

PRESS RELEASE 04/2023

## Climate justice: Ethics Council considers stakeholder perspectives

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In its second public hearing on climate justice on 25 May, the German Ethics Council will question various stakeholders who are particularly affected by the consequences of climate change. It will also look at peculiarities of the public debate on the topic.

In the event, which will be broadcast live on the internet, the Ethics Council will hear from four experts, three of whom represent different aspects of how people are affected by climate change. The fourth expert will examine the climate debate from a communication studies perspective.

First, the focus is on people in the Global South, who often suffer particularly from the consequences of climate change, although they only contribute to it to a comparatively small extent. Their perspective is provided by Md Sham-suddoha, who lives in Bangladesh, a country already severely affected by climate change. He is the Director of the Center for Participatory Research and Development and warns that droughts or floods, which are becoming more frequent as a result of climate change, threaten to destroy the development efforts of emerging countries. This hits already marginalised and vulnerable population groups the hardest.

The second contribution is about the perspective of young people. Many of them consider it unfair that they will be particularly affected by the consequences of climate change, even though they have contributed little to it. The German Federal Constitutional Court confirmed this view in 2021 by ruling that the German Climate Change Act of 12 December 2019 unreasonably restricts the future liberties of young people. This was a partial success of a constitutional complaint involving Sophie Backsen, who was 22 at the time. Now she has been invited to discuss these issues with the Ethics Council. As a resident of the North Frisian island of Pellworm, which is already one metre below sea level, Backsen is also personally affected in a special way.

Another perspective concerns the health consequences of climate change. These include direct damage to health through more frequent extreme weather events such as heat waves or heavy storms, but also indirect problems such as new pathogens. The Ethics Council consults Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum, Head of the Climate Change and Health Unit of the World Health Organization, on these consequences. According to him, the health gain from the transition to climate-neutral energy production exceeds the financial effort required to realise it.

What all stakeholders have in common is that they struggle with many other stakeholders to be heard in the public debate on climate change. To learn more about the specific dynamics of this discourse, the Ethics Council invites the communication scientist Michael Brüggemann. He heads a research group at

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the University of Hamburg focussing on climate communication in different media and different countries. Brüggemann points out four problematic patterns that characterise the climate debate: disregard, denial, doom and delay.

The German Ethics Council had organised an earlier hearing on questions of justice and responsibility in the face of climate change in February 2023. The Council's Opinion on the topic is to be published early next year.

The hearing will be broadcast on 25 May from 1:00 to 4:15 pm (CEST) on the Ethics Council's website at <https://www.ethikrat.org/live>. Registration is not required. The event will be held in English with simultaneous translation into German. Viewers in the livestream can submit questions during the event via an online question module. After the event, a video recording (with original English audio) and a transcription including a translation into German will be made available.