

Moderate Climate Policy

Why the future of the planet matters to us and what we will do about it

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1. Why is the current climate policy narrative problematic?

Climate change affects more than average temperatures. It increases the risk of extreme heat, droughts, heavy rainfall, floods, forest fires, disease and supply chain disruptions. These effects are intertwined with biodiversity loss, soil degradation and the vulnerability of water systems¹. Processes driven by climate change also contribute to geopolitical developments such as new regional armed conflicts and growing migration flows.

For Lithuania, this means damage to forests and agriculture, greater exposure to heat in cities, more vulnerable energy infrastructure, additional pressure on health and civil protection systems, and new national security risks. Climate change is one of humanity's most important challenges, and must therefore be recognised, understood and addressed consistently.

Yet over recent decades, society, and public debate in particular, has come to regard climate change as an issue belonging to left-wing political forces, and climate policy as an inseparable part of the progressive, sometimes even radically left-wing, agenda. This is a major paradox, because climate change is grounded primarily in science and its measured and demonstrated facts, rather than in political ideologies. This pronounced politicisation forces policy decisions vital to the future of the planet and humanity into the traditional confrontation between left and right.

As political polarisation grows, climate action and adaptation measures are often treated as an ideological choice based on beliefs, rather than as a field of practical policy grounded in scientific evidence and workable solutions. Moreover, some measures proposed within the dominant progressive narrative are difficult to implement, insufficiently justified or impose a disproportionate burden on society. The resulting backlash fuels anger and distrust and creates space for radical political forces, including movements that deny climate change.

This creates a second paradox: the impression that people on the political right do not care about climate change, or care less. Yet research from many countries, as well as plain common sense, can confirm that conservatives and people with other right-wing views are no less concerned, and sometimes even more concerned, about signs of environmental deterioration than those on the left. Their reasons for taking action and their approach to climate change often differ, however.

These two paradoxes point to the need for a different approach: one that is practical, deliverable, moderate and resilient to political polarisation. This paper offers such an approach to Lithuania's political debate and to society at large.

¹ IPCC. 2023. *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report*. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; IPBES. 2019. *Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services: Summary for policymakers*. Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

1.1. Limitations of the left-wing approach to climate change

It is important to acknowledge the significant role that progressive climate policy, most often represented politically in Europe by Green parties and movements, has played to date. They helped turn climate science and research findings into a pressing political issue, encouraged the first regulatory measures, and contributed substantially to renewable energy, nature restoration, the promotion of new climate-neutral technologies and other important decisions. The approach of the moderate political right does not seek to deny what has been successful. Its task is to correct the shortcomings of the prevailing model that limit long-term public support for climate policy, and to offer a more sustainable direction for the coming decades.

Fundamental mistakes of the progressive green movement:

- **Excessive bundling of different agendas.** When climate policy is presented as inseparable from every other issue on the progressive agenda, people who support efforts to protect the climate are also pushed to endorse the entire left-wing package of policy choices. This is alienating. More conservative sections of society may support specific climate measures while holding different views on, for example, other cultural and/or social tenets of left-wing ideology. Artificially linking these issues alienates a large part of society whose support is essential for lasting, sustainable climate policy decisions.
- **A closed approach to technology.** Many solutions to climate change lie in technological progress. Unfortunately, climate policy is weakened when technologies are rejected because of their political associations. The clearest example is the European Green movement's scepticism towards nuclear energy, although many scientists and international institutions regard it as a source of electricity with low greenhouse gas emissions that can complement solar and wind generation². A dogmatic approach to technology can lead to decisions that harm the climate. For example, the early closure of Germany's nuclear power plants increased the need to keep coal- and gas-fired plants operating for longer. Similar pre-emptive distrust is sometimes expressed towards hydrogen, CO₂ capture and storage, synthetic fuels and other technologies.
- **Reducing climate policy** to greenhouse gas accounting and focusing on distant climate targets. Emissions accounting is essential, but climate and nature policy cannot be reduced to meeting a single indicator. A forest's value, for example, is not limited to its stored carbon: it is an animal habitat, part of the water cycle and ecological resilience, a recreational space, a landscape and even a place of cultural memory. Yet left-wing politicians and the responsible institutions very often present emissions reduction as the main objective of climate policy. Science underlines why this approach is not sustainable. A recent analysis by authoritative international institutions showed that climate action and biodiversity protection must be coordinated, because a poorly designed measure in one area can harm the other³. Likewise, concentrating all policy measures on distant targets, such as emissions reductions by 2050, is inappropriate when action is needed now. Although long-term targets provide direction, they also encourage the postponement of some measures within short political cycles and provide excuses for political inaction.
- **Policy based on bans and measures with little impact but a large public reaction.** Bans are sometimes necessary, particularly where harm is significant and a realistic alternative is readily available. However, bans that have little impact and complicate everyday life can generate more

² IEA. 2022. *Nuclear Power and Secure Energy Transitions: From today's challenges to tomorrow's clean energy systems*.

International Energy Agency; UNECE. 2021. *Life Cycle Assessment of Electricity Generation Options*. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

³ IPBES and IPCC. 2021. *Biodiversity and Climate Change: Workshop Report*. IPBES Secretariat.

political conflict than climate benefit. Paradoxically, climate measures grounded in left-wing political thought, which at least in theory always emphasises the pursuit of freedom, very often rely exclusively on bans, a utopian ambition to change people's habitual behaviour, or simply additional taxation of everyday life. Such measures may both fail to achieve their purpose and divide society, opening the door to climate sceptics. Research on carbon taxes, for example, shows that support depends heavily on how revenues are used, a fair distribution of the burden and visible benefits⁴. The first question should therefore be not “what should we ban?”, but “how can we make the clean choice cheaper and more convenient?”⁵. There is also a range of measures whose direct climate impact is small but which generate disproportionate public dissatisfaction. Tethered plastic bottle caps, bans on single-use plastic straws and charges on very lightweight plastic bags primarily aim to reduce plastic pollution and waste, rather than substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions or address ecological problems. Although these measures have environmental benefits, the everyday inconvenience they cause is highly visible, while their contribution to curbing climate change is small or difficult to explain, even though their advocates often present them as especially significant climate measures. As a result, they readily become objects of ridicule for climate policy critics and are used in disinformation as supposed evidence that all green policy is pointless. They alienate part of society from much more important measures with a significant impact on emissions reduction and ecological conditions.

- **The reputational damage caused by extreme ideas.** Mandatory veganism, halting economic growth, regulating personal CO₂ footprints, depopulation and restricting everyday recreational activities are ideas that occasionally appear in the rhetoric of the left-wing Green movement. They do not define progressive climate policy as a whole. Yet without a clear rejection of such ideas, they become symbols of climate policy that opponents can easily exploit, including in the propaganda of hostile states. A responsible alternative must distinguish effective climate measures from ideological or sensational proposals whose benefits have not been scientifically demonstrated.

Climate change does not matter only to the political left. On the contrary, climate policy is inherently close to the conservative outlook of the political right, because it seeks to preserve what is valuable, has developed over centuries and must be passed on to the future. The British philosopher Roger Scruton linked the motivation for environmental protection to *oikophilia*, or love of home, and the duty to pass on to future generations the inherited order for which those living here and now are temporary custodians⁶. This perspective allows climate change to be discussed as a matter of the security of our shared home and a problem that unites people, rather than as a badge of identity for one political camp.

⁴ Carattini, S., Carvalho, M. and Fankhauser, S. 2018. *Overcoming public resistance to carbon taxes*. Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change, 9(5), e531; Klenert, D., Mattauch, L., Combet, E. et al. 2018. *Making carbon pricing work for citizens*. Nature Climate Change, 8, 669–677.

⁵ Hamid Bulut and Robin Samuel. 2025. *Public support for carbon taxes varies across countries and policy design must consider the national context*. Communications Earth & Environment, 6, 601.

⁶ Scruton, R. 2012. *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet*. Atlantic Books.

2. The moral foundations of conservative climate policy

In this policy paper, we use the term “moderate climate policy”. We define it as an approach that recognises humanity’s responsibility to protect the environment and mitigate climate change, while reconciling these aims with economic competitiveness, energy security, social acceptability and the interests of local communities. Moderate climate policy rests on environmental stewardship, pragmatism and realism. It favours gradual solutions that are open to different technologies and economically sound, and seeks lasting public support for climate policy.

We derive the idea of moderate climate policy from the fundamental principles of conservatism, outlined below. We believe this approach is superior to a utopian, excessively centralised and radicalised left-wing narrative. Nevertheless, we do not use the term “conservative climate policy” in this analysis, because we also seek to escape the vicious cycle of polarising confrontation between left and right.

Although moderate climate policy rests on conservative values, it does not reject the possibility that other intellectual traditions may offer sound arguments or useful policy measures. Like conservatism itself, it should draw on them whenever they contribute to the common good. We reject radicalism in every direction: both destructive climate change denial and a radical Green movement that seeks to remake society and the planet according to its own utopian vision.

2.1. Nature as home, heritage and the common good

The duty to care for nature arises primarily from our relationship with the world in which we live, rather than from political ideology or international obligations. The environment is more than a collection of raw materials or an abstract “planet”. It is our tangible home: landscapes, forests, rivers, farmland, cities and towns, human communities and a way of life shaped over generations. Roger Scruton’s concept of *oikophilia*, or *love of home*, helps explain why people take on long-term responsibility: we protect what we know, what we feel we belong to and what we want to pass on to future generations⁷.

Such attachment does not mean closing ourselves off from the world or refusing to recognise global problems. On the contrary, responsibility for our shared world becomes stronger when it begins with responsibility for a particular place. People find it easier to understand the duty to mitigate climate change when it is linked to the air quality of their city, the condition of the forests they visit, the fertility of their farm’s soil, their energy security or the prospect of their children living in an environment no worse than ours today. The Earth cannot be treated merely as a resource for short-term consumption. It is an inherited reality that no single generation created and that no single generation has the moral right to exhaust⁸.

This outlook is complemented by the concept of our common home developed in Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato Si’*. Human beings are not separate from nature, and the ecological crisis cannot be separated from human dignity, work, family and the common good. Natural and social systems are interconnected, so responsible policy must assess the full impact of decisions on people, communities and the living environment, rather than a single emissions indicator⁹. Caring for the climate therefore does not compete with caring for people: properly understood, ecological responsibility protects human beings and their living conditions.

⁷ Scruton, R. 2012. *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet*.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Francis. 2015. *Encyclical Laudato Si’ on care for our common home*. Catholic Internet Service.

2.2. Responsibility for our actions and a duty to future generations

The moral duty to care for the environment also arises from a simple principle of justice: people and organisations should not benefit by passing the harm caused by their activities on to others. If pollution damages other people's health, reduces the value of their assets or other private property, destroys shared natural resources or increases future public expenditure, its costs do not disappear. They are simply paid by people who bear no responsibility for the harm, or by future generations. Polluters must therefore take responsibility for significant external harm, and this responsibility must be reflected in economic and political decisions¹⁰.

Climate change makes the importance of intergenerational responsibility particularly clear. Today's generations benefit from institutions, infrastructure, culture and preserved landscapes handed down by previous generations. They likewise have a duty to pass on a financial, cultural and ecological inheritance to future generations. Intergenerational solidarity provides an additional argument for climate policy, but it is also a fundamental requirement of justice without which sustainable development cannot meaningfully be discussed¹¹.

This duty does not mean sacrificing the well-being of people today for an abstract future. The common good encompasses respect for the individual, the vitality of families and intermediary communities, social peace and fair burden-sharing¹². Morally grounded climate policy must therefore assess both the benefits for future generations and the effects on today's families, communities, workers, regions and people on lower incomes. Policy that reduces emissions by placing a disproportionate burden on the most vulnerable creates a new injustice and divides society.

2.3. Responsibility requires state oversight and the involvement of us all

Climate change is a global problem, but however many international agreements are signed, they will be implemented in specific places: homes, farms, municipalities, businesses and national institutions. Responsibility therefore cannot be concentrated in a single centre of government or shifted entirely to individual consumers. It must rest on the principle of subsidiarity, with decisions made and responsibility distributed among different levels of government and actors according to their capabilities, competence and impact.

Elinor Ostrom, a Nobel laureate in economics, offered fundamental insights on this issue. Her research on common resources showed that people can solve even highly complex problems through self-governing institutions when there are clear boundaries of responsibility, rules adapted to local conditions, opportunities for participants to change those rules, reliable monitoring, proportionate sanctions and accessible conflict resolution mechanisms¹³. This approach avoids the false choice between complete centralisation and ignoring the problem altogether. The state must establish clear goals, responsibilities and reliable incentives, while leaving people, municipalities, communities and businesses room to choose the most appropriate way to act, even on a problem as global as climate change¹⁴. This is the most effective path.

Polycentric action also makes it possible to act without waiting for a perfect global agreement of the kind sought each year at the United Nations climate conferences, or COPs, but still not achieved. Different solutions can be tested in different cities, regions and sectors, their results compared,

¹⁰ Scruton, R. 2012. *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet*.

¹¹ Francis. 2015. *Encyclical Laudato Si' on care for our common home*.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ostrom, E. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁴ Ibid.

lessons drawn from successes and mistakes, and effective measures expanded nationally¹⁵. Local associations and practical knowledge are therefore sources of societal resilience and long-term trust, rather than obstacles to state policy¹⁶.

Such action is possible only when people are treated as participants in decisions, rather than as objects of administration. Climate policy must rest on transparent information, a fair assessment of alternatives and dialogue before decisions with major consequences are taken¹⁷. Wider public participation helps improve decisions, take local conditions into account and reduce political polarisation.

2.4. Why climate change matters to the political right

Environmental protection naturally connects with the political right's core values: responsibility, continuity, private property, community, subsidiarity, prudence and respect for the inherited order. A conservative outlook begins by recognising that we did not create everything of value and have no right to consume it all for present needs alone. If conservative politics seeks to protect families, national culture, state sovereignty and thriving communities, it cannot be indifferent to the physical environment that enables them to endure.

For the political right, denying climate change would mean abandoning one of its most important moral principles: the duty to protect what has been inherited. Yet adopting climate policy from the progressive left without reflecting on its own values would also be a mistake. Ideological moralising, dividing society into the “progressive” and the “backward”, utopian ideas of remaking society, and the political polarisation fuelled by all of this provoke rejection and a defensive response in protection of one's way of life, even when specific environmental harm is obvious. A conservative response must offer its own moral path to responsibility, through love of home, duty to the community, fair compensation for harm and care for future generations, rather than copy the political symbols of the left.

The ecological humanism recently proposed in Italy by Shared Ground describes this path as an alternative both to “punitive ecology” and to denial of the problem. It places people, local communities, security, continuity and fair burden-sharing at its centre¹⁸. This is not a “slower” or milder version of progressive climate policy. Its moral structure is different: it rests on personal and institutional responsibility rather than collective guilt; on enabling people to sustain their way of life rather than disrupting it; and on different routes to clearly measurable results rather than a uniform model of behaviour imposed on everyone.

The goal of moderate climate policy must be a combination of climate stability, nature protection, energy security and human well-being, rather than one additional tonne of emissions reduced at any social or economic cost.

This does not mean that every measure must be voluntary. Freedom cannot entail a right to impose significant harm on others or future generations. Before introducing a ban, tax or other restriction, however, the state must demonstrate the significance of the harm and the effectiveness and proportionality of the chosen measure, and ensure that people have access to a realistic alternative. Such policy can reduce emissions while strengthening trust, bringing people together to care for our

¹⁵ Ostrom, E. 2009. *A Polycentric Approach for Coping with Climate Change*. World Bank.

¹⁶ Scruton, R. 2012. *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet*.

¹⁷ Francis. 2015. *Encyclical Laudato Si' on care for our common home*.

¹⁸ Shared Ground. 2026. *Humanist ecology as a response to polarisation*. In *Ecologia umanista: “Manifesto per un conservatorismo verde”*.

common home and take responsibility for the future, rather than turning climate change into another dividing line in cultural conflicts.

Finally, climate goals must be reconciled with economic development, social stability and the vitality of the regions. The climate agenda must not become an obstacle to investment, jobs or local business. It must instead encourage economic modernisation, more efficient resource use and the adoption of new technologies. Moderate climate policy rests on private property and free-market principles: the state must set clear, achievable and measurable goals, ensure fair competition and prevent the costs of environmental harm from being passed on to society. Responsibility for implementing specific solutions, however, lies primarily with people and businesses. Priority must be given to competition between technologies, private investment and incentives, rather than detailed state intervention in the planning and regulation of economic activity. Some economic intervention is, of course, unavoidable: well-designed state incentives can help accelerate the transition to cleaner technologies and support people in adapting. Yet public funding measures must have a clear investment rationale and a defined point at which they will have achieved their purpose and be withdrawn, making way for free-market mechanisms. Climate policy will be sustainable only when lower emissions mean greater productivity, competitiveness and opportunities for the whole country, rather than a weaker economy.

National security is an equally important goal of moderate climate policy. A state dependent on fossil fuel imports, vulnerable supply chains or energy resources controlled by undemocratic regimes cannot be fully independent. Domestic renewable energy generation, keeping nuclear energy options open, energy storage, reliable electricity grids, more efficient consumption and diversified resource supplies can reduce emissions while strengthening national resilience. Climate policy is part of the state's long-term security and independence.

3. An analysis of Lithuania's situation

3.1. Lithuania's emissions

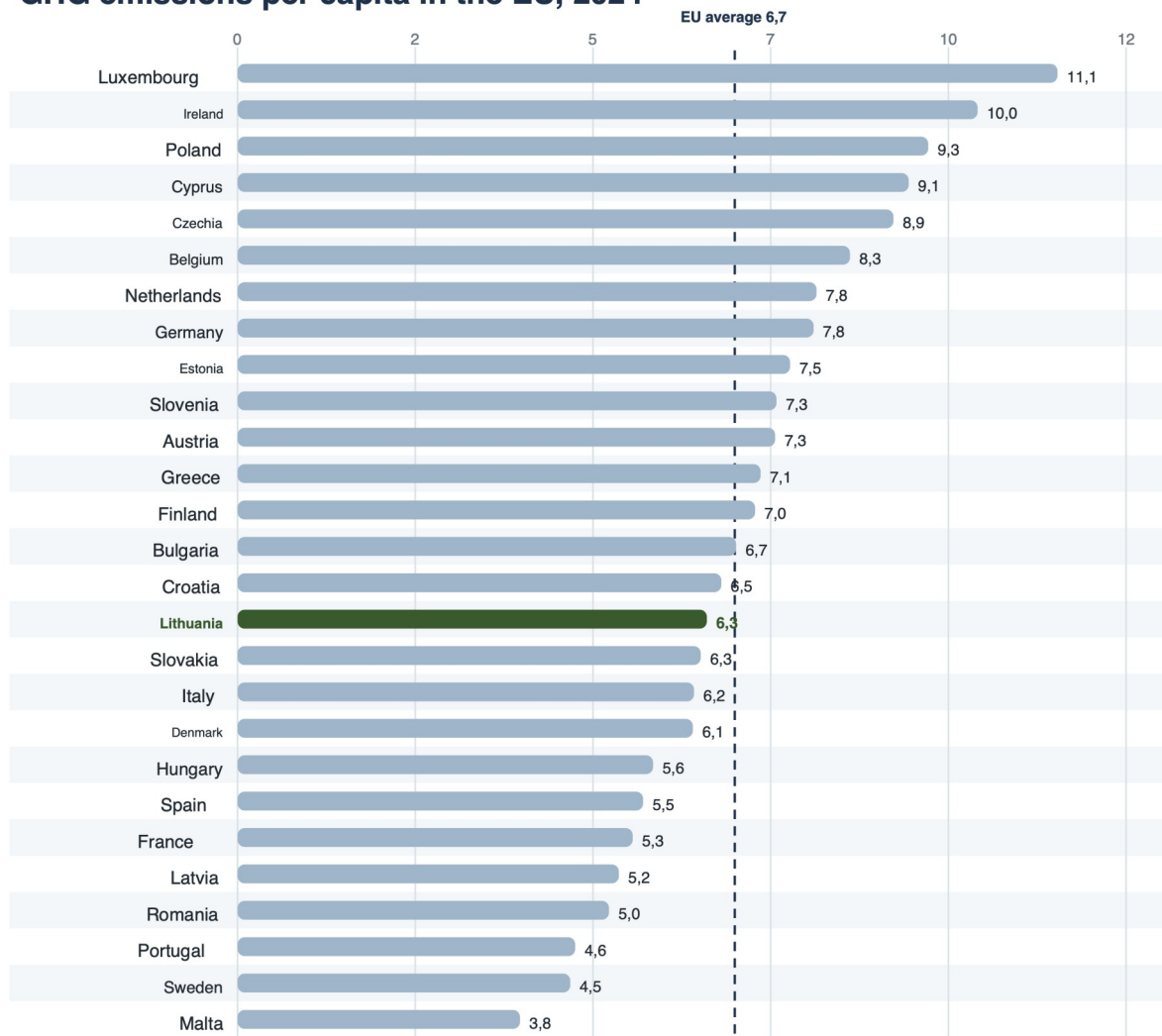
A useful starting point for analysing Lithuania's climate policy is greenhouse gas emissions. Although emissions are not the only criterion for climate policy, their widespread use makes them an important statistical indicator for comparing countries, sectors and progress over time.

The latest data, for 2024, show that Lithuania's emissions reached 18.3 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent¹⁹. This is 61.5% below the 1990 level, but much of this historical reduction reflects the post-Soviet economic transformation rather than consistent decarbonisation across today's sectors. Lithuania is not among the EU countries with the highest total emissions: it is a small country with relatively little heavy industry and makes almost no use of highly polluting fuels for electricity generation. When emissions are calculated per capita, however, Lithuania moves up several places and approaches the EU average²⁰.

¹⁹ Environmental Protection Agency, State Forest Service and other Lithuanian inventory institutions. 2026. *Lithuania's National Inventory Document 2026: Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990–2024*. Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania; European Environment Agency. 2026. *Annual European Union greenhouse gas inventory 1990–2024 and inventory document 2026*. EEA Report 04/2026; Eurostat. 2026a. *Greenhouse gas emissions by source sector (ENV_AIR_GGE)*.

²⁰ Eurostat. 2026a. *Greenhouse gas emissions by source sector (ENV_AIR_GGE)*; Eurostat. 2026b. *Population change – Demographic balance and crude rates at national level (DEMO_GIND)*.

GHG emissions per capita in the EU, 2024



Sources: Eurostat ENV_AIR_GGE (https://doi.org/10.2908/ENV_AIR_GGE) and DEMO_GIND (https://doi.org/10.2908/DEMO_GIND). Author's calculations.

The key indicator is Lithuania's emissions structure in comparison with other countries. It differs from the EU average primarily in the large shares attributable to transport and agriculture. By sectoral share of total national emissions, Lithuania ranked 22nd among the 27 EU member states for energy (12.3%) and 14th for industry (18.9%, including fuel combustion in industry and industrial processes). It ranked 9th for transport (32.3%) and 4th for agriculture (20.2%). Energy and industry therefore do not account for unusually large shares, whereas transport places Lithuania in the top third of EU countries and agriculture accounts for one of the largest shares in the Union²¹.

²¹ Eurostat. 2026a. *Greenhouse gas emissions by source sector (ENV_AIR_GGE)*.

The energy sector is one of Lithuania's clearest success stories of recent decades. Rapid growth in renewable electricity generation shows that consistent policy favourable to investment and technology can deliver results. Yet work in the sector is far from complete: further development is essential, as the electrification of transport, buildings and industry will greatly increase electricity demand. The National Energy Independence Strategy projects that Lithuania's annual electricity consumption will grow more than sixfold by 2050, from around 12 TWh to 74 TWh²². Today's achievements will therefore not suffice. Lithuania will need to increase domestic generation further, strengthen grids, expand energy storage and ensure reliable electricity supply even as consumption rises rapidly.

Looking ahead, Lithuania's greatest climate policy challenge remains its two most polluting sectors: transport and agriculture. Transport emissions rose by 2.3% in 2024 compared with 2023. The OECD had previously noted that road transport accounted for around 96% of all transport emissions and that these emissions had grown by 38% over a decade²³. Agricultural emissions are closely linked to other ecological problems, discussed in more detail in the next section.

²² Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. 2024. *National Agenda "National Energy Independence Strategy"*.

²³ Environmental Protection Agency, State Forest Service and other Lithuanian inventory institutions. 2026. *Lithuania's National Inventory Document 2026: Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990–2024*. Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania; OECD. 2021. *OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Lithuania 2021*. OECD Publishing.

3.2. Lithuania's environmental situation

Climate change in Lithuania is not solely a question of reducing emissions. Resilience to changes already under way is equally important. The European Commission classifies around one-third of Lithuania's regions as areas of heightened climate risk, particularly low-lying coastal areas. Coastal flooding and storms pose the greatest threat in western Lithuania, while increasingly frequent heatwaves raise the risk of illness and death and place additional strain on transport systems, electricity grids and urban water supply infrastructure.

Although Lithuania has a national climate adaptation strategy, an action plan and a recently adopted Climate Change Adaptation Law, adaptation plans for individual sectors and regions have yet to be prepared. The European Commission therefore recommends systematically assessing future climate scenarios in flood risk management documents, justifying the priorities, costs and monitoring of selected protection measures, and involving local communities more actively²⁴.

Another structural problem is Lithuania's slow transition to a circular economy. In 2023, its circular material use rate was just 3.9%, compared with an EU average of 11.8%. Resource productivity was €0.79 per kilogram of materials consumed, against an EU average of €2.23. Lithuania's economic growth thus remains heavily dependent on primary raw materials. Although the country has made substantial progress in reducing landfill disposal and introduced a successful deposit-return system, the European Commission warns that municipal and packaging waste recycling targets may be missed. In 2021, the OECD noted that municipal waste per capita had increased since 2009: sorting waste alone is insufficient, and waste generation must be reduced and material productivity improved²⁵. The Commission recommends increasing product reuse and recycling, improving the collection of waste electrical and electronic equipment, and investing more in waste prevention²⁶. The efficiency of the waste sorting system itself also needs attention, given the substantial differences in quality between Lithuania's regions.

Deteriorating surface water conditions are a particularly serious ecological problem. Only 36.4% of Lithuania's surface water bodies achieve good or very good ecological status or potential, and none of the assessed coastal and transitional waters meets the requirements for good ecological status. The greatest pressure comes from diffuse agricultural pollution and the resulting flow of nitrogen and phosphorus compounds into rivers, lakes and the Baltic Sea. The chemical status of as many as 94% of surface water bodies is reported as unknown, owing to insufficient monitoring of actual pollutants and the lack of a comprehensive inventory of pollution sources for priority substances. The OECD also noted that Lithuania's nitrogen load on the Baltic Sea had increased while several other Baltic countries were reducing theirs²⁷. The European Commission recommends stronger water monitoring, reduced pollution from nutrients, chemicals and metals, stricter implementation of the Nitrates Directive, and sufficient funding. Lithuania's estimated investment shortfall for water protection is around €259 million annually²⁸.

Climate change and biodiversity problems in Lithuania are also closely interconnected. The European Commission's 2025 review, drawing on the latest completed reporting period under the Habitats Directive, states that around two-thirds of protected habitats were in an unfavourable condition. Grasslands, wetlands and forest habitats of EU importance were in particularly poor condition. This weakens ecosystems' ability to store carbon, regulate the water cycle, protect soil

²⁴ European Commission. 2025a. *2025 Environmental Implementation Review: Country Report – Lithuania*.

²⁵ OECD. 2021. *OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Lithuania 2021*. OECD Publishing.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

and mitigate floods and droughts. Some Lithuanian wetlands and peatlands have been drained for agriculture, peat extraction or land reclamation, although restoring them would reduce emissions, improve water quality and restore biodiversity. The Commission recommends completing the designation of Natura 2000 sites, setting specific conservation objectives, restoring damaged habitats, expanding extensive grazing on grasslands, and including peatland restoration in national nature restoration plans²⁹. The OECD also emphasises the need to monitor biodiversity outside protected areas and consider payments for ecosystem services and sustainable forest management³⁰.

Lithuania's air quality presents a mixed picture. In 2023, no breaches of EU ambient air quality limit values were recorded, and emissions of many major pollutants have fallen since 2019. Yet Lithuania has still not met its national commitments to reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides, non-methane volatile organic compounds and ammonia. Transport is the main source of nitrogen oxide pollution, while agriculture drives ammonia emissions. Heating homes and other buildings generates a large share of fine particulate matter. Good average air quality should therefore not obscure structural pollution problems. The European Commission recommends strengthening the measures in the National Air Pollution Reduction Plan, reducing industrial pollution intensity and preparing for stricter EU air quality standards³¹.

The capacity of forests and other land to remove carbon dioxide is an important part of Lithuania's climate policy. In 2024, the land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector as a whole removed 4.3 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. Recent trends point to a decline, however, while Lithuania's 2030 target is at least 6.4 million tonnes of net annual removals. This requires an increase of around 2.1 million tonnes, or 49%. The target applies to the entire LULUCF sector and cannot be treated solely as an afforestation target: grasslands, cropland, wetlands and peatlands also determine the outcome. Lithuania must therefore both expand forest cover and protect carbon-rich mature stands and old-growth forests, align harvesting with forest growth, restore damaged forests and peatlands, increase species and age diversity, and strengthen resilience to droughts, fires, storms and pests. New forests should be planted on suitable low-productivity or degraded land, since afforesting valuable grasslands could increase carbon storage while harming biodiversity. This approach also matters because more than 90% of assessed Lithuanian forest habitats of EU importance are in poor or inadequate condition³².

3.3. Do people understand the problem?

The latest Eurobarometer data show that Lithuanian society recognises climate change as a serious problem. Its urgency is nevertheless often overshadowed by threats felt more directly, particularly security challenges. This is entirely normal.

Climate change is considered a serious problem by 83% of Lithuanian respondents. Yet when asked to identify the world's two most important problems, 74% selected armed conflicts and 42% climate change. The latter figure was 5 percentage points below the EU average, but climate change still ranked second among the global problems selected by Lithuanian respondents. Its importance is therefore not denied in Lithuania; it is assessed within a broader context of geopolitical and economic insecurity³³.

²⁹ OECD. 2021. *OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Lithuania 2021*. OECD Publishing.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

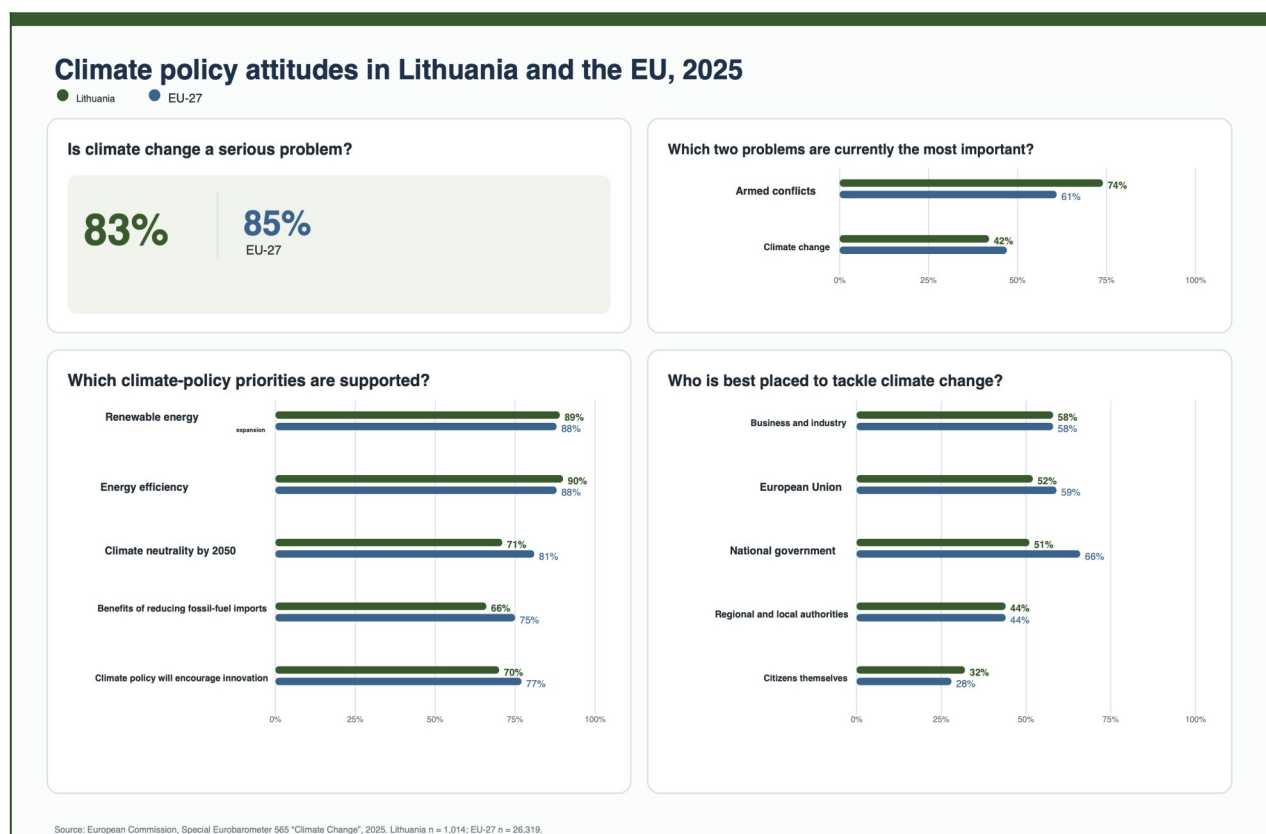
³¹ European Commission. 2025a. *2025 Environmental Implementation Review: Country Report – Lithuania*.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ European Commission. 2025b. *Climate change: Special Eurobarometer 565*.

Public support is strongest for specific, practical measures that promise tangible benefits. Around nine in ten Lithuanian residents consider the expansion of renewable energy and improvements in energy efficiency important, slightly more than the EU average. Support for more abstract or distant targets is relatively lower, although still backed by a clear majority: 71% of Lithuanian respondents support climate neutrality by 2050, 66% recognise the economic and security benefits of reducing fossil fuel imports, and 70% recognise climate policy's contribution to innovation and competitiveness. These findings suggest that climate policy is most acceptable to Lithuanian society when linked to lower energy costs, energy security, home renovation, technological progress and local economic benefits, rather than solely to long-term emissions reduction indicators³⁴.

The survey also shows how Lithuanian residents understand the distribution of responsibility for climate action. Business and industry were most often identified as best placed to tackle climate change, selected by 58% of respondents. The EU was selected by 52%, national government by 51%, regional and local authorities by 44%, and residents themselves by 32%. Compared with the EU average, Lithuanian respondents were considerably less likely to assign the main role to national government (51% versus 66%) or the EU (52% versus 59%), but slightly more likely to emphasise individual action (32% versus 28%). These differences indicate a need to define actors' roles more clearly, rather than a rejection of responsibility. Climate policy should rest on partnership between the state, municipalities, businesses and communities, without placing disproportionate responsibility on individual consumers³⁵.



A public opinion study commissioned by the public institution Baltijos lizdas together with the international Our Common Home network adds to this picture, showing the particularly close link between climate policy and energy in Lithuania. Energy security was considered essential to

³⁴ European Commission. 2025b. *Climate change: Special Eurobarometer 565*.

³⁵ *Ibid*.

national independence by 81% of respondents, while 69% believed renewable sources could meet most of Lithuania's electricity demand. In addition, 73% agreed that Lithuania bears no less responsibility for environmental protection than other European countries, and 64% would be proud to live in an environmentally friendly city or town. Climate policy can therefore be understood as a matter of national independence, local identity and the quality of the living environment, as well as an international commitment³⁶.

The study also reveals clear limits to public support relating to cost, trust and implementation. While 31% of respondents were willing to pay more for green energy, 49% opposed doing so. General support for clean energy does not therefore imply a willingness to accept any additional cost. In addition, 76% opposed using valuable forests for energy, associating acceptable biomass use primarily with waste and production residues. Participants in the qualitative part of the study viewed local energy generation and reduced dependence on imports positively, but also identified obstacles involving electricity grids, energy storage, renovation financing and administration. The benefits of climate policy must therefore be visible, implementation reliable, and the financial burden on residents justified, fair and predictable.

In spring 2026, the European Right Institute and the public institution Baltijos lizdas held a discussion series in Lithuania's regions on local climate solutions and surveyed decision-makers. Of the participants, 93% said they saw the effects of climate change in their municipality and believed these could be mitigated. They linked responsibility for solutions most often to personal involvement, while also emphasising the roles of national government, business, municipal government and communities. They identified a consistent strategy, reconciliation of different interests, political leadership and public dialogue as key conditions for successful local policy. Although the survey was not representative, it suggests that climate policy is best understood in the

³⁶ Our Common Home. 2023. *Study of Lithuanian residents' views on energy and climate policy, a representative survey of 1,504 Lithuanian residents.*

regions through concrete local solutions, cooperation and visible community benefits³⁷. Hundreds of people who attended the events took part in the survey, indicating an interest in environmental issues in their communities or municipalities. Their views provide a particularly important indication of how local community leaders perceive these issues.

Lithuania has broad public support for active climate policy, but that support is conditional. Residents recognise climate change and support solutions that also strengthen energy security, reduce household costs, modernise homes, stimulate the local economy and improve the living environment. Support weakens when policy appears abstract, expensive, poorly administered or places responsibility solely on residents. Effective climate policy should therefore rest on practical partnership between the state, business, municipalities and communities, rather than moral judgements dividing society or restrictions on lifestyles. Such policy would connect climate goals with everyday benefits and enable a broader, more stable public consensus.

3.4. What has Lithuania achieved so far?

Lithuania's greatest energy and climate policy achievements are linked to a long-term reform direction shaped by the governments of Andrius Kubilius and Ingrida Šimonytė, which left-wing governments have continued and continue to pursue. Climate policy should therefore be a priority for Lithuania's centre-right, both because of the climate threat and the conservative duty to care for the environment, and because successful reforms in this field have already become part of the Lithuanian centre-right's political identity.

Andrius Kubilius's government (2008–2012) made Lithuania's independence from Russian energy resources and infrastructure a national security priority. It re-established the Ministry of Energy, began unbundling the gas sector under the EU's Third Energy Package, developed the Klaipėda liquefied natural gas terminal project, advanced electricity interconnections with Sweden and Poland, and laid the foundations for a renewable energy boom. It also began shaping the objective of integrating Lithuania's energy system into Western Europe and separating it from Russian-controlled infrastructure.

These projects extended beyond a single government's term, but the 2008–2012 reforms provided their legal, institutional and political foundations. The subsequent governments of Algirdas Butkevičius and Saulius Skvernelis were able to complete the Klaipėda LNG terminal and the NordBalt and LitPol Link electricity interconnections, continue work on synchronising the Baltic electricity grids with continental Europe, and diversify energy supply. A lasting consensus across political forces thus emerged that energy independence is a matter of sovereignty and national security as well as economic policy. The efforts of then-President Dalia Grybauskaitė to secure strategic energy decisions were also important.

A new phase began in 2020 with the centre-right government led by Ingrida Šimonytė. Its programme made environmental protection and climate policy priorities across government, linking energy independence to renewable energy expansion, electrification of the economy and technological modernisation. This green shift continued the earlier focus on energy security. Domestic solar and wind generation expanded faster to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels, strengthen economic resilience and protect consumers from external energy price fluctuations. Lithuania also set the goal of eventually becoming an exporter of renewable energy.

³⁷ European Right Institute and Nidus Balticus. 2026. *Survey of participants in the "Environmental Dialogues" discussion series*. Unpublished survey data.

Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine made the earlier reforms even more important. Lithuania became the first EU country to stop importing Russian gas, oil and electricity entirely. The Lithuania–Poland gas interconnector GIPL, which entered operation in 2022, integrated the Baltic states into the wider European gas market. In parallel, electricity system synchronisation continued, grids were modernised and a 200 MW electricity storage system was installed. These decisions enabled Lithuania to leave the Russian-controlled BRELL system definitively in 2025 and synchronise its electricity system with continental European grids.

The importance of synchronisation for Lithuania's entire energy policy must be emphasised. It was a fundamental turning point in the energy system, enabling Lithuania both to disengage economically from Russian and Belarusian influence and to achieve an exceptionally rapid expansion of renewable energy within four years. Blocking electricity imports from the unsafe Astravets nuclear power plant also played a major role in renewable energy progress.

The clearest result of the green shift was the rapid expansion of domestic renewable energy generation. In 2024, electricity generated in Lithuania met 62% of national demand, up from 48% in 2023. The number of hours when domestic generation exceeded consumption rose from 39 to 436³⁸. Renewables accounted for 76.7% of national electricity generation, and their preliminary share of total electricity consumption reached 47.1%³⁹. Solar support schemes, the prosumer model and the option to purchase a share in a remote power plant enabled large companies, ordinary households, associations, municipalities and small businesses to participate in the energy transition. The result was striking: just over 10,000 households generated their own electricity in 2021, compared with more than 170,000 by 2026.

The updated National Energy Independence Strategy secured continuity in this direction. It envisages a climate-neutral, self-sufficient energy system by 2050 that reliably supplies residents and businesses and can subsequently export clean energy and related products. The strategy links energy transformation with reliable supply, economic competitiveness, innovation and new export opportunities, as well as emissions reduction⁴⁰. This reflects significant maturity in Lithuania's energy policy: climate neutrality has become a means of strengthening energy independence and economic capacity.

Initial progress was also made in transport. Between June 2022 and the end of 2024, more than €25 million was allocated to encourage electric vehicle purchases. The number of low-emission passenger cars rose from 16,300 to 33,300, and public charging points from 1,600 to 2,500⁴¹. In 2024, public transport passenger numbers increased by 5.35%, while rail passenger numbers rose by 9.87%⁴². These were the first practical steps towards transport decarbonisation based on accessible alternatives for residents, as well as additional taxation.

The green shift also encompassed a wider environmental agenda. The legal framework for protected areas was updated, biodiversity protection strengthened, animal welfare measures adopted, and the phase-out of commercial fishing in inland waters begun. Municipalities also became more active in climate policy. Vilnius and Tauragė joined the EU's climate-neutral cities mission, and Tauragė became the first municipality in Lithuania to adopt a climate neutrality strategy⁴³. The expansion of

³⁸ Government of the Republic of Lithuania. 2025. *2024 State Progress Report*.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. 2024. *National Agenda "National Energy Independence Strategy"*. Resolution No. XI-2133, 2024 version.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

prosumers, remote power plants, local energy initiatives and energy communities showed that residents and communities want to be energy producers and partners in shaping the energy system, as well as consumers.

Lithuania's progress was therefore the result of more than one measure or government term. Andrius Kubilius's government created the institutional and infrastructure foundations of energy independence, while Ingrida Šimonytė's government extended that direction into a green transformation of energy and the economy. Continuity between these two phases demonstrated that centre-right energy and climate policy can strengthen sovereignty, reduce emissions, encourage technological progress and give residents, businesses and local communities greater opportunities to act at the same time.

3.5. Where does Lithuania's climate policy fall short?

In the history of Lithuania's energy policy, it is important to evaluate not only the projects implemented but also the untapped opportunities. The largest of these was the Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant project developed by Andrius Kubilius's government. Its aim was to restore large-scale local electricity production after the closure of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, maintain Lithuania's nuclear energy competencies, and reduce Lithuania's dependence on electricity imports from Russia. The new nuclear power plant would have provided a stable base for electricity generation for faster electrification of transport, heating, and industry.

The Visaginas NPP project also had geopolitical significance. A Lithuanian regional nuclear energy project could have reduced the political and economic incentives to build the unsafe Astravets nuclear power plant in Belarus. However, a consultative referendum initiated for political purposes halted the Visaginas NPP project. This meant that Lithuania remained dependent on Russian electricity imports for longer and had to more quickly seek other local production sources. Solar and wind energy today fill part of the gap, but nuclear electricity generation would have provided a more stable foundation for electrifying the entire economy and reducing pollutant emissions.

Ingrida Šimonytė's government significantly accelerated the green energy transition, but the breakthroughs achieved in the electricity sector could not be consistently transferred to transport, building renovation, agriculture, and natural resource management. The European Commission found that the planned measures to reduce emissions were not clearly defined in terms of their scope, implementation timeline, and expected impact⁴⁴. Thus, the successful development of solar and wind energy has not yet become the foundation for the decarbonisation of the entire economy.

The most prominent energy project initiated by the 18th Government was the first offshore wind farm in the Baltic Sea. It was intended to play a strategic role in increasing local electricity production, reducing import demand, and preparing for greater electrification of transport, heating, and industry. However, due to changing market conditions, rising costs, difficulties in regulation and attracting investors, and political opposition pressure, the project was halted in 2025.

Rapid growth in solar and onshore wind generation also exposed shortcomings in grids, storage and system flexibility. As the share of variable generation increases, energy storage and grids must be expanded and regional cooperation strengthened. Otherwise, industrial production hours may need to be restricted during periods of negative prices, and conflicts may emerge over infrastructure development priorities. The International Energy Agency stressed the need for greater flexibility and more stable generation capacity even before the current surge in generation⁴⁵, and the European

⁴⁴ European Commission. 2025c. *Assessment of the final updated national energy and climate plan of Lithuania*.

⁴⁵ IEA. 2021. *Lithuania 2021: Energy Policy Review*.

Commission highlighted the same issue when assessing Lithuania's updated energy and climate plan⁴⁶. These changes are already under way, but their pace remains insufficient.

In transport, the ruling coalition of conservatives and liberals failed to agree on a comprehensive reform of vehicle pollution taxation, strongly promoted by the European Commission. The tax was seen as an additional burden on people in the regions and those on lower incomes who used older cars and were often offered no realistic transport alternative. This exposed a wider climate policy problem: a measure fails to gain support if a financially and practically accessible alternative is not created before restrictions are imposed. Transport consequently remained Lithuania's largest and most difficult-to-reduce source of emissions.

In buildings, the main problem was the renovation service itself as well as the level of support. Under current procedures, apartment building residents need a technical design, a reliable contractor, financing, agreement among co-owners and supervision of the works. A maze of separate applications and institutions leaves residents exposed to risk even when subsidies are relatively generous. The International Energy Agency noted that Lithuania's energy efficiency and renovation policies depend too heavily on public funding and make insufficient use of private capital⁴⁷. The European Commission found that, although €17.64 billion is allocated to measures under implementation and a further €13.5 billion is planned, more than half the funding is public or from the EU, with no coherent private investment strategy⁴⁸. The OECD therefore recommends bringing financing, technical assistance and clear signals for building modernisation together in a single system⁴⁹.

The 18th Government also struggled to secure a broader political agreement on forest policy. The National Forest Agreement process reconciled some positions among interest groups but did not resolve the fundamental conflict between commercial use, biodiversity protection, recreation and climate goals⁵⁰. This remains a significant future challenge. Sufficient carbon sequestration requires new forests, protection of valuable habitats, more climate-resilient mixed stands, peatland restoration and reliable accounting of carbon removals.

Agriculture ultimately proved one of the most difficult areas, with strong resistance from farmers and their interest groups to any changes towards climate neutrality. Some farmers saw environmental requirements as additional regulatory and economic risks rather than opportunities to modernise their farms. Future policy must be based on dialogue while clearly pursuing lower agricultural emissions, improved ecological conditions and reduced climate impacts. The farm advisory system must be reformed, verified ecological results fairly rewarded, and new income streams created for carbon storage, soil restoration and biodiversity protection.

After the 2024 elections returned left-wing parties to power, the general direction set by earlier governments continued, but climate policy reform slowed. The current left-wing government has not formally abolished national energy and climate targets, yet many remain strategic declarations. Government programmes refer to renewables, grids, storage, renovation and energy affordability, but lack specific implementation mechanisms, financing models and clear deadlines. No significant

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ European Commission. 2025c. *Assessment of the final updated national energy and climate plan of Lithuania*. SWD(2025) 140 final, Lithuania extract.

⁴⁹ OECD. 2023. *Reform Options for Lithuanian Climate Neutrality by 2050*. OECD Publishing.

⁵⁰ Sectoral groups of the National Forest Agreement. 2022. *Draft National Agreement on Forests*. Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania.

new measures have emerged for transport decarbonisation or lower agricultural emissions, while strategic offshore wind development has been brought to a halt politically.

The current period is best described not as an active reversal of climate policy, but as stagnation. Political instability, changes in the government and ministers, internal coalition conflicts, corruption scandals, and the dominance of security agendas have reduced the political attention given to climate policy. Some initiatives – proposals to liberalise construction in forests, weaken farmers' obligations to inform beekeepers about pesticide use, or halt offshore wind farm projects – even contradict officially declared sustainability goals.

Administrative fragmentation has been, and remains, a major challenge for every government. Responsibility is divided among ministries, agencies and municipalities, yet no institution accepts full responsibility for the final outcome. The roles of businesses, communities and residents are largely undefined. Lithuania lacks a shared investment plan, clear sectoral commitments and a mechanism for regularly assessing whether measures actually reduce emissions and improve ecological conditions. International institutions repeatedly underline the need for better coordination, clearer investment priorities and a fair return of collected revenues to society⁵¹.

Lithuania's main climate policy problem today is therefore not a lack of strategic goals, inexperience or public resistance. There is broad public understanding of climate change and general support for climate policy. The country has successful experience, particularly in energy, and its strategic goals are clear and have been recorded repeatedly. The problem is a lack of political will and poor policy design that fails to examine the effects on residents. Instead of a climate policy that could unite society around a recognised shared threat, the result is a polarising, ideological climate agenda that places a disproportionate burden on residents and rests on conflicts of identity.

4. Polarisation resilient designing of climate policy reforms, and a model for communicating them

Lithuania's energy experience shows that people accept change more readily when it rests on benefits they understand for themselves and their local community, as well as national goals. Energy independence received broad support because it addressed a clear problem, dependence on Russia, and promised concrete results: lower consumer prices, more secure supply, greater national independence and less geopolitical vulnerability. Solar and wind expansion, prosumers and remote power plants allowed people both to support the abstract goal of climate neutrality and to participate themselves, reduce bills, invest in their property and gain greater control.

These examples reveal several conditions important for public support for reforms:

First, the problem being addressed must be recognisable and important to the individual.

Second, there must be a clear link between the measure applied and the promised result.

Third, the benefits must be visible not only in national statistics but also in households, local communities, or regions.

Fourth, people must be given the opportunity to choose, participate, and, where possible, own part of the infrastructure being created.

Fifth, administrative procedures must be simple enough for people without high incomes, specialist knowledge or professional advisers to use the measure.

⁵¹ OECD. 2023. *Reform Options for Lithuanian Climate Neutrality by 2050*.

Sixth, public communication must make the problem relevant, show the benefits to residents, use positive narratives, and avoid moralising, alarmism and polarisation.

People do not necessarily oppose change or additional expenditure. Resistance usually arises when it is unclear whether a change will work, who will bear its costs and whether a realistic alternative will be available. If people see that an investment will reduce their bills, increase their home's value, improve transport connections or strengthen the local economy, they may view temporary costs as a worthwhile investment. But if a tax or ban takes effect before an accessible alternative is available, such as a vehicle using new technology, public transport, home renovation or a replacement for a polluting technology, the measure is seen as a burden shifted by the state onto citizens and consumers, rather than a solution to a shared problem.

This problem characterised some of Lithuania's less successful climate reforms. The attempt to broaden vehicle pollution taxation met resistance for reasons beyond an unwillingness to reduce transport pollution. Older cars are used more often by people on lower incomes and those in the regions, for whom a car is often the only realistic way to reach work, school or healthcare. Without reliable public transport, support for a less polluting car or other travel options, the tax was understood as punishment for circumstances individuals could not change.

A similar problem arises in building renovation. Formal eligibility for a subsidy does not ensure that residents can use it in practice. Complex co-owner decisions, technical designs, contractor searches, loan risks and uncertainty over workmanship particularly deter older and lower-income residents. If the state funds part of the work but leaves all organisational and technical risks to individuals, the subsidy does not resolve the underlying trust problem. The OECD's analysis of the JESSICA II programme shows that faster renovation requires risk-sharing finance, technical assistance, well-prepared projects and sufficient administrative capacity, as well as financial support⁵².

Climate policy resilient to political polarisation must therefore begin with a simple rule: create a realistic alternative first, and impose restrictions only afterwards. This shifts the approach from bans towards incentives.

Before a polluting car is taxed, convenient public transport, support for a less polluting vehicle or shared transport options must be available. Before energy requirements for existing buildings are tightened, residents must be offered a one-stop renovation service and accessible financing. Before a new obligation is imposed on a farmer, advice, a technological alternative and a clear opportunity to earn additional income for ecological results must be offered.

Measures must also be adapted to different social and regional circumstances.⁵³ The same measure can have very different effects across Lithuania because incomes, access to public services and opportunities to choose less polluting alternatives vary.

Resilience to polarisation does not mean lowering climate mitigation targets. The ideas in this paper seek to reduce public hostility towards the environmental agenda as a whole and should endure through changes in political leadership.

⁵² OECD. 2023. *Reform Options for Lithuanian Climate Neutrality by 2050*.

⁵³ Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University (VU TSPMI). 2026. *Research-based recommendations*.

4.1. How to design a non-polarising reform

We propose a practical tool, the “Polarisation Resilience Test”, to assess whether a proposed policy measure would provide a unifying solution resilient to political polarisation. Each new climate measure should be assessed against seven questions. A “yes” must be supported by evidence, rather than political intent alone.

No.	Assessment question	Yes	No	What should the answer be based on?
1	Impact. Will the measure significantly reduce CO ₂ emissions or address another specific ecological issue?	☐	☐	Projected reduction in tonnes of CO₂ and/or the specific ecological problem being addressed.
2	Additionality. Would the result fail to materialise without public intervention?	☐	☐	- An explanation of why existing measures do not address the problem. - An explanation of why the market cannot solve it without state intervention.
3	Co-benefits. Does the measure also benefit at least one of the following: energy security, health, nature or the local economy?	☐	☐	Benefits to residents, supported by quantitative indicators.
4	Fairness. Is the distribution of costs and benefits proportionate? Do the most vulnerable people have an accessible alternative?	☐	☐	- Assessment of the financial impact on target groups, regions, families and small businesses. - Effects on those facing adverse consequences and their capacity to adapt.
5	Control and participation. Can a resident, owner, or community actually participate in decision-making and implementation?	☐	☐	Planned consultation and participation arrangements enabling residents, owners and communities to express views and make proposals.
6	Feasibility. Do the implementing institutions have the expertise, data, funding and delivery partners required?	☐	☐	- A financing plan for the reform. - Funding sources. - Assessment of financial risks.
7	Resilience to polarisation. Does the measure create a shared interest that different social groups can understand, rather than a new dividing line?	☐	☐	- Assessment of stakeholder views. - Expected dividing lines. - Indicators of co-benefits. - Measures that build trust.

Appendix 1 provides an example of assessing the resilience of prosumer policy to political polarisation.

If negative answers outnumber positive ones, the measure's proponent should fundamentally reconsider its design. A negative answer on *impact*, *additionality* or *feasibility* means the measure should not be adopted until the shortcomings are corrected. A negative answer on fairness, *control* or *depolarisation* indicates that realistic alternatives must first be developed, burden-sharing reconsidered and a pilot project conducted. The absence of *co-benefits* does not automatically disqualify an effective measure, but it must then have an especially clear climate impact for the target group and distribute the burden fairly.

This policy test protects against both symbolic bans with minimal real climate impact and attractive-sounding subsidies that finance activities that can be carried out without state intervention. Each significant measure should also have a predetermined pilot phase, pilot projects where possible, independent evaluation procedures, publicly published impact indicators, a review date, and conditions for termination or modification of the reform if the promised impact is not achieved.

4.2. Depolarising communication

One reason for growing political polarisation is people's tendency to see decisions made by international organisations or national government as both an economic inconvenience and a threat to their way of life or their ability to control it. Polarisation becomes most dangerous when discussion of ideas, policy impacts, costs and benefits gives way to an emotionally charged "us versus them" logic. Debate about a specific measure's effectiveness becomes a broader conflict between the supposedly "progressive cities" and "backward regions", younger and older people, or between political camps. Even people who recognise climate change may then reject a measure simply because they associate it with an opposing political identity.

This conflict of identities deserves particular attention. Even where most political groups agree on the overall direction of decarbonisation, attitudes to climate policy can become markers of social identity. Identity, rather than disagreement over measures, then becomes the dividing line. The left very often makes this mistake, or uses it as a deliberate political strategy. A Canadian study found that climate policy supporters and opponents rated their own group more favourably than the other. Supporters were more often angry about what they saw as necessary action being blocked, while more sceptical people felt condemned and treated as morally inferior. This occurred even where the groups largely agreed on measures presented without identity labels⁵⁴. Communication should therefore avoid dividing society into fixed camps or turning climate policy attitudes into a test of good citizenship. It should emphasise broad agreement on the overall direction while recognising legitimate disagreements about technologies, measures and the roles of the state and the market.

Many studies find more climate scepticism in the regions than in major cities. This should not be attributed to less concern for the environment. A Spanish study found a relatively small overall difference in rural and urban support for green measures, better explained by perceived harm from the measures than by different environmental values. Regional residents often fear bearing a disproportionate share of reform costs and inconvenience, rather than opposing environmental protection itself. Discussion should therefore begin with the specific losses they expect, whether those risks are justified and how they can be reduced. Each measure must also be discussed separately, since support for renewables, fuel taxes and agricultural restrictions can differ substantially⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ Emily Huddart, Tony Silva, Parker Muzzerall and Sophia Dimitrakopoulos. 2025. *Conceptualizing Affective Climate Polarization*. Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World, 11.

⁵⁵ Marta Vallvé and Eva Anduiza. 2025. *The Losers of Ecological Transitions: Rural and Urban Support for Green Policies in Spain*. Environmental Politics.

Communication must also distinguish fear from anger. A recent Swedish study found that, under certain circumstances, awareness of climate threats and the fear they generate were associated with less emotional antagonism between political camps. The relationship between anger and polarisation was not statistically significant in that study. Discussing climate threats therefore does not necessarily polarise in itself. Communication should nevertheless identify specific consequences and shared vulnerability while avoiding blame directed at a political or social group or the deliberate incitement of anger. Presenting threats must also be linked to realistic solutions and people's ability to act, so that fear does not turn into helplessness, anxiety or withdrawal⁵⁶.

A recent German study by the Dutch think tank Shared Ground found that some sceptical voters' concern is distrust of institutions, opaque burden-sharing and decisions made far from them, rather than climate change denial. Opposition declines when measures deliver local benefits, are easy to administer, strengthen security and are seen as fair⁵⁷. Wider international research reaches a similar conclusion: people judge climate policy by expected benefits and costs, and arguments for action for future generations and effective collective measures can be made on both sides of the political divide⁵⁸.

Research shows that environmental arguments become more understandable to conservative citizens when connected with loyalty, duty, cleanliness, continuity of tradition and protecting the home⁵⁹. This does not mean changing facts to suit an audience's politics. The scientific claim stays the same; its moral context changes. The same forest protection measure can be justified by biodiversity goals, the duty to preserve the landscape, local quality of life and responsibility to future generations, as well as its carbon sequestration potential. These arguments are mutually compatible.

People are also more likely to support climate action when it is linked to a cleaner, more caring and economically stronger society, even if their beliefs about the causes of climate change differ⁶⁰. Climate communication should therefore not begin by demanding that everyone explain climate change in the same way. Cooperation can be built on overlapping motives: one person prioritises emissions reduction, another energy independence, lower bills, cleaner air, Lithuania's forests or a duty to children. Policy need not eliminate this diversity of motives if they lead to the same practical result.

Simply renaming a punitive or poorly designed measure is not enough. Calling a vehicle pollution tax a "clean mobility contribution" will not build trust if people have no realistic transport alternative. If communities are invited to consultations only after the main decisions have been made, participation will be seen as tokenistic. Depolarising communication can work only when the policy itself leaves people meaningful choices, delivers tangible benefits and distributes risks fairly.

Depolarising climate policy communication should be based on eight principles:

⁵⁶ Amanda Remsö, Emma A. Renström and Hanna Bäck. 2025. *Climate Change Threats and Affective Polarization: Exploring the Role of Negative Emotional Reactions*. Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy, 25.

⁵⁷ Shared Ground. 2025a. *Climate solutions from the ground up: Acceptance of policy proposals among AfD-leaning citizens*. Shared Ground and SINUS Institute; Shared Ground. 2025b. *Climate policy that does not lose AfD-leaning voters: A policy brief for policy makers*. Shared Ground.

⁵⁸ Berkebile-Weinberg, M. M., Goldwert, D., Doell, K. C. et al. 2024. *The differential impact of climate interventions along the political divide in 60 countries*. Nature Communications, 15, 3885; Kudrnáč, A. and Fairbrother, M. 2025. *Public support for climate policy is more closely related to perceived benefits than perceived costs*. Climate Action, 4, 93.

⁵⁹ Feinberg, M. and Willer, R. 2013. *The moral roots of environmental attitudes*. Psychological Science, 24(1), 56–62.

⁶⁰ Bain, P. G., Hornsey, M. J., Bongiorno, R. and Jeffries, C. 2012. *Promoting pro-environmental action in climate change deniers*. Nature Climate Change, 2, 600–603.

First, communication must begin by emphasising a shared problem and shared interest, rather than a predetermined measure. The public must first understand the specific harm affecting Lithuania, a region or a particular household, and why the current situation is unsustainable. The problem must be made relevant. Only then should possible solutions be considered.

Second, criticism is part of healthy debate, but it should address decisions and arguments rather than people's morality, intelligence or intentions. Someone who does not support climate policy should not automatically be portrayed as ignorant, selfish, hostile to science or malicious. Supporters should likewise avoid presenting their position as proof of moral superiority. Such moralising increases hostility and weakens trust over time. Depolarising communication recognises legitimate differences of interest, possible shortcomings in decisions and people's right to question a measure's effectiveness⁶¹.

Third, benefits and costs must be discussed with equal clarity. Promising jobs, lower bills or a cleaner environment is insufficient. Communication must state what a measure will cost, who will pay, when benefits will appear and which groups may be adversely affected. Openness about trade-offs builds more trust than concealing them.

Fourth, national goals must be expressed in understandable terms. Idea of "millions of tonnes of avoided emissions" are difficult for many people to grasp. A specific percentage reduction in heating bills, a more convenient bus, a protected forest, a new job or a community-owned solar installation is tangible. National indicators should therefore be accompanied by information on the benefits for a specific region, municipality, group or even individual resident.

Fifth, central government institutions and climate activists should not be the only people discussing measures. A mayor, local business owner, farmer, doctor, teacher, energy specialist or parish or community representative may enjoy greater trust within a particular community. A trusted intermediary can both convey information and explain to government why a solution that appears reasonable nationally does not work in a particular place.

Sixth, climate policy should not be linked to unrelated cultural and ideological demands. People should not be forced to accept an entire package of progressive or conservative political agendas just to support solar energy expansion, forest protection, or sustainable building renovation. The climate policy coalition must be broad enough to include people with different views who agree on a specific outcome, although not necessarily on other political issues.

Seventh, entire social groups should not be portrayed as homogeneous. People in the regions are not inherently opposed to change, urban residents are not indifferent to rural problems, and climate policy critics do not necessarily deny climate change. Stereotypes can be weakened by showing diversity within each group, giving greater space to moderate people and those who do not fit conventional stereotypes, and using evidence about their actual views. This reduces the perception of society as two hostile, irreconcilable camps⁶².

Eighth, communication must continue even after the measure has begun to be implemented. Institutions must publish whether the promised results have been achieved, how much funding has been spent, who benefited, and what problems have emerged. If the measure does not work, its adjustment should not be considered a political defeat. The ability to admit a mistake and change an ineffective decision is a sign of reliable policy, not weakness.

⁶¹ Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University (VU TSPMI). 2026. *Research-based recommendations*.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Depolarising communication requires a different relationship between decision-makers and society. Communities participate in decisions, burdens are shared as fairly as possible, and alternatives are offered before restrictions are imposed. Good communication, however, cannot compensate for a poorly designed reform. Clear communication must therefore go hand in hand with choosing and designing measures that can secure lasting support for ambitious environmental goals.

5. Policy directions: the path to climate neutrality

Having examined the intellectual foundations of moderate climate policy, its relationship with other traditions, and Lithuania's climate policy challenges, successes and failures, we also propose possible directions for practical policy. We believe these can guide future governments in developing detailed measures. Building on this paper and the directions set out below, we expect to present further analytical papers with detailed practical policy proposals in the near future.

5.1. Transport and regional accessibility: cleaner travel as a real choice

The aim is to make less polluting travel a realistic choice in smaller towns and rural areas as well as major cities.

Transport policy must be assessed based on how many people can reach work, school, medical facilities, and other public services by low-emission cars or public transport. Emissions must decrease without reducing regional connectivity or increasing social exclusion.

The first direction is sustained electrification of road transport, supported by reliable electric vehicle charging infrastructure accessible throughout the country. Public charging points must expand beyond main roads and major cities to apartment buildings, multi-storey car parks, larger workplaces and all public institutions, as well as dedicated service centres in smaller towns and rural areas. Grid expansion must be planned around the expected number of electric vehicles. Charging services should meet simple requirements for payment, price transparency and technical interoperability. Installing charging points for apartment residents must be made easier, with provision for shared infrastructure.

It is especially important to promote smart charging systems that allow more electricity to be consumed during hours when solar and wind power plants produce the most. In this way, transport electrification would also increase the flexibility of the energy system.

Lithuania's current electric vehicle incentive scheme has demonstrated its effectiveness, but limited resources and higher vehicle prices mean it has not yet delivered a substantial change in the number of electric vehicles. Future policy should consider reforming the scheme through several funding mechanisms: national budget funding through tax relief and subsidies, EU funds, and incentives in the form of more favourable electricity tariffs for electric vehicle users, effectively subsidising their fuel. If additional vehicle taxation, such as pollution taxes, is considered, the option of returning the revenue to residents who purchase less polluting cars should also be examined.

Electric vehicle purchase incentives must be socially targeted and gradually give way to market mechanisms as the market matures. Greater support should go to people on low and middle incomes who need a car to reach work or essential services and have no suitable public transport alternative. Support could cover both new and used electric vehicles that meet inspection requirements, replacement of an old polluting car with a less polluting one, affordable long-term leasing, and installation of a charging point.

It is important to note that the first priority is to electrify the cars that travel the most kilometres – taxis, ride-hailing, corporate, courier services, and public transport fleets. The state can quite easily encourage this change with existing regulatory measures.

The second direction is a national public passenger transport system. National institutions should plan a core route network around the country's transport needs, set a minimum connectivity standard, coordinate

train and intercity bus timetables and, together with municipalities, local public transport schedules, and administer a shared national system for tickets, payments, data and passenger information. Individual operators would continue providing services, but passengers would experience a single national system. Germany's Deutschlandticket shows that this can be efficient and beneficial to residents: one ticket covers local and regional public transport nationwide, across federal state, transport association and fare zone boundaries⁶³. In Lithuania, a common monthly and annual ticket could cover trains, intercity buses and urban public transport, with revenues allocated automatically to operators according to recorded journeys. Central planning would improve connections, avoid duplicated services and ensure regional connectivity follows a national standard rather than uneven local financial and administrative capacity. More frequent, reliable services would shift some daily journeys from cars to intercity buses, trains and municipal public transport.

The impact of a national system could be increased further by conveniently integrating public transport with bicycle hire, electric mobility, car-sharing, taxis and other on-demand transport. Austria's integrated ticket and Denmark's on-demand transport⁶⁴ show that passengers care about the entire journey from home to their final stop, rather than the separate systems of individual operators.

Major cities should also begin considering future public transport systems centred on autonomous electric vehicles⁶⁵. The importance of integrating such vehicles into public transport has already been demonstrated in the United States and other countries, while Europe still lacks the necessary legal framework and adapted infrastructure. Lithuania could become one of the first EU countries both to permit comprehensive use of autonomous electric vehicles and to put it into practice.

Public transport expansion, easier travel using different modes and vehicle electrification are complementary. The first group of measures reduces total kilometres travelled by car; the second reduces emissions from remaining journeys. Restrictions on car use, whether physical limitations or additional taxation, should not be imposed where people have yet to be offered a realistic, accessible alternative.

5.2. Agriculture and the rural economy: lower emissions and new income

The aim is lower agricultural emissions, farms more resilient to climate events, improved soil and water conditions.

Agricultural change must be understood as an opportunity to modernise farms and diversify activities and income. Farmers must see clear benefits alongside new regulatory measures: lower costs, more stable yields, less risk from climate events and additional income from energy generation or ecosystem services.

Farms must first have access to independent, tailored assessments of emissions, soil, energy and climate risks. Farmers could then choose the combination of actions best suited to their farms, with public support increasingly paid for verified results. This would reduce the burden of uniform requirements and direct funds to activities that genuinely reduce nitrogen surpluses, improve soil quality, retain water or restore biodiversity.

The greatest direct emission reduction potential in the agricultural sector lies in no-till farming, more precise fertilisation, and better manure management. Linking fertiliser quantity and timing to plant needs and soil data would reduce nitrous oxide emissions, fertiliser consumption, and nutrient leaching into water bodies. Sealed manure storage, rapid manure incorporation, and methane leakage control would

⁶³ Federal Government of Germany. 2026. *Deutschlandticket: ein Ticket für ganz Deutschland*.

⁶⁴ Midttrafik. 2026. *Plustur*.

⁶⁵ International Transport Forum. 2023. *Making Automated Vehicles Work for Better Transport Services: Regulating for Impact*.

help reduce emissions from livestock farms. Methane collected on farms should not be released or burned without using its energy value – it should be used for electricity and heat production or purified to biomethane. Cooperative biogas projects would allow smaller farms to use such solutions while creating an additional source of income. Support should be linked to measured emission reductions and the amount of usefully produced energy, so that energy projects do not encourage growing food crops specifically for biogas or inefficient use of raw materials.

In the longer term, increasing soil carbon storage is important. Crop rotation, preserving permanent grasslands, growing cover crops, reducing soil disturbance, agroforestry and restoring the water regime of organic soils can reduce emissions while protecting yields from drought, heat and erosion. These measures require multi-year farm funding agreements that cover transition risks and provide greater rewards for better results.

Climate risk insurance and state aid following disasters must also encourage prevention. Lower insurance premiums or greater direct support could be offered to farms that retain water, improve soil cover, use more resilient varieties or breeds, or protect livestock from heat. Public funds would thus reduce future harm as well as compensate for losses.

5.3. Buildings and heat: lower energy demand and cleaner heating

The aim is lower energy demand in buildings, lower energy bills for residents, and a faster transition to low-emission heating.

The state should prioritise housing in the poorest condition and households for which energy costs account for the largest share of income. Progress must be assessed through actual energy savings, reduced emissions, improved comfort and a lower risk of energy poverty, rather than solely through the amount of support distributed or the number of units of equipment replaced.

Renovating Soviet-era buildings remains an important priority, but slowing renovation rates and declining popularity show that the schemes must become simpler and faster. Renovating an apartment building takes around three years, with document preparation accounting for most of the process. Residents also often have to pay for work unrelated to the renovation's purpose, such as preserving architectural or cultural heritage features. Paperwork must be processed faster through a one-stop service that combines the building assessment, a phased works plan, a financing offer, contractor selection, supervision and verification of results. Linking financing to the building and the savings it generates would help attract private capital and reduce fears of long-term personal debt. The state must compensate residents for work it requires that is not directly related to the renovation's purpose.

Renovation alone will not decarbonise heating. District heating systems must progressively reduce fossil fuel and low-quality biomass use while making greater use of industrial waste heat, large heat pumps, solar thermal energy, geothermal energy and seasonal heat storage. Lower network temperatures and reduced pipe losses would allow these sources to be used more efficiently. This would reduce fuel demand, air pollution and heating prices' dependence on imported resources.

In homes with individual heating, the transition away from fossil fuels must take account of the whole building's condition. Heat pumps deliver the greatest benefit when the building is sufficiently airtight, the heating system is balanced, and the electricity connection and controls are adapted to the new load. Support should therefore cover the equipment and necessary work on insulation, radiators, electrical connections and controls. Contractors should forecast annual costs and take responsibility for seasonal

system performance. This would reduce the risk of unsuitable equipment, high bills and disappointment with the technology.

Smart heating controls, buildings' thermal mass and heat storage can shift electricity use towards periods when power is cheaper and renewable generation more abundant. Buildings would thus consume less energy while contributing to the energy system's flexibility. Public building renovation should be used to test new technologies and demonstrate their results publicly, with successful solutions subsequently expanded to residential and commercial buildings.

5.4. Energy: security, flexibility and local benefits

The aim is a secure, competitive, low-carbon energy system able to supply transport, heating and industry as they electrify.

Lithuania's progress in energy over recent decades offers a useful example for many European countries. Looking ahead, however, progress cannot be measured by installed solar or wind capacity alone. Grid capacity, storage, demand management, reliable reserve capacity, regional interconnections, consumers' ability to participate in the market, and the development of new energy sources such as hydrogen and new nuclear technologies are equally important.

The development of solar and wind energy must be coordinated with pre-planned grid investments and clearly designated suitable areas. Prior environmental assessment, public connection conditions, and early local consultations would allow projects to be implemented faster while protecting sensitive areas. Greater local electricity production would replace fossil fuels and imported electricity, but only if the produced energy could reach the consumer or be stored for later.

Electricity storage is a crucial component of Lithuania's energy system in the short term. Lithuania must substantially expand battery and thermal storage capacity, smart electric vehicle charging, the shifting of consumption to cheaper hours and independent aggregator services. Particular encouragement should be given to installing household technologies that manage and optimise generation, consumption, storage and vehicle charging fully automatically in response to electricity price changes at fifteen-minute intervals. These measures would reduce renewable generation curtailment, the need for fossil fuel plants at peak times and some expensive grid expansion work. Residents and businesses must receive clear financial benefits for offering demand flexibility voluntarily, and be able to leave the service easily.

Local residents must have more opportunities to become co-owners, investors, prosumers or flexibility service providers in the energy transition. Energy communities primarily need professional project management, standard legal documents, accessible finance and simpler grid connections. Such support would extend renewable energy benefits to tenants, lower-income people and small municipalities, while local ownership would reduce opposition to new infrastructure.

Adopting new technologies is one of the most promising directions for further energy development. Green hydrogen can be used to produce synthetic fuels, fertilisers and chemicals, and in other applications that are difficult to electrify directly. The technology remains expensive, so initial projects need targeted state support. Support could cover both initial investment and actual output that meets specified requirements. Early development would build technological experience, prepare infrastructure and create an initial market. Costs should fall as technology improves, production scales up and demand grows. Establishing the first plants now would therefore allow Lithuania to expand capacity faster in future than simply waiting for the technology to become cheaper elsewhere.

For nuclear energy, Lithuania should build expertise, monitor the cost and safety of the first small modular reactor projects, assess potential sites and prepare a legal framework. A decision to build could be taken only once the technology has proved itself and its cost, safety and role in Lithuania's energy system have been independently assessed.

5.5. Forests, nature and adaptation: greater carbon removals and less harm

The aim is to restore the reliable capacity of forests and other land to remove carbon dioxide, while improving biodiversity and reducing damage from floods, droughts, heat and fires.

Carbon removals cannot be taken for granted as a means of offsetting residual emissions. Their capacity must be measured regularly, with accounting linked to the actual condition of forest stands, soils, peatlands and grasslands.

Carbon removals can be increased through several complementary approaches. New mixed forests should primarily be established on low-productivity land poorly suited to agriculture, without damaging valuable open habitats. Existing forests need greater species and age diversity, soil protection, reduced risk of major damage and, where justified, longer retention of carbon in forest stands and long-lived wood products. Such measures would increase long-term removals and reduce the risk that storms, droughts, pests or fires rapidly release stored carbon back into the atmosphere.

Private landowners must be offered clear, voluntary long-term agreements for carbon removals and ecosystem protection. Owners providing public benefits through carbon storage, habitats, water retention or recreation could choose a fixed-term conservation agreement, an easement, a land exchange, a buyout or payment for verified results. Finland's METSO programme shows that protecting valuable private forests can be acceptable when ecological assessments are clear and lost income is fairly compensated. A gradual transition towards closer-to-nature forestry must also be supported while maintaining the long-term prospects of the timber sector.

Restoring drained peatlands and wetlands can have a substantial impact by stopping continuing emissions from organic soils and helping retain water. Where possible, owners should be given opportunities and incentives to continue economic activity through paludiculture, extensive grazing or other forms of farming suited to wetter conditions. Nature restoration would thus create new income opportunities, rather than solely restrict or prohibit land use.

Adaptation measures must be planned around areas of risk: river basins, urban heat islands, and zones vulnerable to fire and drought. Restoring river floodplains would reduce peak floods; urban trees, shade and permeable surfaces would reduce damage from heat and heavy rainfall; and continuous forest fire prevention would reduce risks to people's property and carbon sinks. The Netherlands' Room for the River programme shows that public safety can be combined with restoring natural systems and improving landscape quality.

5.6. Industry and the circular economy: lower emissions while retaining production

The aim is to reduce hard-to-abate industrial emissions while maintaining growth in Lithuanian production, skilled jobs and export competitiveness.

Climate policy should not encourage the relocation of production to countries where emission requirements are weaker. Public support should be linked to long-term investments in Lithuania and proven emission reductions, not just to equipment purchases.

The first direction is to reduce energy and raw material demand and electrify processes where technologies are already mature. Energy audits, more efficient motors, heat recovery, electric boilers and process controls can often cut emissions faster and more cheaply than unproven technologies. Support for these investments should be tied to measured energy savings or emissions reductions, with the financial savings helping businesses fund the next stage of modernisation.

Where clean production remains substantially more expensive, competitively awarded long-term contracts could cover only the cost difference, with support declining as the technology becomes profitable. This approach is suitable for cement, fertiliser, lime and other businesses whose emissions are particularly hard to reduce. Tenders must be open to different solutions, including electrification, green hydrogen, raw material substitution and CO₂ capture, and assess the cost per tonne of emissions actually avoided. This would retain production in Lithuania while protecting the state from subsidising inefficient projects indefinitely.

The state should help develop shared infrastructure that an individual business cannot finance alone, but invest only once credible private demand exists. This applies to hydrogen and CO₂ transport infrastructure, railways, electricity grids and waste heat connections. CO₂ capture should be reserved for process emissions and other emissions that are difficult to avoid, rather than used to justify delaying energy efficiency or electrification.

Progress towards a circular economy requires lower demand for primary raw materials as well as waste sorting. Neutral coordinators in industrial zones can help turn one business's waste heat, water or materials into another's resources. Industrial symbiosis in Denmark's Kalundborg shows how long-term cooperation saves raw materials and reduces emissions. Public procurement can create initial demand for low-carbon cement, steel, timber and other materials, provided requirements reflect whole-life-cycle impacts and preserve competition among suppliers.

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APPENDIX 1

Assessment of prosumer policy using the seven-question depolarisation test

The subject of this assessment is Lithuania's prosumer policy, which enables residents and businesses to generate electricity at the point of consumption, purchase a share in a remote power plant, access state support, and use a system that accounts for electricity generated and consumed. This is one of Lithuania's most rapidly expanded green energy measures. In 2025, the country had around 170,200 prosumers, whose installations generated approximately 1.49 TWh of electricity, or around 17% of total national electricity consumption.

Overall score: +6 / -1

No.	Assessment question	Answer	Rationale for the assessment
1	Impact. Will the measure significantly reduce CO ₂ emissions or address another specific ecological issue?	YES	Prosumers directly increase local renewable electricity production. In 2025, they produced about 1.49 TWh of electricity, or approximately 17% of the country's electricity consumption. This reduces the need for fossil fuels and creates conditions to electrify transport, heating, and other activities. However, every year it would be necessary to additionally publish not only the installed capacity and produced energy but also the calculated net emission reduction in tonnes of CO ₂ .
2	Additionality. Would the result fail to materialise without public intervention?	YES	Prosumer expansion was accelerated by a whole set of public policy measures: legal prosumer status, bidirectional electricity metering, the remote power plant model, connection rules and investment support. Without these, the current scale of development would probably not have been achieved. As technologies become cheaper, however, general subsidies provide less additionality. Future support should therefore focus more on lower-income residents, apartment buildings, storage and solutions that reduce grid load.
3	Co-benefits. Does the measure also benefit at least one of the following: energy security, health, nature or the local economy?	YES	The measure simultaneously reduces the need for electricity imports, strengthens energy independence, and provides residents with the opportunity to stabilise part of their long-term electricity costs. Investments also create demand for installation, electrical engineering, design, and maintenance services. The Lithuanian Energy Agency notes that one of the main motives for residents is the desire to protect themselves from electricity price volatility.
4	Fairness. Is the	NO	Residents who own a house, have a suitable

No.	Assessment question	Answer	Rationale for the assessment
	distribution of costs and benefits proportionate? Do the most vulnerable people have an accessible alternative?		roof and can provide the initial capital are best placed to benefit. The remote power plant model removed the need for a suitable roof but did not eliminate barriers involving capital and creditworthiness. Some support is paid only after an investment is completed, so residents must initially finance it themselves. The costs of bidirectional electricity metering and grid use must also be shared so that residents who are not prosumers do not bear a disproportionate burden.
5	Control and participation. Can a resident, owner, or community actually participate in decision-making and implementation?	YES	This is the policy's strongest feature. Residents become energy producers and investors, as well as support recipients or subjects of regulation. They can choose an on-site or remote power plant, its capacity, a billing plan and a storage solution. Ownership and choice strengthen responsibility and connect climate goals directly with the household economy.
6	Feasibility. Do the implementing institutions have the expertise, data, funding and delivery partners required?	YES	More than 170,000 prosumers show that the legal, financial and administrative system works at scale. An ecosystem of installers, contractors, financiers and administering institutions has developed. The system is still insufficiently simple, however: in early 2025, APVA reported that around 60% of applications lacked information or documents. Further expansion will also require faster grid modernisation, energy storage and clearer information about permitted generation capacity.
7	Resilience to polarisation. Does the measure create a shared interest that different social groups can understand, rather than a new dividing line?	YES	Prosumer policy is voluntary, incentive-based and provides direct personal benefits. It can be justified through climate protection, energy independence, lower bills, technological progress or stronger property ownership. People therefore need not adopt a particular ideological identity to support it. The greatest polarisation risk would arise if support were seen as financing wealthier households' investments at other consumers' expense.

Assessment conclusion

Prosumer policy receives a positive answer to six of the seven questions. It contributes significantly to domestic renewable electricity generation, strengthens energy security, gives people ownership and control, and rests on voluntary participation rather than bans. These features make it a good example of climate policy resilient to political polarisation.

The policy's weakest point is social fairness. A negative answer to the fourth question is therefore a reason to adjust its design, rather than discontinue it. Future support should focus more on lower-income residents, households experiencing energy poverty, apartment building owners' associations, energy communities and storage solutions. The benefits and costs of prosumers for the electricity system must also be calculated transparently and allocated fairly among different consumer groups.

This example shows how the seven-question test can identify precisely which part of a measure needs improvement, as well as assess whether it is good or bad. For prosumer policy, the core model of choice, ownership and direct benefit should be retained while moving from general subsidies towards more socially targeted support and greater system flexibility.