June 2014
Workshop Summary

1st BESTGRID international dissemination workshop
"The Future of Social Acceptance"
21st May 2014 in Hamburg
A workshop hosted by TenneT

Agenda

Morning sessions: presentations of two BESTGRID pilot projects in Germany (SuedLink) and Belgium (Braine l'Alleud – Waterloo) from responsible TSOs (TenneT and Elia) and cooperating NGOs (Germanwatch and IEW)
Afternoon sessions: three discussion groups on EU-sponsored online toolkit for increased stakeholder dialogue, innovative participatory approaches, and energy and democracy; panel discussion on lessons learned from current political discussions in Bavaria

Participation

~80 participants from TSOs, NGOs, politics, authorities, industry, and academia

1. The BESTGRID pilot projects from the TSO and NGO perspectives

TenneT's SuedLink project

Covers presentations by Dr. Christian Schneller and Marius Strecker, TenneT and Rotraud Hänlein, Germanwatch

The German energy transition has two implications for energy generation: firstly, generation is moving from conventional fossil-fuel generation to a system based on renewables and secondly, the geographic spread is changing from generation that is close to demand centres to a system where generation is mainly located in the north, while the biggest demand centres are in the south and west of Germany. Both developments stir the need for the modernization and development of the electricity grid. SuedLink is one of the main grid projects that addresses these two developments and will span over 800 kilometres from north to south Germany. The need for the project has been determined by a national legislative procedure that entails a grid plan compiled by all four German TSOs which is consulted on three times and approved by the regulator. In the end, the plan resulted in a federal law adopted by the German parliament.

The project faces different challenges that relate to a new permitting procedure and its size:

- A new permitting procedure was introduced in Germany in 2012 and SuedLink will be among the first projects to which this procedure applies. To ensure a consistent approach for all of the upcoming projects, the four TSOs developed a 'sample application' (Musterantrag). It is publicly

available (www.netzentwicklungsplan.de).

- The geographic extent of the investigation is very big. At the beginning, one quarter of Germany's territory had to be considered. TenneT had to come up with a system of analysis and examination that is both feasible in the foreseen timeframe and still gives enough insight in narrowing down the examination area.

Based on desk research findings (mainly GIS data, maps from regions and municipalities), TenneT decided on a preferred corridor that was presented to the public at the beginning of this year. Input from ongoing discussions with the public will be collected that will form the basis for more corridor alternatives that are necessary for the official permitting procedure.

Concerning its information activities, TenneT started talking to the federal state governments, continued to do so with regional and local authorities and politicians and is currently in the middle of informing the public by way of its information markets. Since March, 20 markets have been realised and visited by ~300 people each. Input from citizens will be collected at the information markets and every citizen will receive a personal written answer if s/he makes a suggestion/request. So far, TenneT has received almost 2,000 requests that include very concrete input, such as forest kindergartens. They will be included in the official application documents that TenneT is going to submit in the course of this year.

At the beginning of its public activities, TenneT had commissioned a public survey to find out more about the public's opinion on grid expansion. The results showed that the majority of people supported grid expansion related to the "Energiewende". After the first months of public information and discussion activities, TenneT has analysed media coverage on SuedLink and is very satisfied with the result: more than 80% of media reports are either neutral or positive.

In addition to its activities concerning communication, dialogue and participation, TenneT activities within BESTGRID concern environmental issues and have entered into a contract with the regional BirdLife branch Nabu Lower Saxony. It foresees strong cooperation at the early stages of the project that will focus on two main topics: a) Biotope linkage and ecological transmission line planning and b) Nature conservation and technology – aims and implementation.

Germanwatch is a development and environmental NGO that is one of BESTGRID's consortium partners. In their point of view, what makes TenneT's BESTGRID activities special is that information is provided before the official permitting procedures have started and thus, before any decision has yet been taken. This gives citizens the chance to contribute to route planning procedures by voicing their concerns and participate in discussions on how they feel the new line should be built.

Germanwatch visited some of the current TenneT information markets to form their own opinion and give feedback. In general, their impressions were rather positive and what was particularly very positively evaluated were the info market format, the number of TenneT employees present to answer questions, and the different opportunities for citizens to state their concerns. However, in their opinion, an overview of grid development in the region, Germany or even Europe aimed at helping people understand the broader context, is still missing. One critical point that was raised by citizen action groups during a discussion workshop concerns the presentation of one preferred route corridor. The info markets that TenneT is currently running are all taking place in locations that lie inside the preferred corridor. However, if this corridor is going to change, neighbouring communities could be surprised and not well informed enough to state their own concerns in due time.

Both presentations stirred a discussion about different national regulations on **financial compensation**. In the Netherlands, TenneT is responsible for compensation measures for landscape impact, meaning that people living close to a new power line receive money. In other countries, only landowners whose land is being used for pylon construction are entitled for compensation. A third option foresees financial compensation for affected communities, as opposed to single persons. Experiences on financial compensation are rather mixed. Many TSOs report that people are often not satisfied with the amount they receive and ask for more – independent of the type of regulation in place. One of TenneT Germany's initiatives, the introduction of a so-called 'citizen dividend', received strong criticism because the product was too complicated and perceived as rather risky. However, TenneT is still keen on the idea of financially involving citizens in grid development projects and very open to developing new products.

Elia's project between Braine l'Alleud and Waterloo

Covers presentations by Valérie Legat, Elia and Valérie Xhonneux, IEW

The pilot project between Braine l'Alleud and Waterloo in Belgium is driven by a special collaboration between the Belgian TSO Elia and the environmental NGO IEW (Fédération Inter-Environnement Wallonie). Concerning the information and dialogue measures for the project, IEW has supported Elia in three activities so far: 1. Stakeholder mapping, 2. in-depth stakeholder interviews and 3. workshop with regional and local authority representatives. Stakeholder mapping proved to be a successful tool in planning further activities. IEW's network of local NGO representatives provided important information on stakeholders that Elia could not have collected alone. Personal talks with local stakeholders gave access to information that could not be found in municipality directories or on the internet. In order to gather more detailed information on local peculiarities, IEW conducted eight interviews with key

stakeholders, such as local authorities, environmental groups, social and cultural groups and economic stakeholders (e.g. agricultural associations). Again, this tool proved to be helpful and as a trusted institution, IEW was able to gather more information than what would have probably been possible for Elia alone. The workshop with authority representatives was organised by both IEW and Elia and attracted 11 representatives from Braine l'Alleud and Waterloo. The fact that it was jointly organised gave it special credibility and weight. However, both partners were unsatisfied with some details regarding its implementation e.g. the seating plan or the agenda.

2. Discussion groups

EU-sponsored study on raising public acceptance for grid extension: Online toolkit for increased stakeholder dialogue as major result

Covers impulse presentation by Markus Kaufmann, Roland Berger Strategy Consultants and subsequent discussion

Discussions focused on two topics: firstly, a toolkit that has been developed in the last seven months on behalf of the European Commission and secondly, the question whether explaining European drivers for the need of power lines can help to achieve public acceptance.

1. **Online toolkit for increased stakeholder dialogue**

   In October last year, the EU's Directorate-General for Energy commissioned a consortium led by Roland Berger Strategy Consultants) to develop an online toolkit for project communication and stakeholder integration in the context of power grid development projects. The project was governed by a multi-stakeholder Steering Committee (TSOs, NGOs, DG Energy etc.). The toolkit includes detailed descriptions of different communication and engagement elements, including relevant stakeholders, different planning stages, communication channels and formats, and good practice examples. It is intended to be used by all actors involved in grid development projects, such as TSOs, authorities, NGOs or citizen action groups who would like to inform themselves on how they can become engaged in the process.

   Participants of the discussion group stressed the need for regular updates of the online toolkit once it is online. Only if information is kept updated will people use it. Moreover, feedback opportunities should be included as well as links to other participation tools or studies on the same topic. Some TSOs stated concerns that the toolkit would be used by opposition groups to receive information on how to form protest. However, the descriptions in the toolkit include the rights of each stakeholder

group, but also stress their responsibilities. Finally, participants raised the question whether the toolkit could be considered a "standard" from the European Commission in showing project developers what is expected from them. This is rather not the case since the Commission would like to facilitate procedures by providing more information and inspiration on hand. However, since every project on the ground is very different, only project-specific stakeholders can decide on the right tools and formats.

2. **European need drivers: help achieve public acceptance?**

   First of all, the questions raised pertained to the point in time at which the European dimension of the need for new power lines should enter the discussion about grid development in general and specific projects in particular. By the time the project is presented locally, the need has already been determined and people can no longer effectively voice their concerns regarding need drivers. Doubts remained whether it is then useful to mention the European dimension at all in the context of any specific project.

   Two main arguments were raised in favour of bringing the European dimension into local discussions: firstly, one participant asked everyone to understand the promotion of a grid project as a "sales exercise" that can only be successful if it is connected to a great idea and vision. This vision could be e.g. a future energy scenario of an interconnected Europe based on renewables. Secondly, in order to be fully transparent, all need drivers for a project should be mentioned. However, there are also concerns that the European dimension might not help in achieving acceptance, the first reason being that many people long for an energy system based on decentralised generation without big interconnectors and secondly, because both EU and infrastructure projects are criticised for a lack of democratic legitimacy. Mixing both might not help the acceptance of either one of them.

Innovative participatory approaches – can they support formal planning procedures?

Covers impulse presentation by Mathis Danelzik, Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities, KWI Essen and subsequent discussion

KWI and TenneT are jointly working on implementing "innovative participatory approaches" via a pilot project. Activities will be geared towards a level when project implementation is already quite "local". The main question at hand is how to avoid systematic design errors in organising stakeholder engagement. A chosen design for stakeholder engagement procedures can influence the outcome of activities to a large extent. For example, a discussion with stakeholders on different corridor alternatives will lead to very different results depending on whether representatives from affected populations of

each of the three alternatives are physically brought together to discuss amongst themselves, which is the best option, vs. if the three different groups are kept apart. KWI and TenneT are currently developing concepts on how to select the appropriate stakeholders (from which locations, which organisations, organised vs. non-organised stakeholders etc.) to be represented in different engagement instances. This project is an attempt to find solutions under the given "participatory context" which is shaped by legislation and the perception of authorities and project developers on what participation actually is. However, Mathis Danelzik clearly stated that from a broader perspective, participation on grid development in Germany was suffering from a systematic error as there is a major discrepancy between what legal procedures foresee in terms of stakeholder engagement vs. what is perceived by an active public as their democratic right to participate and influence.

The following group discussion reflected that the challenges described by Mathis Danelzik are well known and that so far no "off-the-shelf" solution is available. Design decisions also have to cover the question, at what point in time should stakeholder engagement be initiated? Too-early involvement is perceived by many as being counterproductive, raising fears in people that in the end, may not be affected by the new power line. At the same time, it was clearly stated that early "pre-selection" (e.g. discussion only with the public along one preferred corridor") is unfavourable as well, as any sort of pre-determination triggers negative reactions amongst the relevant public that wants to see the opportunity of having alternatives. Participants agreed that at any point in time, it will always be necessary to explain the need for a project. Speakers also underlined the need to maintain, build or rebuild trust, which currently is often a major issue and has strong implications on who can take on which role in the interaction with stakeholders. Despite the broad agreement that, in terms of influence that can be taken, participation rather needs to be enhanced then reduced, it was also pointed out that people can get very frustrated if there are too many instances in which they are requested to participate. Processes that overstrain people in terms of workload and complexity are no benefit.

Energy and democracy – from participation to ownership?

Covers impulse presentation by Molly Walsh, Friends of the Earth and Project Leader of EU project 'Community Power' and Viktoria Matkovskaia, Berlin Energie

The discussion group focused on two questions: firstly, what does a democratic energy system entail and secondly how can citizens be practically engaged in the energy transition.

1. Democratic energy system

Making the energy system more democratic is strongly linked to fairness and transparency. Only if benefits are equally distributed throughout society, will people regain their trust in institutions and companies, for example if the "bundling of infrastructure" leads to even more burden on poorer areas by adding new power lines to the already existing train lines, highways and industrial plants. Moreover, making the energy system more democratic is strongly linked to the energy market mechanisms, market participants and support schemes. And again: If the already more very resilient parts of society gain even more power over the energy system, the vulnerable milieus might suffer even more. The rich get richer and the authenticity of democratic reforms of the power system will be perceived as hollow and only partially beneficial. The bigger questions of the commons, public and private ownership and common welfare will hit the energy sector as hard as any other sector.

2. How can citizens be engaged in the energy transition?

Full citizen support for the energy transition and all the elements that this entails is only imaginable if people feel a sense of ownership. This ownership can be sensed emotionally, i.e. people feel the energy transition is "their project". It can also be formed through financial participation, i.e. people benefit financially when engaging in the energy transition. Finally, a sense of ownership can be developed if people commonly work on a joint vision for the future. As soon as a society develops a joint vision of (parts of) their future and discusses its pro and cons openly and constructively a better reality has the chance to manifest. If the clarity on the vision is sharpened the enabling infrastructure becomes apparent and gains the support of a democratic majority. Empowering citizens to share the vision, its implementation roadmap and its benefits, will be the success factor for building infrastructure in a deeply connected 21st century.

3. Panel discussion: The future of social acceptance and lessons learned from Bavaria

***Panellists**: Michael Schultz, German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy; Mathis Danelzik, Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI Essen); Rotraud Hänlein, Germanwatch; Marius Strecker, TenneT*

***Moderation**: Antina Sander, RGI*

In Bavaria, unexpected high public opposition and a simultaneous withdrawal of previous political backing for one of the major German power line projects ("Corridor D – South-East link") have – at least temporarily – brought infrastructure developers to a halt. For all panellists, this development was more than surprising since some months before, the Bavarian government had voted in favour of a national law that determines the need of these power lines. At the same time, the Bavarian government's main argument – the fear that the line was primarily needed to transport electricity produced from lignite and

not renewables – had not been stated before. Panellists agreed that such a situation could happen again in similar political situations. If politicians support local opposition, other actors such as project developers and authorities would always have a hard time in achieving acceptance.

One of the lessons that could be learned from this situation is that the gap between national grid development plans and local projects on the ground needs to be closed. Local communities need to understand why certain lines are needed and which procedure determined this need. Environmental NGOs can play an important role in this process. If they are involved in discussions around the grid development plan and can agree with the assumptions that form the basis, they are well equipped to act as multipliers on the ground since they mostly receive more trust from people and have higher credibility than other actors, such as politicians or TSOs. However, no single actor alone will be able to explain the need for new power lines. This can only be a joint exercise involving all responsible actors.

“Silent supporters” can also play an important role. These include stakeholders that would benefit from a new power line, such as industry associations, but often do not speak out themselves. Actively involving them could be one strategy in balancing out the high public attention that protestors normally receive.

Discussion partners agreed that a prerequisite for a fruitful dialogue is a certain level of understanding with respect to technological and procedural questions in grid development. Capacity building is a main element that would allow for this. Only actors that are well informed and have the time and resources to seriously get involved in grid development projects or the grid development plan will be able to give useful input. Germanwatch encouraged the national government and others to set up a national fund that would help NGOs and other organisations to spend more time on the subject and that could be used for independent moderation of dialogue procedures. Despite the fact that NGOs, in consideration of their reputation, generally have to be careful about who they accept support from, it was clearly stated that also the industry, including TSOs, can play an important role in contributing to general capacity building.

If you have questions, comments or relevant information, please contact us: Theresa Schneider, theresa@renewables-grid.eu