EPRG WORKING PAPER NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE | Energy Policy Research Group

Investigating the Regional and Individual Drivers of the Support for Renewable Energy Transition: The Role of Severe Material Deprivation.

EPRG Working Paper 2402

Cambridge Working Paper in Economics CWPE2419

Efthymios Altsitsiadis, Micha Kaiser, Anastasios Tsakas, Anastasios Kyriakidis and Angelos Stamos

This study analyses the interplay between regional and individual factors influencing public support for renewable energy technologies, specifically focusing on hydrogen and biomethane, across three EU countries: the Netherlands, Spain, and Greece. Combining survey data on individual attitudes and perceptions with regional socio-economic indicators, the research investigates how severe material deprivation—a condition marked by significant constraints on access to basic amenities due to inadequate financial resources—affects individual willingness to support renewable energy technologies.

The findings reveal that support for renewable energy is significantly lower in regions with high levels of severe material deprivation. This suggests that beyond individual psychological factors, the economic context of a region plays a crucial role in shaping public attitudes toward renewable energy technologies. In areas where economic hardship is prevalent, there is a notable reluctance to endorse initiatives related to renewable energy, which could be attributed to a variety of factors, including the

perceived financial cost of transitioning to new energy systems and possibly a lower exposure to information and education about the benefits of renewable energies.

The study's results emphasize the need for policymakers to consider the underlying economic disparities that might hinder the social acceptability and effectiveness of renewable energy policies. Addressing these disparities could enhance support for renewable energy and ensure a more equitable energy transition, where the benefits of renewable technologies are accessible to all sections of society, regardless of regional economic conditions.

Furthermore, the paper discusses the implications of these findings for developing and implementing energy policies. It suggests that to increase public support for renewable energy technologies, especially in economically disadvantaged regions, policies must be tailored to address the specific economic and social challenges these regions face. This might include subsidies, educational programs to raise awareness about the benefits of renewable energy, and community-based projects that directly involve residents in the planning and benefits of renewable installations.

Overall, this research contributes significantly to the ongoing discourse on renewable energy adoption by highlighting the importance of integrating socio-economic factors into the planning and implementing energy policies. By recognizing and addressing the economic barriers to renewable energy support, policymakers can foster a more inclusive and effective transition to renewable energy that advances environmental goals and supports social and economic well-being.

Contact m.kaiser@jbs.cam.ac.uk
Publication April 2024
Financial Support European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, grant agreement N.952936