

Public opinion preferences behind the ‘trilemma’ between economic growth, equity, and ecological sustainability: a conjoint experiment

Marcello Natili (Università degli Studi di Milano), Alessandro Pellegata (Università degli Studi di Milano), Francesco Visconti (Università degli Studi di Milano)

The fight against climate change has brought new controversial issues such as energy, industrial, tax and social policies required to address the green transition at the centre of European political debates. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and ensuing growing concerns about energy security and skyrocketing energy prices, dramatically renovated the urgency of these debates. Against such background, this paper investigates the priorities of public opinion across EU countries around the ‘trilemma’ between fighting climate change, promoting economic growth and protecting household disposable income. Based on a survey experiment conducted in the SOLID project framework, we first look at publics’ preferences on different policy strategies to investigate whether citizens prefer to support the green transition away from fossil fuels or if short-term economic evaluations prevail instead. Secondly, we assess the emergence of ‘eco-social’ coalitions by investigating whether and how individual preferences along the trade-off between securing economic growth and energy autonomy, on one side, and fostering environmental sustainability, on the other, change when the governments introduce different kinds of social compensation policies to mitigate the negative effects of the green transition.