

# Policy Brief no. 1

January 2017

## Stakeholder expectations and the importance of trust

The attitudes of stakeholders towards projects to develop new power lines are highly influenced by the way they are involved in the decision-making process. At the same time, regulatory frameworks that shape stakeholder engagement often do not sufficiently allow for different forms of public participation, in particular regarding the way participation is carried out informally. Therefore, INSPIRE-Grid partners identified the integration of formal and informal aspects of stakeholder participation as one of the main challenges of grid development projects.

We based our considerations on a theoretical framework, which can be found below (the figure shows a simplified version of the frame-

work). It allows for a better understanding of different attitudes towards new power lines, ranging from support to resistance. In this framework, we identified the main determinants of stakeholder responses: values (determined by concerns and needs), distributive fairness, procedural fairness and trust (reflected in its three dimensions).

### 1. Addressing the needs and concerns of stakeholders and handling their values

*Whom you engage with determines the values you will deal with in the process*

Formal planning and permitting procedures aim at including all relevant issues that may cause

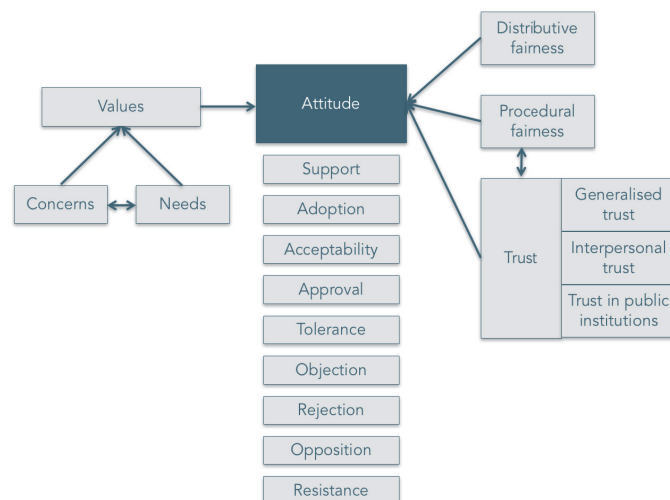


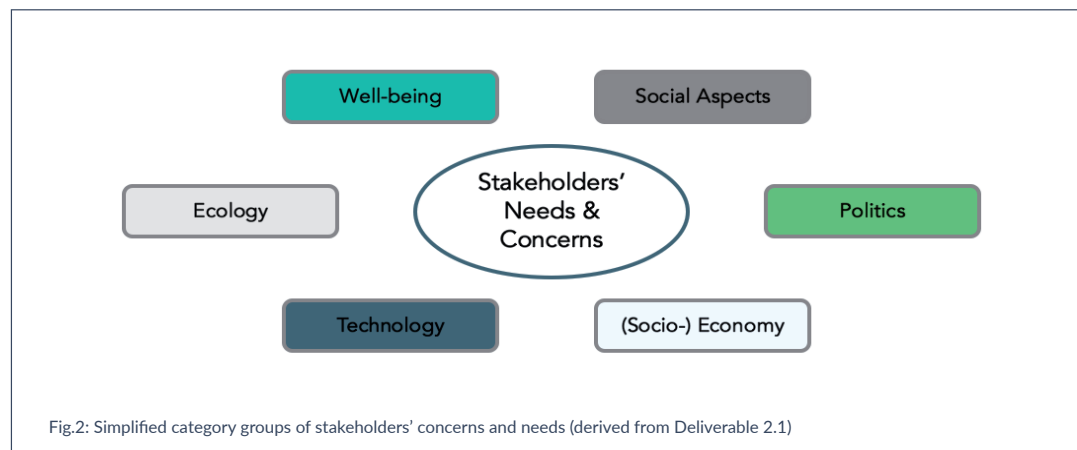
Fig.1: The theoretical stakeholder attitude framework (developed in Deliverable 5.4)

impacts for people and nature, and eliminating or reducing them before giving permission to build. During the last years, it became clear to the consortium that not all relevant concerns and needs are covered by formal procedures. This counts especially for rather emotional issues, such as questions of place attachment or place identity, which is threatened or negatively influenced by new power lines. These aspects demonstrate different needs and concerns of stakeholders, which affect their values and in consequence influence their attitudes towards grid expansion. They represent broad issue areas, have complex dimensions and may create conflicts between different groups of stakeholders.

It is important to know with whom to engage in order to investigate the needs and concerns of stakeholders. Both individual stakeholders and stakeholder groups should be recognised and their roles and positions understood. In our project, we identified nine constellations of stakeholders, which might be affected by a project: planning, permitting and implementing authorities; grid operators; energy providers and producers; construction companies; broad public, residents and citizens' initiatives; nature conservationists; tourism industry; landowners, farmers and forest owners; and hunters.

We recommend to carry out a detailed stakeholder mapping in order to have a comprehensive overview over which stakeholders should be engaged into the decision-making process

and in which way. This step helps also to structure different positions towards the new power line that stakeholders hold in accordance to their own values. Additionally, we recommend to identify the needs and concerns of stakeholders early in the process. Both tasks together then provide a stakeholder analysis, which combines different stakeholder roles with their needs and concerns. Stakeholder mapping is a powerful tool that can increase the understanding of issues and their importance to respective stakeholders. It can allow the identification of potential conflict areas as well as the creation of coalitions between stakeholders. Consequently, it can enable adequate actions that prevent conflicts and provide tailored solutions if a conflict already occurred. Such analysis also gives a solid basis for understanding the values of stakeholders, which can determine their behaviour during the engagement process. Concerns and needs can diverge significantly in detail and between different stakeholders. However, all of them can be summarised in six main categories: well-being, social aspects, politics, (socio-)economy, technology and ecology (see figure below for a simplified overview of the different categories of stakeholders' needs and concerns). The detailed juxtaposition of a joint stakeholder map with different needs and concerns is presented in Deliverable 2.1 of the INSPIRE-Grid project.



In order to face the challenge of different needs, concerns and values of stakeholders we strongly recommend to:

- Give opportunities to address and discuss also emotional or personal aspects of stakeholder concerns and needs.
- Bindingly clarify and clearly communicate what is part of the formal and what is part of the informal procedure.
- Indicate where and how the results of the informal process can be integrated into the formal procedure of the decision-making process.
- Deal with the needs and concerns of stakeholders only in regard to the specific (national, regional, social, political, environmental, technical) context of the project, as it helps to identify substantive values and crucial issues, which might be decisive for the engagement process.
- Identify stakeholders in a transparent and open way, to ensure that all interested parties can participate.
- Give opposing stakeholder groups a possibility to exchange their views and understand the positions of their opponents, as it helps to prevent potential conflicts with specific engagements.

## 2. Understanding the role of trust

### *Interpersonal stakeholder relations matter*

The empirical data gathered during stakeholder interactions in three INSPIRE-Grid case studies in Norway and France showed that stakeholder engagement in the decision-making process does not only take place in formalised structures, such as public hearings or field visits. It also comprises elements of informal settings and contexts, such as simple coffee break situations during official meetings. These informal elements enhance “day to day” relations between the representative who is responsible for the process and stakeholders who give input to decisions and the process itself. These non-formalised parts of the communication allow stakeholders to exert influence on the conditions of the power line development. But, more importantly, they can create trust that can be understood as a condition sine qua non for the acceptance of a participation process (although not necessarily for the decision in the end).

*Three dimensions of trust are important for grid planning procedures:*

1. trust in institutions
2. trust in society
3. interpersonal trust

Institutional trust is needed to lower conflicts in the early phases of the project. If stakeholders

have the impression that the regulator and TSO are legitimised by democratic control and are acting for the public good or if there are sufficient democratic opportunities to influence energy policy, the engagement process for a specific project is less likely to become an arena for competing visions of the energy system. General trust in society is seen to be crucial especially for the willingness of affected people to support the idea of the “public good” – understood as wealth, security of electricity supply or climate protection. The subjective importance of the “public good” increases the motivation of stakeholders to desist from their own interests in the name of the collective interest. However, the most important form of trust in the context of grid planning is the interpersonal trust, developed mainly between the project manager and stakeholders.

We found out that if stakeholders do not have a huge trust in institutions or general trust in society, a trustful relationship with the project manager can partially (but not necessarily) compensate it. Moreover, building trust relations between stakeholders can minimise the feeling of asymmetrical positions between them and a TSO that has usually more information and resources. In consequence, it can turn a formerly negative impression of the company into something positive. If stakeholders do not feel that they are taken seriously and treated as equal partners, if the project manager does not work

in a transparent and reliable way, or if communication cultures differ widely between involved actors, mistrust might arise and hamper a good, acceptable participation process. The same is true for the communication about the purpose of a project. Giving different reasons depending on the type of stakeholder might create an incoherent picture and mistrust. Also, stakeholders should be able to understand the decision that is made in the end, how different factors have been weighted and how their input

into the process has been used. However, trust is a complex and long-term endeavour and a lot of factors play a role. Nevertheless, building on our findings, there are some general rules about trust-building activities and face-to-face communication that we recommend to follow.

### Recommendations for TSOs to understand the role of trust and to increase it:

- Invest in trainings for project managers, not only to improve technical or economic skills, but also soft skills, such as (intercultural) communication, negotiation or context comprehension and up-to-date knowledge about the national energy policy.
- A focus on trust-building activities, such as phone calls to affected stakeholders when new information arrives helps to sustain trust. If possible, provide answers to relevant stakeholders directly. Remember about issues that came up during meetings and present answers to them in the next one.
- Allow enough resources for stakeholder engagement to a project manager in order to deal sufficiently with the variety of the context issues and the broad geographical range of the project. This can help to avoid that stakeholders feel only instrumentally engaged in the process.
- Avoid high staff turnover rates during the project (especially when it comes to project managers), as building up and maintaining trust relationships is a fragile and very time-consuming process.

### Recommendations for planning authorities

- Make a clear statement about the purpose of the project. Indicating the technical, economic, political and public interests helps avoiding confusions among stakeholders and makes the process more transparent.



### More information

#### INSPIRE-Grid deliverables

- D2.1 "Stakeholder map with different concerns and needs"
- D5.1 "Theoretical framework for methods development"
- D5.4 "Improved theoretical framework"

#### External documents

- Devine-Wright, P., Fleming, P., Chadwick, H. (2001). *Role of social capital in advancing regional sustainable*

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- Huijts, N., Molin, E. J. E., Steg, L. (2012). *Psychological factors influencing sustainable energy technology acceptance: A review-based comprehensive framework*.
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#### About INSPIRE-Grid

INSPIRE-Grid is an EU-funded research project that stands for "Improved and enhanced Stakeholders Participation In Reinforcement of Electricity Grid." With ten partners from six different countries, INSPIRE-Grid aimed to increase stakeholder engagement in grid expansion projects, better manage conflicts, and speed up the permitting process. By way of an interdisciplinary approach, INSPIRE-Grid developed stakeholder-led processes and designed an expert-led European good practice guide. Methods to facilitate decision-making have been newly combined with engagement tools and tested with stakeholders from existing or concluded grid development project case studies.

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Project lifespan: October 2013 – January 2017

More information: [www.inspire-grid.eu](http://www.inspire-grid.eu)

#### Contact

Stefano Maran, RSE (project coordinator)  
[Stefano.maran@rse-web.it](mailto:Stefano.maran@rse-web.it)

Theresa Schneider, RGI (project communication)  
[Theresa@renewables-grid.eu](mailto:Theresa@renewables-grid.eu)

#### Disclaimer

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# Policy Brief no. 2

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## Participatory decision-making methods

### 1. Engaging stakeholders in the planning process

Legal and administrative procedures to plan and build new power lines differ substantially between countries. Thus, it is impossible to propose “one-size-fits-all” solutions that would determine the optimal stakeholder engagement process. Moreover, each project is very context-dependent and we observed substantial differences between projects, even in the same legal system. Since stakeholder engagement faces many challenges, it is important to understand why engagement is needed, what to engage on, who should be involved in the process and when to engage stakeholders.

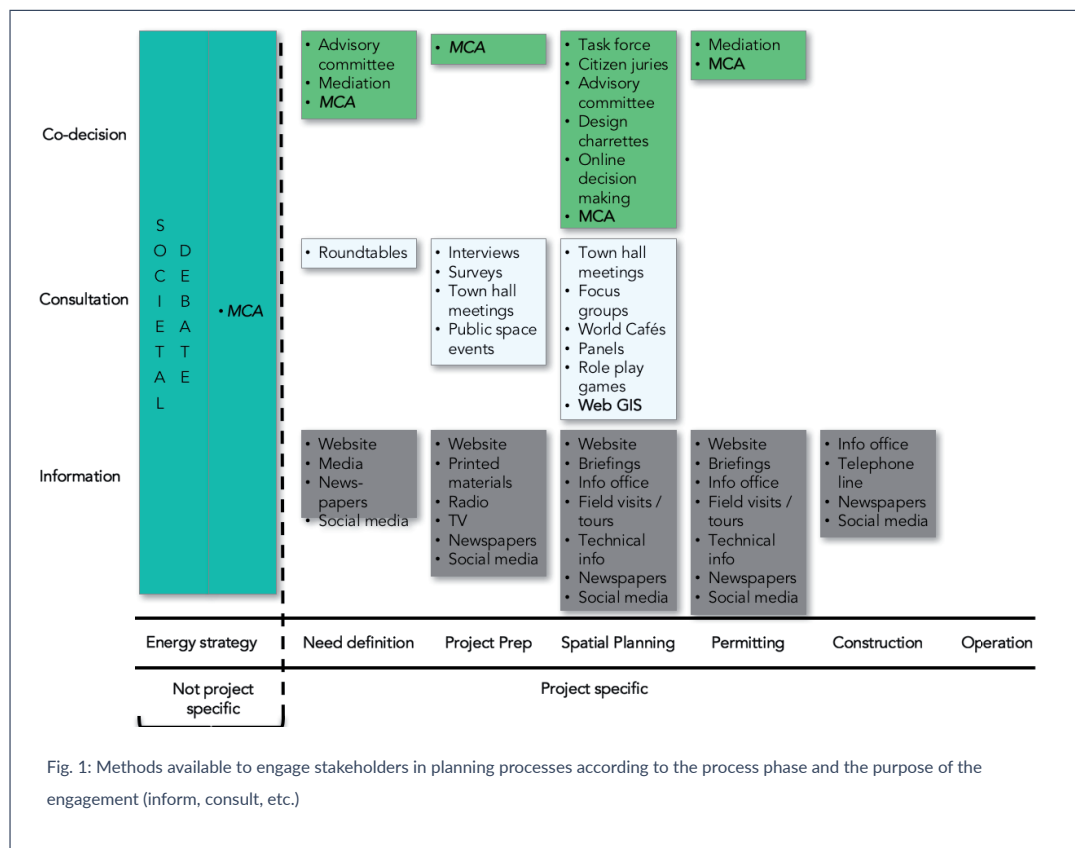
There are many tools available for the engagement of stakeholders in planning processes for power lines. Moreover, vast literature exists on available tools, methods and methodologies to improve stakeholder participation in the decision-making process. However, it is unclear to which extent current planning processes for power lines fulfil these state-of-the-art practices related to participation. Additionally, the way a project developer should use different stakeholder engagement methods should be adapted according to the aims, the desired level of engagement and the stage of the project. This aspect is very present in grey literature, but in need of empirical validation.

The analysis carried out during the INSPIRE-Grid project highlighted that project developers implement good participation practices in current planning procedures in France and Norway, in particular fulfilling the criteria of: representativeness, task definition, influence

on outcome, and independence of participants. However, two major points bear potential for improvement:

1. Early involvement: planning processes should enable an early involvement of stakeholders, especially in the need definition phase.
2. Participatory and structured decision-making methods: the planning process should provide clear participatory mechanisms to structure and display the decision-making.

In order to address these issues, we designed a functional dynamic model for stakeholder engagement that helps in the selection of assessment methods and engagement tools. It combines the stages of project development with different levels of stakeholder participation (information; consultation; co-decision). This model is intended to show which tools are best used when, depending on the available resources and the composition of the stakeholder group.



In synthesis, to improve the engagement of stakeholders in the planning process, we strongly recommend to:

- Involve stakeholders during the need definition for grid development before potential corridors are selected, as it contributes to better subsequent process steps because stakeholders better understand the purpose of the project.
- Use participatory and structured decision-making methods as it contributes to a more transparent decision-making process.
- Select engagement tools in accordance with the project context. The large range of existing engagement tools makes it possible to engage stakeholders in a very specific way to reduce conflicts according to their amount and nature.

### 2. Participatory decision-making: process and outcome

*The importance of a comprehensive approach throughout all stages of the decision-making process*

The decision-making process regarding new power lines can schematically be divided into seven stages: strategy, need definition, preparation, spatial planning, permitting, construction and operation. The strategy stage is particularly necessary and often disregarded in some way. It concerns the strategic vision of the energy system at national and supranational level that justifies the need for new grids and is the basis for the following process. Participation is essential at all stages, although the roles of different stakeholders will be different at different levels: for instance, supranational institutions will have a more relevant role at the strategy stage and a minor one at the permitting stage, while the opposite will be true for citizens.

We recommend the use of a tiering approach, including environmental assessments at all different stages of the overall process. Tiering is a process by which 'higher-tier' or strategic decisions influence and set the context for other, subsequent 'lower-tier' or more detailed decisions (policies set the context for plans, and plans in turn set the context for programmes and then projects). Preparing a sequence of environmental assessments at different planning levels, and linking them, bears many important advantages. In particular, assessment issues can be given the appropriate amount of attention and detail at the right time, in line with the project maturity level.

In order for the decision-making process to be effective, all reasonable alternatives have to be generated at each stage. "Reasonable" means that the alternative is feasible and it is of interest for at least one group of stakeholders. Further, it is important that the do-nothing alternative, usually called zero-alternative, is considered at each stage. The zero-alternative is particularly important during the first stages of the decision process: as the process goes

on, the choice of the zero-alternative becomes more costly and possibly unrealistic compared to proceeding with the project.

Afterwards, the different alternatives for each stage have to be compared and assessed, taking into account all socio-economic, environmental and technical aspects. The use of the Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) can support the decision-maker to select the most suitable alternative in an integrated and participatory way.

*Using Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) for the selection of an alternative*

The use of a formalised MCA method has been tested in INSPIRE-Grid, verifying that:

- a proper use of MCA can foster stakeholder participation.
- MCA can be used to properly understand conflicts and support the choice of a compromising alternative, possibly reducing time and costs necessary to reach a satisfactory decision.

These effects are the result of:

- structuring the problem in a clear, rational and transparent way, which allows stakeholders to
  - understand the case and underlying conflicts;
  - express their value system within the proposed logical framework;
- making computations, according to the chosen MCA method and based on the data obtained in the structuring phase to highlight
  - which alternatives certainly do not constitute a compromise;
  - which alternatives are more/less prone to conflict;
  - possible margins of negotiations.

It is relevant to mention that the role of MCA is not to discover hidden truths, but rather to contribute to structuring individual convictions, collective decisions and compromises between multiple, and often conflicting, rationalities,



stakes and values. Although MCA cannot be expected to solve all problems, it may and should allow participants to structure the debate and facilitate participation and negotiation, especially by helping to establish a climate of confidence and by providing a common understanding of the problem.

*Web-based Geographic Information Systems (Web GIS) can promote the engagement of the general public*

A prototype of a participatory Web GIS has been developed (<http://utopia.rse-web.it>) in the INSPIRE-Grid project. It focuses on the functionalities that support the involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process, enhance their participation, enable them to interact with the decision makers, and express their own opinion about possible alternative routes or solutions.

Three functionalities, which are not available in standard Web GIS applications, have been implemented:

1. Improvement of standard exploration functionalities to visualise the areas affected by the power line.
2. A tool for sending comments and documents related to a specific location
3. An elicitation of people's preferences about the landmarks to be protected and computation of an interference indicator, measuring how much the different options could interfere with the people's preferred points.

These extensions could be used in different ways to involve people during a decision-making process: as an information tool, as a consultation tool and to foster a more active involvement of people who want to show their preferences. In this respect, the interference indicator can also be used as an input to the Multi-Criteria Analysis described above.



Fig 2: Examples of a Web GIS for the fictitious case "Utopia"

### Recommendations to use participatory decision-making methods:

- The use of a tiering approach to planning, where 'higher-tier' or strategic decisions set the context for other, subsequent 'lower-tier' decisions, gives the appropriate amount of attention and detail at the right time, in line with the project maturity level.
- When evaluating path alternatives, the selection of all reasonable alternatives including the zero-alternative is a key point to obtain a good result. The zero-alternative represents the projection of the current situation in the future, if you 'do nothing'. Therefore, as the planning process goes on, the choice of the zero-alternative over the project might become more costly.
- The use of an MCA helps to manage conflicts and supports the choice of a good alternative.
- An MCA can be used to decide about compensation measures to rebalance the residual negative impact of a project in a transparent and participatory way.
- Using a Web GIS to communicate power line route alternatives and to collect local information is useful to elicit people's spatial preferences compared to previous paper-map based methods.

### 3. Overall impact of power lines: methodology for the Life-Cycle Assessment (LCA) of power lines

We used the LCA methodology in INSPIRE-Grid to evaluate the full environmental impacts and benefits of a power line at the successive stages of its life cycle, from raw material extraction to disposal and recycling of the product.

The transmission grid is part of a more complex power system that is formed by many components interacting with each other, such as power plants producing electricity or the distribution grid. In this power system, evolutions of one of its components, resulting for instance from contextual evolutions such as changes in energy policies or consumption behaviours, will have an influence on the others. Accordingly, we deemed LCA as appropriate to deal with such complexity with a global perspective.

The purpose of every LCA is in fact to cover the largest possible spectrum of environmental effects (e.g. climate change, damage to human health and ecosystems, mineral resources depletion, etc.) aggregating them into a single indicator through the use of damage-oriented characterization models.

Nevertheless, LCA remains a complex methodology with numerous hypotheses and scientific choices that could be hardly tackled by a non-expert public. To avoid the risk of frustration and distrust toward LCA itself and the entire engagement process, LCA should be addressed only to appropriate (expert) stakeholders. For instance state services and NGOs commonly benefit from resources they could rely on to properly grasp LCA in its important characteristic of a global and very comprehensive approach.

To evaluate the global impact of power lines, we strongly recommend::

- The use of LCA in the early phases of the project to evaluate and communicate the global impacts of future power lines can help to explain the need for grid expansion.
- Carrying out LCA in the most neutral way, for instance through researchers since it is better for the perception of the results, as TSOs are likely to be considered “judge and party” by stakeholders.
- Exchanging on LCA's results with stakeholder groups who have the technical resources to deal with it since it helps the understanding of the need for grid development. However, communicating results to stakeholders that cannot process this information might have detrimental effects on the process.



## More information

### INSPIRE-Grid deliverables

- D4.1 “Critical review of existing methodologies”
- D4.2 “Methodologies for the Life-Cycle Assessment”
- D4.3 “Multi-stakeholder and multi-criteria methodologies”
- D4.4 “Implementation of the Web GIS tool”
- D4.5 “Recommendations for the application”
- D6.3 “Implementation in case studies”

### External documents

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- EC-JRC (2010). . *International Reference Life Cycle Data System (ILCD) Handbook - General guide for life cycle assessment - Detailed guidance*. First edition March 2010 [en ligne]. EUR 24708 EN. Luxembourg. Publications Office of the European Union.

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[Theresa@renewables-grid.eu](mailto:Theresa@renewables-grid.eu)

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# Policy Brief no. 3

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## Potentials of stakeholder participation

### 1. Achieving procedural, distributive and interpersonal justice

Issues of perceived justice are highly relevant in the context of grid expansion on different levels: regarding the planning process (procedural justice), regarding the allocation of costs and benefits (distributive justice) and in terms of the relationship between involved stakeholders (interpersonal justice).

In order to achieve procedural justice - the subjectively perceived fairness of the planning process - there are several criteria that need to be satisfied, for example transparency, prevention of individual self-interests in the allocation process, decision-making based on accurate information, opportunities to modify decisions, and representation of affected stakeholders in the process. One of the most critical criteria of procedural justice is the aspect of early information as a first step for involvement. This is closely linked to the 'participation paradox', which describes the anti-cyclical relation between affectedness and degree of influence: high levels of frustration often arise when affected stakeholder groups wish to discuss the need of a planned power line during the spatial planning and realise that this is not subject to

discussions in this phase of the planning procedure anymore. In order to tackle this conflict, more effort should be spent on initiating and maintaining a broad and continuous societal dialogue about the energy transition in a comprehensive way - including all aspects of decentral vs. central energy production and the 'system perspective', which means a high degree of interconnections also to the European neighbour countries etc.

It is crucial for society to reach a subjectively perceived fair distribution of costs or impacts (e.g. change in landscape, perceived health risks, changed property values) and benefits (e.g. security of supply, transport of own-produced electricity) for individuals, municipalities or regions. To tackle this challenge, we suggest putting stronger efforts into communication and education measures focusing on the 'consciousness of society': infrastructure is a fundamental condition of people living together. In this context, besides balanced national financial compensations schemes, we emphasise to focus also on the non-material dimension, in the sense of strengthening the culture or social norm of appreciation for people who are contributing to society - such as residents nearby crucial infrastructure.

The perception of interpersonal justice arises through the perception of the social interaction and relationships of stakeholders. Quality therefore depends on aspects like trust and respect. Due to highly emotionally loaded situations people are more likely to lose composure, which becomes critical if they develop a persisting negative attitude or habit. More efforts should be taken to establish a comfortable atmosphere and relationship that value stakeholders as well as to develop and keep positive communication patterns also and especially for times of conflict. This can be supported by trust-building measures and positive communication activities in the pre-planning phase before the

formal procedure starts. The advantage of getting in touch early lies in the fact that people feel not negatively affected yet and are more likely to pay attention to a positive relationship. Another supporting factor is the presence on local level via regional offices and smaller groups instead of large-scale public hearings.: by this means, communication is made more personal and also less anonymous and top-down. Last but not least, clear communication rules in the sense of a code of conduct – which would have to be bindingly signed and fulfilled by all involved stakeholders – seems to be one promising approach to support a constructive communication.

### Recommendations to improve the perceived justice of planning processes

- Putting more effort into initiating and maintaining a broad and continuous societal dialogue about the energy transition – not only sector specific but on the system question in a comprehensive way – including the aspects of decentralised vs. centralised energy production or the high degree of interconnections to the European neighbour countries, fosters a better grasping of the need for grids among affected stakeholders.
- Stronger efforts in communication and education measures focusing on the ‘consciousness of society’ where infrastructure is a fundamental condition of people living together might reduce the urge to maximise individual benefits compared to the needs of society.
- Starting trust building measures and positive communication already in the pre-planning phase, before the formal procedure starts, might prevent later crystallisation of stakeholder opposition.
- Favouring local level and smaller groups as a communication format instead of large-scale public hearings makes communication more personal and less anonymous, improving perceived fairness.

### 2. Future trends and challenges

While the results of the INSPIRE-Grid project show that processes can gain from a better quality of stakeholder engagement and from the use of methods like MCA or Web GIS, it is still unclear how these improvement will be implemented in the future and which new challenges can emerge.

We designed one workshop session aimed at appraising the effects of increased participation in planning processes for power line planning. Participants, mostly TSOs, highlighted several issues and open questions where an improved participation could play a role:

- *Reducing time and costs:* The right investments in and implementation of appropriate stakeholder engagement methods and the introduction of competition in the application process for several operators could reduce the overall planning cost and time.
- *Fostering the integration of different planning models:* Planning processes could benefit from the integration of several stakeholder participation models (e.g. other fields like rail or highways), better integration of different actors (national regulators, planning bodies, etc.) and better integration of research and practice.
- *Bridging the local-national divide:* Planning processes could benefit from an integration of European, national and local plans because conflicts can be harsh locally due to decisions made at higher levels.

Additionally, participants highlighted three additional challenges on participation in planning processes through subsequent discussions. Firstly, while stakeholder engagement may have several levels of engagement (information, consultation and co-decision) participants of the validation workshops did not concede that striving to achieve high levels of participation (co-decision) is appropriate for planning processes of new power lines. The quality of engagement procedures plays an important role and project developers can carry out stakeholder engagement of relative low levels (like information or consultation) in higher quality. The motto 'the more the better' might therefore not be suitable for power lines. Secondly, while project developers can substantially improve the quality of planning processes in the future, this also requires quality control mechanisms. Finally, participants in the workshops highlighted an additional main element: the need for synergies between different sectors and their respective participation models. Although other sectors like rail or road planning are embedded in a very different legal context, fostering exchanges on experiences between different stakeholder engagement cultures may foster positive spill-over effects to improve current planning practices. Additionally, practitioners can carry out these exchanges across different countries, mainly through information exchanges between project developers or through databases.

#### Recommendations to address future trends and challenges:

- Quantity and quality of participation measures: improving the quality of the existing stakeholder engagement practices keeps a clear frame on what is to be discussed and decided, while doing more participation might potentially deceive stakeholders when they realise they cannot change or decide what they want.
- Monitoring stakeholder engagement is useful to ensure a minimum level of engagement quality.
- Fostering exchanges on participation models, experiences and cultures between sectors (e.g. rail and road planning) and between countries contributes to developing new ideas about the way stakeholders may be engaged in the future.



## More information

### INSPIRE-Grid deliverables

- D3.2 “Establishing best practices and determining a tool box”
- D7.2 “Report on validation exercise”
- D7.3 “Synthesis and recommendations”

### External documents

- Devine-Wright, P., Devine-Wright, H. & Cowell, R. (2016). *What do we know about overcoming barriers to siting energy infrastructure in local areas?* DECC Report – Placewise, URN 15D/539.

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### Contact

Stefano Maran, RSE (project coordinator)  
[Stefano.maran@rse-web.it](mailto:Stefano.maran@rse-web.it)

Theresa Schneider, RGI (project communication)  
[Theresa@renewables-grid.eu](mailto:Theresa@renewables-grid.eu)

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