

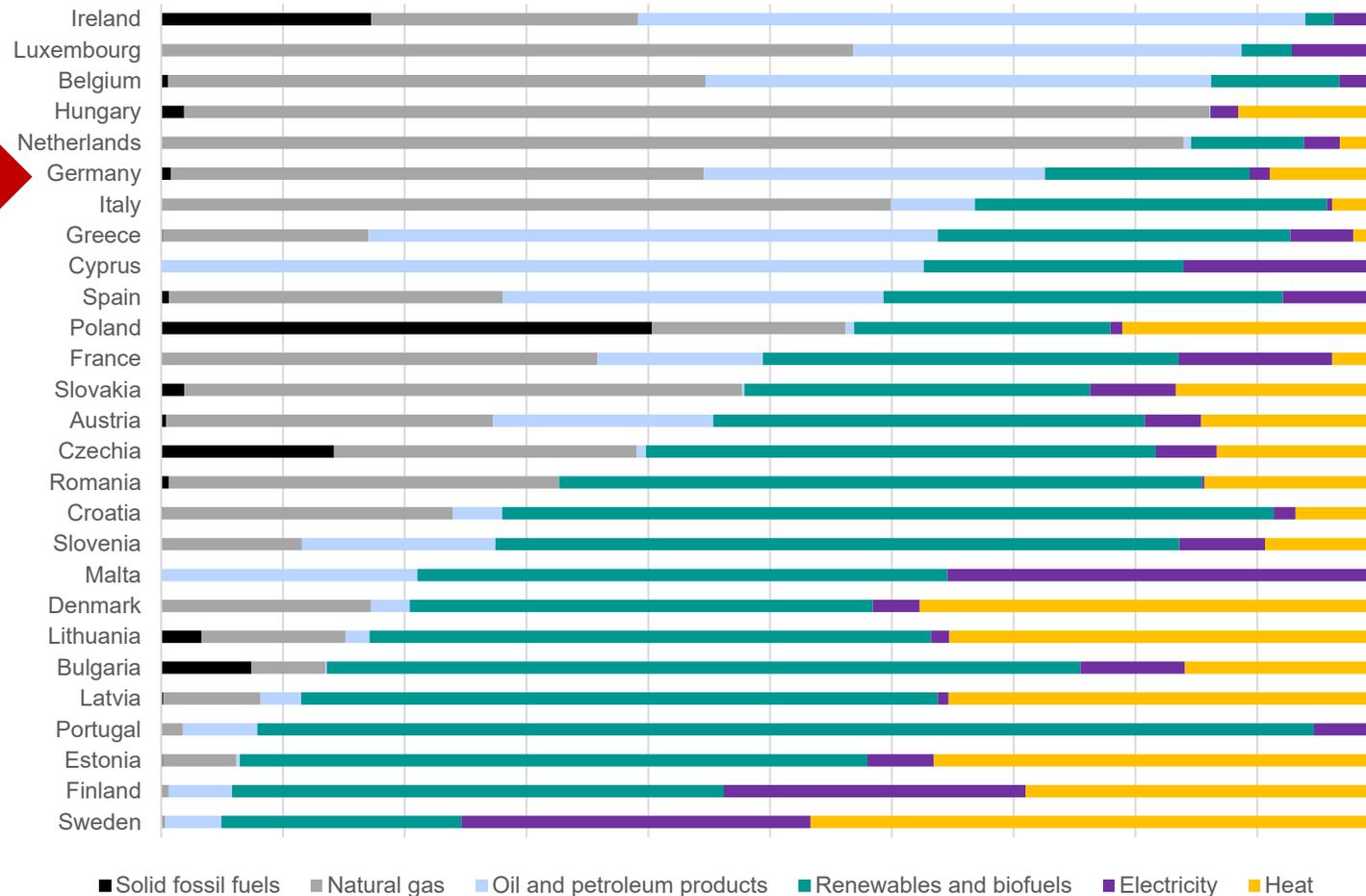
# Is the “heating hammer” hitting energy efficiency policy? Learnings from the debate around the German Buildings Energy Act

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ecccc summer study, 13.06.2024

## Overview

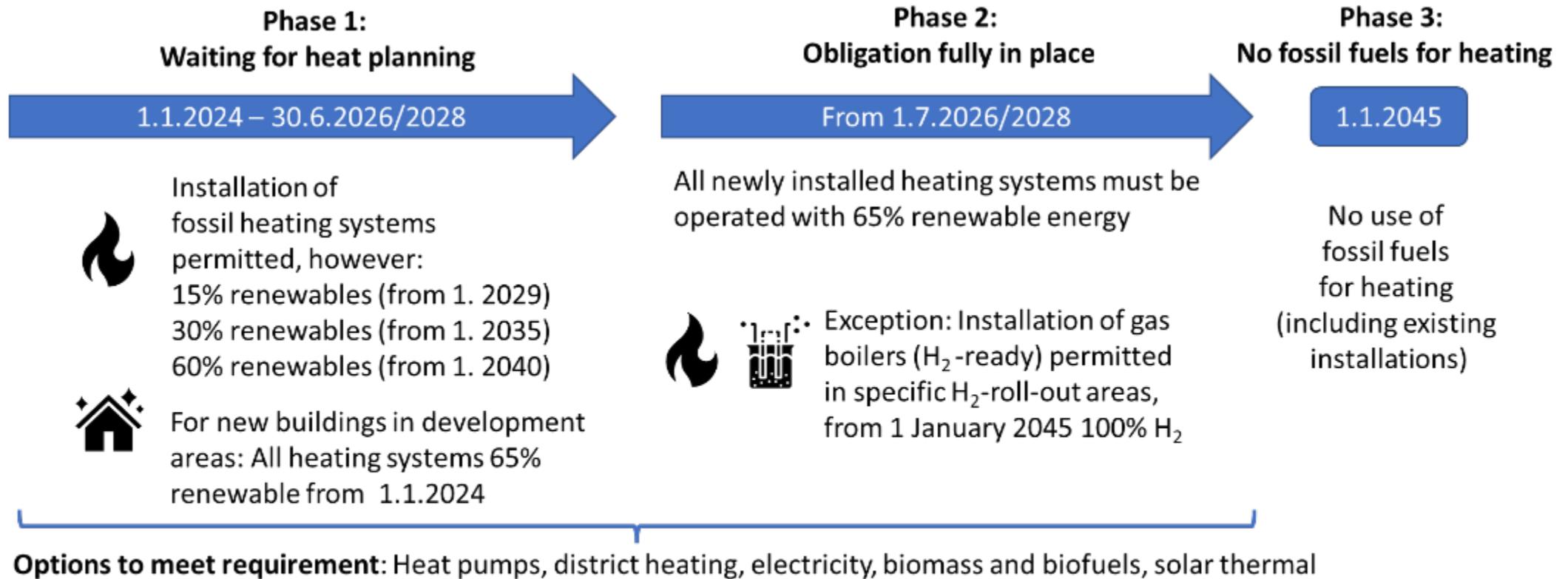
- Background
  - Media debate and narratives
  - Consequences for policy developments
  - Learnings
-

# Background: Fossil fuels dominate space heating in German buildings



- Germany is within the countries with the highest share of fossil fuels in space heating among the EU Member States
- Fossil boilers also dominate market for new heating systems (gas boilers almost 60% market share in January 2024)
- Misalignment with target of climate neutrality 2045

# The revision of the buildings energy act: Requirement for new heating systems to run on 65% renewable energy



## Timeline of the revision of the law

**11-2021 – Coalition Agreement:** from January 1 2025 all newly installed heating systems should be operated with 65% renewable energies

**03-2022 – Coalition Decision:** Referring to the energy crisis, the starting date is shifted to 2024

**07-2022 – Concept paper:** 2 Federal Ministries publish a concept paper for implementing



**02-2023 – Leaked draft:** On Feb. 27 2023, the BILD features a leaked draft of the law on its title page. In early March 2023, the law is labelled “heating hammer” (Heizungshammer) by the BILD

**03-2023 – Coalition Decision:** After 30 hours of negotiations, the three coalition partners agree upon a series of provisions, including the Buildings Energy Act

**04-2023 – Cabinet Decision:** By April 19, 2023 the Federal Cabinet approved the submission of draft legislation to amend the Buildings Energy Act

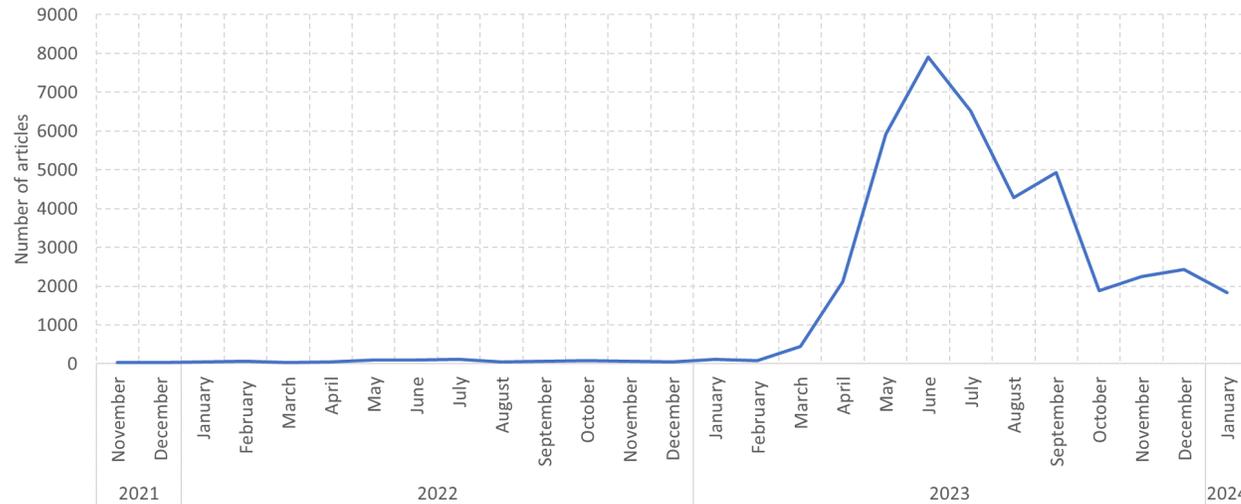
**05-2023 – Obstruction:** In the first half of 2023, the FDP opposed the law for weeks, despite the fact that it had already approved the law several times. It ensured that the GEG was not put on the parliamentary agenda

**06-2023 – Coalition Decision (Bundestag 2023):** By June 27, 2023, Germany's ruling parties agreed on the final details of the green energy law. This agreement included significant changes from the initial proposals: The obligation was adjusted to initially apply only to new buildings

**07-2023 – Constitutional Court ruling:** The Federal Constitutional Court halted the foreseen adoption of the Law

**09-2023 – Adoption:** After the summer recess, the German parliament adopted the heating law

# The „heating hammer“ in the media



- Strong media uptake starting from first leak of draft law
- Media attention continuously high up to adoption of final revision

Number of articles per month covering the law, extracted from the WISO-net database, covering around 200 German newspapers



# Narrative 1: Mandatory exchange of existing heating systems

Kritik von Verbänden

## Habeck plant neues Gesetz: Verbot von Ölheizung rückt näher

Aktualisiert: 28.02.2023, 14:49 | Lesedauer: 5 Minuten

**SPD und FDP blockieren**  
**Habeck erwägt Verbot neuer Öl- und Gasheizungen**  
27.02.2023, 17:47 Uhr

**WIRTSCHAFTSVERBÄNDE BEWERTEN NEUES GEGESITZ**  
**Aus für ALLE Gas-Heizungen droht 10 Jahre früher**  
FDP: „Nachschubfrage-Bürger“ – „Jedem Veränderung der Heizweise“

**AN DER BEWERTUNG IST – WELCHE FREIHEIT GELTEN**  
**So streng ist der Heiz-Hammer wirklich**  
Erdbeide Habeck: keine Ersatzenergie jetzt in BILD lesen

**ZUSCHÜSSE, FÖRDERUNG, FREIHEIT**  
**Neue Details zu Habecks Heiz-Hammer**  
Das ganze Papier zum Öl- und Gas-Verbot – erkläre ich BILD lesen

**WIRTSCHAFTSVERBÄNDE BEWERTEN NEUES GEGESITZ**  
**Hat sich Habeck Heiz-Hammer verreckt**  
Wie teuer es für Eigentümer wirklich werden

**WELCHE KOSTEN KÖNNEN?**  
**Diese Kosten kommen beim Heiz-Hammer auf Sie zu**

**WELCHEN STÜCKEN-HEIZUNGEN KANN ZU ERHEBEN**  
**An diese Mieter hat Habeck gar nicht gedacht**

**ERHEBEN WIRTSCHAFTSVERBÄNDE**  
**Lindner zerpfückt Habecks Heizungshammer**

**NEUER IST**  
**Das miese unserer Heizur**

**WELCHE KOSTEN KÖNNEN?**  
**Habecks Heiz-Hammer würde uns 590 000 Euro kosten**

**WELCHE KOSTEN KÖNNEN?**  
**Diese Kosten kommen beim Heiz-Hammer auf Sie zu**

**ERHEBEN WIRTSCHAFTSVERBÄNDE**  
**Habecks Heiz-Hammer zerstört Altersvorsorge**

**HABECK WILL GAS- UND ÖL-HEIZUNGEN VERBIEHEN**  
**So trifft SIE der Heizungshammer**  
Man es kritisch wird → Wer betroffen ist



Nachdem Öl- und Gasheizungsverbot einen großen Schritt nach vorn ist: Robert Habeck. (Foto: picture alliance/epa)

**HON AB 2024!**  
**Habeck will Öl- und Gas-Heizungen verbieten**

Von: FELIX RUPPRECHT UND JAN W. SCHÄFER 27.02.2023 - 19:58 Uhr

- **Media Misrepresentation:** BILD inaccurately suggested that a new law would require all heating systems, including existing boilers, to use 65% renewable energies, beginning from 1.1.2024.

**CDU ZERPFLÜCKT NEUEN HEIZ-HAMMER**  
**„Habeck will Energie-Stasi einsetzen!“**

Seitdem die Energie- und Wirtschaftsminister Robert Habeck ein neues Gesetz, mit dem der Heiz-Verbot der Bürger massiv überwachelt werden  
Foto: Michael Kappeler/epa

Von: JAN W. SCHÄFER, FELIX RUPPRECHT, KARINA HÖSSBAUER, THOMAS SULZER 24.02.2023 - 19:49 Uhr

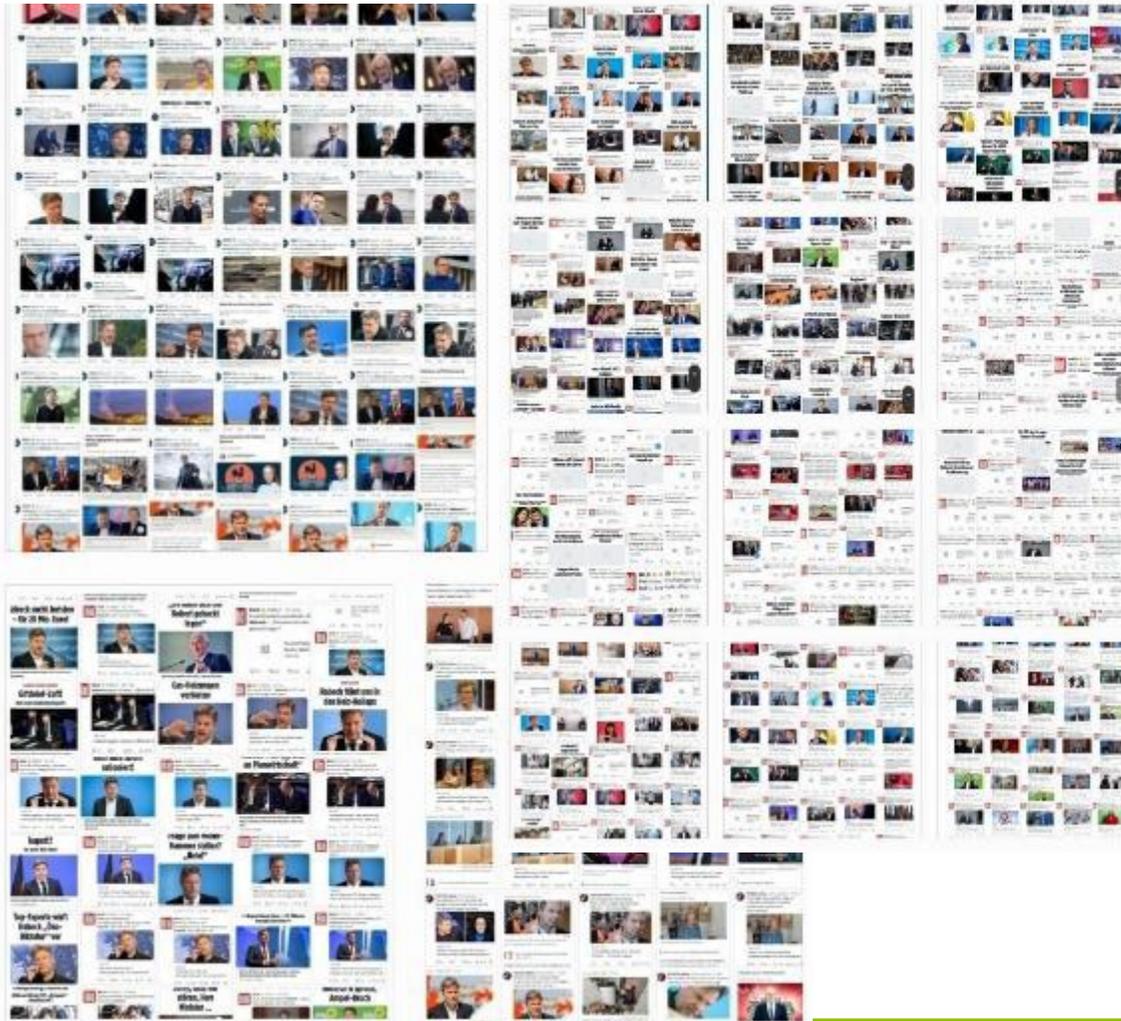
## Narrative 2: High costs and social hardship



- **Focus on Costs:** BILD emphasized the financial burdens on homeowners by presenting calculations that showed significantly higher costs than typical heating system installations.
- Narrative, that the **MEPS** of the EPBD is the even tougher heating hammer.
- **Impact on Families:** The narrative often illustrated the hardships imposed on "normal families" by these laws.



## Narrative 3: Blaming Robert Habeck and the Greens



- A significant theme in BILD's coverage is the consistent **blaming** of German Vice Chancellor **Habeck**, with his name appearing in 60% of the articles and 20% of the titles.
- BILD portrays the revision of the Buildings Energy Act as **solely Habeck's initiative**, neglecting the fact that the obligation was part of the coalition agreement and developed in cooperation with the SPD-led Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building.
- Pre-Existing Campaign: Analysis indicates that BILD had been **running a campaign** against Habeck even before the controversy over the "heating hammer", suggesting a targeted media strategy.

# Narrative 4: FDP defends interests of Germans by fighting against the "heating hammer"



- **FDP Opposition Highlighted:** BILD extensively covers the Free Democratic Party's (FDP) opposition to the "heating hammer" within the coalition government, portraying the party as actively fighting against restrictive measures.

- **Frequent Mentions of FDP:** Throughout the coverage, FDP's role as a counter to Vice Chancellor Habeck is emphasized, with the party or its chairman, Christian Lindner, mentioned in nearly 50% of the articles.



# Narrative 5: Media, FDP and Opposition Parties: Poorly crafted law



- The accusation that the Heating Act was "**poorly crafted**" has been raised continuously and has been taken up widely in the media and the public discussion, without this accusation being substantiated or concretised.
- This claim is not further substantiated, the first (leaked) draft bill had been **prepared carefully over months** of work in the ministries.



## Impact of media debate on other policy developments

- Within „heating law“:
  - Coupling to heat planning act, leading to considerable delays
  - Introduction of hydrogen as option for some areas
- In EU context: Germany’s change of position in negotiations on the revision of the EPBD, especially towards MEPS
- In Germany: Planned revision of standards for new and existing buildings towards more efficiency has been canceled.



ZEIT ONLINE

Fünf vor acht / Heizungsgesetz

**Als Bettvorleger gelandet**  
Eine Kolumne von Petra Pinzler



## Discussion and conclusions

- **Intense Media Criticism:** Germany's Buildings Energy Act faced strong media backlash for its renewable obligations on existing buildings, often amplified by misinformation and negative portrayals of politicians, particularly from the Green Party.
- **Political Tensions and Opposition:** The coalition government's diverse composition and the usage of terms like "heating hammer" fueled public opposition, emphasizing the law's financial impact on citizens.
- **Rise of Populism:** The debate around the Heating Act paralleled the rise of right-wing populism, with the AfD gaining popularity, suggesting their anti-Heating Act rhetoric influenced voter sentiment.
- **Poor Timing:** The law's late introduction missed the optimal timing for public acceptance.
  - The right time would have been at the beginning of the legislative period - at least before the winter of the gas crisis.
  - There should not be just a few months but 1-2 years between the law being passed and coming into force
  - The subsidy scheme for renewable heating systems was not ready at the time of the leaked draft
- **Poor Communication:** The policy makers were not prepared to adequately react to the media uptake.

## Lessons learnt

- **Develop and communicate regulation and funding as a package**
- **Communication Strategy Needs:** The government's inconsistent messaging worsened public reception, highlighting the necessity for improved communication strategies to effectively counter misinformation and clarify policy impacts.
- **Better preparation of communication:** The law was well prepared in technical terms. The communication was too late.
- **Policy makers should consider narratives, potential for backlash and “prebunking” strategies**

THANK YOU!

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