WZGE
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Wittenberg Center for Global Ethics

Sustainable Industry in Europe: Guidelines for a just Transformation

A study in cooperation and with funding from the E.ON Foundation

E.ON STIFTUNG

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1. Introduction

The underlying challenge: Climate-neutral industrial transformation *and* social cohesion

In 2024, the global average temperature exceeded pre-industrial levels by 1.6 degrees Celsius for the first time. Hence, climate targets haven't been met by the international community for the time being and the results are notable, e.g. in Europe during the summer of 2025. Extreme heatwaves swept across the continent with serious consequences for people, ecosystems – and the economy: French nuclear power plants had to reduce their output leading to an energy shortage, drought and heavy fires destroyed vast areas of land in East Germany, and crop yields were exposed to severe risks in Europe's "breadbasket" Poland. This makes it all the more necessary to step up efforts if we are to avert or at least mitigate the resulting risks. One of the most important levers is a climate-neutral transformation of the industry.

At the same time though, geopolitical tensions, economic stagnation, and political change are challenging social cohesion and joint efforts to carry out this transformation: the wars in Europe and the Middle East continue, the United States are withdrawing from international cooperation, Germany's economy – Europe's largest – is experiencing the longest period of stagnation since the country's founding, and populist forces are continuously gaining support, while questioning the human-made climate change, opposing measures of a sustainable transformation and challenging democracy.

How do these developments influence European employees' perspectives on the climate-neutral industrial transformation? After all, they are the ones who (1) must actively help shape the transition within companies, (2) influence public discourse through their workplace experiences and personal networks, and (3) participate as citizens in either granting or withdrawing the political mandate for necessary policy decisions.

This study's goal: Guidelines for a just transformation

This is why the Wittenberg Center for Global Ethics (WCGE), supported by the E.ON Foundation, explores the question: *How can a rapid industrial transformation be reconciled with employment interests in the spirit of a widely demanded "just transformation"*? This requires solid data on employees' preferences regarding the climate-neutral industrial transformation, their expectations of the transition, and their willingness to contribute to change. After all, in a free and democratic society, strategies for industrial transformation can ultimately not be implemented against *the will* and *capabilities* of the people.

In representative surveys that we conducted in Germany, France and Poland (executed by the research institute infas quo), we therefore examined how people perceive the climate-neutral industrial transformation from the perspective of their individual employment situations. Our findings provide an empirical evidence base for public, political, and economic discourse – especially due to the comparability of major European economies that we enable**.** Moreover, we highlight the key factors that determine acceptance and social cohesion in the course of the industrial transformation. Our main findings are presented up front within a management summary.

Management Summary: Guidelines for a just Transformation

How do employees in Germany, France, and Poland view the climate-neutral industrial transformation? Despite current economic, social, and political challenges, a clear majority in all three countries supports maintaining the current pace of change. Only a minority advocates for delaying climate targets. Notably, employees in France and Poland anticipate greater economic and social benefits from the transition than their German counterparts – and political divisions play a smaller role in shaping their views. German workers, meanwhile, show more willingness to make personal contributions, such as reskilling for improved job prospects. Across all countries, support is driven primarily by economic considerations – especially individual employment outlooks. In sum, there is no sign of a backlash. Instead, the data points to broad European momentum and a shared preference for a politically guided, climate-neutral transformation.

Our key findings:

(1) **In all three countries, a large majority opposes a slow-down or postponement in climate-neutral industrial transformation:** Among Germans, 21% support a reduction in pace of transformation, while 80% oppose it. In France, only 13% are in favor of a slow-down (vs. 86% opposed), in Poland 17% (vs. 83% opposed). Likewise, a minority of 5% of Germans and French and 6% of Polish support a postponement of climate targets.

(2) **Along the political spectrum, German society is significantly more divided than France and Poland:** In Germany, the delta between party supporters of *AfD* and *Die Grüne*, who support a *slowdown* of transformation lies at 49%-pts. (51% vs. 2% respectively). In Poland the delta amounts to 31%-pts. (38% among supporter of *Konfederacja* vs. 7% among supporters of *Lewica*), in France to 16%-pts. (19% for *La France Insoumise* vs. 3% for *Les Verts*).

(3) **French and Polish more often expect positive economic and social effects from climate-neutrality than Germans:** While 33% of German employees are positive about the overall economic impact of transformation, in France it is 34% and in Poland even 41% of employees. When it comes to social cohesion, 29% of Germans have a positive outlook vs. 36% of French and 42% of Polish. Yet, important to note: the majority of employees in Germany and France remains *undecided* on whether climate-neutrality will have positive or negative effects on economy and social cohesion – as well as a major part of employees in Poland.

(4) **Germans are displaying more flexibility when it comes to making specific sacrifices:** Germans are more often willing to acquire a new qualification (53% vs. 42% in France and 39% in Poland) or take on a job with

less reputation (31% vs. 23% and 23% respectively) to contribute to the industrial transformation. Only when it comes to potential relocations, Polish show a higher level of flexibility (22% vs. 19% in France and 18% in Germany).

(5) **In all three countries, people base their approval primarily on economic factors – and above all their personal job prospects.** In Germany, the willingness to contribute to industrial transformation lies at 87% among those with very positive job perspectives and 5% among those with very negative perspectives. In France, it is 85% and 16% respectively, and in Poland 77% and 8%. Similarly, willingness is significantly higher within high social classes of all three countries than within their lowest counterparts: In Germany, 57% of those in the highest social class display high willingness, whereas only 38% of those within the low social class. In France these figures amount to 62% versus 44% respectively, in Poland to 60% and 40%.

Guidelines for decision-makers:

(1) **Emphasize the economic necessities and opportunities for change:** Those who want to retain and win people over to the climate-neutral industrial transformation must primarily address employment, competitiveness and regional economic prospects. A closer look at the three countries' economic performance of the past year shows: The higher the growth of the respective Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the more optimism people show regarding the climate-neutral transformation's impact on employment, economy and social cohesion. It is all the more important to highlight positive links between climate neutrality and personal employment prospects – and to counter the notion of an "either-or"-choice.

(2) **Primarily address people in weaker social milieus:** Across all three countries, most people are personally willing to embrace change – but in each case, only small minorities believe that others are also willing to contribute. In fact, skepticism is greatest among those who are already struggling with major impositions. It is first and foremost this societal group that should be won by the means of recognizable efforts to avoid being left behind.

(3) **Promote European alliances and cooperation:** Across all three countries, most people demand a climate-neutral industrial transformation that is as fast or faster than current efforts. They also share similar expectations towards their governments on how to foster this transformation. These clear and cross-national preferences must be protected against populist narratives and unilateral approaches.

2. Study Design

Empirical Approach

Since 2022 the Wittenberg Center for Global Ethics conducts representative surveys in cooperation with the market research institute infas quo among German employees and students, asking about their perspectives on the climate-neutral transformation of the industry. (Fig. 1) The most recent collection of data was conducted for the third time in February 2025 – the report was published in April 2025.

In May 2025, we conducted additional representative surveys of employees and students in France and Poland for the first time ever to get a broader picture on employees' perspective on industrial transformation in Europe. For this purpose, the German questionnaire was professionally translated into the respective national languages, maintaining the same structure and content, and adapted to the respective national context where necessary (e.g., when asking about political party preferences). The following sections focus on the results of the current survey.

	Germany (DE)	France (FR)	Poland (PL)
Methodology	Online-panel interviews by infas quo GmbH	Online-panel interviews by infas quo GmbH	Online-panel interviews by infas quo GmbH
Period	February 14 to 25, 2025	May 7 to 14, 2025	May 7 to 14, 2025
Target group	Current employees and students	Current employees and students	Current employees and students
Case numbers	2.173 interviews	1.053 interviews	1.077 interviews
Weighting factor	Representative across target segments: age, gender, federal state (RIM-EFF.: 0.95)	Representative across target segments: age, gender, region (RIM-EFF.: 0.95)	Representative across target segments: age, gender, region (RIM-EFF.: 0.95)

Fig. 1: Methodology online panel – DE, FR, PL 2025

3. Study Results

3.1. PREFERENCES

European agreement: The vast majority among Germans, French and Polish oppose any slowdown in the industry's climate-neutral transformation

The largest part of German, French and Polish populations agree that there shouldn't be a slowdown in the respective country's transformation pace. Among Germans 80% think that the pace is appropriate (31%) or should even be accelerated (49%). In Poland, an aggregate of 83% support a continuation (40%) or acceleration (43%) of the current transformation pace. And in France it is 86% of interviewees who are in favor of the speed at which the country's industry is transformed to become climate-neutral: 35% think it is appropriate, 51% want to see an acceleration. (Fig. 2)

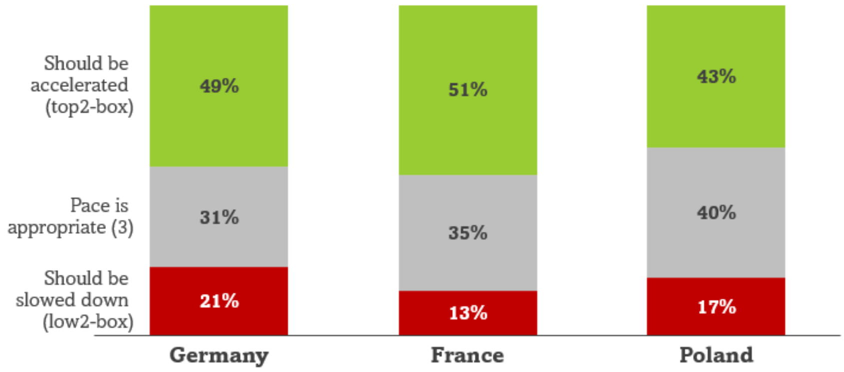

Fig. 2: Stance on transformation pace – DE, FR, PL 2025
TL05 [S]: How would you rate the pace at which this structural change is currently progressing?
Rounding differences possible; basis DE: n=2.173 interviewees, FR: n=1.053 interviewees, PL: n=1.077 interviewees.

A look at political preferences reveals: Germans are significantly more divided on climate-neutral industrial transformation than French or Polish.

In Germany, support for slowing down the transition is highest among supporters of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (*AfD*) at 51%, and lowest among supporters of the Green Party (*Die Grüne*) at 2%. In France, the highest support for less speed comes from voters of *La France Insoumise* at 19%, while the lowest is among supporters of the French Greens (*Les Verts*) at 3%. In Poland, the highest support for slowing down the transition is found among supporters of *Konfederacja* (38%), and the lowest among supporters of *Lewica* (7%). (Fig. 3, 4, 5)

This shows: the deltas between the share of party supporters who are in favor of a green transformation varies significantly between the evaluated countries. In Germany, the delta of supporters of *AfD* and *Die Grüne*, who support a slowdown of transformation lies at 49%-pts. Hence, the issue seems to be subject to substantial disagreement and thus significant polarization between voters of the two parties. In Poland, the delta between supporters of *Konfederacja* and of *Lewica* amounts to 31%-pts. and in France to 16%-pts. between supporters of *La France Insoumise* and *Les Verts*.

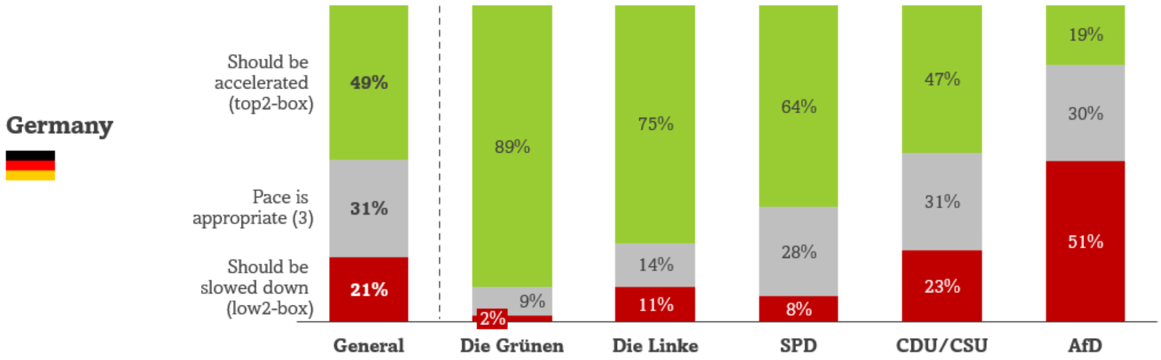

Fig. 3: Stance on transformation pace by political party preference – DE 2025
TL05 [S]: How would you rate the pace at which this structural change is currently progressing?
Rounding differences possible; only parties that entered the German Bundestag post parliamentary elections in 2025; basis: n=2.173 interviewees

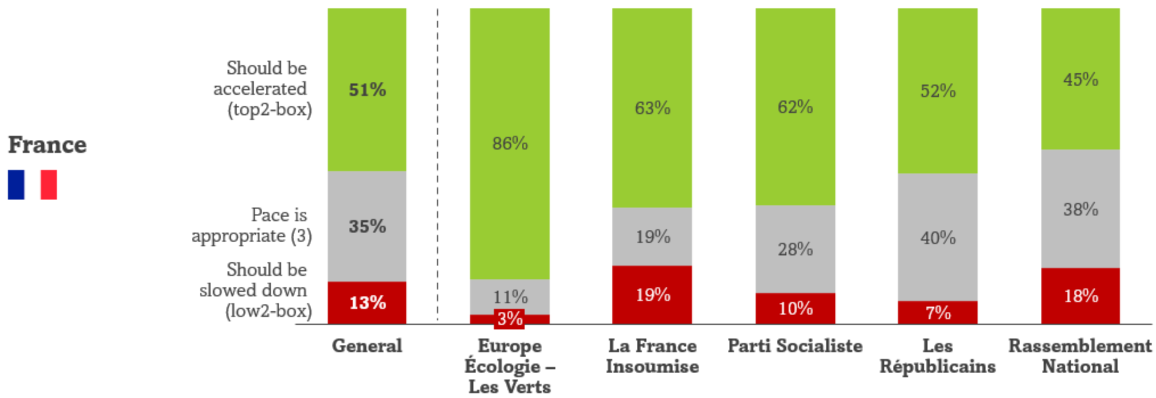

Fig. 4: Stance on transformation pace by political party preference – FR 2025
TL05 [S]: How would you rate the pace at which this structural change is currently progressing?
Rounding differences possible; basis: n=1.053 interviewees

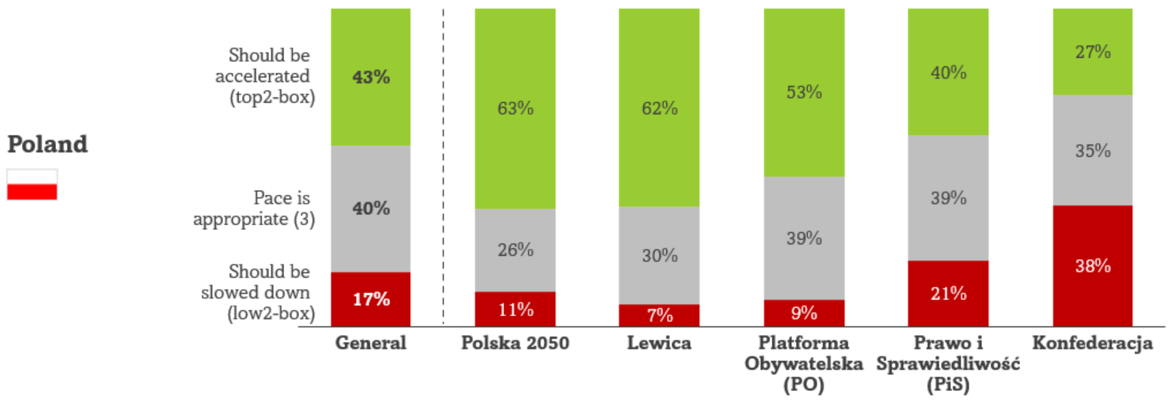

Fig. 5: Stance on transformation pace by political party preference – PL 2025
TL05 [S]: How would you rate the pace at which this structural change is currently progressing?
Rounding differences possible; basis: n=1.077 interviewees

Expectations of the government regarding climate neutrality are almost identical in all three countries

What priorities should the government set to support climate-neutral industrial transformation? Respondents across all three countries display similar preferences: the support of climate-friendly technologies as well as the reduction of energy prices are both political instruments favored among Germans (43% and 37% respectively), French (48% and 38%) and Polish (45% and 39%). Only when it comes to reducing bureaucracy, German sentiment differs substantially from that of its European neighbors (56% vs. 38% in France and 37% in Poland). To French and Polish employment security ranks among top-3-priorities instead (40% and 42% respectively). Remarkably, only a small minority within all countries rejects all the measures listed and votes for postponing the climate targets instead: 5% in Germany and France, 6% in Poland. (Fig. 6)

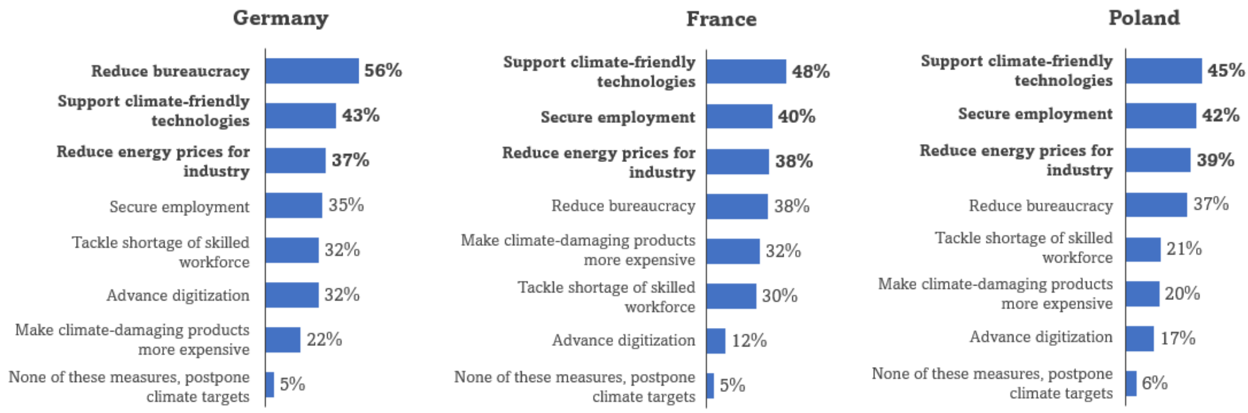

Fig. 6: Political priorities – DE, FR, PL 2025
TL17 [M]: What priorities should the (next) government set to make the industry climate-neutral as quickly as possible? Please select up to 3 answers.
Rounding differences possible; basis: DE: n=2.173 interviewees, FR: n=1.053 interviewees, PL: n=1.077 interviewees

3.2. EXPECTATIONS

In all three countries, significantly more people expect positive rather than negative impacts on personal employment – in Germany, people are most skeptical, in Poland most optimistic.

In Germany, 36% of interviewees are optimistic that the climate-neutral transformation will have a positive impact on their personal employment situation – compared to 18% with a negative outlook. Just the same share of people has a positive outlook in France (36%), with 14% indicating that they fear negative impacts on their personal employment situation. In comparison, people in Poland are most optimistic: 45% of Polish believe that the climate-neutral transformation will have a positive impact on their personal employment situation. 15% are pessimistic – which is broadly in line with Germany and France. Thereby it is important to underline that the majority of employees in Germany and France remains undecided about the transformation's impact on their personal employment situation (46% and 50% respectively). Only in Poland those who are undecided (40%) are outnumbered by optimists. (Fig. 7)

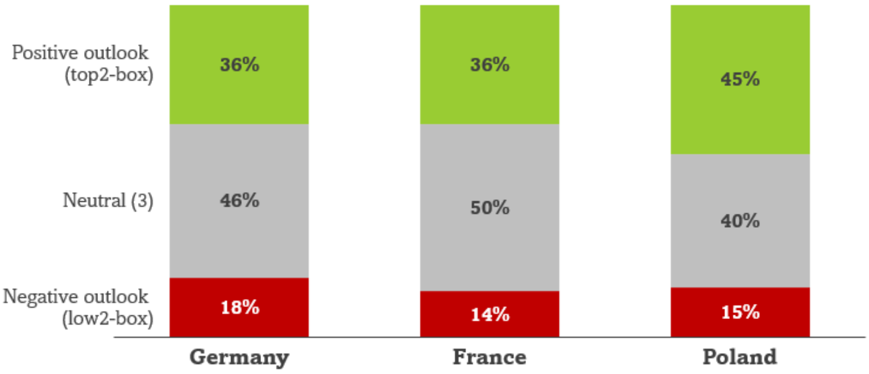

Fig. 7: Expected impact of the transformation on personal employment situation – DE, FR, PL 2025
TL09b [S]: When I think about my own situation as an employee, I view the climate-neutral transformation of the industry in [DE/FR/PL] all in all...
Rounding differences possible; basis: DE: n=2.173 interviewees, FR: n=1.053 interviewees, PL: n=1.077 interviewees

The lower the social status, the more pessimistic the view of one's own employment situation across all three countries.

Segmented by subjective social status, the data reveals a consistent picture across all evaluated countries: Skepticism is more prevalent among individuals who identify with the lowest social status.[1] Within this group in

[1] Participants were asked to assess their own relative social status. To do this, they were asked to imagine a ladder with ten rungs and to place themselves on one of the rungs. At the top (10) are people with the most money, the highest level of education, the best jobs, and the greatest social prestige. At the bottom (1) are those

Germany, 32% of survey-participants expect that the industry's climate-neutral transformation will have a negative impact on their personal employment situation – whereas only 25% display a positive outlook. Within the highest social status bracket, things look very different: 52% are optimistic about the transformation's impact on their personal employment, 14% pessimistic. (Fig. 8)

This tendency is also observable among Germany's neighbors France and Poland – yet, at slightly different levels. In France, the lowest social status bracket is slightly more optimistic (28%) and substantially less pessimistic (20%). Within the highest social class though, optimism is not quite as widespread as in Germany: 43% display a positive outlook, with 12% being pessimistic. (Fig. 9)

The Polish distribution among social classes reflects the country's collectively higher level of optimism. Hence, the outlook is substantially more positive among all social status groups – with optimists (37%) also outnumbering pessimists (18%) within the lowest bracket. Among those who indicate to enjoy a very high social status, the large majority (65%) believes that a climate-neutral transformation of the Polish industry will have a positive impact on their personal employment situation – with 11% sharing a negative outlook. (Fig. 10)

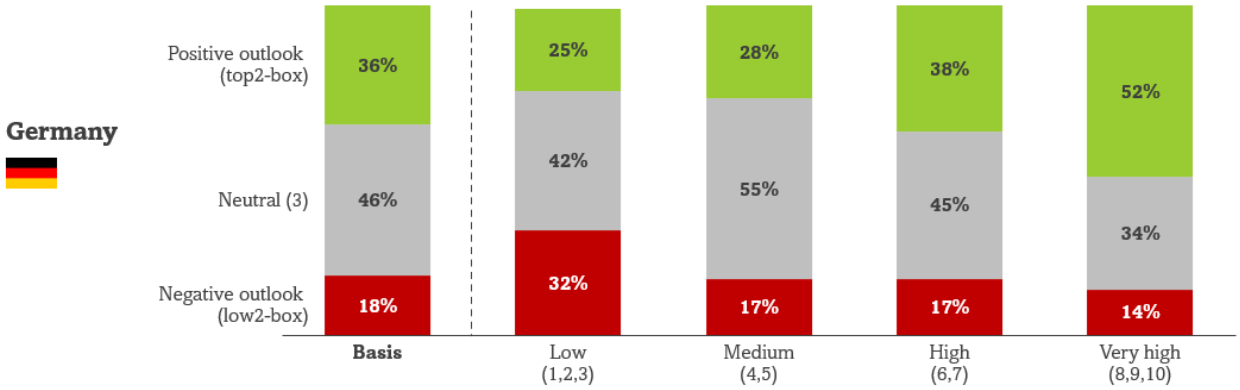

Fig. 8: Expected impact of the transformation on personal employment situation by subjective social status – DE 2025
TL09b [S]: Thinking about my own situation as an employee, I view the climate-neutral transformation of Germany's industry overall as…
Rounding differences possible; basis: n=2.173 interviewees

with the least money, the lowest level of education, the worst jobs (or no job at all), and the lowest social standing. The higher one is placed on the ladder, the closer one is to the person at the top; the lower, the closer to the person at the bottom.

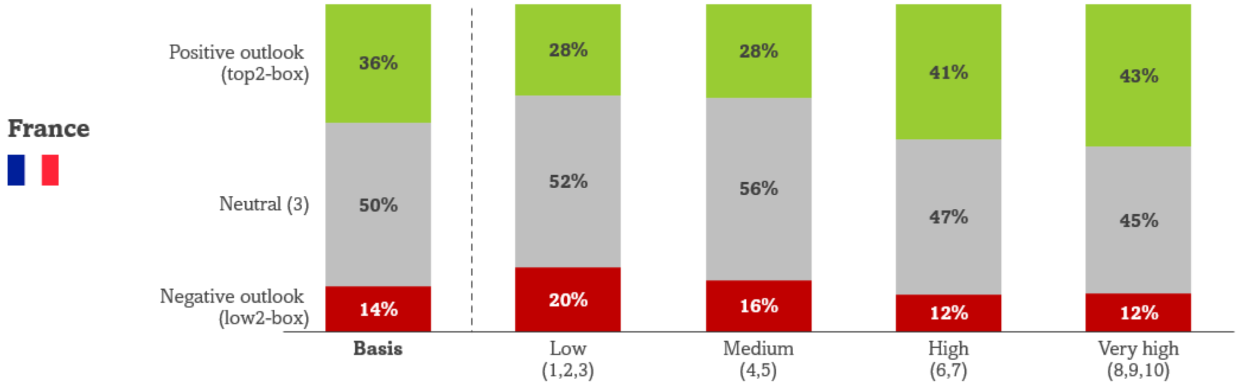

Fig. 9: Expected impact of the transformation on personal employment situation by subjective social status – FR 2025
TL09b [S]: Thinking about my own situation as an employee, I view the climate-neutral transformation of France's industry overall as…
Rounding differences possible; basis: n=1.053 interviewees

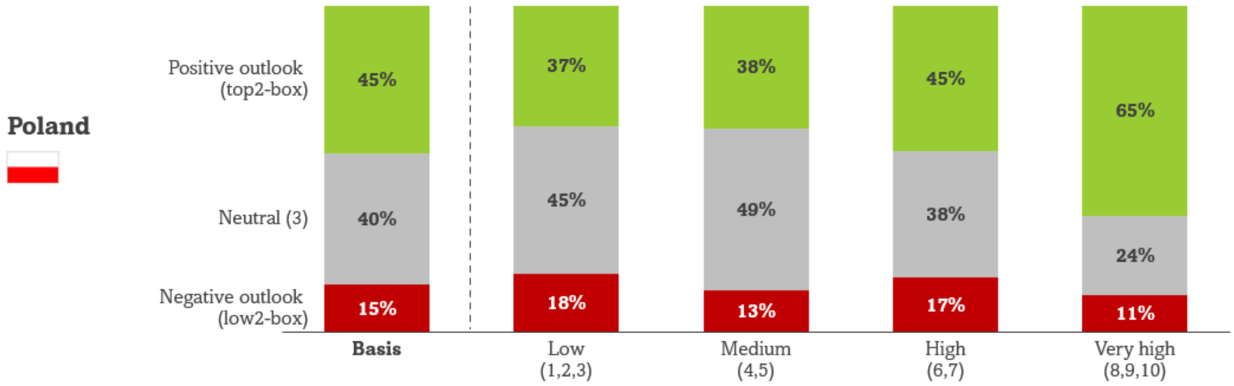

Fig. 10: Expected impact of the transformation on personal employment situation by subjective social status – PL 2025
TL09b [S]: Thinking about my own situation as an employee, I view the climate-neutral transformation of Poland's industry overall as…
Rounding differences possible; basis: n=1.077 interviewees

More people expect positive rather than negative effects on economy and social cohesion in all three countries – Polish display the collectively highest positive outlook.

Most people expect the climate-neutral transformation's impact on the *economy* to be positive among all three evaluated countries – yet the level of (dis)agreement is quite different between them. Germans seem to be most divided, with 33% indicating a positive and 29% a negative outlook. In France, the share of optimists is similar (34%), but significantly higher than the ratio of pessimists (23%). Polish display most optimism: 41% believe that the transformation will have a positive impact on the country's economy, only 20% think that the impact will be negative. Again, the largest part of German and French employees remains undecided about the economic impact of transformation (38% and 43% respectively) – in Poland this group is slightly smaller (38%) than those with a positive outlook. (Fig. 11)

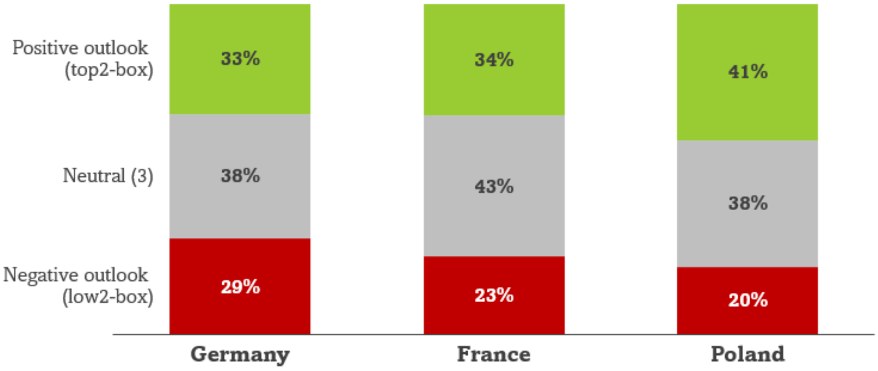

Fig. 11: Expected impact of the transformation on the economy – DE, FR, PL 2025
TL15 [S]: The climate-neutral transformation of industry will have the following impact on the economy of [DE/FR/PL]...
Rounding differences possible; basis: DE: n=2.173 interviewees, FR: n=1.053 interviewees, PL: n=1.077 interviewees

When it comes to an analysis of the transformation's impact on social cohesion, a comparable picture can be painted: in all three countries a (slight) majority indicates to be optimistic – yet the divide among respondents deviates significantly. Again, Germans are most divided on this question with an almost balanced ratio of optimists (29%) and pessimists (28%). In France those with a positive outlook on social cohesion (36%) significantly outnumber those with a negative outlook (21%). And likewise in Poland, optimists significantly (42%) outnumber pessimists (16%) – here even by a factor of more than 2.5. What is important to note: also when it comes to social cohesion, the majority of employees indicates to be undecided about the transformation's impact. In Germany (43%) and France (43%) it is the respondents' largest share – in Poland (42%) it is equal to those with a positive outlook. (Fig. 12)

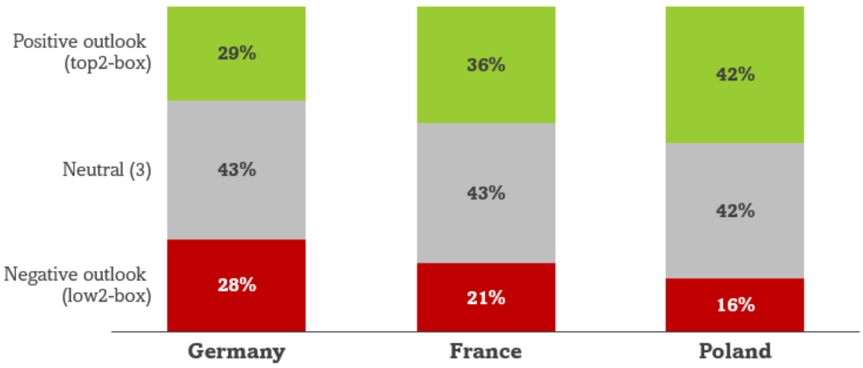

Fig. 12: Expected impact of the transformation on social cohesion – DE, FR, PL 2025
TL14 [S]: The climate-neutral transformation of industry will have the following impact on social cohesion in [DE/FR/PL]...
Rounding differences possible; basis: DE: n=2.173 interviewees, FR: n=1.053 interviewees, PL: n=1.077 interviewees

3.3. CONTRIBUTIONS

Across all three countries, a relative majority express strong willingness to contribute to the industry's climate-neutral transformation – yet most remain skeptical about others' willingness to do the same.

When asked for the extent to which one is personally willing to contribute to the industry's climate-neutral transformation, a majority indicates high willingness across all three countries. In Germany it is 44% vs. 21% displaying low willingness, in France 48% vs. 16%, and in Poland 42% vs. 20%.

Similarly, people are more skeptical about others across all three countries: Germans trust their compatriots the least with only 18% indicating that they believe others are willing to make a contribution to a German sustainable transformation – in comparison: more than twice as many believe that others have a low willingness (38%). In France, a share of 22% of respondents trust in other people's willingness to contribute, while 30% do not. And in Poland, 26% of respondents assess the willingness of others to be high, while 36% believe it to be low. This shows a structural distrust gap among all countries analyzed: individuals tend to rate their own willingness to contribute higher than that of others. (Fig. 13)

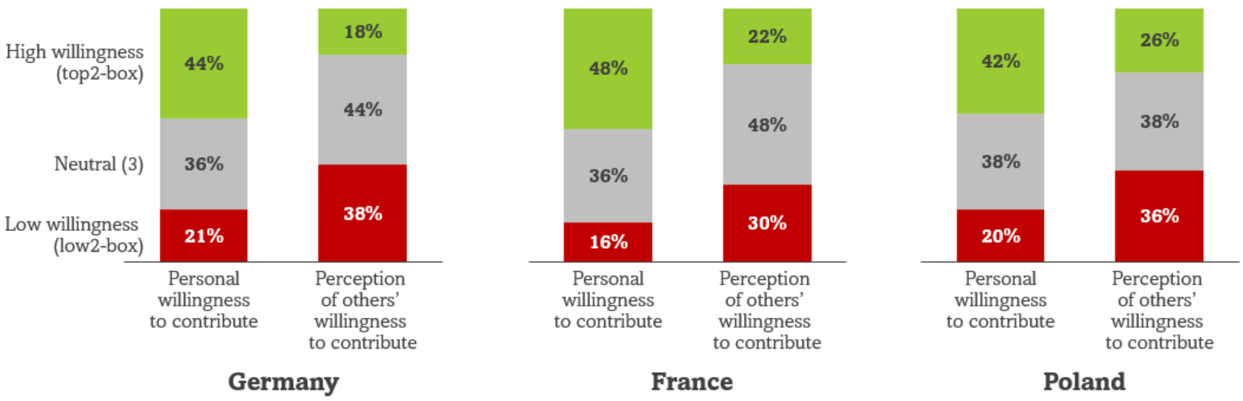

Fig. 13: Personal willingness to contribute & perception of others' willingness to contribute – DE, FR, PL 2025
TL06a [S]: And to what extent are you personally willing to contribute to making the industry in [DE/FR/PL] climate-neutral?
TL06b [S]: How would you generally assess the willingness of people in [DE/FR/PL] to personally contribute to making the industry climate-neutral?
Rounding differences possible; basis: DE: n=2.173 interviewees, FR: n=1.053 interviewees, PL: n=1.077 interviewees

When it comes to making specific indications about how to contribute – like acquiring new skills or accepting lower wages –, Germans display a higher willingness to adapt to changes than its neighbors.

When asked about very specific ways to contribute – and hence to make personal sacrifices –, Germans tend to display a higher approval rate than its European neighbors. Thereby, across all three countries, people are most willing to acquire a new qualification in order to be able to work in a different occupation or sector – e.g., because their job was made redundant by transformation. More than half of German employees (53%) are willing to do so, only 22% reject re-qualifications. In France, 42% of respondents approve to do so, 31% reject it. And in Poland, 39% are willing to acquire a new qualification vs. an almost similar share of 35% that do not. (Fig. 14, 15, 16)

When asked to take on a job that is less respected than the previous one, Germans tend to be more flexible than French and Polish again: 31% indicate to be willing to take on such a job, 36% refuse to do so. In France, the share of employees who agree to take on a less respected job is half the share of those who do not (23% vs. 46%) – which is quite in line with Polish figures: 23% vs. 45%.

When it comes to relocations, Polish display a relatively higher flexibility than Germans and French: 22% approve them vs. 52% who do not. In Germany (18%) and France (19%) this ratio is significantly lower – and the share of those who refuse to relocate significantly higher (61% and 57% respectively).

Salary cuts evoke similar reactions across all three countries and are thereby the least popular sacrifice to be made. Only 16% of Germans are willing to accept a lower pay cheque in order to contribute to the industry's climate-neutral transformation – 62% refuse to do so. In France and Poland, the share of approval even amounts to only 14% – with rejection rates of 67% and 66% respectively.

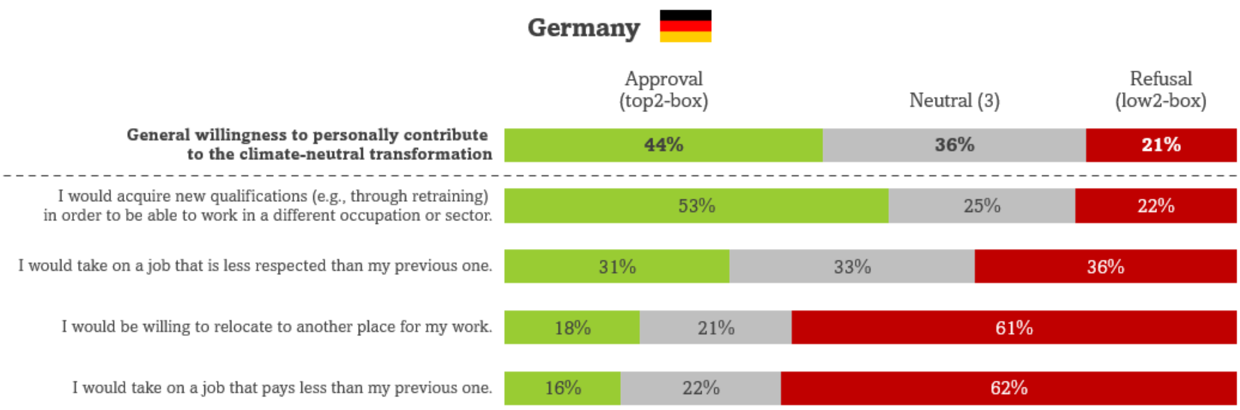

Fig. 14: Willingness to contribute to the climate-neutral transformation of the industry – DE 2025
TL11b: Thinking about your current personal situation: How much do you agree with the following statements? Please answer using a partially verbalized 5-point scale (1 = Definitely; 5 = Definitely not).
Rounding differences possible; basis: n=2.173 interviewees

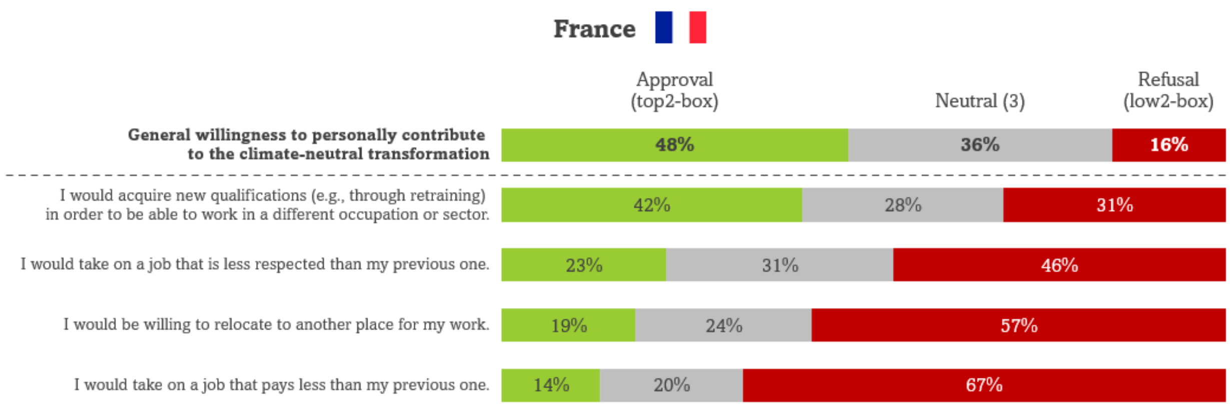

Fig. 15: Willingness to contribute to the climate-neutral transformation of the industry – FR 2025

TL11b: Thinking about your current personal situation: How much do you agree with the following statements? Please answer using a partially verbalized 5-point scale (1 = Definitely; 5 = Definitely not).

Rounding differences possible; basis: n=1.053 interviewees

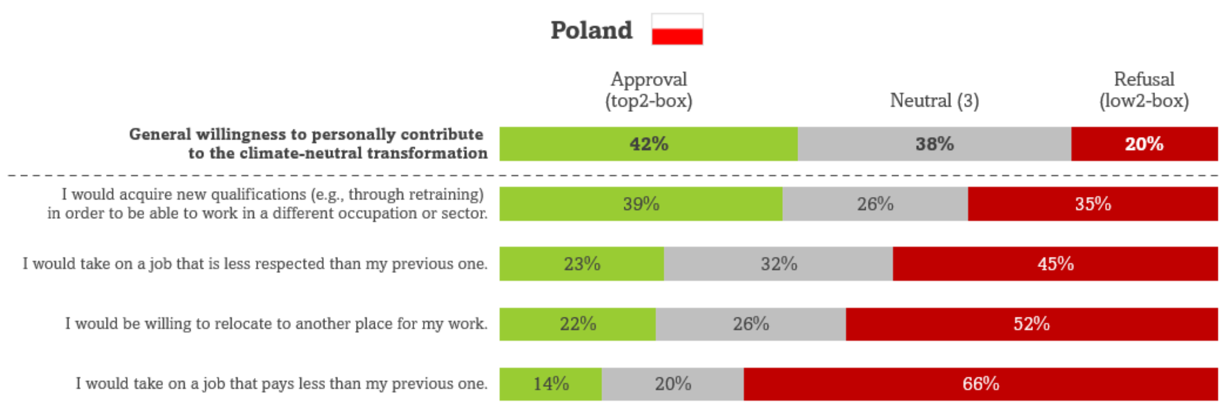

Fig. 16: Willingness to contribute to the climate-neutral transformation of the industry – PL 2025

TL11b: Thinking about your current personal situation: How much do you agree with the following statements? Please answer using a partially verbalized 5-point scale (1 = Definitely; 5 = Definitely not).

Rounding differences possible; basis: n=1.077 interviewees

3.4. ACCEPTANCE FACTORS

Driver I: The job perspective

What ultimately determines acceptance of a sustainable industry transformation is the individual job perspective. The more optimistic people are about their personal employment prospects, the more willing they are to contribute.

In Germany, 87% with a very positive job outlook are highly willing to contribute, compared to just 5% with a very negative outlook. France shows a similar pattern: 85% with high willingness among those with very positive prospects versus 16% among those with a very negative outlook. In Poland, where optimism about the green transformation is generally higher, 77% with a very positive outlook are highly willing to contribute, while only 8% with a negative outlook show high willingness. (Fig. 17, 18, 19)

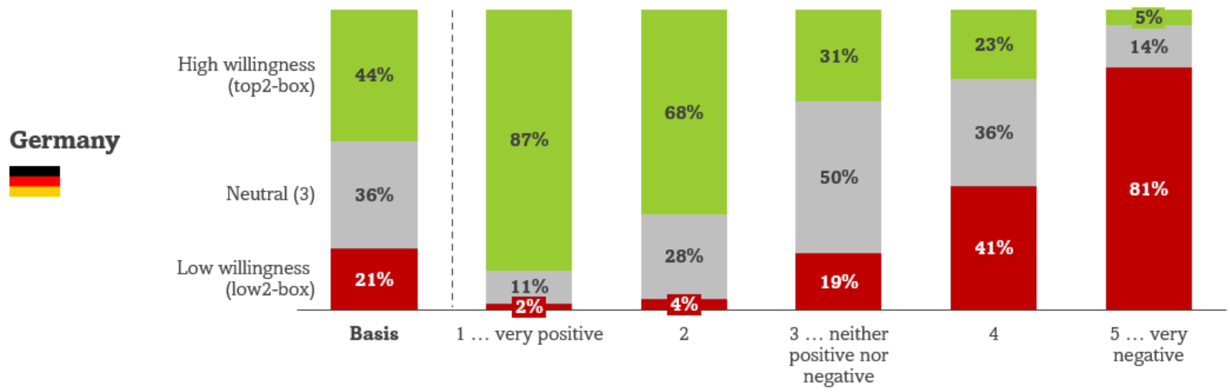

Fig. 17: Willingness to contribute by expected impact of the transformation on personal employment situation – DE 2025
TL06a [S]: And to what extent are you personally willing to contribute to making the industry in Germany climate-neutral?
Rounding differences possible; basis: n=2.173 interviewees

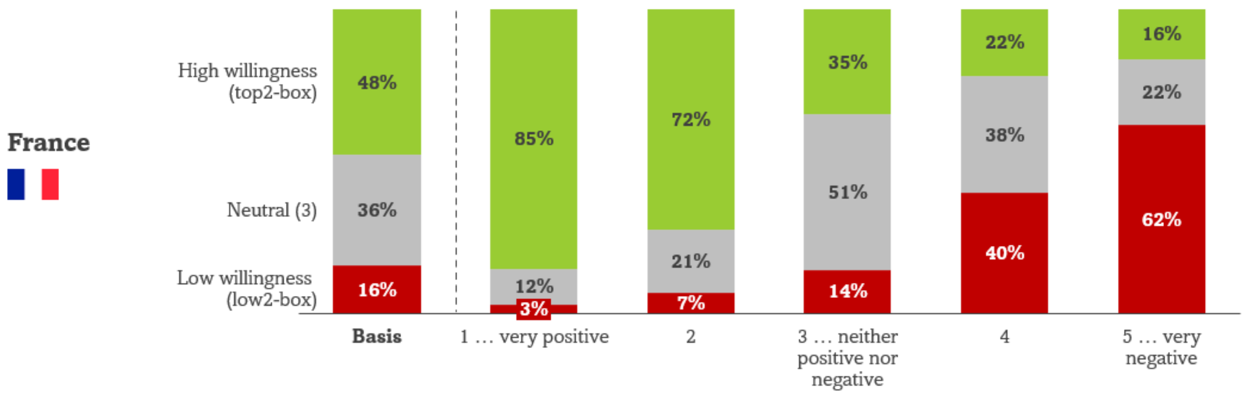

Fig. 18: Willingness to contribute by expected impact of the transformation on personal employment situation – FR 2025
TL06a [S]: And to what extent are you personally willing to contribute to making the industry in France climate-neutral?
Rounding differences possible; basis: n=1.053 interviewees

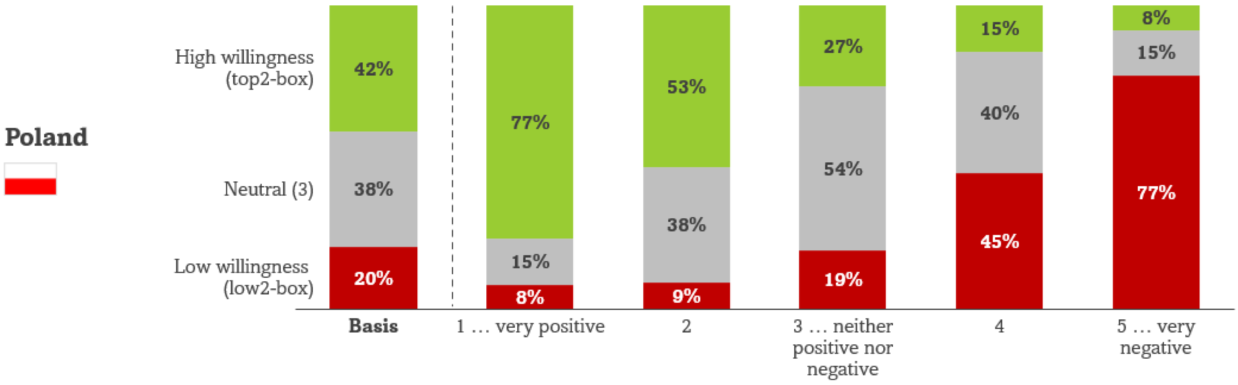

Fig. 19: Willingness to contribute by expected impact of the transformation on personal employment situation – PL 2025
TL06a [S]: And to what extent are you personally willing to contribute to making the industry in Poland climate-neutral?
Rounding differences possible; basis: n=1.077 interviewees

Driver 2: The social status

Beyond individual job prospects, social status plays a key role for accepting change. The lower their social status, the less people are willing to contribute to a climate-neutral industry.

In Germany, among individuals who identify with the lowest social status, 31% express low willingness to contribute (versus 38% who express high willingness). Among individuals who identify with the highest social status, 14% express low willingness (versus 57% who express high willingness). Within the lowest French social class, 18% indicate low willingness to contribute (versus 44% who express high willingness) – among those who identify with the highest social status it is 13% (versus 62% who express high willingness). A similar pattern can be observed in Poland: 23% show low willingness within the lowest social status group (versus 40% with high willingness) and 15% within the highest social status group (versus 60% with high willingness). (Fig. 20, 21, 22)

Interesting detail: In all three countries, individuals who identify with the lowest social status show a higher willingness to contribute than individuals who identify with the medium social status.

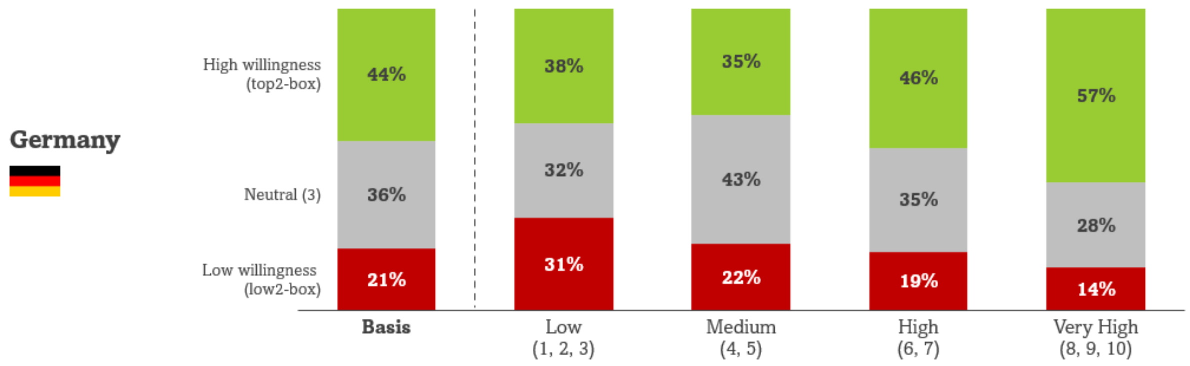

Fig. 20: Willingness to contribute by social status group – DE 2025
TL06a [S]: And to what extent are you personally willing to contribute to making the industry in Germany climate-neutral?
Rounding differences possible; basis: n=2.173 interviewees

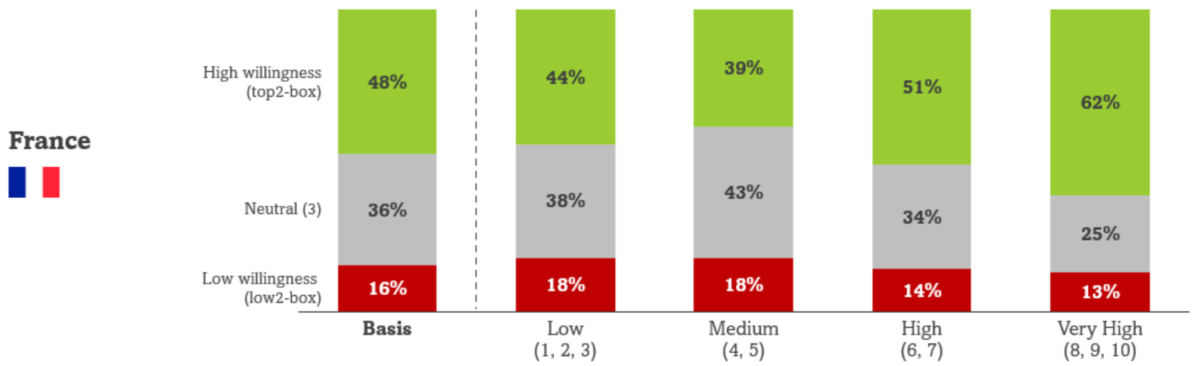

Fig. 21: Willingness to contribute by social status group – FR 2025
TL06a [S]: And to what extent are you personally willing to contribute to making the industry in France climate-neutral?
Rounding differences possible; basis: n=1.053 interviewees

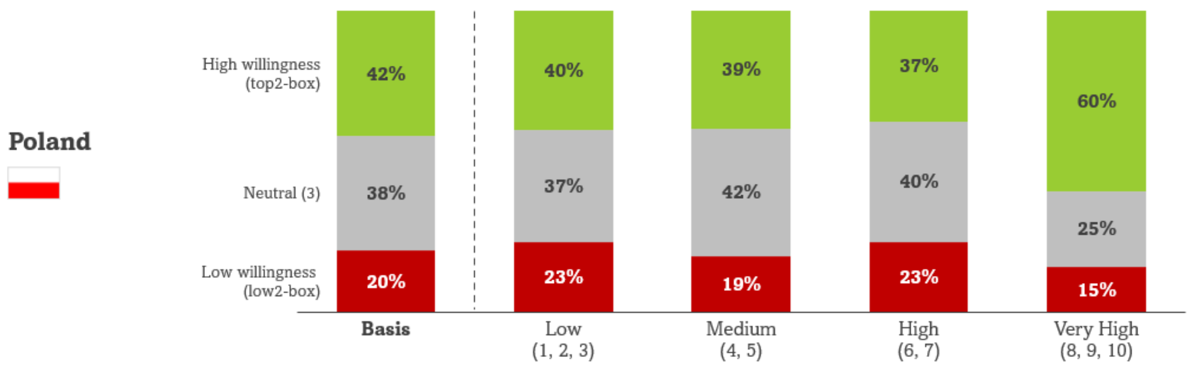

Fig. 22: Willingness to contribute by social status group – PL 2025
TL06a [S]: And to what extent are you personally willing to contribute to making the industry in Poland climate-neutral?
Rounding differences possible; basis: n=1.077 interviewees

Beyond the survey: *Matching our data with current economic figures*

When comparing the perceived impact of the green transformation on personal employment prospects, economy, or social cohesion with GDP-growth figures from the previous year, a notable correlation can be observed. According to the European Commission's published data on EU economic surveillance, the German economy shrank by 0.2%, while the French economy grew by 1.2% and the Polish even by 2.9%.[2] A comparison with our data shows: the higher the economic growth, the more optimistic people are about the climate-neutral transformation. (Fig. 23)

This not only indicates that greater GDP-growth coincides with greater optimism about transforming the industry. It also shows: to get people's buy-in, it is important to highlight economic imperatives and opportunities of the sustainable transformation.

Fig. 23: GDP-growth 2024 vs. positive expected impact of the transformation in DE, FR, PL in 2025
Rounding differences possible; basis: DE: n=2.173 interviewees, FR: n=1.053 interviewees, PL: n=1.077 interviewees

[2] Source: European Commission (2025)

About the Wittenberg Center for Global Ethics (WCGE)

The WCGE is a non-profit think tank: We offer business, corporate and leadership ethics with a practical focus to current and future decision-makers since 1998. Our work is independent, scientifically sound and globally oriented at the interface between science, business and civil society. We are supported by partners from politics, business, science, civil society and churches. The WCGE focuses on ethical challenges: We research, advise, empower and moderate – committed to building bridges for promoting social cooperation and progress.

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