

BESTGRID – Lessons learned

The project

The project was developed, to put into practice what many partners had agreed upon by signing the [European Grid Declaration](#) on Electricity Network Development and Nature Conservation in Europe and its extension on transparency and participation. Five pilot projects for renewables grid expansion were developed and implemented in the UK, Belgium and Germany with strong collaboration of TSOs and NGOs. During the projects, new approaches to increase public acceptance and to speed up permitting procedures, while respecting or surpassing standards for environmental protection, were tested.

Specific objectives

1. Improve local public acceptance for grids by applying best practices in participation and transparency in pilot projects
2. Speed up permitting procedures while respecting or surpassing environmental protection standards in pilot projects
3. Support implementation of best practices in future electricity grid “Projects of Common Interest”

Key lessons learned

1. Adapt to specific circumstances

Application of good practices requires adaptation to specific circumstances – each project and its social and political context are different and action plans need to reflect this and flexibly adjust to it.

2. Successful stakeholder engagement needs personal relationships

Personal interaction and relationships are possibly the most important element of successful stakeholder engagement.

3. Successful engagement needs organisational backing

Honest stakeholder engagement needs strong organizational and political backing.

4. Always be ready to explain the need

Explaining the need for a project is a task that is never fully completed, even if the debate has taken place and technical ‘proof’ has been provided in previous steps of the process.

5. Legislation can help the process

Although unable to replace trust building, suitable legislation can ensure a minimum level of transparency and public participation.

6. It takes time to see the effect of actions taken

To build trust and avoid later obstacles, many steps must be taken at a very early stage. The results of these may only become evident years later, perhaps in another project altogether.

7. Need for knowledge management

Organisational procedures must secure satisfactory intra-organisational learning and handover of experience and relationships in order to safeguard established knowledge and

relationships.

8. Meaningful dialogue needs mutual understanding

Developers must do more to understand how the issues are framed by public and stakeholder groups, to treat their concerns as legitimate, to learn from them and adapt to them.

9. NGO involvement helps to improve projects

Involving NGOs in the design and delivery of stakeholder engagement and environmental protection procedures helps to improve projects and build trust.

10. Engagement beyond the concrete project provides additional value

By developing longer-term partnerships, NGOs and TSOs can continue effective communication beyond a one off pilot project and develop and maintain valuable personal relationships.

Partners

Coordinator: Renewables Grid Initiative

NGOs: Germanwatch e.V. (Germany), BirdLife Europe

TSOs: Elia (Belgium), 50Hertz (Germany), TenneT (Germany/ The Netherlands), National Grid (UK), Terna (Italy)

Research institute: International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (Austria)

10 further NGOs supported the 5 pilot projects locally. You can find more information about BESTGRID at www.bestgrid.eu

Timeframe

April 2013 – October 2015 (31 months)

Funding

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