

Press release – **under embargo until 30 May 22, 9:00 am CET**

Representative Survey: Germans demand their government to assume an active role in the EU

The most urgent issues facing the European Union following Russia's invasion of Ukraine are energy independence, defense and fighting inflation, according to a representative survey of German citizens. During this "Zeitenwende", watershed moment, they expect Germany to play a more active role in the EU.

Berlin, May 30, 2022 - Germans want their government to play an active role in the EU, this is the result of a representative survey commissioned by the *Heinrich Böll Foundation* and Berlin-based think tank *Das Progressive Zentrum*. Not even half of Germans perceive their government's recent behavior in the EU as being active, almost 40 percent see it as rather less so. A clear majority of 72 percent of Germans would like their country to play an active role in the EU in the future.

Concerning the EU's joint response following Russia's war of aggression, 72.1 percent of Germans believe it to be appropriate. However, there are high expectations for joint European action in the coming period: Most Germans (66.9 percent) consider energy independence to be the most urgent issue currently facing the EU. Other concerns given a high-priority are the member states' defense capabilities (52.8 percent) and fighting inflation in the EU (34.6 percent). To achieve progress in these areas, the majority supports the creation of a new EU investment fund: 37.6% are in favor of a fund for energy independence, 37.5 percent in favor of investing in both energy independence and defense, and 10.1 percent advocate for a fund for defense purposes alone. Only 11.4 percent oppose a new European investment instrument.

The long-term study "Actually European?!" was conducted for the fourth time in a row this year. Compared to last year's results, German's general trust in the EU has remained stable. 66.2 percent see more advantages than disadvantages in their country's EU membership. Compared to last year, more Germans, 63.7 percent (+ 4.2 percent compared to 2021), believe their country to be more likely to reach its political goals with the EU than without. There was a slight drop however, in confidence that the economic benefits of an EU membership outweigh the costs.

"In response to the 'Zeitenwende', German citizens are calling for a more active role of their country in Europe. So far, EU policy has been widely neglected in the German debate on the 'Zeitenwende'. Action is now needed to achieve European energy independence and to reorganize Europe's security architecture," says **Johannes Hillje, co-author of the study** and Policy Fellow at *Das Progressive Zentrum*. **Co-author Christine Pütz**, Senior Programme Officer at the *Heinrich Böll Foundation*, explains: "In view of the current threats and challenges, Germans want the EU to have more ability to act. To this end, they demand a more active EU-policy from their government and are clearly in favor of new joint investments in energy security, defense and climate protection."

Jan Philipp Albrecht, designated board member of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, says about the survey results: "In this moment of crisis, the German government has its citizens' support for a decisive and swift transition away from fatal dependencies on fossil energy and authoritarian regimes like Russia. However, this policy must be embedded in the European Green Deal, where it can simultaneously act as a catalyst for Europe's socio-ecological transformation. At the same time, given the far-reaching implications of Russia's war of aggression, the crucial challenge of the coming years will be defending democracy and the rule of law in the EU."

Press release

For the study "Actually European!? 2022 - Citizen Expectations towards German EU Policy at the 'Zeitenwende'", the opinion research institute Civey conducted an online survey of 5,000 people in April 2022. The results are representative for the population of the Federal Republic of Germany aged 18 and over.

The study can be downloaded (as of 30 May 2022, 9:00 am CET on www.boell.de and www.progressives-zentrum.org)

Press contacts:

Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Michael Alvarez Kalverkamp, Spokesperson, alvarez@boell.de, +49 (0)30 285 34-202, +49 (0)160 365 77 22

Das Progressive Zentrum, Benjamin Lamoureux, Head of Communications, benjamin.lamoureux@progressives-zentrum.org, +49 1520 4719 886