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# RETOOL

Strengthening Democratic  
Governance for Climate Transitions

[retoolproject.eu](https://retoolproject.eu)

The **RETOOL project** addresses the dual challenges of responding to the climate imperative while simultaneously strengthening and reinvigorating democratic governance. The urgency of this project is undeniable, given the imperative nature of addressing the climate emergency. Existing governance systems, including those in Europe, have failed to deliver timely and comprehensive policy responses. They have also struggled to involve citizens effectively in decision-making, eroding trust in both processes and outcomes. Additionally, democratic institutions, processes, and norms are under increasing pressure, highlighting a prolonged period of democratic decline. The foundation of the project rests on the belief that achieving successful and inclusive climate transitions, as outlined in the European Green Deal and the Paris Agreement, requires robust democratic governance and active engagement of citizens in shaping the transition process.



We are analysing the impact of climate transitions on democratic governance and investigating how democratic structures influence climate transitions by focusing on key domains of governance, from representative institutions to climate movements. This will enable RETOOL to enhance the capacity of democratic governance to address complex issues and engage citizens in climate transitions. Our insights aim to improve policymaking in European Union and beyond.

**Climate democracy can be explored through four key domains:** First, we investigate **representative democratic institutions** in climate governance at national and EU levels, including analysing climate targets, scrutinizing parliaments, and assessing interactions with social movements. Second, we examine **non-majoritarian institutions** such as courts and climate advisory bodies in the EU, focusing on climate litigation and the role of expert advisory bodies. Third, we study **deliberative democracy** through climate assemblies, analysing their impact and institutionalization, and their influence on broader democratic governance. Finally, we explore the impact of **climate movements** on democracy, investigating historical and contemporary movements, their claims and emotions, and their potential as incubators of democratic innovations.

**The project develops and unfolds in four interlinked steps:**

- Step 1: Establishing the analytical and empirical foundations of our work by developing our analytical framework and developing empirical underpinnings that will inform our subsequent research.
- Step 2: Conducting systematic and ground-breaking research on four domains of climate democracy studying both existing processes as well as promising innovations in governance
- Step 3: Synthesising our research across the four domains of climate democracy in order to understand interactions between domains and to generate user-focused outputs from our research.
- Step 4: Communicating and disseminating our outputs to policymakers, researchers, democracy practitioners civil society and citizens to ensure that recommendations reach key audiences in a timely manner.

