



2019 has a high potential to mark a turning point on climate change communication and mitigation

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The last five years globally have been the warmest ever since we have reliable records. 2018 and 2019 have brought many heat records. In the last two years the losses caused by extreme weather events have been the highest (2017) and the 5th highest (2018) on record. In 2018 the global emissions of CO₂ have increased by 2.7% and hit an all-time high of 37.1bn tonnes. The concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere has reached 410 ppm. In October 2018 IPCC has published the Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C showing clearly the urgency to act.

All these data confirm the high risks global warming is posing to humankind. This is reflected in an increasing awareness of climate change and its consequences in the population. So e.g. a recent survey by the Pew Center with almost 28 thousand respondents from 26 countries showed that global climate change is assessed as the largest threat for their countries. Also the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2019 again has ranked “Extreme Weather Events” and “Failure of Climate-Change Mitigation and Adaptation” as the highest risks.

In August 2018 Greta Thunberg started her school strike for climate, which has developed into “FridaysFor-Future”, the largest movement of young people for climate protection. On March 15, 2019 1.6 million young people in 125 countries took part in the by now largest ever climate demonstration.

In contrast to the recent developments and demands by the population, climate policy is lacking behind in most of the countries. Even though many countries have committed themselves to reductions of greenhouse gas emission in the Paris agreement, hardly any progress has been made. There is a big chance, however, that the recent climatological developments and the increased pressure by the pupils and many other groups in the population may change the attitudes of politicians to become more ambitious in respect to climate change mitigation. 2019 could mark the turning point for this.