



ACTIVITY 1.1

METHODOLOGY FOR INVOLVEMENT OF CITIZENS

AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS (INDUSTRY, NGOS) IN

DELIVERABLE 1.1.1

**JOINT METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK
FOR DEVELOPING BOTTOM-UP ENERGY
PLANNING PROCESS ACROSS THE CE**

07 2019



Introduction

International experiences have demonstrated that with applying stakeholder engagement methods, more useful and applicable strategies are produced. The chances of putting into practice are much higher this way, than they would be in a “traditional” planning process, which would miss these stages. Through the traditional method a concept is forced on the stakeholders by the decision makers, while in an inclusive planning, proposed in this concept paper, the stakeholders can have a say what they would need, what they find important or even crucial.

Further advantage of involvement in the strategy making is that a broad range of stakeholders will gain good knowledge and become well-informed about the planning process and the strategy, and, at the same time their experience, knowledge and expertise can be exploited, and their ideas utilized. The mutual information-exchange will result in a better strategy, and the transparent, democratic planning process will increase the willingness to cooperate and implement the strategy.

Developing a SEAP / SECAP is a complex work, where municipalities play the main role. However, since they are directly responsible for only a certain percentage of resource usage and related emissions, all local actors have roles and responsibilities regarding the issue. The purpose of the project is to test so-called “bottom up” approach that will enable citizens to actively participate in the same. Therefore it is essential to inform and involve stakeholders (institutions, enterprises, civil society organisations, lay public) as early as possible. Currently citizens and other stakeholders are involved in local energy planning only at the end of the process - at the approval phase of energy plans. Such an approach creates an atmosphere of mistrust that makes it challenging to implement the plans in the future.

Purpose of stakeholder engagement

The ENES-CE project is designed to involve citizens at the very beginning of the planning process. This will be done through a series of workshops and tools, through which the existing energy plans will be revised and future ones co-developed. This will include:

1. Co-design tools for active citizens involvement into the planning process designing of strategic documents related to the energy sector
2. Energy infrastructure investment guidelines and
3. Communication methods for local energy plans.

Using these tools the new SEAPs or SECAPs are going to be developed as well as new citizen groups that are going to be actively involved in local energy development. Additional workshops will be organized in collaboration with citizens, technical and municipality partners. Both technical and municipality partners will help citizens in the implementation of energy plans in the future. In order to ensure a transnational dimension the project will also develop guidelines on developing citizen energy



investments and will publish all its major deliverables on a dedicated online platform. Finally the tools and methods developed in the first project phases will be tested. This will be done by implementing a pilot project and organizing an citizen energy group in the partner municipalities. During the testing the municipal officials and the new citizen group will work together to implement the project.

Planning the process

A traditional planning process is usually linear, meaning that the local government (or a subcontracted company) assesses the conditions, needs, financial resources of the municipality and the legal and other requirements. Taking into account the results, a strategy or a plan is elaborated, which is, after certain amendments, approved by the council or the governing body. The assessment is often limited by the staff's time, capacity, as well as the difficulties of access to relevant information and data.

Unfortunately, strategies carried out this way often not at all, or only to a small extent, materialize. It is because of the following:

- the strategy/plan has not been preceded by appropriate data collection, the baseline inventory is not well-assessed;
- the strategy/plan does not solve the real problems of the municipality;
- because of lack of resources investments have to be cancelled;
- contents of the strategy/plan do not find acceptance among municipality workers, nor stakeholders, and even the leaders of the municipality do not adapt, stand up for or follow it;
- measures of the strategy/plan does not meet the ideas of the public or certain interest groups, moreover, they might contradict those interests;
- there are no tools to implement or comply with the strategy/plan;
- monitoring activities are missing, efficiency and productiveness therefore cannot be evaluated, the impacts of steps and measures cannot be assessed;
- the strategy/plan is not coherent enough, it is merely the series of individual steps and activities.

Principally, it is worth conducting a process with engaging stakeholders, although it is much more complicated and time consuming. However, the implementation of the strategy/plan is much more likely if those who will be affected by this document and who might actually have to make changes in their activities, approve of the aims and objectives of the plan. The invested energy and effort will be greatly remunerated, as later on much less will be needed for persuasion and compliance. It is essential to make stakeholders understand that resource efficiency is a complex issue, where leading role is taken by the municipality, but everybody else has their individual responsibilities and roles.

It is important to try to include all relevant stakeholders, however, it has to be emphasized that, as a rule, everyone does not have to be involved in everything. With



good planning, and the agreement of participants, different people can be involved only in those parts of the process which are most relevant to them.

When planning a stakeholder endorsement process, municipalities have to bear in mind that it is not a linear process. There is no single best way, as many things depend on the specific context, issues and needs. In reality, the various steps and decisions are greatly interlinked and take place in parallel. Therefore, it will always be an iterative process, allowing a number of feedback points in the course of progression.

The previous text describes the more traditional approach to engaging stakeholders in SEAP/SECAP planning. This has been expanded further in Annex A where the full and detailed description of traditional methods for stakeholder engagement can be found. However within this project we intend to go a step further and include some new steps to enhance engagement (Table 1). Indeed this is the innovative segment of this project, whose main idea is essentially to improve the traditional methods employed in SEAP/SECAP development (Annex A), and which have until this date failed to achieve active citizen engagement. Based on the application form and grant agreement the new innovative process should look as follows:

- Assessment of current situation (the status quo) of SEAP/SECAP implementation
- Workshop: Ideation and visualization > gathering citizens opinions and inputs for what the SEAP/SECAP should look like > this is preceded by designing the co-design methods tool box
- Rewriting of the SEAP/SECAP according to inputs from citizens
- Workshop: Technical workshop to evaluate in more detail specific projects that have been selected as candidates for the pilot/testing phase > this is followed by the development of a tool that helps municipalities evaluate projects. This should be an Excel tool that ranks local projects according to some given criteria such as inclusiveness, ability of citizens to participate, profitability, environmental impact etc.
- Presenting the rewritten SEAP/SECAP to a wider audience > this is followed by the development of communication methods that should support municipalities in communicating their plans to wider audiences
- Entering into the pilot phase / testing phase where in each municipality a citizen group is formed. Together with the municipality they implement the selected test project (the 15.000 EUR each public authority partner has allocated).



Table 1: Activities and deliverables of the ENES-CE project

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	DELIVERY MONTH
Joint methodological framework for developing bottom-up energy planning process across the Central Europe	A methodology for revising local energy plans in Central Europe	07.2019
Status quo analysis of the local energy plans	The current energy plans will be assessed in terms of their data quality, proposed projects, their economics and GHG emission savings	09.2019
Need assessment for the establishment of city energy groups in each partnering municipality	The needs of the local communities will be assessed based on stakeholder interviews - per each municipality a total of 6 interviews with citizens and industry stakeholders will be conducted	09.2019
Analysis of existing support tools for energy planning and previous project results	Overview of existing tools and guidelines for integrated energy planning, analysis of investments and evaluation of implemented citizens projects	09.2019
Tool 1: Co-design workshop methods for engaging citizens into local energy planning	These methods will include visualization and ideation exercises through which participants are engaged in expressing their concerns, ideas and visions for the future energy systems	12.2019
Workshop 1: Ideation and visualisation	Citizens and other stakeholders will come together to discuss the current	12.2019



	energy plan. This will be done through co-design methods such as visualisation and ideation.	
Local energy plans revision based on citizens and other stakeholder inputs	Based on the results from Workshop 1 the local energy plans have been revised and a new energy roadmap has been developed. The top 3 projects that can be considered for the pilots have been suggested	03.2020
Workshop 2: Technical workshop on revised energy plans: presentation of the top 3 selected projects	During this workshop the participants are presented the revised energy plan and are invited into a discussion (again using the previously developed co-design tools)	05.2020
Community energy investment guidelines - technical, business and legal aspects	Assessment tool: an excel based tool aimed at helping communities identify community energy projects, their legal aspects and economic feasibility	05.2020
Communication methods for local energy plans and creating an atmosphere of acceptance	A combination of methods to effectively communicate local energy plans using social media, traditional media (radio, TV) and events	07.2020
Communication strategies for presenting the revised energy plans to the general public	Communication strategies for presenting the newly revised energy plans have been developed for each municipality in Central Europe	08.2020
Workshop 3: Presentation of new strategies to the wider public	The new energy plans will be presented to the public - tools from the communication package will be used, making sure the new energy	09.2020



	plans are easily understandable	
Knowledge base with repository of best practices community energy and analysis of citizens investment	Report: A common analytical report on best practices and institutional, legal, policy environment to establishment of community energy projects and investments participatory investment mechanisms in CE	12.2020
Design of guidelines for developing citizen energy investments in Central Europe	A common guideline detailing a step by step approach to developing energy cooperatives or other forms of citizen energy groups	12.2020
Workshop 4: Workshops for citizens and stakeholders	A series of workshops where citizens and stakeholders (from industry, sectoral agencies, BSOs, etc.) will be engaged in setting up the consumer energy group with specific tasks.	06.2021
Creation of citizen energy group	A citizen energy group that bridges the gap between the municipality and citizens in implementing the measures from SEAP/SECAP will be established	06.2021
Definition of pilot action	Pilot project activity to be implemented will be defined within cooperation of local authority representatives, regional energy agency as a project partner and newly established citizen energy group after SEAP/SECAP revision	06.2021
Implementing the defined pilot actions	The pilot actions will be implemented and these will include energy savings	02.2022



	measures that have been defined by citizens through the SEAP revision (up to 15.000 EUR value investment)	
Report on pilot project implementation	Report: the lesson learned from implementing the pilot action and establishing the citizen energy group	02.2022

The proposed methodology is based on mutual cooperation between all project partners. It also represents deliverables on a general level, however each of the activities will be tailored to the individual needs of the partners.

Annex A

Stakeholder platform manager

Even the simplest engagement process will benefit from a person (or even better: a small team, if there is enough capacity) dedicated to this particular part of the project, to ensure that the process planning is taken seriously and programmed into people's work schedules. The stakeholder platform manager can be the same person who is responsible for delivering the process, or a separate delivery team may be established, in which case very close working relationships need to be established.

Whoever is selected to be the stakeholder platform manager should be involved as early as possible. Their tasks will include defining the scope of the process, working out an engagement plan, identifying and informing stakeholders, communicating aims of the project, applying engagement methods and techniques, organizing forums, events, defining outputs and channelling them into the project, carrying out follow-ups reporting, etc. For more efficient work it is beneficial that the stakeholder platform manager joins the project team (see next part).

Scope of the project

The reason for defining the scope of stakeholder involvement, is to clarify exactly what the boundaries are, i.e. what can really be achieved in practice.

Usually, the initiation for elaborating a strategy/plan comes from the main decision-makers of the municipality. However, it is not rare, that they articulate only the intention, but do not know the details of such a process. When the intention is strong, a project team is developed, which comprises representatives from the municipalities and the actual developer who is entrusted with the construction/revision of the strategy/plan. During the revision process the project team, analyse the measures taken



and the progress made, then set new objectives, activities, expected outcomes, etc. These details should be presented to the leading decision makers of the municipalities.

Once the project gets support from the main decision makers, it is time to start working on the engagement plan, which is the task of the stakeholder platform manager. An engagement plan can be as detailed as possible, but there are required elements, which in all cases have to be included: timeframes, required resources, desired outcomes, communication strategy, delivery logistics, selection of methods. When the engagement plan gets accepted, the engagement process can start, usually with the identification of who to involve.

Identifying stakeholders

Identifying who should be involved/consulted in the engagement process is perhaps one of the most difficult parts. Finding the right mix of participants, and ensuring that no group is unintentionally (or perhaps, deliberately) excluded, is essential to provide legitimacy and credibility to the engagement process.

In the context of public participation, a stakeholder can be defined as any person, or group, who has an interest in the project or could be potentially affected by its delivery or outputs. It is sensible to identify the broadest pool of stakeholders, so that all affected parties and fields can have a chance to be represented, and later on there can be no accusation of being left out.

Potential stakeholders are (if applicable):

- energy agencies,
- municipality workers and experts,
- public utilities (electricity, gas, water, waste, sewage works),
- authorities,
- transportation companies (local bus, train,...),
- civil society organisations,
- energy producers,
- energy associations, interest groups,
- industries, major companies, chambers,
- economic leaders, analysers, experts,
- trading companies,
- public roads administration,
- agricultural experts,
- public authority for water,



- architectures,
- consumer protection organisations,
- health care organisations,
- trade unions,
- educational institutions,
- social institutions,
- building associations,
- journalists, media contacts,
- and the broader public, local residents.

These institutions, companies, organisations, individuals must be mapped and contacted, and a short written introduction of the project should be communicated towards them, as well as the possibility for further participation. If the aim is to be inclusive and open to whoever wants to be involved, the best approach is often to identify an initial list of people and then ask them who else they think should be involved.

Not all stakeholders are equally interested in and affected by the project. Therefore it is not necessary to include them to the same extent. It has to be decided in advance what the purpose is with each stakeholder: whether we would like to get information/data, technical or professional assistance, just general contributions, or just would like to provide the opportunity to express their concerns (which is usually the case with the broader public of local residents). The stakeholder platform manager has to decide which group of stakeholders to involve in which part/stage of the process.

The possibility to participate should be directly communicated to the identified stakeholders (via regular mail, electronic mail, telephone, or in any other channels of accessibility), as well as publicized to local residents on homepages, in local newspapers, social media and on the notice board of the municipality. The information should contain the fundamental details of the project as well as the main stages of participation.

Methods for stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder forums

Engaging stakeholders often starts with organizing meetings, forums. Based on the personal contacts acquired through these events, cooperation can continue in written forms, with some forums to discuss sub-results.

If the skills do not exist within the municipality or the project team to deliver the engagement process, then professionals such as facilitators can provide valuable



contribution, especially if the issue is likely to be controversial or when the independence of the facilitation could be an issue.

It is advantageous, if the main discussion points of the event are circulated among stakeholders in advance, so that they can be prepared with questions and comments.

The forums can be organized thematically, where the first forum is an introductory one. It should be held as early as possible, when the aims, objectives, main milestones, required outcomes are defined.

(1) Initiation of the project, informing stakeholders, opening active communication channels. During this forum the concept of a resource efficiency plan is introduced. Its significance, main elements and the planned work process are presented to the participants. The points which have to be emphasized are the advantages such a resource efficiency plan can bring to the municipality, as well as what the town/city expects from stakeholder involvement (not only contributions regarding the strategy, but providing input data as well).

The role of the stakeholders at this preliminary event is to express whether they support the initiation and what kind of obstacles they envisage during implementation. These comments, remarks and questions have to be recorded and steps have to be taken in order to be prepared for these possible obstacles and opposite interests. Also, local residents can express here which part of the strategy they find more important, which has greater local consequence, what kind of developments and investments they would like to see in their town/city, etc.

This is the event where technical details have to be shared: who the contact person for the project is, how further communication will be enhanced, what topics will be covered in future forums.

(2) Collecting and disclosing data. This second forum can focus on more particular issues, such as the collection of data from different stakeholders. Participants may be limited to those from whom the data are needed. Explaining why these data are important and how they will be used could increase willingness to disclose information about their activities. A presentation of the results based on the already disclosed data would help this process even more. This is the place and time when a true dialogue can start, as the process arrived at a certain point (the project team has some data, and based on them they have results), but the “picture” has just started to be drawn, more data are needed, some existing information need to be clarified or discussed. Regarding the nature of this forum, if the project does not suffer from lack of data, it might as well be skipped, or substituted with other specific subjects.

(3) Defining city-specific aims and priorities. After the stakeholders learnt about the project at the introductory forum, where the general aims have been presented, it is profitable to organize a meeting on revising and structuring the aims and objectives. During this event, stakeholders can express their views about what the priorities of the plan should be in their municipalities. If a preliminary assessment has been conducted,



for instance on present conditions or potentials, its results can be presented, so that those aspects can be taken into consideration by the participants.

(4) Presenting the strategy. Based on the work of the project team and on the outcomes of the stakeholder forums, the draft of the revised strategy is to be introduced. Contributions, remarks, comments, questions, debates are part of this forum, after which corrections and amendments can and has to be made to the strategy, to form the final version.

(5) Targeted forums with focus groups. During strategy making, at certain points, it makes sense to organize forums on specific topics, to specific groups of stakeholders, the so called focus groups. Such can be an expert forum, discussing particular topics, themes and questions in a structured way. It is also a good idea to organize a meeting for civil society organisations. They often prove to be valuable partners, possessing constructive views and ideas. Also, they have their own channels and forums to advertise the project and the stakeholder engagement process.

Useful tips for organizing stakeholder forums

Spend sufficient time on preparation. Organizing a forum takes at least 6 weeks. Time is needed for finding suitable venue and date, reaching all stakeholders, compiling and disseminating materials.

Be flexible. There will always be people who cannot be reached or disregard the invitation, even if their presence would be important. They have to be approached by several means, contacting them only by e-mail is not sufficient. Methods like regular mail, mailing lists and the internet have to be used. The most effective ways are personal communication and telephone call.

Use a facilitator. As emphasized earlier, an experienced moderator who leads the forum is a gift. They know and can apply several methods to keep the discussion focused, to serve the aim of decision making. This way no comments will be “lost”, the participants will keep to the topic and conflicts can be managed more easily.

Use existing resources. If there are structures, organizations, initiations, working groups, etc. in the municipality related to the subject, involve them not only as stakeholders, but as supporters in the process of stakeholder endorsement. They have connections to many other possible stakeholders, their communication channels can also be used for disseminating information (such as mailing lists, newsletters).

Be formal. Invitation for forums should arrive from the mayor, or a high position decision maker. This gives earnestness and commitment to the issue. Decision makers, experts and administrators of the municipality should attend these forums.

Be personal. Besides being formal, and providing the earnestness, there should be opportunity (a long coffee break, for instance) for being personal: to make contacts, exchange information. Meetings such as stakeholder forums are good occasions for evolving partnerships and networks, which later will be of good service for the cause.



Be professional. Invite people who possess practical knowledge, like field workers, constructors, technicians. They represent crucial elements of the actual implementation of the strategy/plan, their experience is priceless.

Plan the communication. The ideal situation is if there are resources for communication purposes: a separate budget, capacity, infrastructure. They are needed for organizing media activity, compiling brochures, leaflets, newsletters, maintaining websites, writing articles, etc. Local media (newspaper, radio, television) are invaluable sources, through which local public can be informed. Information on the municipality website has to be kept up-to-date. Communication methods like competitions, games can draw attention and activate the public. The source of information has to be greatly publicized, let it be a particular contact person who can be asked, or even an office where all related information and documents can be found (see chapter on communication).

Be efficient. Depending on the size of the municipality, it is worth limiting the number of participants to 20-30 people, as a larger group of people cannot work together efficiently. If there is greater interest, consider forming working groups.

Draw attention. Find the advantages, the messages which make stakeholders really interested. It is important to make them see why and how they are affected and how they can benefit from participating.

Take the time. One way of ensuring stakeholders about the earnestness of the process is that there is enough time for discussion. Ideally the forum should last a couple of hours (2-3). Presentations and providing information should not take up much more time than the discussion part.

Listen to participants. Ask them about the organization and logistics of the forum as well. Learn about what they expect, what they would change. One method for this is asking them to fill out an evaluation form.

Record and consider remarks. It is beneficial if, besides taking written notes, the whole meeting is recorded (an audio or a video record is made). This would prove useful when details need to be taken into consideration. The written summary of the meeting has to be disseminated, providing opportunity for completion and/or amendment. Opinions and comments should be collected, summed up and circulated (make it anonym!). These comments can later on be referred to in draft materials, so that it can be followed how they influenced the process and the strategy.

Questionnaires, surveys

This method requires less organization and enables access to large samples of individuals. However, questions to be asked must carefully be considered, preferably put together with the help of a survey expert. Questions can target different fields, ranging from general public knowledge about resource efficiency, through attitudes to taking actions, to such specific issues as what kind of developments and investments they would like to see in the municipality and which direction of (sustainable) development



they would like their city to follow. Some questionnaires can be grouped around these topics and targeted to different groups of stakeholders, while others can be intended to collect general opinions.

For the general public, local residents, prepare a shorter questionnaire. Experience shows that the longer it takes to fill out a form, the fewer questionnaires arrive back. These questionnaires should usually target general knowledge, attitude towards the subject, and willingness to make actions. Several methods should be applied parallel to each other, in order to gain a sufficient amount of filled questionnaires. Placing boxes at public places of the municipality (mayor's office, public library, public service office, community centre, etc) is a good way of collecting. Festivals, public events can also be used for publicizing, where a separate information stall, posters and boxes for collecting written contributions can help the process. Street surveys also augment the number of questionnaires. Online questionnaires can be attractive because of the easier handling and submission.

The drawback of questionnaires is that they provide little opportunity for dialogue, resulting in possible misinterpretations.

Written contributions

In many stages of the work this method can be applied. When a draft or part of the (revised) plan/strategy is ready, it can be distributed among stakeholders, asking for their written contributions. Provide sufficient time for them to be able to consider it carefully.

Personal interviews

This method can be applied at fields which are of high priority to the municipality, or which needs the most intervention. Locals engaged in that field can be approached personally for interviews about related issues, problems and local specialities.

Taking comments into account

Stakeholder platform managers should report back to the public how comments have been taken into account, e.g. through a written report. All comments received should be documented in the report, as well as which arguments have been accepted and which not and why not. The report proves that the comments were considered seriously. It supports the transparency and credibility of the stakeholder engagement process and it makes the decision-making more accountable. It also increases trust.

As a method, it can be helpful to draw up a table where the submitted arguments and the way they have changed the draft are documented. This is a good method when many comments are received, because similar arguments can be clustered in the table.



Problems to tackle

During the process of stakeholder engagement the project team might encounter some problems, which are worth to be prepared for.

Lack of time and capacity

One difficulty is when municipality workers are overloaded. Municipalities have to handle countless tasks, many of them required by law, thus it should come as no surprise if they find low interest in making/revising a strategy/plan. Therefore, it is of utmost interest to create a positive political background, a political will around the topic. The best way of this is a formal decision by the mayor or the city council. After this it is easier to allocate time, resources and capacity, and win the key actors within the municipality (energy expert, environmental expert, chief architect, etc.) to the cause. They are the ones who can add most to the plan with data, expertise, experience and working hours.

Although it is not part of the engagement process, but it has to be emphasized here that capacity has to be allocated to the implementation stage as well. There is nothing worse when putting the effort into creating a strategy/plan, which is later on not implemented.

Opposite interests

There might be opposite interests, like on economic terms, regarding aims and certain measures of the strategy/plan. Actually, this is a very good reason to conduct stakeholder involvement: if those, who are likely to have opposite interests, are engaged at an early stage in the process, it helps to get these problems, these supposed or existing opposite interests, soon on to the surface, which then can be assessed and tackled. Convincing arguments for financial anxiety include those which emphasize that the amount of investment will soon be remunerated if the measures and results of the plan will be applied. Environmental and social gain has to be accentuated as well.

Communication problems

Slow and erratic internal communication, or even the lack of it, can be a problem. It is difficult to reach people, information gets stuck within the office, or the system is too bureaucratic. This can be remedied by using more channels of communication, however, it is a fact that in this case more energy and time is required from the stakeholder platform manager.



Low rate of participation, small attendance

This can be avoided by efficient promotion, where the local media can be of good use. Personal contacts are invaluable, major societal actors should be addressed through their own individual interests, each group in a different, specialized way. The stakeholder platform manager can have a great role in this, motivating the different interest spheres. Further catalysts can be local civil organizations, who can be good allies of the stakeholder platform manager. At each and every document, invitation, meeting and event it has to be presented and underlined why that particular topic is important for the public, or for the specific interest groups, how their work and everyday life is affected by that matter. It is always worth to indicate what results their participation has yielded so far, how their remarks, comments and recommendations have been taken into account, used and built in the document. If it is needed, anonymity has to be guaranteed.

Review and evaluation

A structured review process is crucial to ensure continuous learning. As stakeholder engagement is an iterative process, it is worth inserting in regular evaluation. This way mistakes can be corrected during the process, and it makes it possible to cope with unforeseen circumstances as they arise. Also, the review process provides checks as to whether the process is meeting the purpose agreed at the start. This can happen through the regular design/delivery of team meetings. This approach is especially useful if the team undertaking the analysis has a broad knowledge of other methods available so that if the current approach is not working an alternative method can be used. Things to be assessed and evaluated include: the level of participation (is the project team satisfied with it?), the methods and techniques applied (are they appropriate? Is there a need for a greater variety?), level and range of responses (do the contributions serve the aim?), outcomes (are we getting what we desire?).