

**Press release**

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## **Representative survey: Germans want their government to assume an active and cooperative role in Europe**

*German citizens believe their government's promise to shape EU policy has not yet been fulfilled. The majority support a joint EU investment fund to promote climate-neutral industries. European defense capabilities and energy independence are their top policy priorities.*

Berlin, 23.03.2023 - Most German citizens believe their government's EU policy has not yet fulfilled the promises set in the coalition agreement. This is the result of a representative survey commissioned by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the think tank Das Progressive Zentrum. In its coalition agreement, Germany's current government committed itself to an "active EU policy" and promised to shape Europe in a "constructive" way. 74.6 percent of Germans believe the government has not yet delivered on those claims, 19.9 percent are of the opposite opinion. 51.6 percent perceive Germany's behavior in the EU as "less active" recently, whereas 37.1 percent evaluate it as active. A clear majority of 66.6 percent would like to see Germany play a more active role in the EU in the future. In addition, 69.8 percent support the German government pursuing a cooperative, rather than a dominating, approach to politics on the EU level.

The survey also asked which aspects of European policy German citizens hope to see progress in: 55.8 percent of Germans would like to see the EU member states create a joint investment fund to promote climate-neutral industries. 35.4 percent of respondents are opposed to this idea. Moreover, Germans believe Europe's defensive capability and energy independence to be the most important goals of the EU at this time. Citizens also see a need for institutional reform before the EU integrates new

member states: 57.9 percent of Germans believe the veto for individual countries should be abolished before extending the EU.

2023 marks the fifth year in a row for the long-term study "Actually European!?". As in previous years, the perceived advantages of Germany's EU membership outweigh the disadvantages for a majority of respondents (58.7 percent). However, 37.7 percent see more disadvantages than advantages, an increase of 7 percentage points compared to 2022. Germans are particularly convinced of the political benefits of the EU: 61 percent of respondents say Germany is more likely to achieve its political goals with the EU, rather than without it. Yet, only 46.2 percent of the surveyed citizens currently believe the economic benefits of the EU outweigh the disadvantages. This more pessimistic view could stem from current general economic uncertainty.

"Germans are demanding a more active EU policy, and the governing coalition should deliver on that by combining short-term crisis management with long-term, future-oriented policies," says **Dr. Johannes Hillje, co-author of the study** and Policy Fellow at Das Progressive Zentrum. **Co-author Dr. Christine Pütz**, Heinrich Böll Foundation, explains: "Given the current uncertainties, Europe should be strengthened as a common economic and social project. This should also include investing in the transition towards climate neutrality. Here, the German government can count on the support of its citizens for an EU fund for green industry."

**Jan Philipp Albrecht, President of the Heinrich Böll Foundation**, commented on the survey results as follows: "Germans have high expectations for the European Union – that is good news. At the moment, however, the German government is not living up to these expectations, though its action is crucial to enable the EU to shape the socio-ecological transition in Europe and deliver an adequate response to the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act. With more integration and more joint investments."

For the study, "Actually European!? 2023 – Citizen Expectations towards German EU policy in the Context of Crisis and Transformation", the opinion research company Civey conducted an online survey of 5.000 people in February 2023. The findings are representative of the German population aged 18 and over.

**The study is available to download in German (on 23. March 2023 at 10.00 o'clock CET) at [www.boell.de](http://www.boell.de) and [www.progressives-zentrum.org/en](http://www.progressives-zentrum.org/en)**

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