

# **Modeling Political Decisions for Sustainability**

## **Assignment #1**

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### **How is the actor relevant to the permissibility of carbon removals to count towards reaching the 2040 EU net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emission goal(s)?**

Germany is a relevant actor because of its economic size (accounts for 25 percent of the EU GDP), its share of GHG-emissions (20 percent) and many energy-intensive sectors as an industrial base (Jha et al. 2024, p. 55). As the largest country of the European Union (EU), it obtains with 96 seats the largest number of seats in the European Parliament (EP) and is as well part of the Council of the European Union (Council). Since both, the EP and the Council, are institutions with a legislative power and play therefore a central role in climate-related legislation, Germany can influence the outcome of the negotiations through its representatives.

### **Describe the actor's relations with other actors on the abovementioned issue.**

Currently, most actors have not positioned themselves regarding the permissibility of carbon dioxide removals (CDRs), but the following relations can be assumed.

In the past the German government often supported the EU Commission e.g. on the proposal for the certification of CDRs even though they demanded a clarification concerning details (Wettengel 2022).

With regard to the member states, it can be presumed that Germany aligns with other progressive climate leaders. Germany has one of the highest ambition levels concerning effort sharing, with a target of minus 50 percent by 2030 compared to 2005 (Ilha et al.). Other states with the same high goal are Denmark Luxembourg and Finland (Ilha et al). Furthermore, in an open letter Germany and eleven other states e.g. France, Italy and Austria demanded an ambitious climate target for 2040 from the EU Commission (Mayr 2024). However, these member states have for example not all separate goals on a national level concerning CDRs and emissions (Carbon Gap o.D.).

Looking at the factions of the Parliament, Germany should generally be more aligned with the factions that supported the European Green Deal initially e.g. the European People's Party, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, Renew Europe and the Greens.

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Concerning the private sector, on the one hand, there is doubt about reaching the targets for 2030, and it is viewed as counterproductive to intensify the targets for 2040 (DIHK 2024). Since Germany has a large industrial sector which contributes to the national GDP and offers workplaces, they will probably try to work together to integrate removals in the goal for 2040. NGOs, on the other hand, do not support including CDRs in the goal for 2040 and are therefore advocating a different position and demand not to include CDRs in a same target with the reduction of emissions (Pernot et al. 2024).

### **Where can the actor be found on the position scale? Justify.**

The actor can be found close to 90 on the position scale. This would mean the actor is close to the proposal of the EU Commission that 400 MT CO<sub>2</sub>eq of CDRs can count towards the 2040 EU GHG net emission reduction goal.

Germany has implemented and revised its climate law which aims at a similar reduction path as the proposal of the EU Commission. Germany's goal for 2040 concerning the emission reduction is with 88 percent only two percentage points lower than the proposed goal of 90 percent. In their law they have already included CDRs with a reduction contribution of the LULUCF sector of 35 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>eq (Umweltbundesamt 2024). Therefore, it can be assumed that they would include CDRs on a European level as well. Concerning the large industrial base of steel, concrete and chemistry they would rather argue of a higher amount. In addition, the German government provides funding for research projects for different CDR methods which could be an indicator that they want to focus more on CDRs in the future (Carbon Gap 2024).

### **Which potential influence does the actor have on these negotiations? Develop a general scale/index for all actors and score your particular actor. Justify.**

It can be assumed that the EP and the Council are the most influential actors because they are the institutions who have the legislative power to implement the emission goal for 2040 and therefore as well on the permissibility of CDRs towards this goal. Since they both have to agree on a proposal, they have the same amount of influential power and can be found on the 100 of the potential influence scale.

With them both as a benchmark every country can be calibrated concerning their number of seats in the parliament and voting weight in the Council. Germany has 96 of 705 seats in the EP and represents 18.6 percent of the population of the EU in the Council. Taking this under consideration Germany can be assessed with a 16 on the potential influence scale.

The same procedure can be applied to the factions of the EP. The number of seats they have in the EP can be calibrated to the Benchmark as well. Concerning the EU Commission, it is an important actor because the Commission has the right of initiative and paves therefore the way of discussion. Nevertheless, after the proposal of the EU Commission the outcome of the discussion depends on the EU Parliament and the Council of

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the European Union. It can be proposed to assess the Commission with a potential influence of 40-50. For the private sector or NGOs, it could be determined how their potential influence can be assessed towards a seat in the parliament.

**What is the actor's salience and flexibility regarding the position scale? Do they have veto status? Justify.**

Germany is assigned a salience of 75, which means that it is an important topic for them, and they would try hard to reschedule. With their goal to reduce their emissions by 50 percent by 2030 compared to 2005, Germany has one of the highest ambition levels concerning the effort sharing (Jha et al. 2024, p. 55). This shows its commitment to reaching climate neutrality and its leading role in the EU. The already mentioned open letter counts towards this hypothesis. Nevertheless, Germany struggles right now with an election upcoming in 2025 and will be focused as well on the election campaign. This can for example be shown by Chancellor Scholz, who cancelled his trip to the UN Climate conference in Baku because of the domestic political situation (Zeit Online 2024).

In case of the flexibility Germany is assigned a 15, because its rather open to some significant concessions not too far from their current position. It could be shown that in terms of salience the outcome of the negotiation is important for Germany, nevertheless it is important to reach an agreement at all in the end.

Germany as an actor has no veto status. The EU Parliament and the Council of the EU make their decisions according to majority principles and a single country therefore doesn't have the legal right to veto. For certain sensitive policy areas on the European Level exists the unanimity principle, but this is here not the case.

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