

# PACHELBEL

POLICY ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND LEARNING ABOUT CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOUR AND EVERYDAY LIFE

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**TITLE**

***Evidence about the policy assumptions about lay behaviour***

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## POLICY ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT LAY BEHAVIOUR: AN INITIAL ANALYSIS

### Executive summary

This deliverable provides an analysis of the early fieldwork reports that have been produced as part of WP3. Its focus is on identifying the assumptions that are evident in the approaches of the policy partners to human behaviour around sustainability. The themes of this early work will form one focus of subsequent interactions with the policy partners and will be used as the basis for developing a schedule for further investigations to be deployed with policy makers in each country

#### Keywords

Behaviour, behaviour change, policy partner, assumptions, public, citizens

### Introduction and Overview

Deliverable 3.1 initially consisted of a document containing all the fieldwork reports delivered by the research teams in WP3 along with some linking text. However, in order to provide some guidance to the team as to the focus of their data collection in the remaining stages of WP3 an analysis of these reports has been conducted to draw out the main themes about the policy assumptions about lay behaviour evident in policy-makers' work.

Thus far, each of the research partner countries has been spending sometimes extended periods of time with a policy partner (PP) with whom they will be working over the next 2 years, in order to document the nature of their interactions with them. At this stage the aim has primarily been to build relationships and to work with the PP to identify the issue upon which they might jointly focus. The identification of assumptions about human behaviour made by the policy partner has thus not always been an explicit focus thus far.

The aim of this document is to examine all the reports that have been produced by the partners so far and to collate the evidence we have thus far as to the assumptions that are made about lay behaviour. A more explicit examination of these can then take place in the coming phases of interaction with PPs and they can serve to sensitise researchers to the sorts of ways in which these assumptions are manifest and thus help to structure subsequent fieldwork investigations.

This document contains three sections. First a series of general observations that set the context of the analysis will be made. Second, a series of themes relating to the assumptions made about human behaviour will be outlined. A short final section makes some closing observations.

## General observations

1. Material about the assumptions PPs make about human behaviour was relatively limited in the first four reports submitted by each country. The main focus of project activity at this stage was interaction focused on building relationships with the PP and finding a mutually acceptable policy issue to focus on. Some of the policy assumptions noted below emerged in the course of this activity. Other sources of assumptions were in the reactions to PACHELBEL, to STAVE, and more generally in the talk around the research, evaluation or interaction that policy makers may be planning.
2. Most of the analysis on which this paper is based is around the interaction between researcher and policy person rather than on policy documents.
3. Not all issues arise in all countries. It will be important for researchers in each country to consider this report and reflect upon which the identified themes resonate with their policy context and which might therefore bear further exploration in the coming phases of data collection. It is an important for each national team to find evidence that certain things evident elsewhere are NOT taking place in their context so as to confirm their existence. Similarities and contrasts provide a powerful basis for gaining a broad understanding of the nature of work entailed in policy-making.
4. There is also an issue of whose assumptions these are – by and large the reports contain detail both about interactions with the PPs themselves as well those of a much wider range of interactions – in meetings with external stakeholders, in conferences and so on. However, we are not interested at this point in the assumptions about human behaviour made by those with whom policy makers are talking or (as is also the case in at least one of the reports) of the ‘citizens’ that are taking part in the early research by the PP. We thus need to be more explicit in our reports about the distinction between views held by the PP and the views to which they are themselves exposed. It might also mean that as part of our interactions with the PP we specifically enquire ‘what they thought’ of an ‘other’ set of views.

This would be one way to learn more about their own assumptions. Of central importance here is what assumptions are evident in the practical work of policy making. Accounts of such work, delivered perhaps in relaxed interview settings, may not entirely capture the real-world nature of the work that is the focus of our research.

5. PPs are organisations although it is often the case that we are relating to one or two particular people. The question then arises as to the extent to which the views (and assumptions about human behaviour) of the individual are shared within the broader organisation. In at least one of our case studies, the individual with whom the researcher is interacting from the PP says that his views on a certain matter are different from those of his colleague. This raises the question of how best to deal with this question of ‘within PP’ variability. One might suggest that it makes the policy literature as a source of information more important. Arguably, as a minimum it would be good to be more explicit about the ‘within PP’ variation.

6. Related to the point above, as part of the ‘within PP’, it might also be useful for us to be explicit about the way that over time we might see the PP position change over time. To do so would also allow us to reflect more explicitly on the impact that our own involvement and the PACHELBEL project might be having on the way the PP is thinking and working.

7. It is very important that our reports are written in such a way that it is clear what the perspective of the PP is and what the researcher’s analysis of this is. There are a few instances in the country reports where it is difficult to discern whether text refers to what the researcher’s interpretation is or whether it is intended to represent what the policy partner’s perspective is.

8. One of the major preoccupations of the country reports thus far has been on the nature of the policy issue to be studied. The nature of this focus is likely to be fairly stable across the whole of PACHELBEL but it is an important backdrop to understanding the nature of consumer activity that goes on. So, the nature of the consumer related focus in Spain’s case study is about a voluntary action that aimed to change organisational sustainability behaviour; France is focusing on the imposition of a new structure for distributing electricity; Germany is working with the “Climate Protection Concept 2020 Plus Baden-Württemberg” (KSK 2020+); Sweden in a sense has a similar focus to Germany with the translation of a high level vision (Värmland is climate-neutral in 2030) with the translation of this into particular

actions required from public and private organizations, businesses and citizens. In Romania this issue to be focused on is ‘the increase the efficiency use of energy for buildings’ as a way of stimulating the increase of house heating efficiency. Within the UK the agreed focus is upon re-visiting the Defra Framework for Pro-Environmental Behaviours, the aim of which is to “help people lead a more sustainable life style”.

9. In the following text – the words public, citizen etc. are used interchangeably unless stated otherwise.

## Assumptions about human behaviour

Analysis of the interviews suggests several interesting themes relating to policy assumptions about lay behaviour. These are summarised below.

### Is lay behaviour envisaged as active or passive?

It is important to have a sense of this to understand the nature of the particular actions that were required of consumers (in order to successfully implement the policy). So in Spain the role of consumers was considered an active one, in France passive. In Germany, insofar as the emphasis was on regulation forcing changes in behaviour, like France it was also passive. In Sweden it seemed that there was a climate in which consumer perspectives were valued and important and that influencing the public and facilitating their active involvement was a primary task. In Romania, it seemed that little involvement with the public was envisaged although in a sense the required action (a decision to pay for insulation of the house) requires an active rather than a passive public. Within UK within the particular case study of interest there is a focus on exploring how consumers make sense of sustainability across different facets of their lives and an assumption that people are making active choices.

### What behaviour was required of lay people?

What was the envisaged nature of lay behaviour? For Spain organisations were signing up to a pledge and later deriving a plan of action. In France it was about accepting the new technology and not behaving in ways that might disrupt this (in a sense consumer actions were only relevant insofar as they might undermine or disrupt the solution in some way). In Germany the KSK2020+ initiative contains both a vision (of a carbon free society) and more concrete short term objectives (as yet unarticulated) aiming at reducing greenhouse gas

emissions. Prior to confirmation of the short term plans – the overall focus role of technological solutions meant a largely passive role for the consumer. In Sweden it seemed that the public were considered to be intimately involved with the issues at hand and it seemed important that thought was given to how best they might be communicated with in a relevant way – a ‘marketing approach’ was one approach used here. In Romania the aim was that consumers insulated their houses – and this was primarily to be achieved through incentivising them by two thirds of the cost for this being met by the authorities. As it was the consumers’ choice as to whether to do this we might broadly characterise this as requiring an active public, though the required activity was tightly specified. On the other hand it seemed that in general there is a lack of understanding of the public’s views and an absence of any public debate. In the UK the end point being explored is not an end point as such, more about collecting information that will inform the policy measures around sustainability in general. The assumption underlying this however is surely that consumers are active in making sense of sustainability in the context of their lives

### What is the public’s position considered to be vis-à-vis sustainability issues?

In Germany it seemed there was some sense that some people were somehow unable to see the importance of these issues and that strategies were necessary to make them do so; for others who kept up to date with the news, the necessity of the action would be self-evident. How the PP characterised consumers’ stance on this in Spain was unclear. In France it seemed that the public was a relatively shadowy presence whose desires and appetites were somewhat at variance with the sustainability and thus policy action was required to change patterns of behaviour. In Sweden where this was discussed in relation to the issue of sustainable travel there seemed to be some frustration and discouragement around the arguments that were made by parents in support of continuing to drive. In the UK a great deal of work has taken place in relation to segmentation and different appreciations of sustainability are linked to different segments of the public. It is unclear at present in Romanian reports how the PP sees the Romanian public’s stance vis-à-vis sustainability.

### What triggers change in consumer behaviour?

The importance attributed to economic incentives (rather than moral reasoning) was most explicit in Germany; regulation was needed rather than information and communication

although this did have a role in particular circumstances. Spain's focus was more on the moral expectation that people would do what they had committed to and follow through to the next stage. In France, though largely implicit it was seen that technological change would lead to changes in behaviour. It was this that was the trigger for changing citizen behaviour. Sweden too mentioned incentives within a broad package of measures (in the example of encouraging people to cycle) – alongside the identifying 'champions', more frequent bus stopping points for example. Certainly the emphasis in Sweden was on the requirement for behaviour change rather than simply on technological innovation. In the UK the particular project of focus explores the way in which activity in one area of life can trigger sustainable behaviours in others and how life events (such as moving house or having a baby may provide a window of opportunity for change. The focus is on individual responsibility for action and the importance of people making good choices. More broadly within Defra, outside the context of this particular initiative, there is a general preference for technological solutions and, alongside this, an emphasis on the importance of the cost benefit analysis of any policy initiatives.

### What is the role of information provision in triggering change?

In Germany it had a role in some areas; in France yes in principle it was important but in the context of this particular case study, the situation into which information was coming had already been strongly structured and thus information would only play a supporting role. Unclear what the position on this was in Spain. In Sweden there was little specific mention but the implication was that this would be part of a package of measures. There was a clear focus on information provision in promoting energy efficient housing in Romania. There has been little specific mention of this in the UK although the Defra approach recognises that information provision should simply be one part of a broader suite of measures.

### How important in achieving the policy aim is it to engage with lay publics?

In Spain - engagement was important both in principle and in practice it was important to talk to people to find out why certain things were not happening as it was thought that they should: why for instance had people signed a commitment and then not developed an action plan. In France: knowing the perspective of the public was largely considered in aspirational terms and as something that ought to be done. Having said that it was planned to do research

into the public post-implementation (I was unclear exactly why or what this was to achieve). In Germany there was no sense of the necessity or purpose of engaging with the public might be, nor any plans at this stage to do so. In Sweden engagement with the public took place around particular campaigns (the example of this was around decreasing car use and increasing public transport and cycling. In Romania there was no evidence that public engagement was part of the strategy of increasing energy efficient homes although there was increasing awareness that there were some areas (e.g. when a single building was shared by people with widely differing incomes) that some form of consensus building might be necessary. In future work developing this theme it will be important better understand this issue in the light of each country's traditions and governmental practices]

### What methods are used/preferred for research with the public and why?

It was interesting in France that the 3x3 groups STAVE intervention – regarded as, in essence, a glorified focus group exercise - was seen by policy-makers as an inadequate basis for capturing lay perspectives. Rather, they were planning to contact ALL the households where smart meters had been installed in order to evaluate the impact of the initiative.. This reveals interesting questions as to what this information would be used for and, more broadly, what our PPs consider as constituting legitimate evidence about the public. Interviews were to be used in Spain to understand the reasons for the shortfall between making an initial commitment and following through by forming a full plan of action. There were no plans in Germany at this stage. It was unclear whether there was research planned in the Swedish context but there was certainly evidence of engagement – it was not clear if this was based on research. In the UK, the PP (Defra) use a range of research methods to understand and characterise public responses to matters of sustainability – surveys, action research, focus groups, interviews etc. Around the housing issue it did not seem that there were any plans to engage with the public in Romania

### How are the public referred to?

Documenting this seems a potentially useful way to uncover the policy assumptions about lay behaviour. For instance in France lay people were variously referred to as stakeholder; client; consumer; taxpayer; actor; economic/rational agent; voter; population; people; inhabitants; public. This theme might also usefully include some reflection on what the *relevant sub-*



**sections of the public** are that are the focus on the policy any socio-demographic groups of the public that are/not considered as relevant. For example, in the UK it was noted that class was not visible in any consideration of the characteristics of the public.

### What is the rhetoric around the lay behaviour change?

It was evident in some of the country reports that the PPs were using very particular terms or concepts that related to how public behaviour might be changed and the policy tools that were needed to do this. For example, in France there was discussion of *segmentation*, *social pressure to conform* and the *rebound* effect ((Sweden and the UK also spoke of segmentation). These are terms that were used without explanation, that is with some degree of assumption that they were well understood and thus somewhat 'everyday'. We should be alert to such terms that are used in our countries that are part of the 'rhetoric' around 'influencing behaviour'. An early 'hypothesis' here might be is that PPs can show quite a sophisticated and differentiated rhetoric around 'lay behaviour' even in countries and around policy issues where there is little actual or planned public involvement and where the role of the public is seen to be a passive one.

As noted above, there was mention in France, Sweden and the UK of the notion of segmentation which In Romania too the "classification of target groups in sub-groups taking into account some specificities" was one approach of the PP. Where we have PPs using the notion of segmentation it may be interesting to explore (a) how this is done - i.e. what methods are used to segment; (b) what is the population segmented on the basis of? E.g. class, attitudes, behaviours etc. (c) what is 'done' with it e.g. what courses of action are contingent on the segmentation and how segmentation is used to justify this? Where subsequent actions are *not* contingent on the segmentation we would want to understand the reasons for this also.

### Other observations

The following points emerged from examination of the data. They are unrelated to assumptions about human behaviour *per se* but are noted in passing, in order to help sensitise us to their possible importance.

## Where to look for assumptions about lay behaviour

1. Discussion of **change** and how to effect change seems a topic around which assumptions about human behaviour may emerge.
2. Consideration of any **interventions being planned** – i.e. separate from the research version of STAVE intervention. These could include research with citizens, an evaluation etc.
3. Discussion of the **STAVE intervention** itself – this is likely to be instructive not only in relation to assumptions about human behaviour but also for our planning of both the ‘research version’ of STAVE and the eventual ‘do-it-yourself’ (DIY) version. For example the German PP asked “*What do we expect to learn about consumers’ behaviour through observing the process of policy making? What is the purpose of the stimulus materials to be used in the focus groups? How will findings resulting from observing the process of policy making be translated into stimulus materials?*”

## A final thought about STAVE

One important role of developing and implementing STAVE is about making policy assumptions visible. In the prototype version of STAVE (i.e. the version we are ‘creating’ and delivering within the PACHELBEL research programme) this might be achieved in terms of making clear what those initial assumptions were, and then confronting policy-makers with evidence from the groups that may or may not serve to validate those assumptions. For example in the Spanish work, it seems that PPs assumed that there would be a fairly unproblematic translation from ‘signing up’ to making an action plan. In fact, even from the early work they did themselves, it was clear that sometimes limited resources precluded the translation of initial sign up into an action plan. In the full operational (‘do it yourself’) version of STAVE, this might mean (a) providing a tool that lays bare the implications of the assumptions about human behaviour that are being made, or (b) providing a framework for commissioning research that explicitly puts the assumptions being made to the test.