

# WE NEED TO CHANGE:

## ANALYSING POTENTIAL FOR DEGROWTH ACROSS EUROPE

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# Starting points

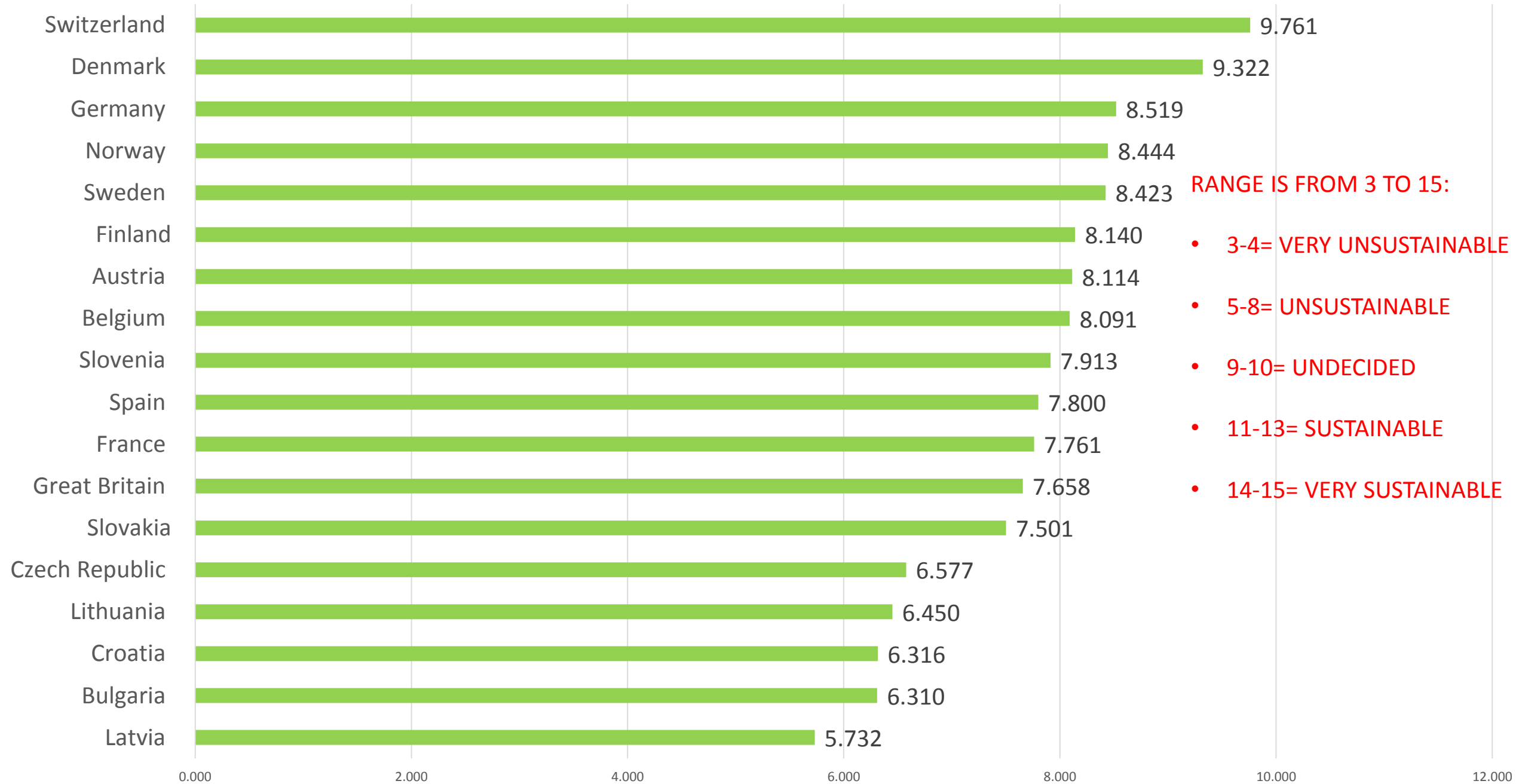
- uniqueness of our historical moment: widescale of environmental collapse in addition to growth downsides
- the warming of the climate system is unequivocal
- Europeans have in the past successfully acted upon environmental concerns (East & West)
- Environmental attitudes primary motivation for degrowth in Europe (cf. Dietz & O'Neill, 2013)
- despite threats being **environmental** and their implications **economic**, transformation is essentially **cultural**: requires a fundamental transformation of **attitudes** and **practices**
- degrowth of material and energy consumption to stay within environmental limits



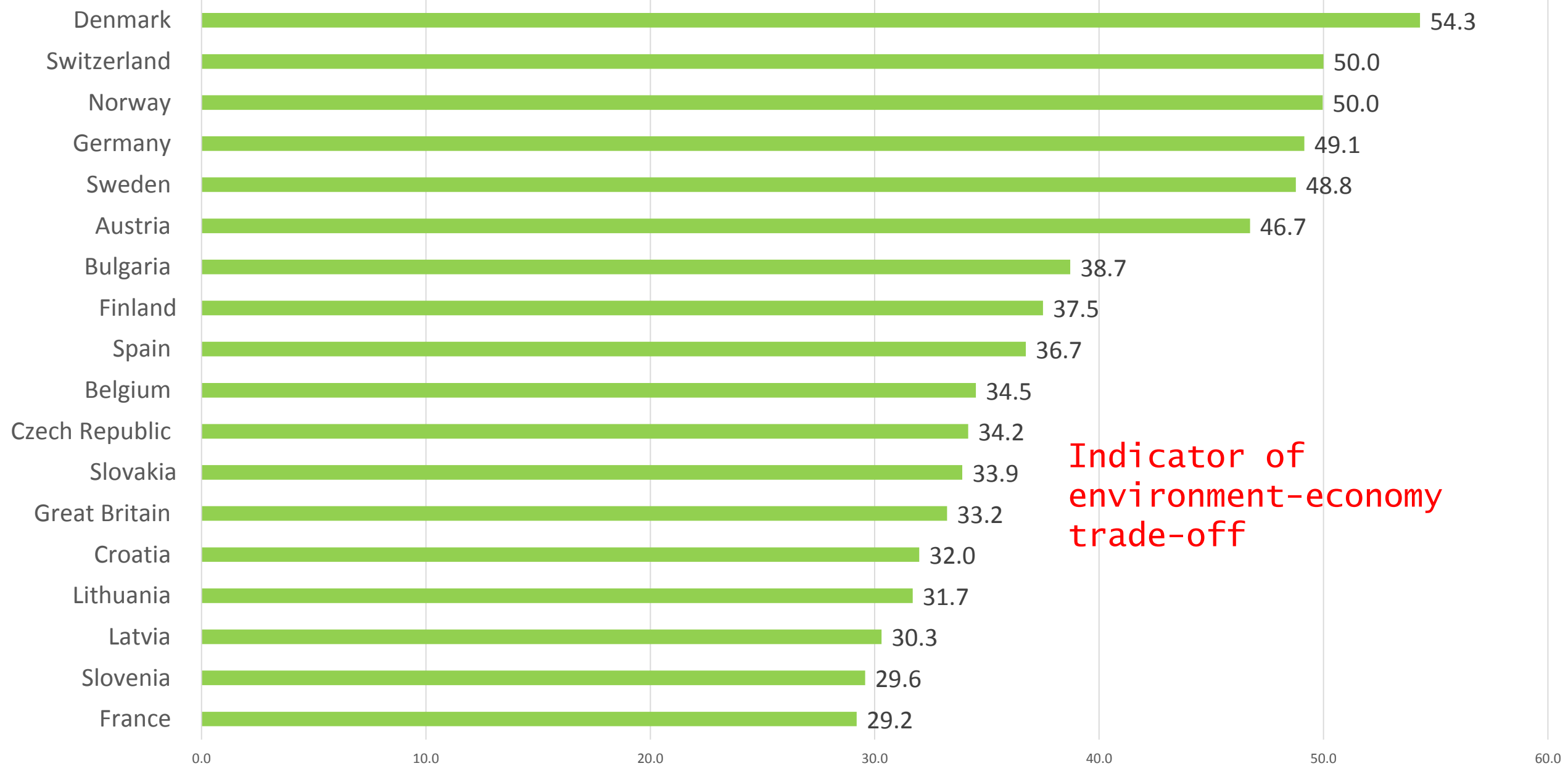
# How attitudes were surveyed?

- INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SURVEY PROGRAMME ([www.issp.org](http://www.issp.org))
- module Environment (2009-2011)
- national representative samples
- questionnaire
- 18 European countries:
  - Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Great Britain

# Individual material sacrifice for degrowth (index - M)

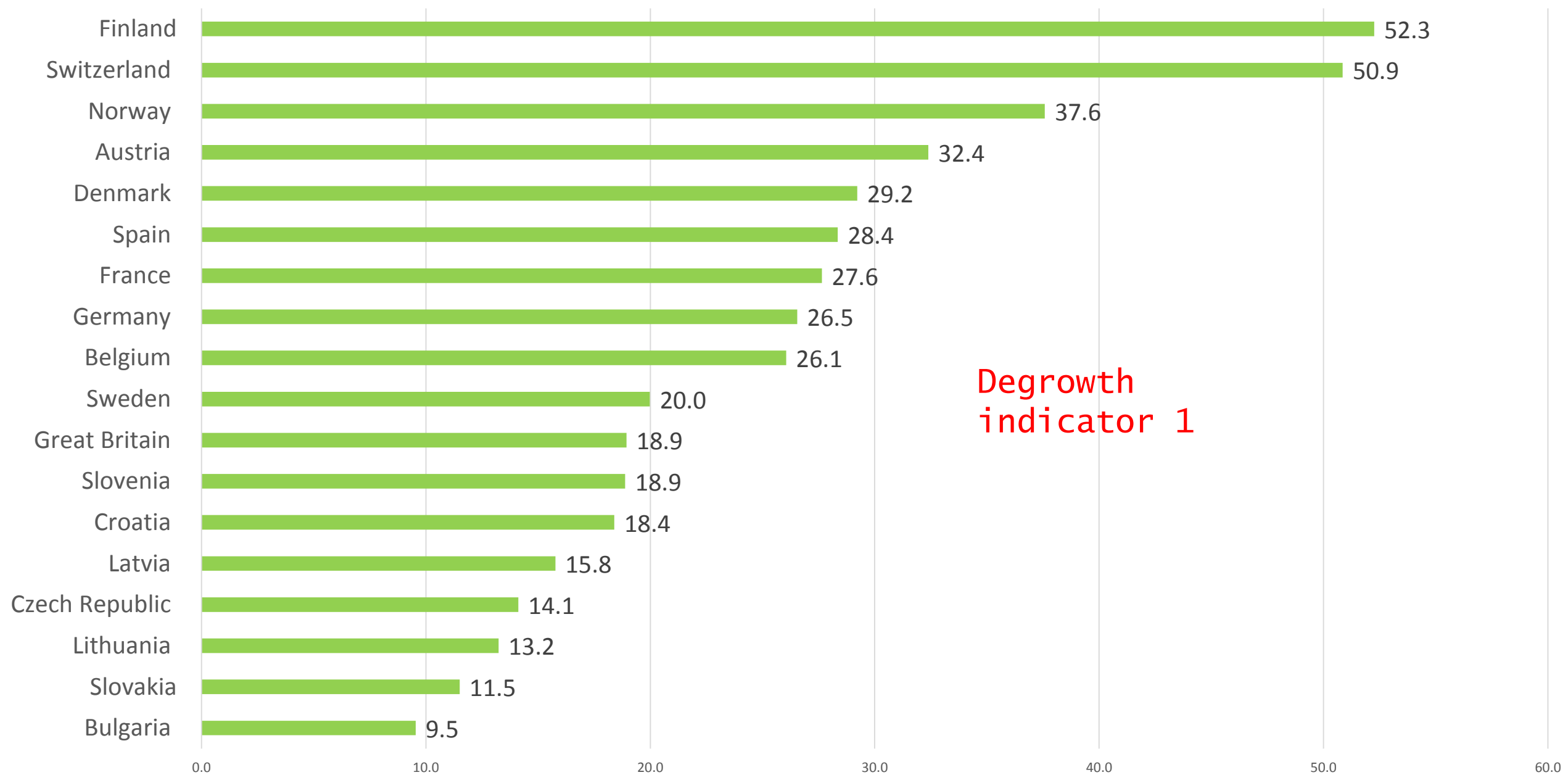


# We worry too much about the future of the environment and not enough about prices and jobs today (% disagree)

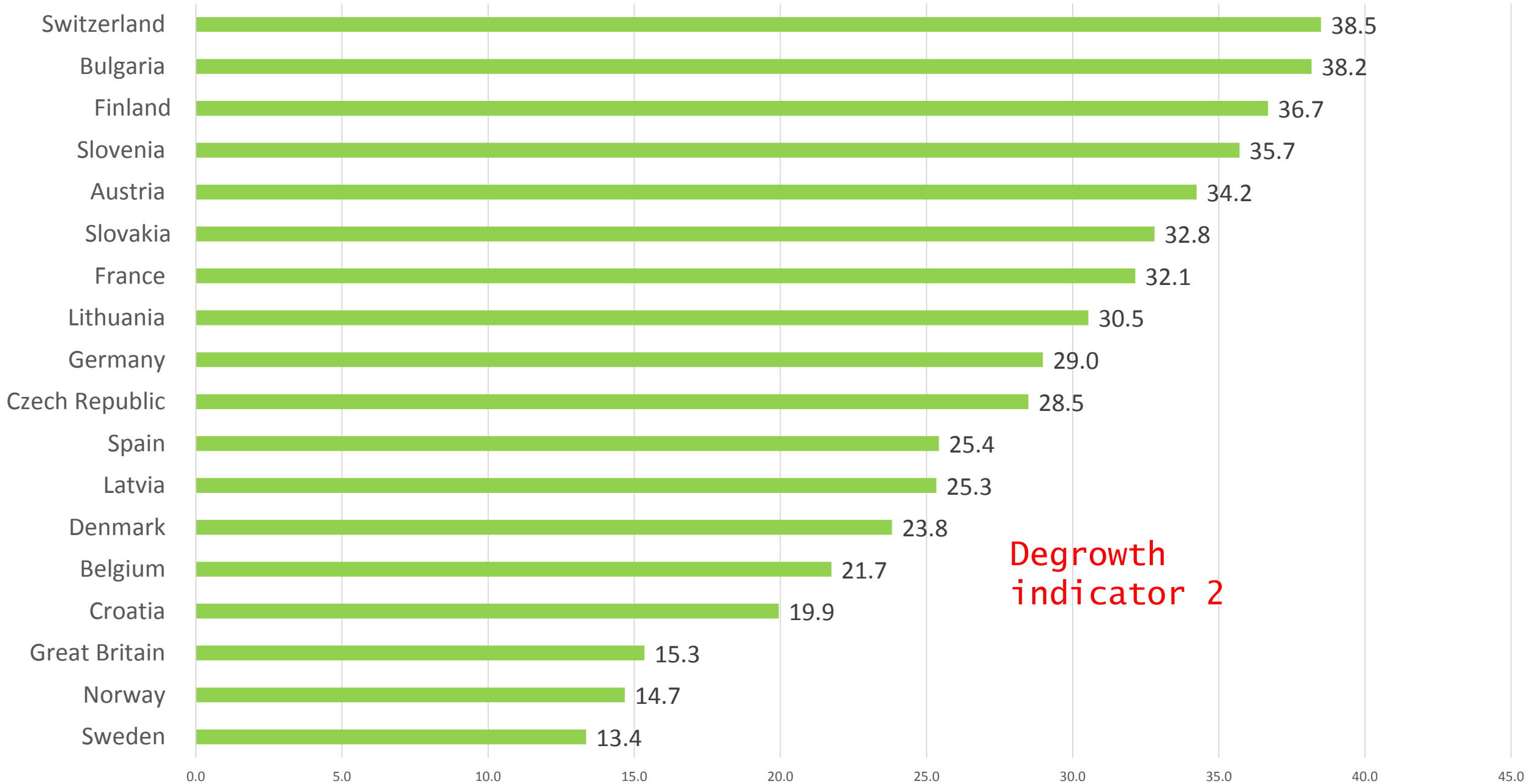


Indicator of environment-economy trade-off

# My country needs economic growth in order to protect the environment (% disagree)



# Economic growth always harms the environment (% agree)



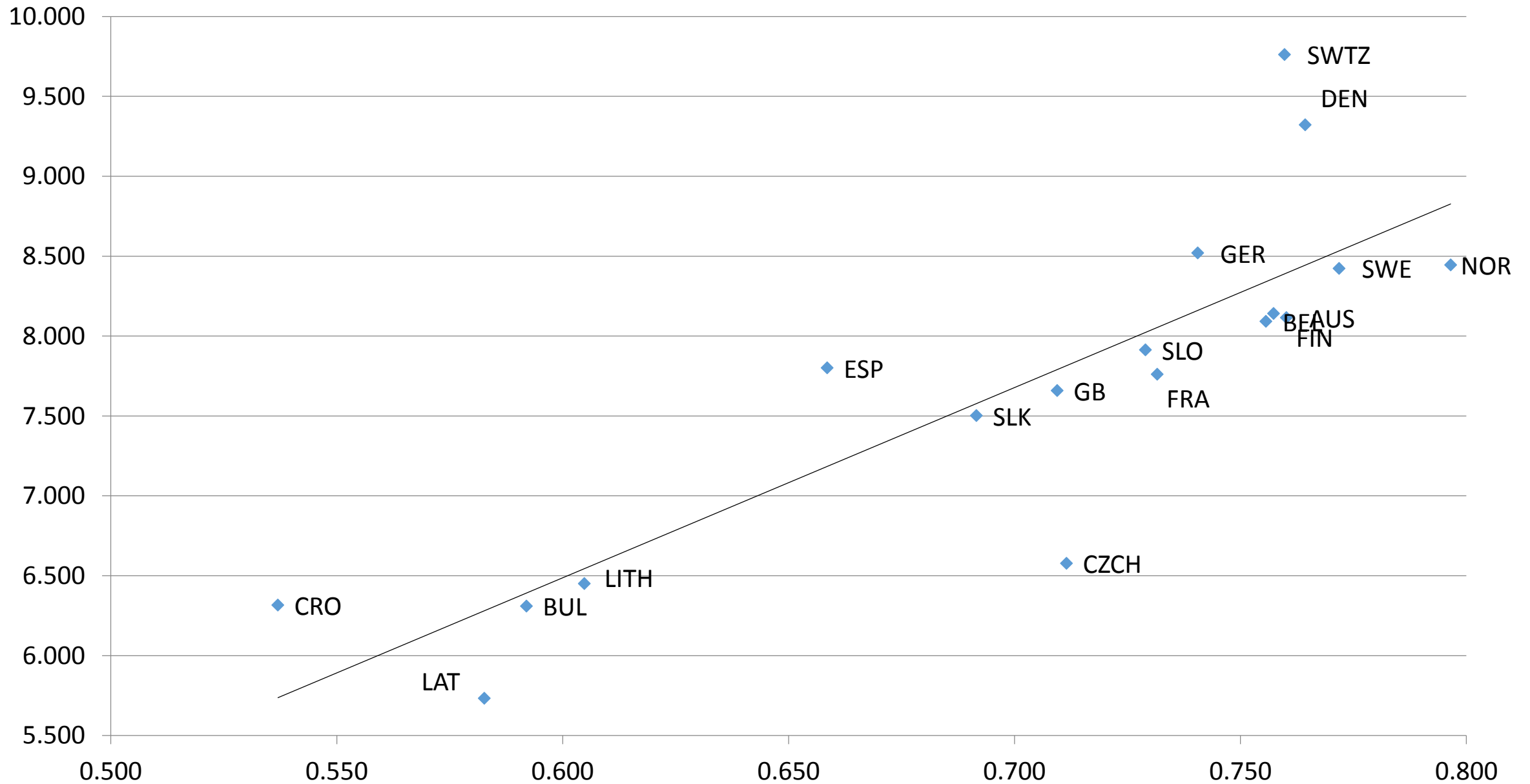


# Testing the relation between nations' wealth and environmental concern

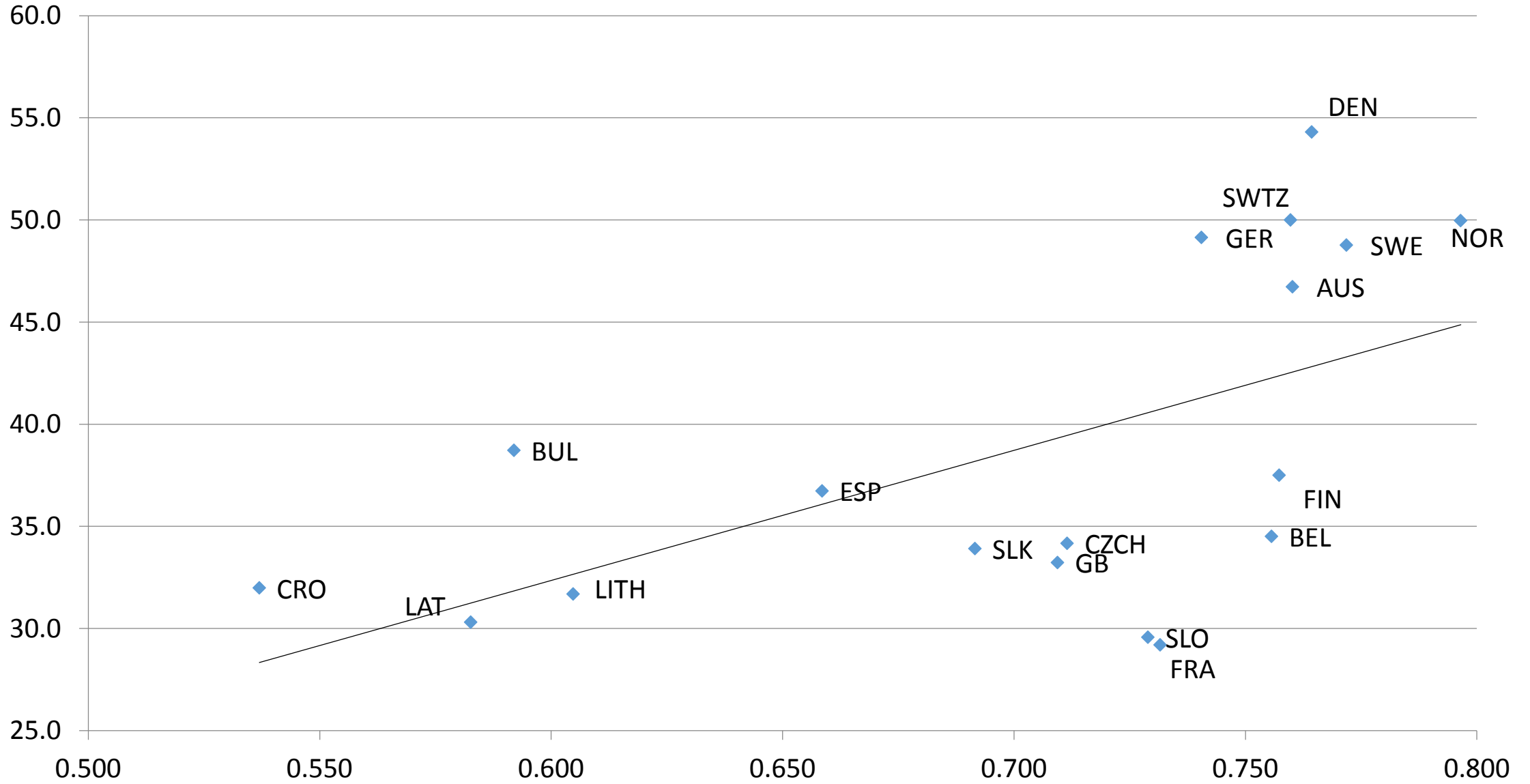
- Inglehart's (1997) prevalence of post-materialistic values in developed societies
- Dunlap and Mertig's (1997) estimation of concern through spread of globalized attitudes and direct experience of environmental degradation
- Diekmann and Franzen's (1999) prosperity thesis linking environmental concern to national wealth, regardless of the dispersion of value-sets
  - As populations become wealthier, they say, demand for higher environmental quality rises, as well as the ability to financially respond to that demand, which in the end results in a positive correlation between a country's average wealth and its level of environmental concern

Our study analyses the above described indicators for all European samples included in ISSP Environment dataset (18) in the context of the the **Inequality-adjusted Income Index – III** (2012). **III** is an indicator of the respective national inequality-adjusted income, thus representing *State's average level of prosperity* in our analyses.

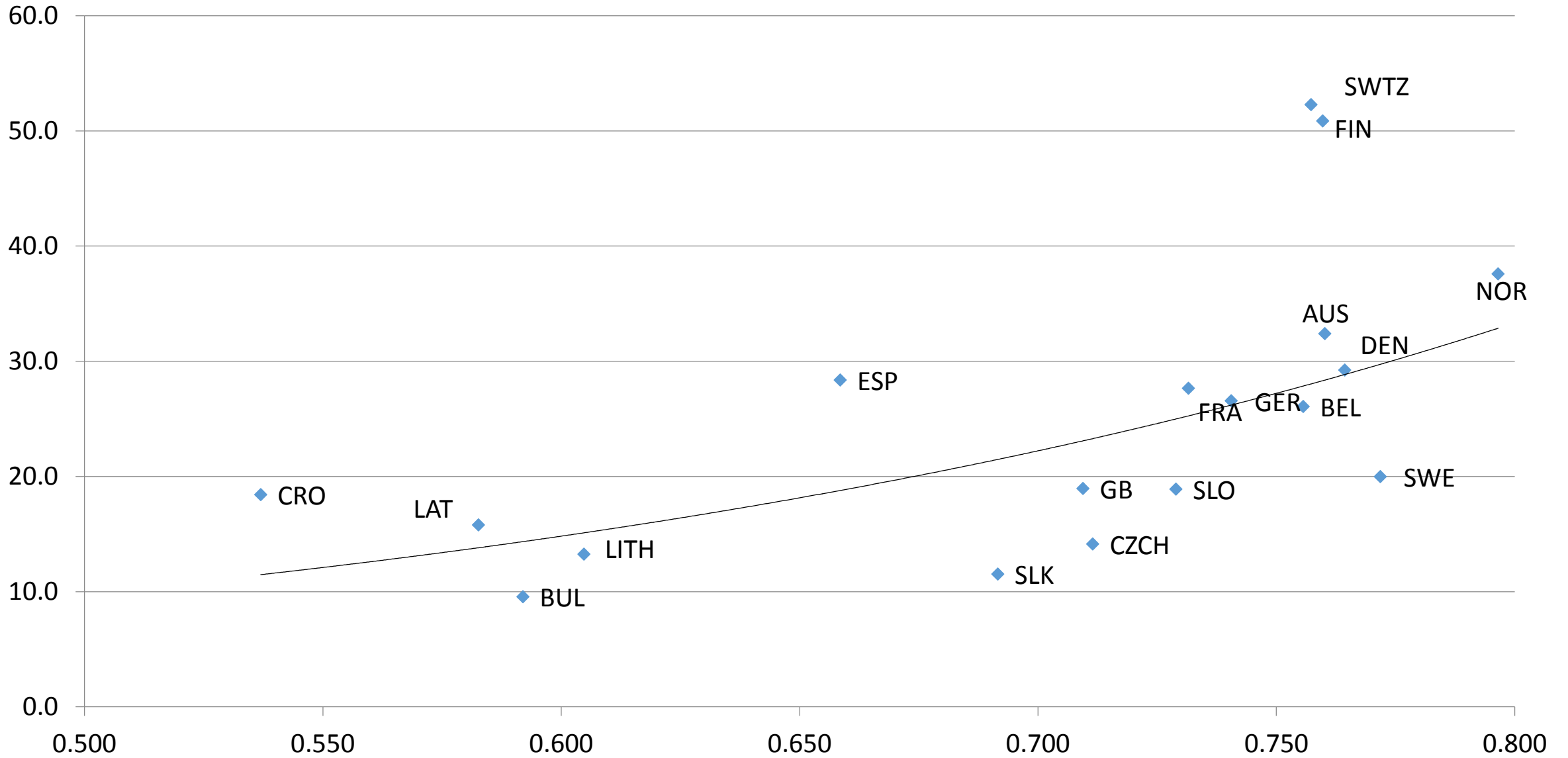
# Prosperity – Individual material sacrifice



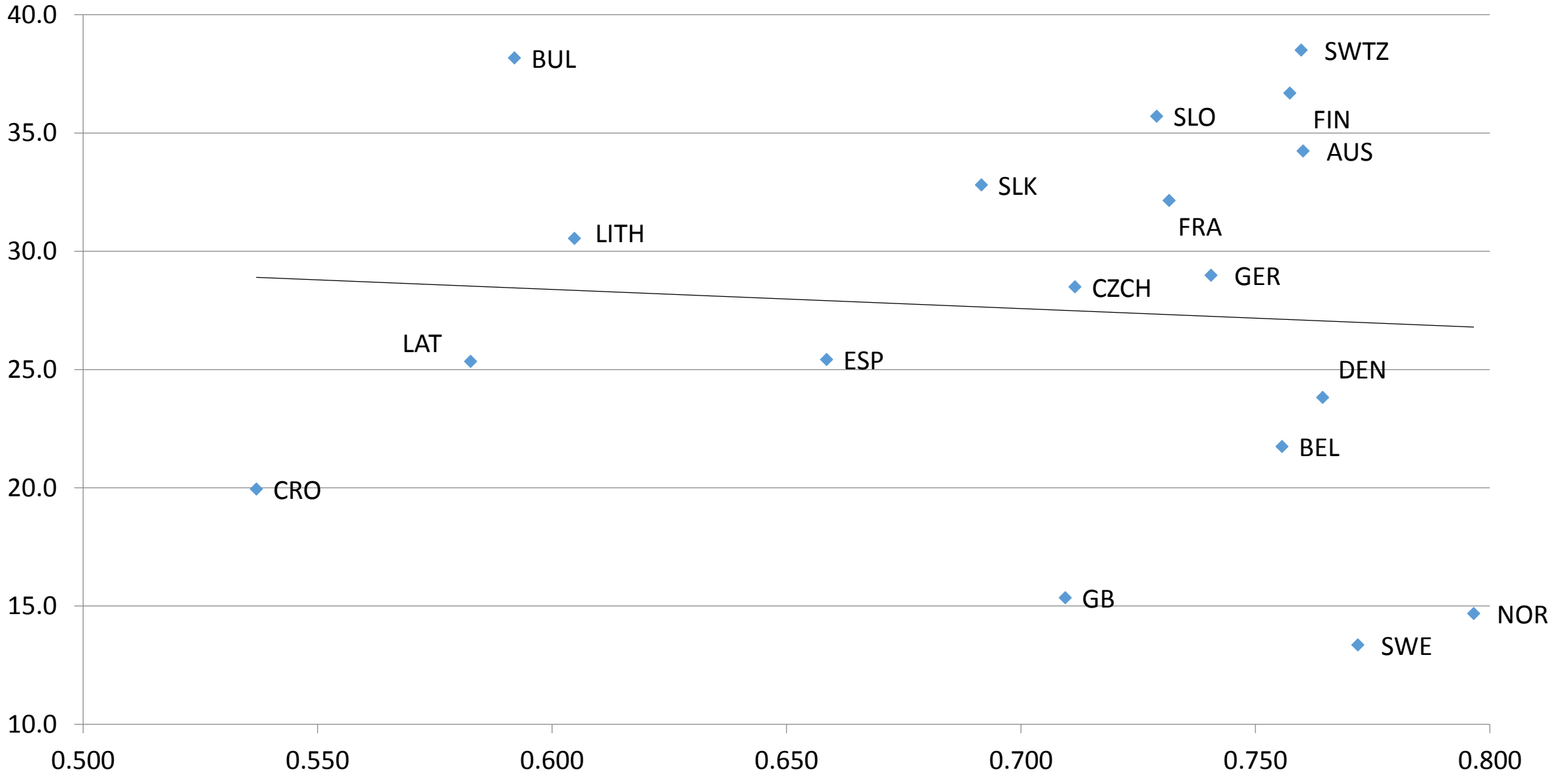
# Prosperity - Environment-economy trade-off (proenvironmental)



# Prosperity - Degrowth indicator 1



# Prosperity – Degrowth indicator 2



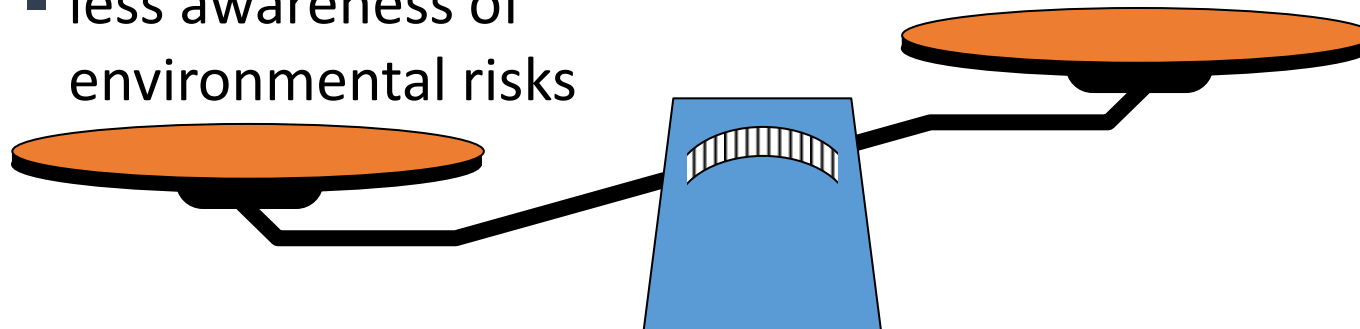
# But poverty does not induce blindness to environmental risks

## More Affluent Countries

- Austria, Finland, Sweden...
- less awareness of environmental risks

## Less Affluent Countries

- Croatia, Bulgaria, Slovakia...
- more awareness of environmental risks



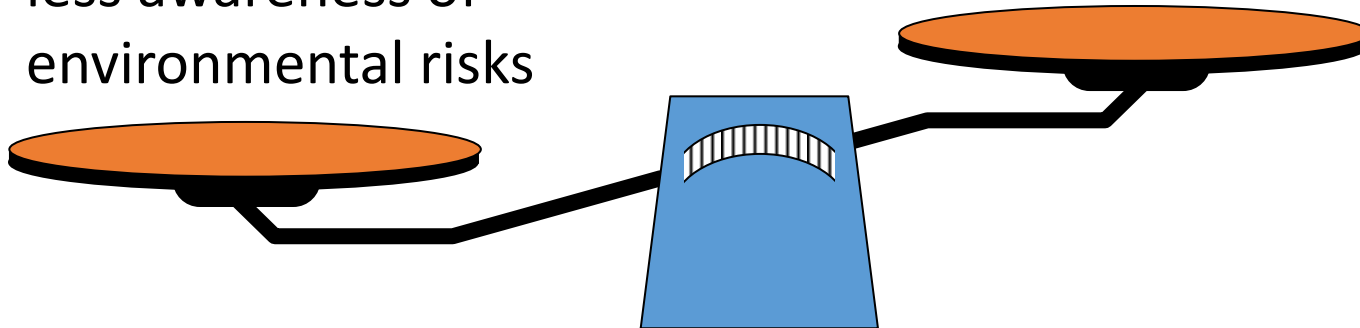
# Neoliberal techno-optimism dampens environmental risks perception among wealthier countries

## Strong neoliberal orientation

- Scandinavia, Great Britain
- less awareness of environmental risks

## Weak neoliberal orientation

- Austria, France, Spain
- more awareness of environmental risks



# Conclusion

- Individual sacrifice for degrowth – prosperity thesis as valid explanatory frame of differences in attitudes among European state populations
- General-normative degrowth attitudes gradually deviate from prosperity thesis
- Environmentalism of the semiperiphery – collective degrowth potential not dependent solely on wealth
  - Degrowth as individual material sacrifice boosted by affluence