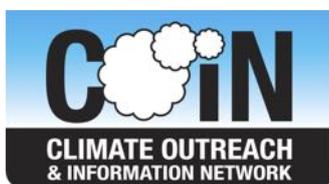


# Starting a New Conversation on Climate Change with the European Centre-Right



**A practical toolkit**



## Project team

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## About COIN

The Climate Outreach and Information Network (COIN) is a charity focused on building cross-societal acceptance of the need to tackle climate change. We have 10 years of experience helping our partners to talk and think about climate change in ways that reflect their individual values, interests and ways of seeing the world. We work with a wide range of partners including central, regional and local governments, charities, trades unions, business and faith organisations.

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The arguments expressed in this report remain solely those of COIN, and do not reflect the opinion of any other party. Any errors that remain in the paper are solely those of the author.

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# INTRODUCTION

**Addressing climate change at the European level requires that the majority of society accept the need to act.** European level climate actions have been largely supported by a cross-political consensus, but this unity of purpose is weakening with the growing reluctance of the centre-right in some countries to take action. The political centre-right occupies the moderate centre of politics, though reflecting right-wing positions in its support for free markets and business. The location of the centre-right shifts according to the wider political trends, but it is consistently defined by its opposition to radicalism on both sides.<sup>1</sup>

**Unless communicators can find messages that engage centre-right audiences, doubts about the need for EU action will continue to be raised, with profound consequences for future climate change policy.** It is clear that there is an increasing acceptance that simply communicating the science of climate change is not enough. This research follows a similar project undertaken by COIN focused on centre-right audiences in the UK.<sup>2</sup>

**European voters with centre-right politics are therefore a critically important audience to engage about climate change.** Centre-right parties hold the balance of power in the European Parliament and control the governments of many member states. What is more, centre-right values are shared by many conservatives as well as many people who vote for centre-left parties.

**Surveys find that Europeans with centrist and right-wing politics are significantly less concerned about climate change than people with left-wing politics.** They are also far more likely to feel that the threats have been exaggerated and to distrust environmentalist communicators. There is now a large body of attitudinal research into conservative values and, we suggest, it predicts that conventional climate narratives are especially challenging for this audience.

**A political division is already clear.** It appears in the media and the debates of politicians in the European Parliament and many national governments. There is a serious danger that these differences could widen further, as they have throughout the English-speaking world, to become an intractable obstacle to climate policy.

**There has been very little research into communicating climate change with the centre-right.** European communications specialists have tended to use a single set of generic messages and have paid little attention to finding ways to speak better to this audience. There has been very little survey or focus group research into the attitudes of the European centre-right to climate change, and no attempt to rigorously test different climate messages.

**This report is the first to propose practical narratives for communicating climate change with centre-right audiences across Europe.** Inevitably, as the first study in an emerging field, it has limitations: it has limited source material and its proposals have not been tested. It is intended to challenge climate communicators, inspire new approaches and, we hope, initiate a vitally important debate:

*How can we find new ways to engage, motivate and mobilise people of the centre-right around action on climate change?*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Aim

The aim of this report is to evaluate the narratives currently being used by leading figures on the centre-right and propose new narratives based on their core values.

## The Formation of Attitudes

Drawing on a large body of sociological and psychological research, we argue that people's attitudes to climate change are formed through the filter of their values and worldview. These attitudes are then shaped and shared in the form of narratives. The report follows the structure of this argument, starting with values, moving to frames and language, and then to narratives.

## Values

We identify eight core values that consistently define a conservative identity in multiple countries. We suggest that the dominant left/green climate change narrative is challenging for these values and argue that people of the centre-right need climate narratives that can speak better to their values.

## Frames

We show how values become incorporated into 'frames', which create structures through which people interpret climate change. We identify ten key centre-right frames that are widely applied by centre-right communicators when discussing climate change: Balance; Stability; Fairness; Realism; Leadership; Duty and Responsibility; Health and Life; Religious Faith; Freedom; Us (Not Them).

Using speeches by centre-right MEPs as well as twenty structured interviews, we give practical examples of their application to climate change.

Drawing on these frames and their use in the current discourse, we develop a lexicon of words that have the most relevance to people with a centre-right identity. We argue that these words are important signals of deeper values and markers of identity. We draw a counter-vocabulary of words which usually signal a left-wing or environmentalist identity.

## Narratives

We focus on three major narratives that apply these frames and values to more complex storylines containing actors, threats and solutions, and a sequence of events. Two of these, *Security* and *Economy*, are firmly established among the centre-right. We warn that both have drawbacks and may trigger values such as competition and self-interest that, experiments show, can suppress concern about climate change. A third narrative, *Threats*, is heard much less often. We argue that the communication of threat is vital for mobilising the necessary level of concern about climate change and we suggest possible ways to communicate threat to a centre-right audience.

## Communicators

Research finds that trust in the climate change communicator is often the single most important component of successful communications. We note that many climate communicators have

progressive values and are not trusted by people of the centre-right. As one MEP told us “the comments that are always coming up are that environmentalists are stupid, extreme, and exaggerate their case.” We argue that advocates therefore need to build an ‘infrastructure of influence”, that supports new communicators from the centre-right and generates the opportunities for them to speak more effectively within their own community.

### **Narratives in Action**

Finally, we analyse in detail speeches on climate change by the British Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher and by the German Christian Democrat Angela Merkel and show how these values and themes can be woven into motivating and distinctly centre-right narratives.

### **The Limitations of this Report**

Two limitations must be stressed. Firstly, we decided to focus on the political discourse in the European Parliament because it combines, within one body, a wide spectrum of current European political attitudes. However, we recognise that the political culture of the European Parliament differs from many national level parliaments, especially in regards to co-operation between the centre-left and centre-right. Secondly, although grounded in the evidence base and expert practice, none of these communication proposals have yet been formally evaluated or tested. Responses to climate change are complex and often hard to predict. All proposals in this report must therefore be considered as guidelines or suggestions to be applied carefully and adapted as needed.

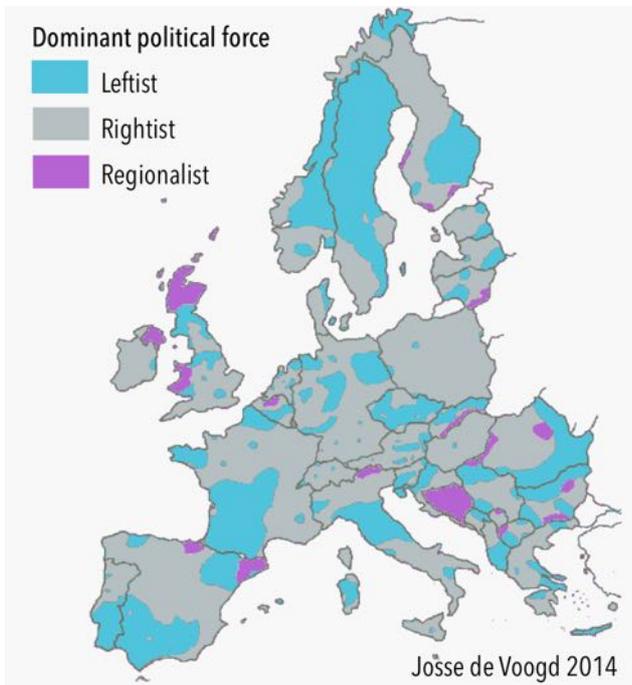
### **A Note on Terminology**

The academic research adopts a simple division between left and right wing political values and does not identify a distinctly centrist position. Therefore, for simplicity we have used the term *conservatives* for people with generally right-wing political values and *progressives* for those with left-wing values. When speaking about specific politicians and parties we have been more specific and refer to far-left, centre-left, centre-right and far-right political groups. Greens are identified as centre-left.

# BACKGROUND:

## EUROPE, THE CENTRE-RIGHT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

### The Centre-Right in Europe



Source: [www.jossedevogd.nl/](http://www.jossedevogd.nl/)

There are currently centre-right governments in many countries within Europe including Belgium, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom and Spain. Right-wing parties hold the majority of seats in the European Parliament. The centre-right European People's Party (EPP) is the largest single grouping in the European Parliament, currently holding 211 seats out of 751. The recent 2014 elections saw major gains for the far right, especially the French National Front which became the largest French party in the European Parliament.<sup>3</sup>

The distribution of voting patterns in the 2014 European election also shows marked political variations within countries.<sup>4</sup> Some of these variations follow patterns of urbanisation and industrialisation, which typically lend support to left-wing parties. There are other complex patterns of religious and cultural loyalty that lead to political affiliation.

These other identities may be sufficiently strong to lead conservatives to vote for centre-left parties and vice versa. A study in Latvia, for example, found that political choices were more likely to be determined primarily by residual tensions between Latvians and Russian-speaking minorities than by political values.<sup>5</sup> It is important to stress that the relationship between political values and voting patterns is always complex and specific to local circumstances.

### Centre-Right Attitudes to Climate Change

The Eurobarometer programme, commissioned by the European Commission, surveys public attitudes across member states on a wide range of EU policies. This is the only survey that compares attitudes to climate change across all countries in the European Union.

#### *The Strong Influence across Europe of Political Orientation on Attitudes to Climate Change*

In its 2008 and 2009 special reports on climate change (though unfortunately not in more recent years) the Eurobarometer surveys asked participants to identify their political orientation as either

left, right or centre.<sup>6,7</sup> Political self-identification, though, is not an entirely reliable guide to values.\*<sup>8</sup>

The 2009 survey found that conservatives were consistently and significantly less concerned and more sceptical about climate change than progressives. On most questions people who identified with the centre were closest in their attitudes to people on the right. This suggests that narratives for the centre-right about climate change may also be relevant for some centre-left audiences.

	Percentage agreeing with statement, by political identification		
	Left	Centre	Right
Climate change is the most important issue facing the world	55	54	47
Climate change is a very serious problem	72	66	65
Climate change is not a serious problem	10	10	12
I have personally taken actions aimed at helping to fight climate change	64	65	57
Fighting climate change can have a positive impact on the European economy	20	17	16
The seriousness of climate change has been exaggerated	27	30	33

Source: Special Eurobarometer 313, Europeans' attitudes towards climate change July 2009

The 2008 survey showed a similar distribution of attitudes between left and right, though, in the midst of worsening recession, there was a marked decline in concern about climate change in all groups.<sup>9</sup>

### Wide National Variations

The Europeans most likely to rate climate change as the *greatest* problem facing the world are those in the relatively affluent countries of Germany and Scandinavia. Mediterranean countries are more likely to rate economic concerns above climate change, but have a stronger popular consensus that climate change is 'extremely serious'. This may be because they are more vulnerable to major climate impacts<sup>10</sup>. The United Kingdom and the countries of Eastern Europe are least likely to agree with either position. Over 95% of all people (regardless of their political orientation) in Cyprus and Spain said that climate change is a very serious problem. In the United Kingdom and some Eastern countries it was 63% or less.<sup>11</sup>

The data shows that the variation between countries can be greater than the variation between political groups. Conservatives in Mediterranean countries are as likely to agree that climate change is 'extremely serious' as progressives in more sceptical cultures.

\* People's understanding of their own position is complicated by culture and recent political change. For example, across Eastern Europe, 12 to 17% of people are unwilling to place themselves anywhere on a left-right spectrum.

This variation is found in national level surveys on attitudes. Recent research in Germany for example could not find any significant connection between politics and attitudes to climate change. Scepticism about climate change is linked, if anything, to scepticism about politics in general.<sup>12</sup> In Britain, France, and Scandinavia, where there are greater ideological divisions between political parties, there are also correspondingly greater political differences in climate change attitudes. A survey of international media found that the conservative media in France and Britain both had much higher levels of sceptical coverage than the international norm.<sup>13</sup> In Britain, like many Anglophone countries, particularly the USA and Australia, there is a pronounced difference in attitudes towards climate change on the left and on the right.<sup>14</sup> In Norway, where there are strong political divisions, 90% of those voting for the ruling centre-left parties believe that climate change is caused by humans. That belief falls to 60% among conservative voters and lower still to 40% among voters who support the far right Progress party.<sup>15</sup>

## How Climate Change Plays Out in the European Parliament

The European Parliament tends to exhibit a greater degree of cross-party co-operation than is found in most national politics. Centre-left and centre-right agree on the existence of climate change as a problem and the need for a concerted EU response. However, right-wing groups, especially British members of the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) group,<sup>16</sup> have consistently voted against climate change policy. So far they have been unwilling to take a clear stance on the science - the far-right French National Front and German National Democratic Party,<sup>17,18</sup> for example, make no mention of climate change in their 2014 European programmes. Individual right-wing politicians are becoming more outspoken and some parties such as the United Kingdom Independence Party and the Czech Party of Free Citizens are openly denying climate change.<sup>19</sup>

### Section Summary

- Levels of concern about climate change are high across the European Union. A large majority in each country considers it to be a major threat.
- There are notable differences between countries, but, in the absence of rigorous research, it is not possible to know exactly why.
- Across Europe, people with right-wing and centrist politics are likely to be less concerned about climate change than people with left-wing politics, less likely to take personal action and more likely to believe that it has been exaggerated.

# BACKGROUND: HOW WE MAKE SENSE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The ways in which we form our attitudes towards climate change are complex, containing a mixture of individual and group-level motivations. A growing body of research shows that a rational evaluation of the scientific evidence is a relatively minor component of people's attitudes towards climate change. Of far greater influence are people's values, worldviews and political beliefs, and whether the stories or 'narratives' they hear about climate change fit with - or challenge - their existing beliefs.<sup>20</sup> Understanding how narratives about climate change are transmitted by peers and trusted communicators is crucial to understanding how people engage with the issue.

## Values

Social psychologists define a value as a 'guiding principle in the life of a person'.<sup>21</sup> Certain types of values cluster together, while others conflict with each other. In particular, 'self-enhancing' values like wealth, status and power conflict with 'self-transcending' values like altruism and concern for the welfare of others. When messages are 'framed' in different ways, they are likely to speak to different values.

Research clearly shows that self-transcending values are associated with positive engagement with climate change, whereas self-enhancing values are not.<sup>22</sup> One practical implication of this finding is that promoting or 'priming' one type of value (for example, talking about the economic rationale for energy saving - a self-enhancing value) is likely to inhibit or weaken the prominence of competing values. This would suggest that focusing exclusively on the economic rationale for climate change is unlikely to be an effective approach. It is therefore useful to identify 'self-transcending' values associated with a centre-right identity.

## Frames

All information is 'framed' by the context in which it appears. Frames can consist in individual words and phrases (sometimes called 'surface framing'), or something more substantial (called 'deep framing'). 'Deep framing' refers to the connections that are forged between a particular communication strategy and a set of deeper values or principles.<sup>23</sup>

Any message can be 'framed' in multiple ways, and unsurprisingly, research has found that values-based framing matters for public engagement with climate change. Frames are also powerful markers of social identity, allowing people to distinguish between messages and ideas that have come from their 'in-group' or from outside of it.

For people with conservative political views, studies have shown that framing climate change with reference to policies that are congruent with their view of the world (e.g., nuclear power and free-market solutions) can reduce levels of scepticism.<sup>24</sup>

## Narratives

When frames are repeated and used consistently, they become known as a 'narrative'. Narratives are a key part of human experience, and have been for thousands of years. They are the means by which people make sense of the world, learn values, form beliefs, and give shape to their lives.<sup>25</sup> There is a large body of academic work focused specifically on the idea of 'policy narratives', which can be summarised as having a setting, a plot (beginning, middle, end), characters (heroes, villains, and victims) and a moral to the story.<sup>26</sup> Using this definition, it is possible to systematically compare different policy narratives. There is a growing body of evidence that narratives are important for engaging the public on climate change and energy specifically, because they help to give these issues a relevant social identity for groups who have not yet been particularly engaged in the subject.<sup>27</sup>

## Communicators

The final stage in the process is the role of trusted communicators in transmitting information. Experimental research shows that people are far more inclined to believe something that is communicated by someone who they believe shares their values. Conversely, they may be unwilling to believe information from a source they do not know or trust, even if it is directly relevant to their concerns and values.

Taken together, the research findings described above provide sound guidance for communicating climate change with the centre-right, providing the structure for the rest of the report. Communicators can shape climate change around centre-right values and frames. They can construct narratives that embody these values and frames. And, if they do not come from the centre-right themselves, they can work with and support people who will be trusted as communicators.

# VALUES

## 8 Core Conservative Values

Research since the 1950s has found that fundamental differences in the values of conservatives and progressives underpin their worldview and define their attitudes. These differences are both social and psychological in origin and are found across cultures. A standard test, the Schwartz Values Scale, found that conservatives exhibited remarkably consistent values across a survey of 28 countries.<sup>28</sup>

The eight values below have been found across Europe, but as with attitudes to climate change, there are national variations. For example, a resistance to change and adherence to rules is found consistently across conservative voters. However, acceptance of inequality is far more marked among conservative voters in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe, where the need for security (which is discussed in more detail as a narrative) is a stronger mark of political ideology.<sup>29</sup>

### *1. Resistance to (and discomfort with) change; defence of the status quo*

Experiments show that conservatives are generally wary of novelty and uncomfortable with change, whereas openness to change and a willingness to seek out new experiences is often part of progressives' sense of identity.<sup>30</sup>

### *2. Support for authority, hierarchies, and acceptance of inequality*

Conservatives are supportive of social hierarchies, and adhere strongly to tradition-based social rules. While the left favours greater equality, the right sees society as inevitably hierarchical. This worldview is inclined to see society as a 'competitive jungle' where success is earned through hard work and initiative, and should be duly rewarded.<sup>31</sup> Conservatives adhere to a vision of a 'just world' with an innate balance in which people are rewarded or punished according to their actions.<sup>32</sup>

### *3. Need for closure and certainty*

Conservatives across multiple cultures have been found to have a strong underlying desire for closure, certainty, and predictability, and a corresponding intolerance of ambiguity.<sup>33</sup> This can be expressed as a preference for making up one's mind quickly, reaching firm resolutions and sorting information into familiar categories.<sup>34</sup> Progressives are more comfortable with uncertainty and willing to accept open-ended or unresolved outcomes. Conservatives correspondingly adopt language based around defined categories and realism. These preferences often extend to their attitudes to humour,<sup>35</sup> art, poetry and food.<sup>36</sup>

## 4. Conscientiousness

The English word conscientiousness expresses a cluster of personality traits concerned with being thorough, careful, vigilant and disciplined.\* Psychologists regard conscientiousness as one of the five defining dimensions of personality-testing and it is the dimension in which conservatives consistently score highest.<sup>37,38</sup>

## 5. Focus on purity/resistance to impurity

Research finds that conservatives are strongly motivated by notions of purity (and react strongly against threats to purity).<sup>39</sup> This self-transcendent value can be expressed in multiple ways: a dislike of waste, disruption and chaos; a focus on protecting the 'pure' (for example children and nature); and a high standard of cleanliness and tidiness in appearance and home.<sup>40</sup> In terms of attitudes to the environment this is expressed as a strong opposition to litter, pollution (especially air pollution that affects the health of children) and the destruction of nature or cultural heritage.

## 6. Loyalty to the in-group

Compared with progressives, conservatives have a stronger sense of their own identity (their in-group), and a stronger tendency to define it in opposition to out-groups. They are more loyal to their group and, correspondingly, more likely to compete with people from other groups.<sup>41,42</sup>

## 7. Sensitivity to negativity

Conservatives are more sensitive than progressives to narratives and images that are negative, including those that are ambiguous, uncertain, or disorderly. For example, when presented in experiments with a choice of negative images (vomit, houses on fire, dangerous animals) and positive images (sunsets, happy children, pets) they pay far more attention than progressives to the negative images.<sup>43</sup> They are also more likely to express disgust (especially in regards to threats to purity) and interpret ambiguous situations as threatening and dangerous.

One study concluded that "across research methods, samples and countries, conservatives have been found to be quicker to focus on the negative, to spend longer looking at the negative, and to be more distracted by the negative."<sup>44</sup>

## 8. Enjoyment of life

This sensitivity to negativity does not lead to a lower enjoyment of life - in fact, repeated studies find that conservatives report being more contented with their lives than progressives. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that their lives are better than progressives' lives, but it does suggest that they may be more prone to present them as being better. One explanation for this, supported by research in ten countries, is that their sensitivity to negativity and their preference for security may be strategies by which conservatives defend their sense of wellbeing and personal comfort.<sup>45</sup> In other words, conservatives may be more adept at blocking out unwelcome information. This analysis has profound implications for communicating climate change to this group.

.....  
\* Equivalent words in other languages are *Gewissenhaftigkeit* in German and *Soin* in French.

# How Conservative Values Influence Attitudes to Climate Change

Climate change poses many challenges to people holding the following conservative values: <sup>46</sup>

**Change:** The entire issue (embodied even within the name 'climate change') poses unprecedented and extreme changes to the status quo.

**Certainty:** Climate change is uncertain, ambiguous and open-ended. The issue is multi-causal and complex in both cause and effect. It does not fit into conventional categories based on familiar threats.

**In-groups:** Because emissions are produced by all populations and nations, climate change does not fit conventional narratives of in-group defence against out-group enemies. What is more, reaching agreement on emissions reductions requires exceptional co-operation with rival nations, political groups and social classes.

**Hierarchies and inequality:** On both individual and national levels, high emissions are strongly related to high income and the correspondingly higher energy use, consumption levels and mobility it enables.<sup>47</sup> Climate change therefore contains a moral challenge to the conservative principle that social progress is best achieved by enabling personal prosperity.

**Negativity:** Scientific models all predict extremely severe and permanent damage on current trajectories. Although there can be positive messaging around solutions, the underlying arguments for action are inevitably negative.

All of these qualities make climate change challenging to core conservative values and have made it correspondingly more acceptable to the values of progressives. Progressives have in turn taken stronger ownership of the issue and have often presented it with the images, narratives and frames drawn from their own values.<sup>48</sup> As discussed later in this report, in the section 'The importance of communicator trust', the use of progressives' values to communicate climate change is a reason why conservatives reject the issue.

There are many facets to climate change and there is no inherent reason why climate change cannot be communicated in ways that speak strongly to conservative values. For example, it contains a potent threat to social order, the status quo, purity and enjoyment of life. The solutions require a strong sense of duty, responsibility and group loyalty.

The rest of this report explores how centre-right politicians (including the British conservative leader Mrs Thatcher) have shaped climate change in terms of these values, applying conservative frames and building conservative narratives. Although there is scant academic research into conservative narratives, there are many examples of practical communication which constitutes a long term experiment in public engagement.

# FRAMES

Frames are a means by which we use language to define areas of attention and make sense of new information. They consist of words and phrases that can be purely descriptive (called 'surface frames') or trigger complex clusters of associations that connect a message to an entire worldview (called 'deep frames'). An example, often used by the cognitive linguist George Lakoff, is adoption of the phrase "tax relief" by US conservatives.<sup>49</sup> As Lakoff explains, 'relief' is a deep frame that portrays taxation as a burden, and the person who removes it as a liberator. This metaphorical association, and the worldview it supports, is then reinforced every time the phrase is used.

## 10 Key Frames for the Centre-Right

In the following analysis we identify ten dominant frames that appear regularly in centre-right political narratives about climate change: Balance; Stability; Fairness; Realism; Leadership; Duty and Responsibility; Health and Life; Religious Faith; Freedom; and Us (Not Them).

We draw on two sources:

- Speeches and media reporting of centre-right Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). These MEPs are named directly and associated with their main political group:

<b>EPP</b>	<b>European People's Party</b>	<i>Largest pro-European centre-right group</i>
<b>ALDE</b>	<b>Alliance of Liberals &amp; Democrats for Europe</b>	<i>Free-market pro-Europe conservatives</i>
<b>ECR</b>	<b>European Conservatives &amp; Reformists</b>	<i>Free-market soft eurosceptics.</i>

- Twenty formal interviews with politicians, lobbyists and advisers working in the Parliament. The interviewees who agreed to be named as contributors are listed at the end of the report. To respect their anonymity they are not named in the text and the source is referenced by abbreviations:

[CR MEP] *Centre-right Member of the European Parliament*

[CL MEP] *Centre-left Member of the European Parliament*

[ADV] *Political Advisor*

[NGO] *Non-Governmental Organisation Lobbyist or Campaigner*

[IND] *Industry Lobbyist*

A quote promoting climate change action

A quote opposing climate change action

The quotes in the report are displayed according to whether language is used to promote climate change action (in blue) or to oppose climate change action (in grey).

## Frame One: Balance

The frame of *balance* relates to conservative values of conscientiousness and closure. It is used widely around the climate change issue, even when accepting the need for action:

"I am convinced Cañete will strike the right balance between reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and keeping European industry strong." **Krišjānis Kariņš (EPP)**<sup>50</sup>

"We need to strike an appropriate balance between affordable and safe energy, and efforts to combat climate change." **Herbert Reul (EPP)**<sup>51</sup>

Conservatives believe that their sense of *balance* is essential to moderate the excesses of 'greens' who they believe exaggerate risk and create scare stories: "the centre-right believes in caution, looking carefully at the options, whereas the environmental left will tend to go in head first." [CR MEP]

An NGO lobbyist sees it quite differently: "*balance* is a coded word that implies that trade-offs are needed. It sounds reasonable - that you can't have everything and can't overreact - but it can also be a rhetorical device to avoid action. *Balance* is not a word used much in issues of conflict or torture." [NGO]

Conservatives believe that their innate caution makes them more "reasonable" and less likely to interfere. "We do not want rule upon rule and ban upon ban on the basis of a newspaper article," comments one centre-right MEP. Another says that "greens always go on about the precautionary principle. But this can sometimes be completely wrong. It needs to be set against the *proportionate* principle. The risk is then re-*balanced*." [CR MEP]

A centre-right politician is therefore likely to see his or her professional role as *balancing* different points of view and finding a resolution. Within the European Parliament, that includes being seen as respecting the input of industry and welcoming debate to reach a *balanced* view.

"It is clear that on this issue, we have different opinions [about climate change]. This is normal, this is the democratic game." **Anne Delvaux (EPP)**<sup>52</sup>

## Frame Two: Stability

Whereas *balance* is about managing different demands, *stability* is related to creating a secure framework - either a *stable* economy or society - within which those demands can be met. *Stability* is an important frame for conservatives, drawing on values of security and social order.

Conservatives may criticise climate change policies for bringing *instability*, for example, saying that energy prices are "out of control"<sup>53</sup> Herbert Reul (EPP).

On the other hand, *stability* can be a powerful argument for creating a strong climate policy with clear targets (as opposed to a weak and unsettled policy) because it can provide *stability* for further business investment:

"We have repeatedly said our industry needs a stable and predictable framework to promote long-term investment." **Patrizia Toia (EPP)**<sup>54</sup>

"Our industry needs a stable and foreseeable framework to boost long-term investments." **Françoise Grossetête (EPP)**<sup>55</sup>

### Frame Three: Fairness

Conservatives and progressives have different understandings of *fairness*. Conservatives see it as a form of *balance*, a level playing field that enables responsibility. Progressives see it as an expression of social rights and equality.<sup>56</sup>

"A few words on the principles that have steered our work [on climate change] (...) First, fairness: every country contributes, according to their prosperity and capacity." **Herman Van Rompuy (EPP)**<sup>57</sup>

*Fairness* is the frame used by some conservatives to argue that Europe is doing too much on climate change and that it is not *fair* that it make excessive sacrifices because it is now only a minority player:

"The EU is now responsible for only 11% of global emissions. It is illusory to believe that it can, by itself, change." **Patrizia Toia (EPP)**<sup>58</sup>

"It's not in Europe's interest to systematically disadvantage industry here in comparison to other worldwide competitors." **Herbert Reul (EPP)**<sup>59</sup>

*Fairness* (in the conservative sense) is, however, also a powerful frame for climate legislation, for example for removing subsidies on fossil fuels and setting basic energy standards. *Fairness* was the key frame that led to mandatory performance standards for electrical goods in 2007: *fairness* required that the same levels be set for all to prevent *unfair* competition by companies from outside the EU.<sup>60</sup>

### Frame Four: Realism

*Realism* is closely allied to the frames of *balance* and moderation and the value of conscientiousness. It is an important mark of conservative identity: "we are the *realists*. We are the ones who sift out *reality* from the rhetoric." [CR MEP]

"#Climate protection needs realism and ambition" Tweet by **Karl-Heinz Florenz (EPP)**

"Only realism will make Europe the world leader in research and innovation." **Gunther Oettinger (European Commissioner for Energy, German Christian Democrat Union)**<sup>61</sup>

*Realism* is also claimed by opponents of action on the centre-right, typically in contrast to the emotional, unreasonable and *unrealistic* demands of the left and 'greens':

"Unrealistic emissions reduction targets will become an enormous burden."  
**Herbert Reul (EPP)**<sup>62</sup>

### Frame Five: Leadership

*Leadership* is a frequently applied frame that combines the conservative values of *duty*, *responsibility* and acceptance of hierarchy.

"The EU alone cannot save the climate. However, we can be a role model. We can show that it is possible to reduce emissions and protect the climate while at the same time have a thriving economy. This is one of the best levers to make others follow us." **Karl-Heinz Florenz (EPP)**<sup>63</sup>

*Leadership* also requires that there be followers who show respect and obedience. Without these, *leadership* can be a needless sacrifice. If other major players like the US and China do not follow Europe, the situation becomes *unfair*. Many centre-right MEPs feel that Europe has already done too much *leading* and has put itself at an economic disadvantage.

"We have always questioned the sense of forging too far ahead too quickly with unilateral action. I know people talk about that as leadership, but there is another way of looking at that, which is isolation." **Julie Girling (ECR)**<sup>64</sup>

When calling for *leadership*, centre-right MEPs tend to avoid direct moral appeals for *leadership* by moderating it with an appeal to *security* or *fairness*. Thus an EPP press release is titled "Europe should lead the way in addressing climate concerns, while safeguarding its industrial activities."<sup>65</sup> Alternatively, they can show that *leadership* is indeed working and others are following:

"It is just very rewarding to see that, finally, European leadership has paid off (...) Obama's plan mirrors European initiatives." **Karl-Heinz Florenz (EPP)**<sup>66</sup>

### Frame Six: Duty and Responsibility

*Duty* and *responsibility* are powerful moral values for conservatives, which, because they are self-transcending, have important potential in climate change narratives. "*Responsibility to Future Generations*" was the title of the 2008 climate change position of the centre-right European People's Party and is listed as a major operating principle in the revised position.<sup>67</sup> This aspect of *responsibility* speaks to conservative values of tradition, protection, investment and purity and appears regularly in the speeches of centre-right politicians.

"As a Christian democrat (...) it is our "moral duty" to leave a planet to our children which is not polluted and damaged (...) When historians look back on this critical moment of human history, I would not like them to say that we have failed our children." **Karl-Heinz Florenz (EPP)**<sup>68</sup>

“The world and especially our children will suffer (...) Our generation is the last generation that is able to stop uncontrolled climate change (...) Future generations would blame us for having allowed the uncontrolled effects of climate change.” **Peter Liese (EPP)**<sup>69</sup>

Another argument associated to *duty*, with an added appeal to politicians, presents climate change as a historical calling, drawing on historical metaphors of co-operation in a common struggle. For British politicians the metaphor draws on the resistance to Nazi invasion. For Germans, not surprisingly, the historical metaphor is one of post-war reconstruction:

“There are very few moments in history when nations are asked to find common decisions that will change the lives of every man, woman and child on the planet for generations to come: the creation of Bretton Woods and the architecture of the post-war economy; the Marshall Plan that rebuilt Europe after the war; the talks that led to the fall of the Iron Curtain and the reunification of Germany.” **Karl-Heinz Florenz (EPP)**<sup>70</sup>

However appealing to politicians, there is no rigorous testing to establish how well the *duty* frame works with the centre-right public. An industry lobbyist duly adds a note of caution: “I am not convinced that *responsibility* is ever a winning argument. A lot of MEPs go into politics to take *responsibility* - they are very conscious and proud about this. However, if you speak the language of *responsibility* you are speaking the language of sacrifice and you imply that it is a negative thing that will hurt. This is why they respond defensively saying that we always make more effort than others even though we represent no more than 10% of global emissions - it is not *fair*.” [IND]

### Frame Seven: Health and Life

*Health* is a powerful frame for conservatives and there is polling evidence from the USA that it can be the basis for effective mitigation narratives for conservatives, including those who do not accept the threats of climate change.<sup>71</sup> *Life* is also a highly resonant frame, with strong religious overtones, that appears in moral debates about abortion or euthanasia.

“Conservative action is not just to prettify, but to protect the health of people and life on the planet.” [CR MEP]

### Frame Eight: Religious Faith

The centre-right has strong links with mainstream churches and in several European countries, it is strongly identified with ‘Christian Democrat’ parties. Although individual MEPs may or may not be practising Christians, they recognise and respond to *religious* values and respect *religious* spokespeople. *Religious leaders*, in turn, usually speak to their values. Here, for example, Cardinal Lehmann, the most senior Catholic bishop in Germany, uses conservative frames of *loans*, *responsibility* and hierarchical leadership.

“As those to whom God entrusted creation as a loan, we humans bear responsibility for its well-being (...) We call upon (...) those in positions of responsibility within the Church, as well as those who hold responsibility in government and politics, in business and industry, and in society, to take up effective measures to conserve the climate and to adapt to the consequences of global climate change.” **Cardinal Karl Lehmann, Bishop of Mainz**<sup>72</sup>

### Frame Nine: Freedom

Although less pronounced than in the USA, where the far right has framed action on climate change as an assault on personal *freedom*, issues of choice and freedom bubble up through the climate debate.<sup>73</sup>

“Energy efficiency targets mean much more EU regulation in private households. The light bulb ban was only a small-scale start, more home appliances would follow. This is a very dangerous direction and will again drive more citizens into the arms of the enemies of the EU.” **Herbert Reul (EPP)**<sup>74</sup>

### Frame Ten: Us (Not Them)

Conservatives have a strong sense of identity and assert their strengths in other debates. They feel the need to assert their ownership by claiming “this is an issue that *we*, with *our* values, *our* skills, *our* intelligence, *our* experience can be most effective in solving”. This in-group framing builds on a sense of competition with rival political ideologies and may involve some - hopefully respectful - generalisations about out-groups, as in this British example:

“The challenge of climate change is too important be left to ‘hair shirt and sandal’ hippies, who are nostalgic for the past. Creating a modern, efficient and productive low-carbon future is the responsibility of business leaders and entrepreneurs – the people who get things done in society.” **James Murray, Business Green.**<sup>75</sup>

If the reward for involvement is shaping the discourse along the lines of conservative values, the punishment for not getting involved is that rival left-wing values will dominate. One revealing experiment in the USA found that people with right-wing/authoritarian values were far more motivated to vote in a coming election by a threat of exclusion (“not voting allows others to take away your right to express your values”) than by the promise of self-expression (“voting is a way to express and live in accordance with important values”).<sup>76</sup> This is consistent with the wider finding that conservatives are strongly motivated by the defence of their *in-group*.

## A Centre-Right Lexicon: Words to Use...and to Avoid

Individual words can often stand in for frames and the entire set of associated values contained within them. This is why creating and controlling the words that frame debates is a major objective in all political communications.<sup>77</sup>

The following words are frames found in the language, speeches and interviews of the European centre-right about climate change. When used appropriately, they clearly signal that the communicator is speaking from and to the centre-right in a way that is distinct from other political worldviews.

VALUE	VOCABULARY	
Resistance to (and discomfort with) change; defence of the status quo	Stable, stability Straightforward Settled, settlement	Moderation Order
Support for authority, hierarchies, and acceptance of inequality	Duty Tradition Ambition	Values Competitive
Need for closure and certainty	Resolve, resolution Predictable Balance Proportionate Fair, fairness	Clear, clarity Simplicity Real, reality, realistic Consistent, consistency
Purity	Innocent, beautiful, pure Dirty, filthy Pollution	Waste Ugly Messy
Conscientiousness	Efficient Reliable Reasonable, sensible	Integrity Right Decent
Security (personal and economic)	Secure, security Prosperity Investment	Defend/combat Safe Grow, growth
Avoidance of Negativity	Opportunity Confident, confidence Positive	Health Life Future

In speeches, these words often appear in strings, for example:

“We need to strike an appropriate balance between affordable and safe energy, and efforts to combat climate change.” **Konrad Szymanski (ECR)**<sup>78</sup>

“Securing a better future for our grandchildren.” **(EPP website)**<sup>79</sup>

Many of these words are applied beyond their literal context or in compound phrases such as “secure investment”, a “healthy economy”, “our way of life”, “stable prices”, “a balanced debate”, “clear conclusions”- all of which signal a centre-right identity.

It is important to note that there is a corresponding lexicon of framing words that are used almost exclusively by ‘greens’, environmental NGOs and people with left-wing politics. These words and phrases also convey messages about values and identity and when used in communications with the centre-right, clearly indicate that the communicator belongs to the out-group. For this reason they are best avoided. Some examples are:

## VALUE

## VOCABULARY

Environmentalism	Green, eco, planet, save the planet, biosphere, ecosystem
Acceptance of complexity	Diverse, diversity
Dislike of inequality and hierarchies	Equal, equality, unequal, social rights, social justice, welfare, greed, rich, elites
Distrust of industry	‘Dinosaur industries’ (to describe energy-intensive high carbon industries)

# NARRATIVES

## The Importance of Compelling Narratives

Narratives are a fundamental aspect of human reasoning. They combine values and frames into more complex storylines with defined timelines, familiar heroes and enemies, and metaphors and morals. No issue has ever mobilised strong political and social commitment without being grounded in narratives. Mobilising the centre-right around climate change depends, more than anything else, on finding compelling and easily understood narratives.

Many of the examples already given constitute partial narratives. The following section focuses on three more complete narratives: threat, security, and economy. Each reflects the principles of narrative. Threat contains the moral requirement to protect the group. Security contains out-group enemies. Economy contains timelines, competition and a struggle for dominance.

As noted above, self-transcending values have been found to stimulate greater willingness to take action on climate change than self-enhancing values. In each case these narratives can speak to either set of values and we warn that economy and security are particularly liable to be expressed in competitive self-enhancing values. We recommend utilising self-transcending frames whenever possible.

## 3 Narratives

### *Narrative One: Threats*

Although there may be positive economic and social arguments for reducing emissions, it is the scale of threat from climate change that justifies political attention and collective commitment. A centre-right narrative on threat could look like this, COIN suggests:

Climate change threatens everything we care about on the centre-right - our prosperity,<sup>80</sup> our landscapes, our cultures, our security and our very way of life.<sup>81</sup> It threatens the health of our most vulnerable citizens - the youngest and oldest.<sup>82</sup> Future extreme weather events could cost us billions of Euros each year in damage to our property, industrial production and agriculture, stalling economic growth and reversing the extraordinary progress we have made in the past generation.

Yet the centre-right is strangely quiet about climate change as an overarching threat to its values. Much of the language of climate change as a threat comes from the environmental left who are criticised by conservatives for being “emotional and exaggerating threats.” [CR MEP]

One reason for this may be the conservative aversion to negativity described above. A large body of research shows that people can respond to threat messages with defence and avoidance mechanisms.<sup>83</sup> As one centre-right MEP explains, “conservatives are people who hate big threats - if you throw an indigestible ball, something in their brains shuts off and they become very defensive - people get angry and upset.” [CR MEP]

Climate change also suffers with a centre-right audience from its novelty and uncertainty. Other threats are familiar and, however unwelcome, part of the political status quo. As one centre-right MEP explained, "climate change isn't on the list of threats whereas the financial crisis or Russia are ancient stories and we think we know what to do." [CR MEP]

For these reasons, communications specialists sometimes argue that negative messages about climate impacts may be counterproductive unless they are balanced by positive messages of opportunity or reward.<sup>84</sup> Some communicators even avoid talking about climate change at all, and simply focus on it as an economic or energy issue.

This approach has many critics. Scientists and campaigners say it is dishonest and ultimately counter-productive to downplay the threat.<sup>85</sup> Social psychologists point out that people interpret threats through the lens of their culture and therefore the key reason why they may accept or reject threat messages is not the nature of the threat per se, but whether they accept the worldview it contains or trust the messenger.<sup>86</sup>

Thus despite (or maybe because of) their aversion to negativity, conservatives can become highly emotionally motivated by threats to their core values such as foreign competition, excessive government interference, terrorism, child abuse, marriage equality and immigration. In theory, with their strong focus on maintaining order and status quo and their sensitivity to threats and negative impacts, they should be similarly motivated by the potential instability of climate impacts - provided these are communicated by trusted sources in ways that speak to their core concerns.

COIN recommends the following narratives as a means to engage conservatives with climate change threats. They are built on conservative values and, where possible, current practice of leading politicians from the centre-right. Again it must be stressed that these narratives need to be tested and might only be effective if delivered by trusted communicators.

## **Local Impacts and Extreme Weather Events**

There are increasingly extreme weather events happening across Europe that could be the basis for centre-right engagement. They affect key centre-right concerns (property, vulnerable people in local communities, heritage and culture) and are harbingers of even greater disruption to the status quo.

However, communicators continue to struggle with finding ways to communicate extreme weather.<sup>87</sup> One problem is that no single weather event has a clear and irrefutable link to climate change and scientists are unwilling to make such connections at the time - although they may do so on the basis of subsequent research.<sup>88</sup> This uncertainty and poor categorisation does not fit well with the conservative need for certainty and closure.

Research shows that non-experts are very biased in their interpretation of weather events, and actively choose whether to see them as confirmation of the existence of climate change or simply proof of the natural variation in weather.<sup>89</sup> In Britain, where attitudes to climate change are

strongly polarised along political lines, conservatives were half as likely to ascribe the record-breaking floods of the 2013/14 winter to climate change than progressives.<sup>90</sup>

Nonetheless, research in the USA finds that conservatives may be more inclined to accept climate change on the basis of personal experience of extreme weather.<sup>91</sup> The opportunity is therefore to encourage centre-right politicians to visit impacted areas and to initiate peer-to-peer conversations *between* conservatives about these impacts and how to prepare for future events.

Adaptation could also be a strong narrative for centre-right engagement as it contains strong values of defence, security, protection of property and communities, and the stabilisation of the status quo. Some communicators are concerned that it might undermine commitment to mitigation, but experience in the USA has found that it can be a highly effective way to engage sceptical policy makers.<sup>92</sup>

At the level of the European Parliament, however, centre-right politicians are reluctant to discuss adaptation because the principle of subsidiarity makes this a national issue. They are also wary of additional costs and one MEP observes that the “European People’s Party is allergic to arguments about adaptation as this is seen as a way to socialise climate change costs.” [CL MEP] The objective of having 20% of the EU budget related to climate change<sup>93</sup>, which would include adaptation measures, has already led to strong complaints from some on the centre-right that this is a drain on funds.

### **Climate Change Could Threaten/Permanently Change your Landscape and Culture**

Whereas environmentalists talk about the “planet” and a responsibility to the global environment, conservatives respond most strongly to the environment when it is referred to as landscapes and ‘countryside’ containing strong cultural (and nationalist) meaning.<sup>94</sup> This reflects their strong roots in traditional rural areas.

In theory, threats to national cultural icons, symbols and practices could motivate the nationally minded centre-right. There have been attempts to play to such concerns, such as warnings from German brewers that climate change and fracking could threaten the famed *Reinheitsgebot* (‘purity’) of German beers<sup>95</sup> or from French vintners that climate change threatens the boundaries of the classic wine ‘denominations’.<sup>96</sup> One regular lobbyist of German MEPs commented that “everyone smiled about the German beers – it is not clear that it moves anyone to action and there is a risk of looking silly.” [IND] This very limited example provides no clear evidence about the effectiveness of cultural threat narratives.

### **It’s Not About Climate, it’s About...**

Another approach is to focus away from climate altogether and onto aspects of the issue that speak to existing and well-established conservative concerns about potential threats.

“CO<sub>2</sub> is a current problem but it is only the tip of the iceberg. The bigger problem is about how long our resources will last and how irresponsibly are we dealing with them.” **Karl-Heinz Florenz (EPP)**<sup>97</sup>

“It threatens your ownership, capital, economic security. What is going to happen to my pensions and investments?” **[CR MEP]**

“It is not only about climate protection but about the future of our industry. It is about jobs.” **Karl-Heinz Florenz (EPP)**<sup>98</sup>

## Climate Change is a ‘Threat Multiplier’

Military and security strategists argue that the primary danger posed by climate change is that it multiplies other risks.<sup>99</sup> Narratives building on these arguments have two advantages. Firstly, military communicators are unexpected and ‘non-green’, and as such may be trusted sources, who are applying a security frame that speaks to conservative values. Secondly, if climate change is seen as a threat multiplier, the threats can be tailored closely to encompass a range of non-environmental concerns, whether economic, agricultural, cultural or health-related.

### *Narrative Two: Security*

Security, in its broadest sense, is grounded in the values of stability and order, and is closely related to the conservative values of cleanliness, social stability and health.<sup>100</sup> Security can therefore be expressed in many ways - including safety, job and family security - but this frame is most motivating when combined with an external threat from an enemy or competitor. As one centre-left MEP put it, “Russia makes conservatives nervous. This is far more interesting to them than climate change.” [CL MEP]

“EU energy security is of the utmost importance ... Most energy sources and key suppliers come from politically and socially unstable regions. Relative energy security is very much dependent on EU-Russia relations.” (ECR Group Political Guidelines)<sup>101</sup>

Thus some communicators have framed climate change and a reliance on fossil fuels as a threat to European independence and security.

“Every day half a billion Euros goes to countries like Russia for our fossil-fuel starvation. And this dependence will only increase.” **Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (ALDE)**<sup>102</sup>

A more complete security narrative that consolidates these different meanings could look something like this, COIN suggests:

Climate change threatens the security of Europe - creating economic and social instability. Defence experts regard climate change as a leading cause of future global conflict. Our dependence on energy from fossil fuels, the main cause of climate change, makes us extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in price and supply and involves large transfers of money to unstable and competitor states. By comparison, the solutions to climate change, most notably domestic renewable power, offer a reliable and secure energy supply, with stable, long-term job prospects across Europe, including in depressed areas with high unemployment.

However, this security frame may promote self-enhancing, nationalistic values whilst suppressing the values of co-operation and empathy that are necessary for international action. Security narratives actively seek enemies, and, for some conservatives, these may be left-wing climate campaigners. For example, the British UKIP MEP, Roger Helmer (an outspoken sceptic of climate science) argues that environmentalist enemies are opposing the national, family and job security that shale gas could provide:

"An unholy alliance of 'green' NGOs together with Russia's Gazprom threaten this amazing opportunity [of shale gas] to develop our economy, to achieve security of supply, and to provide jobs for our children and grandchildren." **Roger Helmer (EFD)**<sup>103</sup>

Another significant note of warning should be sounded here: arguments about energy security have also played a key role in justifying the enormous expansion in unconventional fossil fuels (in particular shale gas) that has recently taken place in the USA. This means that although there is potential to use energy security arguments to engage the centre-right, there are also risks.

Human rights and refugee organisations have expressed serious concerns that security narratives could exploit the potential for mass migration resulting from climate change to justify policies opposing migration.<sup>104</sup> As yet this narrative is rarely heard and right-wing or far-right groups that are outspoken on migration are generally silent or sceptical about climate change.

### *Narrative Three: The Economy*

The dominant centre-right narrative for action on climate change at a European level is the economic opportunity of energy transformation and the creation of a low carbon economy. This focus on economics and growth reflects a strong centre-right orientation towards pro-business policies and solutions, grounded in growth and technology.

"Climate action is not about the environment but about building a new economic order. We go to Copenhagen not as climate negotiators but as trade negotiators (...) showing new possibilities of doing trade, of creating jobs, and of assuring development." **Karl-Heinz Florenz (EPP)**<sup>105</sup>

"Every economist should be in favour of ambitious climate policy." **Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (ALDE)**<sup>106</sup>

These arguments are grounded in a positive image of Europe as a world centre of technology and creativity. In this model, Europe is uniquely positioned to respond to the challenges of climate change:

"I argue that Europe is an ageing society, densely populated without many resources. Our great advantage is our knowledge infrastructure but we have to move fast so we can keep that leading position." **[CL MEP]**

"Arguments against action are based on a lack of faith in European corporate creativity." **Anna Rosbach (ECR)**<sup>107</sup>

These economic narratives are grounded in a competitive worldview in which the winners will be ahead of the pack in a major economic transformation. In these narratives, the threat is not climate change itself, but the danger that Europe might lose this opportunity and the investment might go elsewhere - as one industry lobbyist says, "*investment* is the magic word and the critical discussion is what makes investments come in or go away." [IND]

"The U.S. will not let an economic opportunity pass unused any longer. The first mover will indeed lead the way for a long time. It is good that America now sees the necessity to act, but let's make sure that they follow us - and not the other way around." **Karl Heinz Florenz (EPP)**<sup>108</sup>

Economic narratives inevitably lead climate change decisions to be framed as a balance of costs and benefits. Centre-right advocates for action emphasise the economic benefits and downplay the costs of action:

"Of course, there are some costs. But the costs of doing nothing or too little will be far greater. I have absolutely no doubt that as investments in new low-carbon technologies start, this will bring costs down." **Karl-Heinz Florenz (EPP)**<sup>109</sup>

There are other costs - the costs of energy imports and dependency on Russian gas in particular - which relate to centre-right concerns around security:

"The most crucial question for me is the question of how we will reduce costs. Today, the EU imports annually nearly 400 billion Euros in net costs, so if we want to reduce our energy imports, we must produce more in Europe by exploiting our resources sustainably, efficiently and responsibly." **Anne Delvaux (EPP)**<sup>110</sup>

These themes come together in the win-win argument (sometimes called a 'no-regrets' argument) that action on climate change is worth pursuing from any point of view because it makes citizens happier, industry more profitable and the environment less threatened:

"We have two major problems: climate change and expensive and unreliable energy. Well it's nice that we can solve both problems with the same package of measures. That means that even those who still believe that climate change is a myth, should support this package, precisely because it leads to a reliable energy and cheap energy." **Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (ALDE)**<sup>111</sup>

## Carbon leakage - the economic costs of unfair energy prices

Carbon leakage is a term for the loss of jobs or investment to overseas countries - especially to the emerging economies and China - because climate policies have made energy prices too high in Europe. It is an especially compelling narrative for conservatives because it combines unfairness with the fear of defection (whether jobs or investment) to an out-group. Although never made explicit, it is hard not to detect an underlying ethnocentrism in the constant references to China.

The costs of carbon leakage are duly promoted as such by the industrial lobby. It is presented as self-inflicted, which brings up issues of undue government interference in the market, whereas the far greater migration of jobs and investment from outsourcing is seen to be an inevitable, and even desirable, consequence of the free market and a globalised economy.

In 2013, a high-level consultancy report found “no evidence” of carbon leakage in any high-energy industry but this information-based approach was unable to counter the compelling narrative. Carbon leakage can be challenged but only by a communicator with the requisite authority, who is able to satisfy conservative standards of balance. An example would be Christof Ruehl, the chief economist for BP, who has said that carbon leakage is a “red herring”, noting how other factors such as wage costs also played a major role in location decisions.

## The Weaknesses of Economic Narratives for Centre-Right Audiences

There are strong reasons to ask whether dry economic arguments can motivate the public and political commitment necessary to keep climate change within the agreed target of two degrees increase in global temperature. Some leading climate scientists are now openly arguing that keeping within this climatic boundary is not compatible with any form of economic growth.<sup>112</sup>

Dry economic arguments devoid of all emotional imperative place climate change within the domain of economic choices. They detach it from other sacred values that motivate the centre-right, such as decency, security and loyalty. As one NGO lobbyist commented, “if we were under threat from a foreign invader we would not be having cost-benefit arguments and debating about the economic opportunity.” [NGO]

There is always a danger that action on climate change may not be able to justify itself fully on economic grounds alone. The promised economic benefits of action on climate change might not manifest. Expanded fossil fuel production might, in the short term, generate more jobs or economic benefits. Oil prices might fall, as is happening at the time of this report.

The competitive language of winners and losers also weakens the motivation for co-operation and finding a common purpose, which is vital for international climate action. As explained earlier in this report, in the section ‘Background: How We Make Sense of Climate Change’, when ‘self-

enhancing' values such as competition and status are triggered, there is a corresponding reduction in concern about the environment and climate change.<sup>113</sup>

In practice, environmental campaigners have not found that these narratives provide the key for opening up widespread centre-right engagement: "This is not working well. For over five years we have been saying the same thing - you can be better off economically. We assume they care about industry but, however strong our arguments, they are not backing us on this." [NGO]

Even if this economic language works within the 'bubble' of political decision makers, there is no clear evidence that it is effective with the wider centre-right public. In 2012 and 2014, the Climate Outreach Information Network tested the dominant political narratives of economic opportunity and green growth with focus groups of traditional conservatives in Wales and England. In both countries it found that this language provoked widespread cynicism, disinterest or even anger.<sup>114</sup>

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# COMMUNICATORS

## The Importance of Communicator Trust

Extensive research shows that trusting the communicator is of major - and sometimes decisive - importance in the formation of views on climate change. Trust is based on a sense that the communicator is knowledgeable, honest, and, above all, shares the values and concerns of the target audience.<sup>116</sup>

As noted earlier, the environmental left has taken strong ownership of the climate change issue and built the frames, narratives and images of climate change around their own concerns, from global equity to polar bears. It has become the domain of left-leaning media and progressive celebrities. At a political level, the politicians taking strongest ownership of the issue are mainly from the centre-left, with a few exceptions such as the German Chancellor Angela Merkel.\*

A major obstacle to action from the centre-right on the issue of climate change is their distrust of advocates from the left and environmental organisations. Within the European Parliament, there is a strong conservative prejudice against environmental lobbyists who many on the centre-right regard as being left-wing and indistinguishable from the Green Party: "they don't understand business so they harm it." [CR MEP] "It is like listening to communists telling us how to run businesses." [CR MEP].

MEPs are reluctant to show these views openly:

"We are polite but we discuss with each other and we categorise people - and the comments that are always coming up are that environmentalists are stupid, extreme, and exaggerate their case." [CR MEP]

This distrust extends to the wider public. The Eurobarometer survey described as 'massive' the difference in levels of trust for environmental organisations. 59% of people on the left trusted them, but only 40% of people on the right did. 30% of people on the left favoured giving environmental organisations more say, compared to only 18% of people on the right.<sup>117</sup>

The role of the communicator may explain why some messages which should speak strongly to conservative values sometimes generate low interest among conservatives if they do not come from a member of their peer group.

The 2009 Eurobarometer survey tested three arguments based around conservative values of duty and responsibility.<sup>118</sup> This question was asked only to the 57% of conservatives who said they had "personally taken actions aimed at fighting climate change," so the audience was preselected to include only the most engaged conservatives. Nonetheless, none of the appeals to values of duty and responsibility appealed strongly to them. Revealingly, the statement about future generations, widely used by centre-right politicians, was more appealing to progressives.

.....  
\*As noted earlier, Germany is unusual for having no clear political polarisation in attitudes to climate change.

<i>There are many reasons why people take actions aimed at fighting climate change. Please tell me which of the following apply to you (multiple answers possible)</i>	Percentage agreeing with statement by political identification		
	Left	Centre	Right
If everybody changes their behaviour, it will have a real impact on climate change	65	62	63
It is your duty as a citizen to protect the environment	63	62	62
You are very concerned about the world that you will leave for the young and future generations	57	53	50

This is only one survey and it is not possible to explain why these messages did not have a greater appeal to right-wing participants. We suggest, based on wider research, that messages about duty (which imply a call to personal sacrifice) are not effective unless they come from a member of the peer group. Calls to defend future generations, which might be highly motivating if heard from a conservative leader, may feel manipulative in a socially neutral survey context. This argument would be supported by American research that finds that conservatives sometimes react most angrily to the survey questions built around their core values.<sup>119</sup>

The key to motivating the centre-right may therefore lie with enabling centre-right communicators to speak more effectively to their own community. This might include providing an infrastructure of influence, inviting centre-right communicators to meetings and public fora and providing them with media access. These communicators could be centre-right politicians or people not affiliated to party politics who speak well to conservative values - for example, business, community or church leaders, who might be even more effective than politicians.

The value of new communicators is demonstrated by the 2014 appointment of Miguel Arias Cañete, an MEP from the Spanish conservative Partido Popular party, as climate commissioner. Cañete has been widely criticised by environmentalists for his links with the oil and gas industry.<sup>120</sup> However, one insider who works closely with the environment committee comments that Cañete's positions to date, which have been very progressive, are being actively supported by conservatives who might otherwise oppose them: "they defend him because he is one of them." [ADV]

## 7 Challenges for Communicators

### *Climate change narratives are usually politically progressive*

Apart from scientific reports, most climate communications is generated by progressives, built around their values and distributed through their media. Because their own networks reflect their worldview, progressives have little opportunity or motivation to find out whether their narratives resonate with the centre-right.

## *Progressive climate change messages may actively alienate the centre-right*

Because identity and values are so fundamental to people's attitudes to climate change, if people do not identify with the values contained in a climate communication they may reject the entire issue. Just as the right words can encourage centre-right ownership, there is a counter-vocabulary that can actively alienate them.

## *We still cannot be certain which narratives work well with the centre-right*

Communicators tend to take their lead from other communicators and adopt their narratives. They therefore come to assume that some messages work just because other communicators use them. In reality, though, there has been very little testing of communications with a centre-right audience. Messages that are assumed to work - including those in this report - are therefore assumptions.

## *Centre-right politicians do not necessarily know what works with a wider public*

Centre-right politicians understand the values of their audiences better than progressives, and some may have an intuitive sense of what works. However, politicians are very different from the wider population in their interests and motivations. Narratives that excite and motivate them - for example calls for leadership - may leave the public unmoved.

## *There are major centre-right climate narratives that have never been tried*

Climate communications is a new area with immense potential for creative experiment. We can summarise and evaluate the narratives that are already in use but need to recognise the potential for many new emerging narratives. Threat narratives are a neglected area and the language around opportunity is often constrained within a very limited economic frame.

## *Communications is about much more than words*

When we analyse language, we run the danger of underestimating the importance of non-verbal cues which, psychology experiments show, can sometimes be more influential than language. Images, for example, have their own semiotics and frames. Wider social cues are also often non-verbal, including the personal appearance of the communicators.

## *Communicators may be more important than content*

This report aims to provide a guide to more effective messages, but it also points out the importance of communicator trust. If a communicator is not trusted, his or her messages will fail, regardless of content. Successful communications may be as much about enabling new voices as in finding new messages.

# APPLICATION: VALUES, FRAMES AND NARRATIVES IN PRACTICE

## Margaret Thatcher's Speech to the British Conservative Party Conference, 13 October 1989



The former British conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, was one of the most influential conservatives of the 20th century. She had a background as a research scientist and fully accepted the science of climate change. Yet, as a conviction politician, she shaped climate change around the distinctly conservative values of duty, order and prosperity.

In 1989, at a time when public understanding of the issue was still limited and not yet polarised along party lines, Mrs. Thatcher spoke of the dangers of climate change to the annual conference of her party.<sup>121</sup> She anticipated that many in her party would be sceptical of 'left-wing environmentalism.' She openly mocked the left's dominance of the issue and asserted the superiority of conservative values. Throughout her speech she used words that would clearly signal conservative identity. In particular, she used language around the resonant conservative frame of the sanctity of 'life' – a word she repeats five times – and its opposites, depopulation and 'lifeless planets'. Words that frame conservative values are in **bold**.

Above image: "Margaret Thatcher (1983)" by Rob Bogaerts / Anefo - Nationaal Archief. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 nl via Wikimedia Commons - [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Margaret\\_Thatcher\\_\(1983\).jpg#mediaviewer/File:Margaret\\_Thatcher\\_\(1983\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Margaret_Thatcher_(1983).jpg#mediaviewer/File:Margaret_Thatcher_(1983).jpg)



Mr President, when I spoke to the Royal Society about the environment over a year ago, I spoke about the global threat of climate change. I set out the magnitude of the challenge we face.

Scientific authority over the environment

We have to work to solve these problems on a **sound** scientific basis so that our remedies will be **effective**.

Rules create Balance

It is no good proposing that we go back to some simple village life and halve our population by some means which have not yet been revealed, as if that would solve all our problems. Indeed, some of the Third World's **primitive** farming methods created the deserts and denuded the forests. And some of Eastern Europe's **crude** technologies **polluted** the skies and **poisoned** the rivers.

Asserting in-group superiority over environmentalists who oppose life and progress, and communists who destroy purity

It's **PROSPERITY** which creates the **technology** that can keep the earth **healthy**.

Economic narrative of increasing wealth through creativity

We are called **conservatives** with good reason. We believe in **conserving** what is best—the values of our **way of life**, the **beauties** of our **countryside** [that] have shaped our character as a nation.

Assertion of conservative values; countryside and landscape as primary cultural 'values'

We have a special **responsibility** not to let the towns **sprawl** into it.

Cleanliness, pollution, litter, waste, 'sprawl' all damage the 'purity' of the countryside

And to make Britain cleaner, we shall bring in a new Environment Bill to give us much **tougher controls** on pollution, litter and waste.

Next month, I shall be going to the United Nations to set out our view on how the world should tackle climate change.

'Good conduct' is conservative language of polite rule abiding

We have proposed a global convention – a sort of **good conduct** guide to the environment for all the world's nations on problems like the greenhouse effect.

Britain has **taken the lead** internationally and we shall continue to do so.

Leadership

This is not only a question of acting **responsibly**, though we do.

Responsibility

There is something deeper in us, an **innate sense of belonging**, of sharing **life** in a world that we have not fully understood.

A 'sacred value' and almost religious calling to value and preserve life

As Voyager 2, on its remarkable twelve year flight, raced through the solar system to Neptune and beyond, we were awe-struck by the pictures it sent back of **arid, lifeless planets and moons**.

They were a solemn reminder that our planet has the **unique privilege of life**.

How much more that makes us aware of our **duty to safeguard** our world.

Custodians

The more we **master** our environment, the more we must learn to **serve** it.

Hierarchy and authority

That is the Conservative approach.



Re-assertion of in-group identity



## Angela Merkel's Speech to the United States Congress, 3 November 2009

Chancellor Merkel's aim, in her 2009 speech to the US Congress, was to encourage strong US action in the coming Copenhagen climate conference.<sup>122</sup> This required appealing to the values of Republicans. Throughout her speech she

validates their identity. She talks about America as "a land of unlimited opportunity." She says that, as a child, she "was passionate about the vast American landscape which seemed to breathe the very spirit of freedom and independence" - as noted above, conservatives' attitudes to environment often focus on landscape.

When she calls for international unity, she frames it in terms of the two most powerful historical metaphors for conservatives: the defeat of Nazism and communism. She then draws on her own upbringing in communist East Germany to speak, in very visual terms, about the Berlin Wall as a physical barrier to freedom.

Having established these themes, she pulls them together when she talks about climate change, combining the visual metaphor of a wall with the conservative narrative of responsibility to future generations. Appealing to the conservative desire for completion, she urges them to "tear down this wall" and reconnect with their deepest ideals. Words that frame conservative values are in **bold**.



The fact that global **challenges** can only be met by comprehensive international co-operation is also shown by a **third great challenge** of the 21st century, by a wall, so to speak, separating the present from the **future**.

Climate is created as a third challenge alongside globalisation and terrorism

That wall prevents us from seeing the needs of **future generations**, it prevents us from taking the measures urgently needed to **protect** the very basis of our **life** and climate.

Protection of life and future generations

We can already see where this **wasteful** attitude towards our future leads: in the Arctic icebergs are melting, in Africa people are becoming refugees due to environmental damage, and global sea levels are rising...

Inaction is 'waste'

We cannot **afford failure** with regard to achieving the climate protection objectives scientists tell us are crucial. That would be **technologically** short-sighted, for the development of new **technologies** in the energy sector offers major **opportunities** for **growth** and **jobs** in the **future**.

A major threat of climate change is missing an economic opportunity

I am convinced that, just as we found the strength in the 20th century to **tear down** a wall made of barbed wire and concrete, today we have the **strength** to **overcome** the walls of the 21st century, walls in our minds, walls of **short-sighted self-interest**, walls between the present and the **future** - in the interests of our **children** and **grandchildren** and of sustainable **development** worldwide.

Inaction on climate change is like a 'Berlin Wall' between us and our responsibility

But we are strong and action - tear down - makes us complete and whole again



Above image: "Angela Merkel (2008)" by N (Aleph) - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.5 via Wikimedia Commons - [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Angela\\_Merkel\\_\(2008\).jpg#mediaviewer/File:Angela\\_Merkel\\_\(2008\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Angela_Merkel_(2008).jpg#mediaviewer/File:Angela_Merkel_(2008).jpg)

# INTERVIEW SOURCES

Twenty formal interviews with politicians, lobbyists and advisers working in the Parliament were conducted for this report. The following interviewees agreed to be listed as contributors.

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<b>Jesse Scott</b>	Head of Environment and Sustainable Development Policy, Eurelectric (main lobbying arm for European electricity industry)
<b>Helen Spence-Jackson</b>	Programme Advisor, Prince of Wales's EU Corporate Leaders Group

In order to respect the anonymity of personal sources, they are not named in the text. Sources for quotes are indicated in square brackets by the abbreviations:

[CR MEP]	Centre-right Member of the European Parliament
[CL MEP]	Centre-left Member of the European Parliament
[ADV]	Political Advisor
[NGO]	Non-Governmental Organisation Lobbyist or Campaigner
[IND]	Industry Lobbyist

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