

Report on the Evening Lecture: Prof. Dr. Lucia Reisch „Behavioural Public Policy for Sustainable Development – with a Focus on Climate Change“

On Wednesday, December 15, 2021, the second event of the series “Evening Lectures” in the winter semester 2021/2022 took place. The online event was once again hosted and moderated by **Univ.-Prof. Dr. Susanne Augenhofer, LL.M. (Yale)**. The renowned social scientist and economist **Prof. Dr. Lucia Reisch, Director of the El-Erian Institute of Behavioural Economics and Policy, University of Cambridge**, spoke on the topic of “Behavioural Public Policy for Sustainable Development – with a Focus on Climate Change”.

Prof. Reisch began by giving the participants an overview of the various organizations active worldwide (OECD, WHO, UN, etc.) that are researching and working on the topic of behavioural action policy. In this context she also pointed out the valuable work of the UN Innovation Network. She then stated that it is of enormous importance that public policy takes an approach that actively supports the preservation and saving of a healthy ecosystem, as global climate change is clearly already underway.

In the context of combating global climate change, the demand side plays a greater role than has often been assumed to date. Technological and system-wide approaches remain very important, but the contribution of individuals is sometimes significantly underestimated, Prof. Reisch said. She supported this thesis with reference to *Dubois et al. (2019)*, who suggest in an estimate that private households worldwide are responsible for 72 % of global greenhouse gas emissions on average.

Prof. Reisch then presented a “*toolbox*” for demand-sided policy measures, including legislative (regulatory) measures, positive and negative financial incentives, public procurement, and choice architecture & behavioural insights (“nudges”). In her view, public procurement and the use of “nudging” in particular play a paramount role in the given context. It would also be advisable to use the entire available spectrum of demand-sided measures, she continued.

In the second part of her presentation, which dealt with the presentation of concrete findings from recent behavioural research, Prof. Reisch pointed out that nowadays there are better models for mapping the decision-making of individuals by considering the multitude of factors that influence our daily decisions. She stated that human beings are precisely not like a “*homo oeconomicus*”.

For policy makers, according to Prof. Reisch, it is crucial to be clear about the nature of the problem to be addressed by behavioural measures. Therefore, behavioural obstacles to political

climate protection measures, such as confusion and misinformation of consumers or the (extreme) polarization of climate change on the basis of political ideologies, must be taken into consideration in the development of concrete measures. With regard to the “nudges” central to Prof. Reisch, for example, it is central that such behavioural incentives must suggest the specific measures to achieve the goal (combating global climate change), rather than directly imposing the measures top-down.

Following the exciting and informative Evening Lecture, the participants of the event took the opportunity to enter into a direct dialog with Prof. Reisch. In particular, the latest findings from behavioural research and the creation of incentives through “nudging” were discussed in depth.

(Julian Nigg)

