The Climate Crisis as a Societal Challenge

An initiative of people from the humanities and beyond

To effectively address challenges associated with the climate crisis, it is essential to move away from viewing it solely as a problem of nature or technical issue. Solutions should draw from all areas of human knowledge.

KLIMATICKÁ KOALÍCIA

Introduction: Why this document?

The initiative, The Climate Crisis as a Societal Challenge, originated from nine experts in humanities and social sciences who felt compelled to voice their concern over the escalating threats posed by global climate change, which each year affects Slovakia more intensely. The group includes three sociologists, one philosopher, one psychologist, a prognosticator, and an economist. These experts independently answered ten key questions about the climate crisis, sharing and comparing their responses, which they compiled in this document.

Their consensus was that the climate crisis should not be viewed solely as a topic of natural sciences or technical solutions; rather, it demands a holistic approach that includes a variety of scientific disciplines. Social sciences must focus on researching the socio-cultural and socio-economic causes, consequences, and solutions to the climate crisis. This should encompass formulating concepts for a **socially and environmentally sustainable society**, to a far greater extent than has been done thus far. It is also essential to address issues related to social cohesion, **the prevention of social tension**, and the protection of vulnerable groups, such as minorities or impoverished communities. Furthermore, direct threats to other fundamental human rights are intertwined with the climate crisis, such as the right to a healthy environment, safe food, and quality education.

As a result, we have formed an initiative designed to reach out to additional humanities and social science experts who, like us, seek to either quietly support or actively drive the necessary changes in response to the climate crisis. We aim to advocate for action to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis and to prepare society for its worsening stages.

1 What awaits our society in relation to the climate crisis

Drawing on insights from past crises as well as current social parameters impacted by the climate crisis in Slovakia, we can anticipate certain phenomena that will vary in degree and intensity, and it is essential to prepare for them.

1.1 Changing natural conditions: Scarcity of essential resources

One of the critical manifestations of the crisis will likely be a significant shortage of essential resources needed for survival, especially **water, both potable and utility-grade**. Slovakia is not prepared for water scarcity either infrastructurally or culturally. Soil fertility and food production will also face challenges if the last one will continue under current practices.

Climate change will also introduce new public health challenges. New epidemics are likely, and with them a **strain on the social system and health care**. Heat waves will cause premature deaths of older, more vulnerable and economically disadvantaged populations.

Adaptation - our ability to adjust to these altered conditions - will be crucial, as the coming changes will dramatically differ from those we currently experience.

"We will have to accept that dry periods, heatwaves, and extreme weather fluctuations are now part of our lives."

"There will likely be regions in Slovakia that will become uninhabitable due to recurring droughts, floods, or landslides."

Access to essential goods and services will likely be restricted for large segments of the population, leading to a rise in **energy poverty** (inability to cool in summer and heat in winter) and broader defined **climate poverty** (limited means for a dignified life under these new conditions).

On the other hand, the value of resources like water, forests, and unpolluted nature will increase, making lifestyles that offer both physical and mental **climate security** increasingly attractive. Slovakia possesses regions, particularly in the northeast, that offer these natural advantages, though these are often underdeveloped areas from which people are currently emigrating—something that may change in the future.

1.2 Changes in the system of territorial governance and legitimate authority

The climate crisis and rapid changes threatening survival conditions will place new demands on local, regional, and national governance. Institutional credibility will rest on **the capacity to prevent, protect, and rescue**. A core question will be whether these systems function inclusively or foster

division and antagonism. Should official systems fail, people may turn to **alternative structures for security**, including spontaneous mutual aid networks or, conversely, criminal or mafia-like organizations.

It is possible that the current system of international relations based on sovereignty of nation states could cease to function, as it may be unable to ensure the protection and survival of populations within defined borders.

"It is reasonable to assume that security - physical, water, food, energy, and epidemiological - will become one of the most restricted public goods."

1.3 Migration

We expect climate migration to affect Slovakia on a major scale. As a result of movements around the world, an increasing number of individuals may seek permanent residence within Slovakia. This will necessitate new **legislation and policies for managing migration** within both European and Slovak contexts.

On the other hand, migration remains a highly polarizing and populist issue in our country, on which there has been little substantive debate. It involves multiple facets of security - physical, cultural, and health-related, which could lead to instability and unrest. It will be all the more important to manage relations between migrants and the local population and to take preventive measures to improve coexistence, rather than dealing with unrest later on.

1.4 Rising social tensions and polarization

Experience from recent years indicate that the phenomena listed above - resource scarcity, migration, governance challenges, will contribute to increased social tension, deepening societal polarization, and potentially conflicts over resources.

"The negative impacts of the climate crisis will disproportionately affect vulnerable and economically disadvantaged groups, increasing the risk of social exclusion."

Segments of the population may face **unbearable living conditions**, possibly affecting entire regions or communities. The state currently lacks the legislative, technical, and financial capacity to protect and assist these groups in cases of climate-induced catastrophes, including relocation, provision of housing,

food, water, healthcare, and basic dignified survival.
"But perhaps the policy of leaving the inhabitants of such regions to their fate will prevail. The principle of solidarity has been so weakened by education and policies in the spirit of neoliberalism that this outcome is increasingly likely."

New epidemics, migration, and declining living conditions will create unprecedented demands on the healthcare system, contributing to social tensions and the need to **secure safety** (at least for a part of) **the population**.

Growing resource scarcity will further amplify **socio-economic inequalities**, leaving more **groups feeling marginalized**. Unless principles of climate justice are integrated into policies proactively, this will lead to unrest, a rise in populism, and potentially increased violence.

At the same time, **a privileged segment of society** may be able to afford a comfortable lifestyle or profit from others hardship, further eroding already fragile social cohesion.

There is also the possibility that certain educated social groups will attempt to *"reshape our **value system** and refocus on issues that have been neglected but cannot be ignored in the wake of the climate crisis, such as global inequalities."*

Communities, especially at the municipal level, may seek to promote different types of **leadership**. *"Competitiveness and aggressiveness, along with arrogance and disregard for others, may give way to collaborative skills."*

In this context, communities willing to cooperate may navigate the crisis more effectively. By contrast, those adhering to "old world" values, financial capitalism and authoritarianism offering quick solutions may struggle.

Those who are willing to cooperate may prove to be better able to cope with the crisis. On the other side will be the structures of the 'old world'. *"The 'old world' will strike back. Financial capitalism will fight for its legitimacy, egocentric autocrats will offer cheap and quick solutions."*

These dynamics may foster "islands of positive deviation," or communities that remain **resilient through mutual cooperation**. Whether these communities will isolate themselves or share their values more broadly remains to be seen. A further risk is societal resignation and helplessness, potentially leading to the **acceptance of authoritarian governance**.

2 Possible development scenarios

Several potential scenarios outline how the social consequences of the climate crisis might unfold. Some may appear utopian, while others are more probable. Based on existing experience and knowledge, it is unrealistic to assume that global warming will be entirely halted or that Slovakia will take proactive measures to prepare society for these changes.

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2.1 Pro-environmental participatory democracy

This scenario, though deemed unrealistic by most experts, envisions a governance system based on democratic principles with an emphasis on **equitable management of crisis risks** and impacts a form of "*socio-environmental transformation toward environmental democracy*."

Mitigation and adaptation efforts would include public **participation and dialogue**, particularly aimed at supporting vulnerable groups. Data-driven, responsible policy-making would ideally operate at least at the European level, or even globally.

"*Annual climate summits would transition from symbolic gestures to concrete steps toward climate change mitigation and adaptation, with solutions aiming for a more equitable and improved future for all.*"

"*A scenario built on public discussion, participation, the use of expert analyses, and negotiation of principles upon which solutions will be founded.*"

Justice would be a cornerstone of this scenario, with a **shift in dominant values from economic growth to survival and sustainability** of both nature and communities.

2.2 Total collapse and the breakdown of international order

Another, albeit undesired, scenario involves collapse and chaos. This could result from inaction and gradual erosion of social structures, or from a global catastrophic event or series of events. **Growing global injustices impacting more individuals** could also precipitate this outcome.

"*Such developments would gradually erode societal order and the legitimacy of our current parliamentary democracy.*"

In the face of basic resource shortages, the current model of democracy may prove unsustainable. One consequence of inaction might be a **world war**, with devastating effects that would derail any potential solutions.

"*Climate change would receive even less attention than it does now.*"
"*The collapse could also occur due to the persistent inertia and refusal to change by those benefiting from the current economic and political global structure.*"

2.3 Gradual reactive changes

The most probable scenario involves a series of incremental tragedies, errors, and immediate corrective measures. Solutions would be enacted reactively, tested in real-time without a coherent strategy.

"*Corrective measures would be implemented, but they would be inadequate and only address experts' calls for action, without truly changing much.*"

This scenario is anticipated to bring a considerable number of casualties, as **conflicts are expected to emerge**. While painful, this scenario is likely more realistic and achievable than the first.

"*Real solutions will be delayed until we can no longer ignore the unprecedented environmental devastation, prompting a rushed mobilization in response to the climate crisis. However, these responses will likely be more costly and harsher than if action had been taken earlier.*"

The defining feature of this scenario is its **reactivity**, contrasting with proactive planning. Any changes implemented would be limited to those necessary to address immediate threats. We anticipate **resistance from the ruling classes to climate-focused measures**.

"*If a problem arises, it will likely be addressed locally within specific sectors, without fostering broader public discourse on solutions.*"

This scenario envisions violence and chaos, albeit on a smaller scale and spread out over time. It suggests that disorder could lead to the **emergence of new self-organized structures within society**, as traditional systems falter or serve only a portion of the population.

"*...minor rebellions by groups that feel excluded and desperate, as elites will not voluntarily address the drastic social inequalities. Thus, we can expect chaos interspersed with remnants of existing structures, changing gradually and giving rise to parallel systems like those seen in communist totalitarian regimes, such as alternative social support, food supply, and healthcare systems.*"

Each scenario assumes profound changes in institutions, governance, and prevailing values. The extent of **violence, chaos, and sacrifices required to establish a new, effective social order will vary**.

"*I do not believe that superficial adjustments, which fail to address the unsustainability of our civilization, can slow the crisis we face.*"

2.4 Other phenomena that can occur within various scenarios

2.4.1 Attempts of strengthening national sovereignty

Parallel, opposing forces may emerge. On the one hand, countries may attempt to "renationalize" their policies, as was seen during the pandemic. The collapse of the climate system may bring about a **breakdown of international relations and cooperation**, with states attempting to address crises within national borders - a strategy that may conflict with the limitations of global interconnectedness, which cannot be easily undone.

Simultaneously, **the legitimacy of nation-states may come into question**, as these entities may be unable to individually respond to crises and ensure the survival of their populations amid extreme weather events, pandemics, and migration.

"If current governance cannot generate the identity and wealth needed to sustain the state entity, and proves unviable, it will eventually be replaced by another form of governance."

2.4.2 Authoritarianism as an attractive form of governance

A shift toward authoritarian governance is anticipated, with such tendencies already observable in Europe and elsewhere. This shift could involve increased militarization and restrictions on civil rights, justified by the need to **maintain security and manage the distribution of essential resources**.

A key question will be the type of leadership preferred. One potential scenario envisions "strong-handed" rule, but it may struggle to deliver meaningful outcomes given the complexities of today's security landscape.

"This can bring autocrats to power who, if they are wily, can deceive society for years. If they are less cunning, reality will quickly reveal further deteriorations in living standards, health, the quality of nature and human life. This may lead to the riots. It all depends on how deep a disruption society experiences to begin to create new governance structures."

3 Key steps for governance and societal preservation

3.1 New value framework and societal discourse

Societal changes and lived tragedies will demand new narratives for the existence of Slovakia, Europe, or otherwise defined communities. **Neoliberal values, which equate economic growth with societal success, will need to give way to other values**.

"The current development model based on the imperative of growth (production and consumption) will have to be replaced by an imperative focused on survival, or on sustaining life's essential conditions."

A broad societal discussion across various sectors (government, local authorities, businesses, and civil society) will be necessary to define the threats we face and identify the changes needed not only to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis but also to improve quality of life. For such a discourse to be effective, platforms built on trust across fields (interdisciplinary, community-based, professional) must be developed.

"Climate justice is an absolutely critical issue. If we fail to agree on fair approaches to addressing climate change now, any fair agreements in the future, when tensions are likely to be higher, will be nearly impossible."

The discussion will need to address not only immediate pragmatic solutions but also deep-rooted cultural values shared by those living in Slovakia.

"We will need to start asking difficult but important questions about our national and social purpose, where we want to belong, and what we wish to leave for future generations. A crisis-driven articulation of values lies ahead."

Incremental changes alone will not suffice. There will be pressure for both **technological and social innovation**, including the potential use of artificial intelligence. Many solutions may prove ineffective and could be implemented hastily without sufficient testing, highlighting the need to build capacities for **discussion, collaboration, and evaluation of innovation**.

"Broader community collaboration will be essential, though we are not yet accustomed to it."

This shift also calls for **educational reform** - moving away from the predominant growth model and competitiveness as the driving force of society. Education should emphasize skills (understood broadly) such as communication, validation of results, critical thinking, and also openness and cooperation. These should be cultivated alongside emotional skills like empathy, tolerance, solidarity, and ethical cohabitation values. Societal worth should be assigned to **reconstruction, repair, caregiving, and regeneration** over triumph, production, destruction, and extraction.

This discourse can be initiated by groups within society with intellectual and material resources and reserves, allowing them to focus on more than mere survival.

Regions of Slovakia that have been marginal in terms of development (sparsely populated, limited infrastructure, functioning ecosystems, arable land) may gain new value as conceptions of a good life evolve. This potential should be addressed, and conditions should be established to enable these regions to benefit from their unique advantages. Otherwise, resistance from local residents toward "development" or sharing "their" resources with others may arise.

3.2 Crisis management as a measure of governance success

The ability to **ensure basic needs for survival** and quality crisis management will be central to the success of any governing body or political representation.

"On the national level, this means prioritizing water, food, medical, and energy security as absolute priorities of public policy."

Just as freedom emerged as the highest value after experiences with fascism and communism, **safety** (in all its forms) and accountability may now **become the dominant values**.

"Any country unable to provide its population with access to water, food, basic medicines, medical supplies, and shelter will face a significant population decline, as well as social unrest and high levels of crime driven by existential necessity."

3.3 Agents of change: Corporate, civic sectors, and local governments

As national governments grapple with legitimacy challenges and international organizations struggle to address people's needs, especially those most affected by crises, actors of positive change may emerge from the **civic and corporate sectors**. On the other hand, local governments will be most likely more able to respond

to the needs of the population than the national government. New horizontal leadership and models for assistance and rescue will likely spread from those who possess greater resources within society.

"The climate-privileged will likely strengthen their standing within society. Among them, some will voluntarily choose a path of solidarity and assistance for the 'non-privileged.'"

Economically and civically active individuals - those open to change and capable of creatively using resources while maintaining values of solidarity and democratic decision-making will likely become key actors.

Additionally, **academically engaged individuals alongside academically trained professionals** will continue to play an essential role in monitoring and evaluating societal and natural conditions, conducting critical analysis, forecasting, proposing solutions, and liaising with domestic and international expert communities.

3.4 Practical steps of high urgency

To ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the measures taken, it is essential to **emphasize scientific knowledge** from various disciplines. If this knowledge is to have legitimacy in society, it should be **presented in a way that is understandable to both the professional and lay public, and with an understanding of the emotions and reactions that its results may provoke**. Experts dedicated to these topics should be prominently featured in the public discourse on mitigating and adapting to climate change. Broad public support for scientifically backed and proven solutions is necessary, aiming to diminish the influence of climate change "doubters" who drain resources essential for future preparedness.

In decisions regarding public finances, priority should be given to supporting science and innovation. **All public investment should already take climate change into account today**. Robust financial support is required for rescue systems and rapid response capabilities at both the municipal and national levels (emergency services, military). Funding is also necessary for expertise and social dialogue when designing policies and strategies to ensure they are functional, high-quality, and consulted with relevant stakeholders.

At the social and policy level, **consistent application of European policies** is required. At the organizational or expert level, it is crucial to foster existing and new cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaborations across various domains. A climate law, as well as comprehensive legislative norms and regulations for all stakeholders at the (supra-)individual, organizational, and sectoral levels, is necessary. The Social Climate Fund, the Recovery and Resilience Plan, and all **resources allocated for this purpose must be used effectively and transparently**.

"It is essential that the vast financial resources directed toward this area in the coming years are utilized efficiently and equitably."

Developing all initiatives and approaches that sustain and promote green solutions, cooperation with nature, and reforestation is essential. This is important not only for mitigating adverse climate impacts but also for the physical and mental health of the population and for stress management in society. **The health of people, a healthy environment, and healthy relationships within families and communities will be closely interconnected**.

We also need an **untiring and effective campaign** to raise public awareness of the reality of the climate crisis, as well as to empower individuals to participate in adopting necessary solutions.

3.5 Radicalism – yes or no?

Slovakia is not a country traditionally accustomed to radical approaches, and radicalism is generally viewed with suspicion. On the one hand, the prevailing neoliberal narrative of development already positions any questioning of economic growth as the ultimate value of political endeavor as radicalism.

"Simply advocating for changes in societal organization, priorities, imperatives, and organizational principles is seen as radical."

On the other hand, both the **vigorous naming of issues and the radicalism of the means often seem useful** in order to bring peaceful discussion with the naming of societal problems into the 'mainstream'. Radicalism can also be a natural outgrowth of social frustration.

"In advocacy and watchdog activities, I believe a stricter tone is necessary alongside factual identification of institutional failures to highlight the alarming situation and firmly demand solutions."

"Today, any association with environmental protection is considered radical. We need true radicalism to clarify that standing up for frogs or trees is not radical."

"Radicalism is a natural component of social change. Insufficient emphasis on just transformation leads to frustration, resignation, or resistance."

Radicalism can be defined differently in different contexts, and its definition naturally evolves over time.

"A certain degree of radicalism can expand the boundaries of acceptability for climate measures. Initially, people may perceive such a measure as radical (e.g., not using personal cars for transport), but over time, they may adopt it as a viable solution."

Scientists typically avoid political engagement, but many now feel compelled to raise their voices in civic activism on climate protection and socio-environmental transformation because the situation is extremely serious.

4 What resources can Slovakia rely on?

What are the natural or sociocultural assets within Slovakia that can be harnessed for climate adaptation or mitigation? A few are mentioned here, although the list is far from exhaustive.

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Slovakia is situated in a climate zone more favorable for human habitation than much of Europe. Additionally, it is rich in **valuable natural resources** such as potable water, forest ecosystems, surface running waters, thermal springs, soil, and more. These resources must be used sustainably, with an emphasis on **regeneration and care for both nature and the people who live in it**. This approach can serve as a relatively low-cost solution to many problems associated with the climate crisis. If necessary, they may also contribute to future energy and food self-sufficiency.

There is a growing number of **high-quality experts** who are already addressing the climate crisis. These include not only scientific teams but entire institutions, companies, their associations, non-governmental organizations, and civic initiatives. Importantly, the political sphere also features an increasing number of environmentally knowledgeable professionals who bring these topics to the EU level.

Future-oriented businesses are introducing innovations in Slovakia in areas such as the circular economy, renewable energy, public health protection, and services critical for crisis management. Slovakia is well-connected with European centers of science and innovation, from which it can continue to draw and exchange experiences. A significant portion of businesses respond to future needs and already consider environmental and social aspects in their operations.

The climate-conscious segment of the public, including professionals, supports public debate guided by values such as the protection of human health and nature, as well as the processes of finding and testing effective solutions. Slovakia has – and surely will continue to develop – teams, networks, and communities that will approach the issue using advanced science, interdisciplinary methods, and civic activism.

Civil society is a strong actor in Slovakia's climate crisis response. It is involved not only through advocacy and mobilization activities but also in nature protection, regeneration, and support for marginalized communities. Recent crises have shown that civil society is an indispensable part of crisis teams and rescue operations. Additionally, NGOs work in expert and research teams, and national advisory groups for policy issues are forming today. **The potential of civil society is vast and should be leveraged in governance**. The Slovak nonprofit sector has expert potential and a comparative advantage beyond the national context.

For example, many independent think tanks are already engaged in international collaborations, actively participating in the global climate agenda, despite current political attacks that negatively impact the otherwise favorable public perception of civil society.

"We have a strong civil society that is active in advocating on climate crisis issues and conducting watchdog activities. This is a resource that the country should more strongly utilize and can rely on."

Moreover, Slovakia's civil society is highly interconnected and networked, which enhances mobilization capacity.

"Civil society here is extensive, with associations, societies, and other groups connected through various platforms and chambers, which is a great strength we are learning to mobilize effectively."

A notable resource is Slovakia's **tradition of nature conservation**, which was one of the driving forces of the anti-communist resistance. Even during times of limited freedom, environmentalists connected with other communities (religious, cultural). Nature conservation embodies values of **care, rescue, and solidarity**.

Public opinion surveys reveal that Slovaks have overwhelmingly **positive attitudes toward nature conservation and environmental protection**. This strong emotional connection to nature is a valuable foundation for addressing the climate crisis in Slovakia.

"... there is significant public support for various solutions that can lead us to carbon neutrality."

A long-standing aversion to open, direct violence is also a resource. Despite a few politically motivated violent incidents in recent years, Slovakia remains a peaceful and safe country. In crises, it is likely that people will opt for a peaceful, non-confrontational approach if given the choice.

"Social changes in recent decades have occurred without mass bloodshed. Public protests against authorities are rarely violent. This culture of non-violence should be fostered."

Another undeniable asset is Slovakia's **functioning local governments**, which, despite being underfunded, **continue to provide essential services to citizens, including life-saving ones**. They proved to be crucial during the pandemic and will be vital again amid the climate crisis.

In terms of lifestyle, unique traits among Slovaks include self-sufficiency and generational skills in food production, such as growing vegetables and fruits and raising animals. In times of resource scarcity, these skills can be highly advantageous.

"We are unique in our extensive self-sufficiency in food. Many people still cultivate crops at home and in gardens or raise animals."

We can also hypothesize that another resource is the number of individuals with specialized craft and manual skills, the ability to repair or create daily necessities. There is likely still a high percentage of people in Slovakia who, despite sophisticated education and jobs, possess practical skills that may prove vital for survival in the future.

5 How can the social sciences and humanities contribute?

5.1 Elevating the role of social sciences

Individuals with humanities and social science backgrounds feel that Slovakia lacks enough professionals **persistently addressing climate crisis solutions without succumbing to skepticism**. Yet, their role is crucial. Their experience shows that, although they often generate insights valuable for practical applications, their contributions are not adequately recognized.

"Social sciences have not yet found a respected position in Slovakia."

"The climate crisis has not been widely recognized as a social issue. Most climate change experts come from natural sciences, with limited interdisciplinary collaboration. Building cross-sector cooperation is a major challenge for the near future, as diverse impacts of the climate crisis are interconnected and require synergies across various approaches."

"The climate crisis is nearly inevitable – it's upon us or fast approaching – yet receives limited priority. We need to discuss and write about it more, linking it to all social topics."

There is a significant need to scrutinize critical conditions that accelerate the climate crisis, such as **examining the true costs of prosperity built on capitalist economic principles**.

"Those who dare to criticize financial capitalism are often labeled and associated with totalitarian regimes and ideologies."

The voice of humanities and social science professionals should not be sidelined during the climate crisis. Their input will be essential across all stages of **societal support** for socio-economic transformation and in **preventing reductionism** in public discourse.

"Transforming our economy to achieve carbon neutrality is impossible without public support. Key to success is ensuring that the transformation is socially just and addresses the legitimate concerns of various societal segments who associate it with significant risks."

Social sciences must take an active role to devise high-quality solutions and methodologies. Potential contributions include the following areas of activity and intervention.

5.2 Reflecting on the causes and consequences of the crisis

Given that the **root causes of the crisis lie in the socio-economic organization of society**, both globally and within Slovakia, social sciences must **critically reflect** on this structure and propose changes. Thus, research engagement on climate issues by social scientists is crucial.

"Answering the main questions of the current climate crisis – how we reached this point, how we are responding, and how our behavior and society will evolve – falls under the domain of social sciences."

"Experts should focus on researching the socio-cultural and socio-economic causes of planetary system degradation and formulating concepts for a socially and environmentally sustainable society."

Social science research should emphasize applied research, the outcomes of which will inform climate policies, mitigation measures, and public climate communication.

Research should not only address climate and environmental protection directly but should also **aim to integrate climate aspects into previously unrelated research areas**, contributing insights to the broader discourse on various aspects of the climate crisis.

"In my work on minority integration, social trust, and inclusion, I can add a perspective on inequalities and the need to involve diverse backgrounds in climate solutions."

Special attention should be given to **psychological aspects**, as the impacts of climate change will increasingly focus on mental health, shaping personal perspectives, and addressing challenges related to identity, self-efficacy, anxiety, and mental disorders. It is also crucial to explore ways of promoting compassion and solidarity in a global context, making psychological research related to climate perception highly relevant.

5.3 Mapping public sentiment and managing social group responses

Social sciences should provide answers on "how the climate crisis affects population behavior, health, psychological aspects, financial situation, satisfaction, poverty, education, migration…". They should describe how the public perceives and experiences the climate crisis and how life strategies evolve in response to it. How people at the individual, community level are dealing with new challenges.

An open society requires transparency in governance, understanding **how people perceive climate-related issues**, how opinions and attitudes form, and their awareness of solutions. The goal is to **actively support the public in managing the crisis**, fostering hope, positive examples, and innovative and effective solutions.

"A key part of the plan involves nurturing critical and positive thinking from youth to the elderly, enhancing mental health, self-confidence, empathy, and responsibility."

5.4 Social dialogue and civic participation

Social science research and concepts need to be communicated to a broad audience to raise **awareness of the existential threat the climate crisis poses to organized human society**. Society should also be informed of the potential for **socio-environmental transformation**, such as alternative societal structures and policy objectives to protect the planet.

Humanities and social sciences professionals should find effective ways to communicate with the public, especially regarding negative climate change predictions, aiming **to motivate rather than frighten**. They should actively engage in discussions with the public, communities, and policymakers across all levels from local governments to corporate and national measures on climate adaptation and mitigation. A constructive societal climate must be fostered systematically.

"Humanities and social science professionals are uniquely positioned to approach and communicate on these topics in a way that accounts for key social and psychological aspects, potentially increasing public interest and enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of policies."

"They should contribute by articulating the climate dimension and scientifically backed facts, co-creating policies to prepare, reform, guide, and enable a healthy, harmonious, and safe existence despite worsening climate conditions. Their expertise should extend to everything they do as researchers, educators, artists, journalists."

The humanities, represented by their advocates, should help ensure meaningful **public involvement in addressing and adapting to the climate crisis**, as well as in mitigating its impacts. This includes facilitating communication and guiding **societal dialogue**, with active participation in public discourse by those in their ranks.

"Meaningful participation in the activities of public authorities, non-governmental organizations, and media, as well as active engagement in public discourse, is essential."

Furthermore, it is critical to integrate a **"societal perspective" directly into planning, forecasting, and the design of specific policies or public spaces**, considering "*the impact on residents; how to more effectively involve residents in these solutions; and how to leverage green urban design to promote a more inclusive approach to organizing social relations within cities.*"

"We must have a plan and implement it immediately to address issues like energy/climate poverty."

5.5 Expert input into the governance of the state

In addressing the climate crisis, it is the role of social scientists and scholars across all disciplines to thematise the issue in their research and then to persistently communicate and educate about it. They should **highlight the social aspects** and the overlaps of the issue on social justice, (in)equality, mental health, security and overall urgency.

Our premise is that **managing crises like climate change is essential for future social reconciliation**.

Humanities and social sciences professionals, attuned to the climate crisis, should actively serve in public offices, local government, and both the corporate and nonprofit sectors.

"They should bring insights on the social dimensions of transformation processes, helping identify solutions or means of implementation acceptable to society."

"The integration of social science expertise into institutions and public policies remains insufficient and requires focused efforts."

"Social science research on the climate crisis should be seamlessly linked to the development of climate adaptation and mitigation policies."

Humanities professionals, even within public administration, should emphasize the unsustainability of success criteria based on industrialism and productivity, advocating for changes in society's core imperatives and organizational principles.

"Anthropocentric arguments should gradually be complemented with biocentric ones, familiarizing people with the legitimacy of both perspectives."

Finally, they should assess and reflect on climate-oriented public policies, scrutinizing governmental approaches and evaluating policy impacts.

"Finding ways for these solutions to address multiple issues simultaneously and advocating for their implementation in this manner."

5.6 Civic activism of humanities professionals and mutual support of dedicated Individuals

People with a humanities background are and want to be involved in climate action, and are and can be role models for an exemplary lifestyle or responsible voting behavior. With this initiative, we **ourselves are advocating activism and support for civic initiatives**.

"We can personally adopt environmentally friendly behaviors, discuss climate topics with those around us, seek ways to translate conversations into practical actions, and support civic initiatives addressing climate change, considering this issue's importance when choosing representatives."

The focus remains on building community, mutual support, collaboration, and partnerships, while also being prepared to try new approaches beyond the status quo.

"It would help me if we would connect more and encourage each other in our work..."

"There is a need for more community building and finding common solutions among experts from different disciplines, as well as people from the civil sector and engaged communities across Slovakia."

"I want to channel my energy and skills into an initiative that strengthens communities, protects rights, and promotes a sustainable economy. I am determined to engage in something meaningful."

"I would like to throw my energy and competence into action, an initiative or movement that will be effective for the restoration and creation of healthy communities, the protection of rights on this issue, and a sustainable economy. I have gathered within me the determination and energy to embark on something meaningful."

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