



ENergies for Local Administrations  
to Renovate Governance in Europe

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# Project: ENLARGE – Energies for Local Administrations to Renovate Governance in Europe

WP4: Deliberative event

Report: Manifesto for boosting collaborative processes to achieve relevant results in sustainable energy policies and processes

DATE: 12 January 2018

VERSION: FINAL VERSION

Comments are welcomed. Please send them to: [contact@enlarge-project.eu](mailto:contact@enlarge-project.eu)



This project has received funding from the *European Union's* Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727124

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## Introduction

This manifesto is promoted within the H2020 ENLARGE project. ENLARGE focuses on building and disseminating knowledge on the design features and mechanisms that favour or hinder the legitimacy, effectiveness and sustainability of collaborative processes in the sustainable energy area, through a collaborative process with actors involved in such processes.

The manifesto draws on the findings of the ENLARGE deliberative event held in October 2017, which involved 74 participants (politicians, civil servants, experts, economic and civil society actors) in a collective reflection and discussion on the success factors and weaknesses of collaborative processes in sustainable energy.

The manifesto does not aim to create ideal types of collaborative processes, but to **shed light on key ingredients for boosting three main democratic objectives of collaborative processes:**

- **Social legitimacy**, i.e. the capacity of collaborative processes to be perceived as a legitimate policymaking tool by civil society actors and ordinary citizens who do not take part in the process. Collaborative processes can be seen with scepticism, both from ordinary citizens and civil society organisations, as they can be perceived as political manipulation or tools to increase legitimisation of decisions already taken. Without citizens' and stakeholders' diffused support (i.e. social legitimacy), these processes risk generating more problems than benefits in policymaking.
- **Institutional sustainability**, i.e. the capacity of collaborative process to be accepted by public officials (elected politicians and civil servants). This is particularly relevant for mainstreaming such processes into the daily practice of public institutions and for the implementation and sustainability of their results.
- **Policy effectiveness**, i.e. the capacity of collaborative process to influence public policies and changes in one or more of the policy phases: decision-making, implementation or evaluation. Policy effectiveness of such processes cannot be taken for granted, as, generally, public authorities are not obliged usually to respect their outcomes.

Key ingredients refer to the **process features or tools characterising collaborative processes**, i.e. those elements specifically intended to achieve social legitimacy, institutional sustainability and policy effectiveness of these processes. **Key ingredients** reported in the next paragraphs contribute to overcoming the following **recurrent obstacles** to the social legitimacy, institutional sustainability and policy effectiveness of collaborative processes:

- People's distrust in the interests of public institutions promoting/managing the process and fear of being manipulated by them;
- People's low environmental knowledge and/or perception that their lack/low level of specific technical knowledge on sustainable energy-related issues makes their participation less useful;
- People's late involvement in the process, i.e. when they perceive that decisions have been already taken and that involvement aims to legitimise those decisions;
- Rigid delivery procedures not adaptable to people's needs, expectations, etc. result in people's distrust in collaborative processes;
- Weak communication of the process and of its outcomes at community, political and institutional levels;
- Creation of false expectations within institutions and communities involved in the process;
- Politicians' and civil servants' scepticism towards collaborative processes in this field;

- Promotion of one-stop collaborative processes and of participation for the sake of participation without really considering people's opinions in the policy design/implementation;
- Excluding potential social/political/institutional opponents in the process from the process;
- Policy and politics not matching time, hindering the implementation of the process outcomes, especially in the case of long-term processes;
- Lack of resources (e.g. knowledge, economic, legal, etc.) for the delivery of the process and/or implementation of its outcomes;
- Low implementation feasibility of people's proposals.

It is worth noting that **context factors** also condition social legitimacy, institutional sustainability and policy effectiveness and, therefore, have to be considered in the design of collaborative process features. The most relevant context factors impacting on collaborative processes are:

- **Public participation culture and previous experience:** A high level of public participation culture at both community and institutional level favours social and institutional legitimacy, as previous experiences of collaborative processes reduce citizens', politicians' and civil servants' scepticism about and fear of public participation. On the contrary, negative previous experience increases scepticism and fear.
- **Social capital, civic culture, institutional trust and low corruption:** High levels of social capital, trust in public institutions and civic culture coupled with low levels of corruption favour the creation of public-private networks, the active involvement of the local civil society in public decisions and citizens' engagement in collaborative processes promoted by public institutions.
- **Political stability:** This reduces the risks of unsustainable/destructive changes in the regulatory, legal and institutional framework related to the sustainable energy collaborative processes, and favours the implementation of the process outcomes.
- **Legal framework imposing mandatory collaborative approaches** in the delivery and implementation of sustainable energy initiatives: This makes the process less linked to a specific political party, favouring legitimisation of the process and the sustainability of its outcomes over time.
- A certain degree of **autonomy of the institutions promoting the process:** This allows them to respect commitments taken during the process and to implement its outcomes.

## Key ingredients for the social legitimacy of collaborative processes in sustainable energy

- **Openness, inclusiveness and transparency of the process** are key for social legitimacy. The format, the contents and the language of collaborative actions have to be adapted to the characteristics of the various target groups of the process. Information on the process has to be easily accessible to anyone at any time of the process. Adopting informal settings and ‘fun’ actions (e.g. city picnics for collecting ideas on sustainable energy, walking groups for disseminating information on sustainable energy, etc.) triggers the attention and participation of those not particularly interested in sustainable energy issues. Other tools can be used, such as calls for interest, which can enhance voluntarily participation in the process, or other specific incentives for gaining the attention of different types of actors. Furthermore, the combination of onsite and online participation enhances the involvement of a wide part of the community. Person-to-person repeated interactions is particularly relevant for actors’ engagement in small contexts, whereas in larger contexts (big cities, metropolitan areas) online communication seems more effective in engaging citizens.
- **Involving citizens and stakeholders from the early stages of the process** (e.g. from the definition of the agenda and the rules of the game, etc.) contributes to lowering their fear of being manipulated and dissipating distrust in the interests of the institutions promoting/managing the process.
- **Providing continuous feedback on the collaborative process, its short-term results and general outcomes** favour trust, mutual learning and commitment among participants, as they learn to value relations and the costs of defecting. Different tools, which favour repeated interactions and information flows between the actors involved in the process, can be used to this end such as citizens’ assemblies, steering committees, constituencies made of grassroots organisations and institutions, etc.
- **Multilevel governance** should be carefully considered. When upper institutional levels promote energy policies, the involvement of local institutions is relevant for including local communities’ interests and preventing possible conflicts. When energy policies are promoted at the local level, the involvement of upper institutions could bring in additional political resources to the local policy. The involvement of institutions at local level is also relevant when processes are born within and promoted by the community itself, as institutions retain the legal resources necessary for the implementation of their outcomes.
- **The active involvement of highly reputable actors** can favour stakeholders’ and citizens’ acceptance of the collaborative process and foster imitative behaviours. People are more prone to adhere to a collaborative process when well-acknowledged and trustworthy actors are engaged in it.
- **Adopting specific tools to share technical knowledge on sustainable energy-related aspects** (e.g. explanation tours, community groups including a technical mediator) contributes to overcoming citizens’ perceptions of feeling unprepared to take part in the discussion.
- **Ensuring adequate time and economic resources** to collaborative processes is essential for complex sustainable energy issues and in contexts with a low level of participatory culture. Adequate time and economic resources are also essential for creating inclusive participation strategies. However, in long-term participatory processes, it is important to show people short-term results of their participation to keep them engaged in the process.

## Key ingredients for the institutional sustainability of collaborative processes in sustainable energy

- Building the capacities of politicians and administrative staff on public participation can favour their better understanding of the value and benefits of collaborative policymaking in sustainable energy.
- Active involvement of civil servants and politicians at various levels, including potential opponents, before opening the process and their coordination throughout the process is key for preventing conflicts and for building trust in the process. Specific tools, such as, for instance, intergovernmental bodies, intersectorial groups, task forces, steering groups, allow for repeated interactions between the actors involved, information flow on the process, anticipation of actors' preferences and potential conflicts. These foster mutual trust between actors and the adjustment of their preferences, reducing the risk of conflicts. Furthermore, clearing actors' roles and responsibilities in the process, through specific agreements, favours their coordination and commitment to promises undertaken.
- Finding a trustworthy front runner of collaborative processes within the promoting/managing institution is relevant for triggering an imitative behaviour in the rest of the administration. If deemed reputable and trustworthy, top-level politicians and/or managers can act as front runners of collaborative processes in sustainable energy.
- Creation of win-win situations for both politicians and administrative staff and their extensive communication within the administration can contribute to gaining their support and engagement in the process. Indeed, actors mobilise themselves when they perceive a window of opportunity for pushing their agenda. Furthermore, their communication increases their visibility among politicians and civil servants, and fosters imitative behaviours.
- Sharing the responsibilities of the process and its outcomes between administrations (politicians and civil servants) and stakeholders and citizens contributes to reducing the burden of public decisions on the administration. This in turn can favour institutional sustainability of collaborative policymaking.
- Coupling collaborative processes with the public agenda increases the salience of collaborative processes, putting pressure on public administrations to proceed.
- Ensuring adequate resources (e.g. financial, human, time, knowledge, etc.) for the delivery of the process in order to avoid administrative staff feeling overwhelmed by the process and opposing/blocking it.

## Key ingredients for the policy effectiveness of collaborative processes in sustainable energy

- Some sustainable energy collaborative processes (e.g. energy efficiency, sustainable mobility and transport, renewable energy, sustainable waste management, etc.) are more effective when coupled with incentives. **Provision of incentives** in the sustainable energy field (e.g. financial incentives for energy efficiency in private buildings; reduction of bills for people saving energy/waste/using sustainable mobility; free parking or renting of electric cars for people to try them, etc.) and **showing people the concrete benefits of sustainable energy initiatives** (e.g. money savings at the individual level, investment of community savings in other needs expressed by the community) as well as the **(negative/positive) effects of their actions on the environment** (e.g. reduction in pollution) favour changes in their everyday behaviours.
- **Engaging trustworthy front runners and/or diffusing positive results** (e.g. through communication campaigns, neighbourhood groups, etc.) of collaborative processes in sustainable energy can enhance policy effectiveness by triggering imitative behaviours at both community and institutional level. At community level, this results in positive changes in people's behaviours in sustainable energy (e.g. diffusion of energy savings obtained by people engaged in energy efficiency collaborative processes stimulates others to adopt the same measures and those involved to continue the measures implemented). At institutional level, politicians and civil servants are more prone to consider outcomes of collaborative processes when these are supported by trustworthy actors and/or backed by similar good examples from other contexts.
- **Institutionalisation** of collaborative processes increases the possibility that their results impact upon policies in sustainable energy and that they last over time. Often, collaborative policymaking in sustainable energy stops after the initial interest. However, in order to ensure the implementation and sustainability of its outcomes, one needs to institutionalise the initial enthusiasm for collaborative processes, for instance, through the creation of specific bodies, groups, offices, committees, etc. Institutionalisation of collaborative processes socialises public servants to collaborative policymaking, favours mutual trust and learning between actors involved in the process, thus contributing to policy effectiveness of these processes. Besides institutionalisation of collaborative processes, **their embedding into sustainable energy strategies/programmes/plans** also favours policy effectiveness by triggering commitment to respect the engagements undertaken by institutions promoting/ managing the process. Both institutionalisation and mainstreaming of sustainable energy collaborative processes into wider plans/strategies also allows the overcoming of challenges brought about by political changes in the institutions involved in the process.
- **Agreement on feasible proposals** (i.e. proposals that balance citizens' requests and technical feasibility) favours their implementation. Furthermore, **starting from clear and simple sustainable energy actions** (e.g. projects) and then moving to more complex ones (e.g. strategies and policies) also favours their implementation.
- **Ensuring adequate resources** (e.g. economic, legal, political, etc.) favours the implementation of the process outcomes.
- **Socialisation moments** (e.g. post-collaborative action appetisers, community dinners, etc.) to favour social exchanges and the creation of group identity.