

# COLLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT LESSONS: WHAT THE COVID-19 RESPONSE CAN TEACH US ABOUT ENGAGING THE PUBLIC TO TAKE CLIMATE ACTION

## BACKGROUND

COVID-19 has provoked a worldwide response and a level of compliance we can only dream of with regards to climate action. With the virus appearing on the stage only in late 2019, the response has been rapid, widespread and mostly compliant.

Climate action, on the other hand, has been fighting for decades to gain a decent enough foothold to even begin evoking the large-scale responses that are needed and our societies are still far away from the level of change required to slow down the carbon train on which we are hurtling along.

So, which lessons can our management of the pandemic teach us about how we might improve collective engagement towards climate change mitigation?



## SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Both the pandemic and the climate crisis share:

- Their global scale
- The need for a collective response for the common good
- That responses require severe and inconvenient changes of habits and lifestyles
- That the threat itself is invisible

Crucial differences are that:

- COVID-19 effects are more immediate and tangible
- Climate change is more complex and required actions are more numerous and less clear
- There is an eventual end to the pandemic and the restrictive measures it demands in sight

## LESSONS

- **Emphasis:** Strong, broad, and consistent communication with many popular faces voicing their support of measures and the use of inclusive language such as “us” and “we”.
- **Focus:** Select a number of core measures based on impact and feasibility and push them decisively and large-scale as common goal that allows easy observation of progress.
- **Perspectives:** Offer perspectives on how it will get easier, the more people join in, the more technology advances, the more policy adjusts, the more infrastructure adapts. Provide achievable goals and lay out the collective path on how to achieve them. Divide the road ahead in manageable sections.
- **Consequences:** Both beneficial and punitive measures need to be made use of in policy and regulation design much more decisively and collective achievements as well as negative impacts should be communicated more systematically.



*These considerations build on research conducted in GEL OpenDataPlatform (KLIEN, K17VE2F261303).*