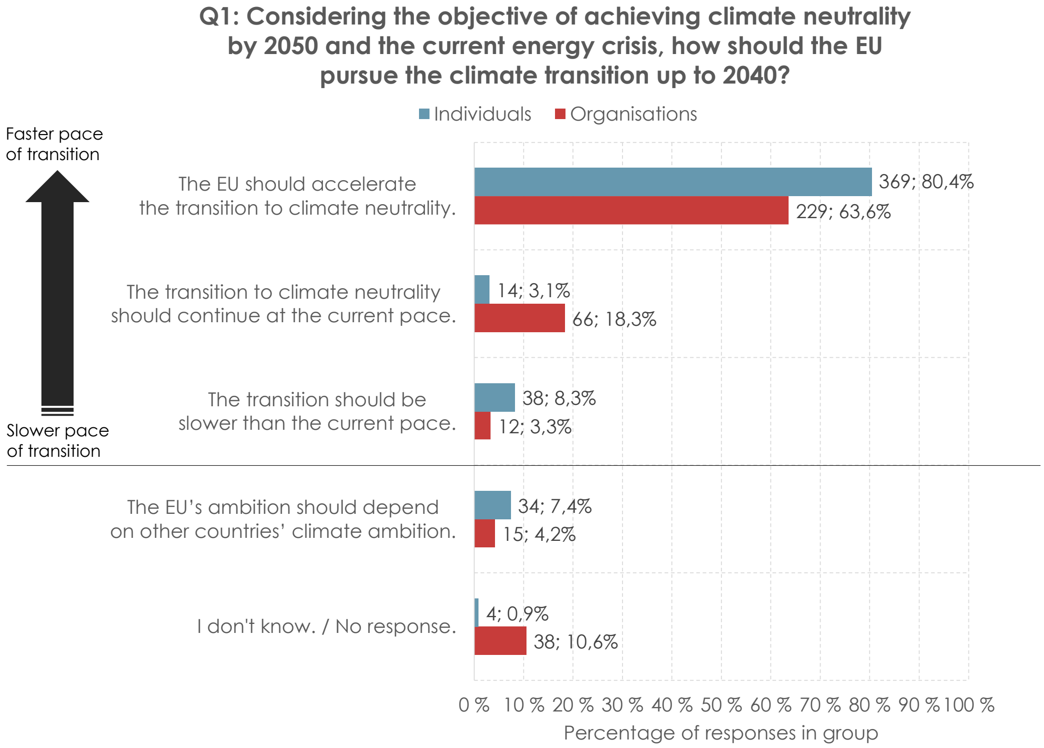
3.1. General section

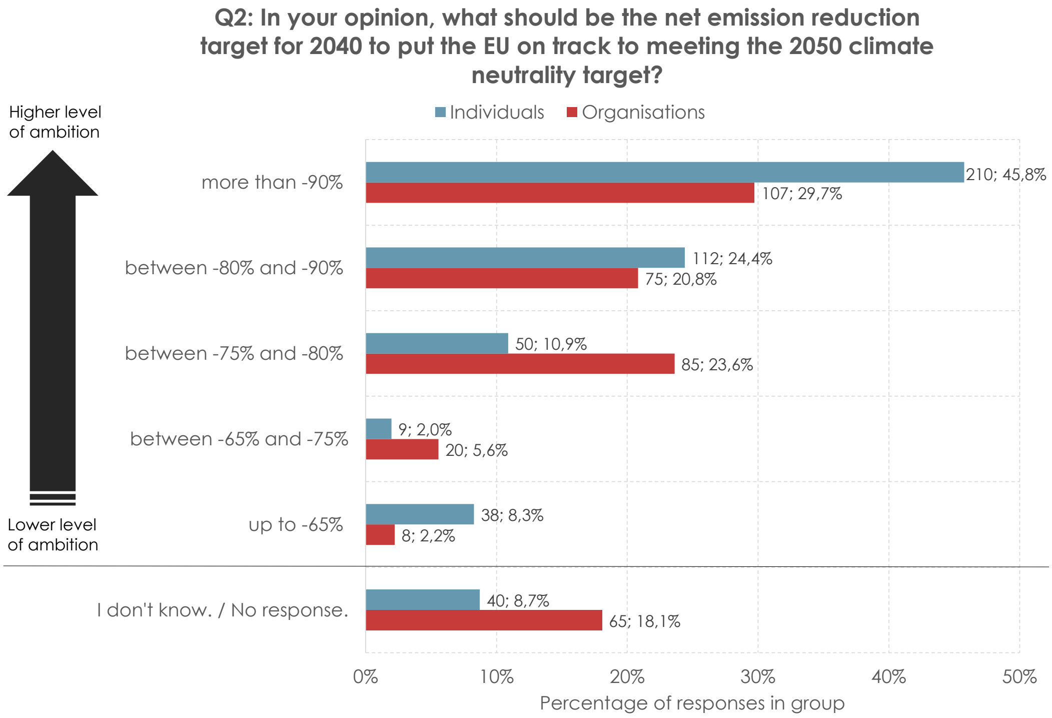
Level of ambition for the climate target for 2040

Most respondents (598, 73%) proposed accelerating the EU's climate transition to 2040, with individuals showing even greater support (369, 80%). The majority of organizations also backed an acceleration (229, 64%), while fewer suggested maintaining the current pace (66, 18%) (see Q1 in Figure 3). Civil society organisations (84, 91%) and academic/research institutions (17, 85%) strongly favoured an acceleration, this tendency was less pronounced among SMEs (51, 53%) and large companies (60, 48%).

Regarding the level of ambition, citizen responses showed strong support for an ambitious net target, while organizational responses were more evenly distributed across the ambitious target bands (see Q2 in Figure 3). Overall, only few citizens and organisations called for a net target less ambitious than -75%. Among organisations, civil society organisations mainly called for a highly ambitious net target, while the responses from business associations and companies were more mixed.

Figure 3 Responses on the climate ambition for 2040 (Q1/2)





n = 819 (Number of responses to general section)

Carbon removals in the climate target for 2040

Concerning the integration of carbon removals into the climate targets for 2040, most respondents (443, 54%) advocated for three separate targets for GHG emission reductions, nature-based carbon removals, and industrial removals. Especially civil society organisations (64, 70%) and academic/research institutions (14, 70%) strongly supported three separate targets. In contrast, SMEs, large companies as well as public authorities diverged more in their responses.

Contribution of individual sectors to the EU's climate ambition

Respondents stressed the necessity for increased efforts in GHG emission reduction for all sectors (Avg. 3.96 to 4.42). But among respondents, the highest agreement to stepping up emission reduction was for the transport sector, both for aviation and maritime transport (Avg.: 4.42[3], 57% rating 5) and road transport (Avg.: 4.39, 59% rating 5). Furthermore, respondents viewed the electricity and district heating sector as most likely to reach climate neutrality first.

Personal contribution to the climate

Most citizens acknowledged their awareness of climate change's reality (363, 79% rating 5) and expressed readiness to alter their behaviour (312, 68% rating 5). But only a low number of citizens indicated that from their perspective the same awareness persists throughout society (36, 8% rating 5).

The impacts of the climate crisis

In general, respondents showed awareness and concern regarding the negative impacts of the climate crisis. Loss of biodiversity and natural habitats (506, 62%) and damage from natural hazards (478, 58%) emerged as of highest concern. A strong consensus (Avg.: 4.33, 47% rating 5) suggested authorities should intensify efforts to ready cities and regions for climate change.

3.2. Expert section

General policy framework

Regarding EU emissions trading post-2030, respondents mostly supported covering all fossil fuel uses (Avg.: 4.27, 48% rating 5) and non-CO2 GHG emissions (Avg.: 4.09, 46% rating 5). Concerning CBAM, views were less definitive, but respondents suggested prioritizing sectors with the highest absolute emissions for inclusion under CBAM (Avg.: 3.90, 28% rating 5) instead of sectors where the emission reduction efforts are the lowest (Avg.: 2.97, 13% rating 5). Frequently mentioned sectors for potential CBAM expansion among open-text responses were transport emissions, chemicals and polymers, and agriculture.

Mitigation of GHG emissions from the land sector and policy options

Respondents mainly agreed that ambitious sectoral standards should exclude unsustainable farming practices (Avg.: 4.23, 37% rating 5). Non-regulatory approaches alone (e.g., information, innovation) were seen as insufficient for driving the transformation (Avg.: 1.75, 5% rating 5). Regarding the possible introduction of a carbon price in agriculture, respondents indicated that a carbon price, if introduced,

[3] Avg.: Average value of the responses received on a scale from 1 to 5 (applies to all questions with an average value). Responses that indicated "I don't know/No response" were excluded from the calculation of the average.

should rather be set at the level of food companies (Avg.: 4.26, 37% rating 5) or fertiliser producers (Avg.: 4.07, 32% rating 5). Setting the carbon price at the farmer or consumer level was seen as less favourable.

The role of carbon removals

Regarding the role of carbon removals in the climate policy framework, opinions split: nearly half said carbon removals are key for 2050 climate neutrality (274, 47%), whereas a somewhat smaller faction favoured a limited role (211, 36%). Academic/research institutions (10, 53%), public authorities (11, 61%), SMEs (60, 63%), and large business associations/companies (94, 73%) leaned towards an important role. Civil society organisations (52, 62%) and EU citizens (110, 50%) leaned towards a limited role. Concerning the relative contributions of nature-based and industrial removals, respondents slightly favoured the option for a higher reliance on nature-based removals (180, 31%). EU citizens and civil society organisations preferred a higher reliance on nature-based removals, while SMEs favoured a higher reliance on industrial ones.

Technologies

To facilitate the energy transition, respondents considered renewable energy as the most relevant technology (Avg.: 4.71, 70% ranking 5), together with energy efficiency (Avg.: 4.38, 54% ranking 5) and storage technologies (Avg.: 4.48, 52% ranking 5). The important role of renewables and energy efficiency was consistent across questions.

Engagement and social impacts

Regarding the local and regional implementation of the European Green Deal, only 10% (58) of respondents agreed (ranking 4 or 5) that local, regional, and private sector players are sufficiently involved to support the green transition. Regarding the requirements for a just transition, stakeholders emphasized inter-generational fairness (Avg.: 4.56, 55% ranking 5), and financial support for middle- and low-income households (Avg.: 4.52, 50% ranking 5).

4. RESULTS FROM THE IDENTIFIED CAMPAIGN

In the public consultation, 23 (3%) responses of EU citizens from Slovakia were classified as a campaign. The responses in the campaign showed the same narrative of stressing politicians using CO_2-free transportation (Q11, open-text). Regarding climate ambition for 2040, most responses indicated that the EU should make its ambition dependent on other countries' climate ambition (19, 83%).