

MCC Press Release

Technological R&D – the most important driver for climate protection

Survey of experts from the IPCC and the UN climate change conferences indicates the priorities. Climate action is hampered primarily by the power of lobbies.

Berlin, 19/12/2019. According to key experts, research and development of low-carbon technologies could currently best provide additional momentum in the worldwide fight against global warming. This is the result of a new study led by the Berlin climate research institute MCC (Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change). It is based on a survey of around 900 people who are involved in creating the IPCC Assessment Reports or are participating in the UNFCCC climate change conferences as country delegates. The study has now been published in the renowned journal *Environmental Research Letters*.

“Our objective was to empirically inform prioritization in both the political and research agenda setting process,” explains lead author [Ulrike Kornek](#), who heads the Governance working group at the MCC. “Resources are limited on both levels – and until now there has been little clarity about why climate protection is not making better progress with global warming presenting us with so many different challenges.” More than 70 percent of experts consider technology research to be a very or even extremely important option to achieving the 2-degree goal, and this aspect is also most strongly emphasised on average. Accordingly, other important options include intensified communication and education to build public support, as well as changed lifestyles and behaviours within society.

The authors also polled what the most important obstacles to climate protection currently are. Opposition from special interest groups, for example emission-intensive industries, was most strongly emphasised and also described as very or even extremely important by more than 70 percent. The time lag between costs and benefits of mitigation, as well as concerns over high mitigation costs slowing economic development, are also rated as particularly problematic. “Overall, around a dozen obstacles and response options are considered to be quite relevant,” Kornek reports. “The evaluation shows few differences between the IPCC and the UNFCCC or between women and men – but there is a relation to geographical and professional origin.”

For example, increased financial and technological transfers are seen as an important instrument, particularly in the Global South, while carbon pricing is considered an important instrument in the Global North. It is important that both measures find a place within global research and policy processes, so that in the end everyone can be satisfied with the process. Therefore, even if it emphasises the significance of

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lobbying influences and research efforts, the study concludes: climate protection requires a broad agenda – and a process in which all regions of the world participate equally. “Agenda setting can vary from region to region,” emphasises Kornek. “Our survey shows: what may seem minor in one part of the world can perhaps bring about a breakthrough elsewhere.”

About the MCC

The MCC explores sustainable management as well as the use of common goods such as global environmental systems and social infrastructures against the background of climate change. Our seven working groups are active in the fields of economic growth and development, resources and international trade, cities and infrastructure, governance and scientific policy advice. The MCC was co-founded by the Mercator Foundation and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK).

Reference of the cited article:

Kornek, U., Flachsland, C., Kardish, C., Levi, S., Edenhofer, O., 2019, What is important for achieving 2°C? UNFCCC and IPCC expert perceptions on obstacles and response options for climate change mitigation, *Environmental Research Letters*
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