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Department für Wirtschafts- und  
Sozialwissenschaften



# Climate Change Acts in Scotland, Austria, Denmark and Sweden: the role of discourse and deliberation

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Articles

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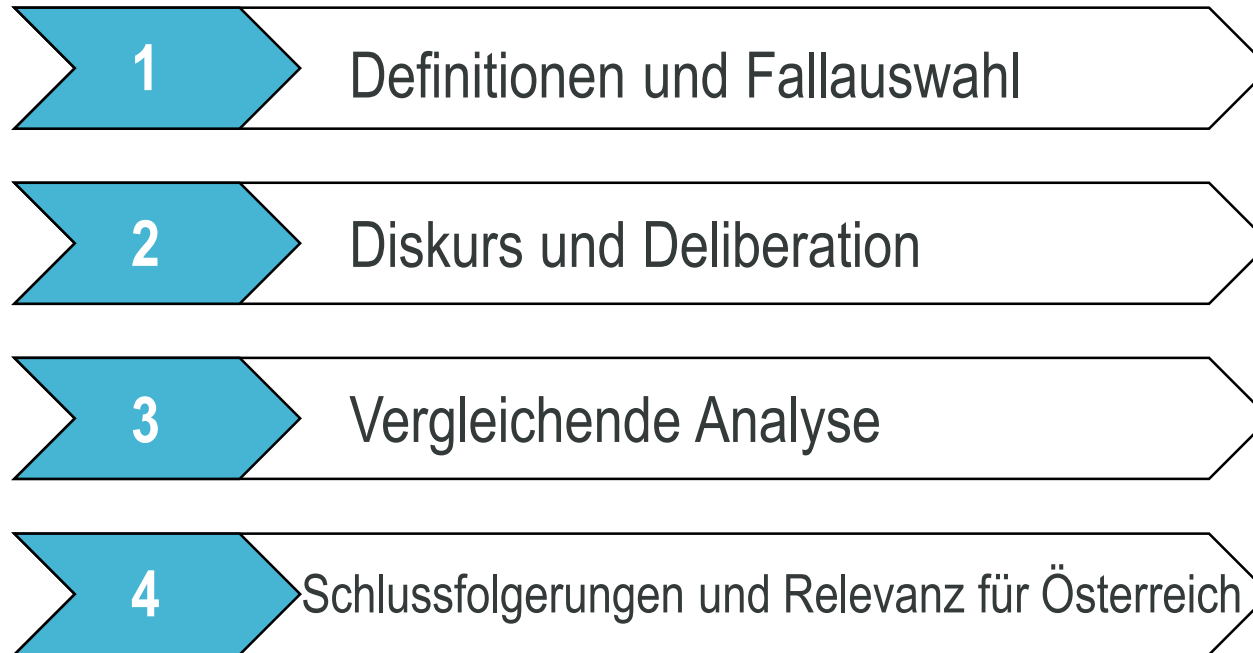
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### ABSTRACT

Climate Change Acts (CCAs) have become a key legislative tool to mitigate climate change. While various case studies have shown that ambition varies greatly, little is known about why this is the case. This comparative study aims to fill this gap by examining the emergence of six CCAs across four legislatures: Scotland (2009 and 2019), Austria (2011), Denmark (2014 and 2020) and Sweden (2017). We focus on climate change discourse broadly and processes of deliberation within legislatures specifically, to explore how they influenced the ambition of the six CCAs from our analysis. We combine extensive document analysis with 43 semi-structured interviews conducted between June 2018 and May 2019. We show that heightened attention at the discursive level combined with a strong deliberative process within legislatures to underpin all of the more ambitious CCAs. Overall, governments are more likely to adopt strong CCAs when prominent discursive junctures politicize climate policy and when parliamentary deliberation is strong. The overarching climate discourse and parliamentary deliberation had an even greater influence in our case studies than the political orientation of governments. Centre-left governments adopted weak GHG emission reduction targets at times of low political salience for climate but were more ambitious when supportive politicization of climate was present.

# Ablauf





## Climate Change Acts (Klimaschutzgesetze)

“framework legislation adopted by parliament that lays down general principles and obligations for climate change policy-making in a nation-state (or sub-state entity), with the explicit aim of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in relevant sectors through specific measures to be implemented at a later stage”. (Nash & Steurer, 2019, p. 1053)

Sarah Louise Nash & Reinhard Steurer (2019) Taking stock of Climate Change Acts in Europe: living policy processes or symbolic gestures?, *Climate Policy*, 19:8, 1052-1065, DOI: [10.1080/14693062.2019.1623164](https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2019.1623164) S. 1053

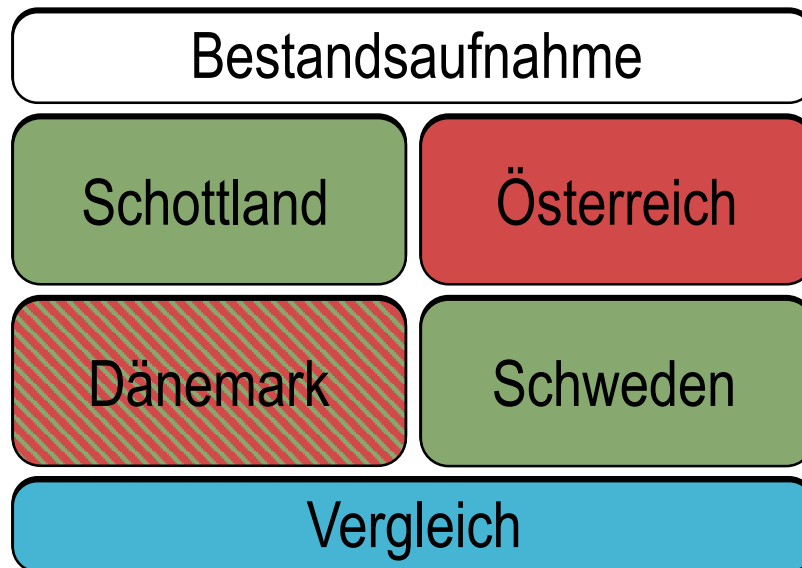
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Definitionen und Fallauswahl



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# Climate Change Acts: Comparing diffusion, governance and policy relevance



**Table 1.** GHG emission reduction targets in CCAs.

Legislature (year)	Quantitative GHG emission reduction targets <sup>a</sup>
Scotland (2009)	80% by 2050 42% by 2020
Austria (2011)	16% by 2020 in non-ETS sectors, baseline 2005
Denmark (2014)	None, low-emissions society by 2050
Sweden (2017)	Net-zero by 2045, at least 85% reduction
Scotland (2019)	Net-zero by 2045, 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030, 90% by 2040
Denmark (2020)	Net-zero by 2050, 70% by 2030

<sup>a</sup>Unless otherwise stated, the baseline year is 1990.

Sarah Louise Nash & Reinhard Steurer (2021) Climate Change Acts in Scotland, Austria, Denmark and Sweden: the role of discourse and deliberation, *Climate Policy*, 21:9, 1120-1131, DOI: [10.1080/14693062.2021.1962235](https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2021.1962235) S. 1121



“assumption that discourses enable and constrain how political entities and societies understand and act on certain social or physical phenomena that are negotiated in environmental policy making”

Leipold, S., Feindt, P. H., Winkel, G., & Keller, R. (2019). Discourse analysis of environmental policy revisited: Traditions, trends, perspectives. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 21(5), 445–463.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1523908X.2019.1660462> S.447



Deliberation: “reaching judgements and reflecting upon preferences in the context of dialogue that is informed, respectful, and competent”

Dryzek, J. S. (2013). The politics of the Earth. Environmental discourses. Oxford University Press, S.236  
Image © Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body



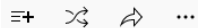


“It’s often said that Scotland is a village and there is some truth in that in that people know each other [...], so what you tend to find is that networks work better” (Interview)



## Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

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17.03.2021 aktualisiert



The Scottish  
Parliament

ABONNIEREN



1 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee - 5 March 2019

The Scottish Parliament



2 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee - 26 February 2019

The Scottish Parliament



3 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee - 29 January 2019

The Scottish Parliament



4 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee - 22 January 2019

The Scottish Parliament



5 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee - 15 January 2019

The Scottish Parliament



6 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee - 8 January 2019

The Scottish Parliament



7 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee - 18 December 2018

The Scottish Parliament



8 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee - 11 December 2018

The Scottish Parliament

## 3 wichtige ‚discursive junctures‘

1. IPCC Bericht, 2007
2. COP15 Klimaverhandlungen in Kopenhagen
3. Europäischer Klimadiskurs und Ziele



“trench warfare” (Interview)

“all representing their own interests” (Interview)

**1 wichtige ‚discursive juncture‘**

Europäische Klimaziele



achieve a “compromise and law which everybody can see themselves in” (Interview, 2014 CCA)

Parties competing “about how much they love the climate law proposal” (Interview, 2020 CCA)

## 4 wichtige ‚discursive junctures‘

2014

1. COP15 Klimaverhandlungen in Kopenhagen
2. Europäische Klimaziele

2020

1. Pariser Übereinkommen
2. Fridays for Future Demonstrationen



“this knowledge-based process actually gave the politicians courage [...] to be able to take a fairly brave step” (Interview)

## 1 wichtige ‚discursive juncture‘

Pariser Übereinkommen



“this knowledge-based process actually gave the politicians courage [...] to be able to take a fairly brave step” (Interview)

## 1 wichtige ‚discursive juncture‘

### Pariser Übereinkommen



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Schlussfolgerungen und Relevanz für Österreich



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Ein unterstützender öffentlicher Diskurs ist wichtig

Debatten im Parlament sind wichtig!

Der öffentliche Diskurs zu Klimaschutz hat sich seit 2020 stark abgeschwächt

Das Klimaschutzgesetz wird in Österreich seit Monaten geheim verhandelt

Ein starkes Klimaschutzgesetz ist unter diesen Voraussetzungen sehr unwahrscheinlich: Das „Beste aus zwei Welten“ bleibt eine Illusion



ABER: wenn


- (1) Klimaschutz in die öffentliche Debatte zurückkehren und
  - (2) das nächste Klimaschutzgesetz im Parlament intensiv diskutiert werden würde,
- dann wäre das wichtiger als die Zusammensetzung der nächsten Regierung




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