



Central European
Digital Media
Observatory



Dilemma: Environmental protection vs. economic growth

Coffee Beans

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The topic of environmental protection has been part of the public debate for several decades. Approaches to its implementation are different and naturally trigger different types of reactions in society. The following text aims to present the attitude towards environmental protection in the V4 countries from the point of view of the World Values Survey and European Values Study, which examines the respondents' value orientation.

The following question is also asked within the mentioned surveys: *Here are two statements people sometimes make when discussing the environment and economic growth. Which of them comes closer to your own point of view?* Respondents have a choice between two "borderline" options: a) *Protecting the environment should be given priority, even if it causes slower economic growth and some loss of jobs*, or b) *Economic growth and creating jobs should be the top priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent*. As part of the survey carried out in 1997-1998 in the V4 countries, the results were as follows:

Here are two statements people sometimes make when discussing the environment and economic growth. Which of them comes closer to your own point of view?				
	CZ	HU	PL	SK
Protecting the environment should be given priority	48.9%	30.2%	40.8%	43.4%
Economic growth and creating jobs should be the top priority	33.6%	56.2%	39.9%	39.9%
Do not know / No answer	17.5%	13.6%	19.3%	16.7%

Table 1: Overview of attitudes on the issue of environmental protection vs. economic growth in the V4 countries in 1997-1998. (Source: World Values Survey, 3rd wave)

Another measurement of attitudes using the same question was carried out in the V4 region through the European Values Study in 2017 (Poland, Hungary) and in 2022 through the World Values Study, Wave 7 (Czech Republic, Slovakia).

Here are two statements people sometimes make when discussing the environment and economic growth. Which of them comes closer to your own point of view?				
	CZ	HU	PL	SK
Protecting the environment should be given priority	45.1%	62.2%	39.2%	50.6%
Economic growth and creating jobs should be the top priority	47.9%	29.1%	48.5%	41.3%
Do not know / No answer	7.1%	8.7%	12.2%	8.1%

Table 2: Overview of attitudes on the issue of environmental protection vs. economic growth in V4 countries in 2017 (PL, HU) and 2022 (CR, SK). (Source: 2017: European Values Survey, 2022: World Values Survey, 7th wave)

Table 3 provides an overview of respondents' attitudes from the results shown in Table 2, but divided by age cohort into three groups.

	CZ	HU	PL	SK
Up to 29 years old: Protecting the environment should be given priority	49.10%	64.80%	27.80%	51.80%
Up to 29 years old: Economic growth and creating jobs should be the top priority	42.60%	25.50%	60.10%	39.20%
30 – 49 years old: Protecting the environment should be given priority	45.40%	61.20%	45.60%	52.20%
30 – 49 years old: Economic growth and creating jobs should be the top priority	48.40%	31.10%	42.60%	39.80%
50+ years old: Protecting the environment should be given priority	43.30%	61.80%	39.20%	48.80%
50+ years old: Economic growth and creating jobs should be the top priority	49.50%	29.20%	48.00%	43.40%

Table 3: Overview of attitudes on the issue of environmental protection vs. economic growth in V4 countries in 2017 (PL, HU) and 2022 (CR, SK) divided into 3 age cohorts. The total up to 100% is represented by respondents who did not answer the question. (Source: 2017: European Values Survey, 2022: World Values Survey, 7th wave)

A surprising result when comparing surveys from 1997-1998 and 2017-2022 is the shift of respondents in Hungary in favour of environmental protection - 30.2% of respondents in the first survey (1998) and 62% in the second survey (2017) voted for this option. On the other hand, when comparing surveys in the case of the Czech Republic and Poland, the measurements show a strengthening of the attitude supporting economic growth. However, this change occurred without reducing the proportion of respondents preferring environmental protection - the increase was possible due to the reduction of the proportion of respondents who did not answer the question. In other words, more respondents took a clear position on the given question. In the case of Poland, there is also significantly strong support for economic growth in the case of the age cohort under 29 (60.10%) compared to other V4 countries, respectively the remaining age cohorts.

Dataset:

Inglehart, R., C. Haerper, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen (eds.). 2022. World Values Survey: All Rounds - Country-Pooled Datafile. Madrid, Spain & Vienna, Austria: JD Systems Institute & WWSA Secretariat. Dataset Version 3.0.0. [doi:10.14281/18241.17](https://doi.org/10.14281/18241.17)

