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PLAN4CET

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CET workshop guide for communities and quintuple helix

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PLAN4CET

Cities and urban areas have been identified as the main opportunity in reaching climate neutrality, as they consume 78% of the world's energy and produce more than 60% of GHG. This need and vision are shared across EU cities and regions, but the climate neutrality transition process is complex, and many barriers have been identified. Even local and regional authorities have shown commitment to achieve climate neutrality, the lack of appropriate horizontal and vertical CET governance, integrated and holistic solutions and lack capacity (knowledge and resources) to develop and implement CET plans and strategies slows down the development of these process.

The general objective of the PLAN4CET project is to support European regions and cities to design, develop and implement Clean Energy Transition plans according to their needs and possibilities. To do so, the project has been conceived as an initiative where different project outputs (methodologies, tools and capability building and technical assistance) will be generated to support EU regions (specially to support medium and small municipalities with a capacity lack) and cities in their CET planning, implementation and monitoring activities. The project will directly support 3 EU regions in improving the Climate and sustainable Energy Action Plans in pilots to be carried out in Navarra (ES), Skäne (SW) and Emilia Romagna (IT). These regions represent different type of EU regions and will serve as samples to many others in which the learnings and best practices can be transferred.

PLAN4CET is executed by a consortium composed by a group of 11 entities located in 4 European Countries (Spain, Sweden, Italy, and Belgium), involving different type local and regional public authorities together with other entities.

Summary

This guide equips local administrations with tools to support the participation of stakeholders and citizens in Clean Energy Transition (CET) planning and implementation. Its aim is to increase their knowledge about CET to ensure endorsement and empower them to contribute actively to the clean energy transition

The quintuple helix framework, which extends the triple helix model by including not only academia, industry, and government but also civil society and the environment, underscores the importance of holistic engagement in addressing climate and energy challenges.

As described in Chapter 2, the levels of engagement in CET planning and related engagement strategies can vary according to the committment requested from stakeholders and citizens. Accordingly, they can get involved, for instance, from sharing information (low level of committment) to co-ownership of an action (highest level of committment).

Chapter 3 is focused on stakeholders engagement and presents a variety of tools for the engagement of stakeholders at the different stages of CET planning and implementation.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to citizens engagement and illustrates which tools are more effective for citizens during the different stages of CET planning (definition of goals, implementation, monitoring, review). In both chapters, for each stage of CET planning, one or more tools are presented, providing examples and case studies which may inspire the design of new participatory processes.

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1. Introduction

This guide equips local administrations with tools to support the participation of stakeholders and citizens in Climate and Energy Transition (CET) planning and implementation, by increasing their knowledge about CET in order to ensure endorsement and empower them.

The engagement of citizens and stakeholders shall take place during all phases of CET planning and implementation (Hernandez et al., 2018), since the involvement of stakeholders and citizens is the key to a concerted and co-ordinated way to implement CET. Even the most robust CET strategy will not be successful unless it is accepted and backed by stakeholders and citizens.

Why stakeholders' and citizens' involvement is so important?

A collective action guarantees sustainability, long-term acceptance, and support of plans and initiatives over the long run. In this way, there are more chances to reduce conflicts, foster trust among stakeholders and citizens, and create a collaborative decision-making process.

2. Increasing levels of engagement

In order to effectively carry out an engagement strategy in relation to CET planning, **the first step is to decide what level of engagement is required by the stakeholders or citizens.** The levels of engagement depends on the commitment undertook by stakeholders and citizens, which can varies from sharing information (low level of commitment) to co-owning (highest level of commitment):

1. Information: it is the minimum commitment that requires the least effort from the stakeholder.
2. Awareness: implies that the message is made accessible and targeted to a diverse audience.
3. Representation: a selection of stakeholders or the community is asked to represent the interests of the other actors in providing specific feedback on decisions or plans.
4. Discussion/consultation: by participating in deliberative activities, stakeholders can influence CET actions within predetermined frameworks.
5. Co-definition of the problem: needs and aspirations from stakeholders and citizens are considered as the starting point of CET planning.
6. Co-ownership of the process: the highest level of engagement of stakeholders and citizens implies that they can take initiative and take up specific roles from coordination to implementation.

While the role of stakeholders and citizens is crucial in building a solid decision-making process and a shared plan, their involvement should take into account the inherent differences that distinguish the two groups. When referring to those groups, the following distinction needs to be taken into consideration:

- With the term "*stakeholder*", we refer to any interested and/or impacted actor, including institutions and organisations (governmental or non-governmental), the business, academic, or mediatic sector.
- With "*citizens*", we consider all individuals, irrespective of their age, gender, sexual preference, profession, religion or political affiliation.

The following guidelines will outline different ways and strategies to involve stakeholders and citizens, with examples to better understand the possible way to engage with these groups.

2.1. Engagement strategies for each CET planning phase

Depending on the CET planning phase at which the local administration is working, different engagement strategies and actions can be put in place towards stakeholders and citizens (Table 1).

At an early stage, local administration should collect and consider the perspectives of stakeholders and citizens to ensure the building of a shared and solid vision. During the set-up of the plan, stakeholders and citizens can participate in the definition and prioritization of actions. Subsequently, during the implementation phase, the actors would be influenced by the planned solutions while, at the same time, concretely supporting the achievement of the project targets. In the periodical monitoring, stakeholders can contribute to collect and share useful data and define relevant indicators. Monitoring data will inform reviewing and readjusting of the CET plans. In these phases, stakeholders and citizens may provide relevant feedback on the progress of the actions.

This guideline has been written using as main resource the Final Report of the "Adaptation Strategies for European Cities" project that was prepared by Ricardo-AEA for the European Commission's Directorate-General for Climate Action.

Table 1 – Examples of actions towards stakeholders' citizens and in different phases of CET planning and implementation.

CET phase	Stakeholders	Citizens
1 – Developing a vision	Engagement strategy (stakeholder mapping) Community of practice to be consulted in all subsequent steps	Surveys Citizens assembly
2 – Planning	Focus groups to prioritize options	Participative budgeting
3 – Implementation	Information campaigns on incentives or funding	Communication campaigns Co-creation spaces
4 – Monitoring	Involvement of stakeholders in the monitoring of CET actions	Public opinion surveys, citizens science, online tools (apps, virtual forums, social media or webpages)
5 – Review/Readjust	Workshops	Surveys and interviews

Resources

- Final Report of the "Adaptation Strategies for European Cities".
- Stakeholder and Citizen Engagement in Climate Adaptation: A DIY Manual.
- NZC_Civic-engagement-mapping-guide-May-2023.pdf (energy-cities.eu)

2.2. Five-steps for stakeholders & citizens involvement alongside CET planning

Involving stakeholders and citizens in the delineation of CET plan is crucial for achieving results, but this has to be done in a way that is functional and effective for both the planners and participants. This means choosing approaches that are practical, easy to understand, and conducive to meaningful engagement. By prioritizing functionality and efficiency, it is easy to optimize the planning process and foster active participation. To ensure proper engagement, below are five key steps that need to be considered for a successful outcome when designing a participatory strategy.

1. **Identification and analysis**. The first step entails the identification and analysis of stakeholders and citizens that could be affected by climate policies and initiatives. This process involves comprehending their interests, concerns, and level of influence within the community. It is a fundamental step for pinpointing the primary concerns shared. Through this identification, the outcome will be a strategy crafted to the community's interests and is responsive to the needs of all involved parties.
2. **Definition of the expected results**. This entails establishing clear goals and objectives that align with the overall vision and objectives of the community. By outlining expected outcomes, progress can be better tracked, and efforts can be ensured to effectively contribute to the desired outcomes.
3. **Method selection**. It is essential to carefully evaluate different approaches and methodologies to determine the most suitable course of action. This process involves assessing factors such as feasibility, effectiveness, and alignment with the goals of the strategy. By selecting the appropriate method, it becomes feasible to enhance the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes and maximizing the impact of efforts.
4. **Monitoring**. This step involves implementing a monitoring and evaluation system to track progress and assess the effectiveness of actions taken, in order to provide insights into what has been accomplished in the previous steps, guiding adjustments and improvements as needed.
5. **Review session**. The review session aims to reflect on the progress made and identify areas for improvement for the future. It is an opportunity for stakeholders and citizens to provide feedback, share insights, and collaboratively strategize next steps for advancing climate change initiatives.

While these steps provide a general framework for approaching engagement, the following two chapters will delve into more detailed methods for involving stakeholders and citizens effectively. By exploring these methods, the aim is to provide practical guidance for implementing inclusive and impactful energy and climate initiatives.

3. Stakeholder engagement

3.1. Developing a vision

Developing an energy common vision with stakeholders is a collaborative and iterative process that requires active engagement, effective communication, and a commitment toward shared goals and values. This process lays the foundation for aligning stakeholders' efforts and driving a clean transition establishing a shared future common vision.

Stakeholders' involvement is known to improve networks among all actors, which ensures the implementation of a collaborative decision-making process. Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, the types of stakeholders willing to participate can vary greatly. Consequently, it is necessary to plan a strategy that best suits the appropriate level of their involvement. A stakeholder

engagement strategy will ensure support, growing connections, trust and confidence during each of the CET phases. Moreover, it is important to notice that an efficient strategy can be reached when is perfectly tailored to the local context of intervention.

Engaging stakeholders means involving them in discussions, workshops, meetings or other collaborative activities designed to gather their input, insights and perspectives. Their involvement must be inclusive to ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute.

This requires answering the following questions, which will be helpful in creating an unique and specific engagement strategy.

Objective	What benefits can stakeholders involvement in the decision-making process bring?
Target groups	Who to engage (e.g., institutions and organizations, business sector, academia, media, or civil society organizations)? What level of interest in getting involved will they have?
Tools	Stakeholder mapping

Stakeholder mapping is a crucial tool to make clear which stakeholders are involved, to facilitate the establishment of a leader team dedicated to guiding the transition effectively and reducing misunderstandings among actors. Furthermore, mapping the stakeholders to involve can support the development of a common set of rules that defines the team's organizational structure or leadership framework and its operational guidelines. Expectations for interactions, roles and responsibilities are thus established.

Note: Draft a Vision Statement. Recruit the communications leads to draft a vision statement that describes the defining characteristics of the future energy system and reflects the input the decision makers provided. A vision is aspirational: it describes the desired future aspiration of the community, including the beneficial impacts of the energy transition.

3.1.1 Stakeholders mapping

Stakeholder mapping is the first valuable tool to consider for a useful engagement strategy. This tool is essential for classifying various stakeholders and makes it easier to identify various categories of stakeholders involved and implement targeted engagement strategies for each group. The purpose of stakeholder mapping is to understand the interests, influence, relationships and needs of various actors to engage with them and manage their expectations effectively.

Here is how stakeholder mapping is typically conducted:

1. **Identify key stakeholders.** The first step is to identify all individuals or groups who have an interest in or may be affected by the project, initiative, or organization. This includes both internal stakeholders and external stakeholders.
   This process should help clarify the level and type of engagement stakeholders require based on their impact and interest in the outcome under consideration. A simple matrix can map stakeholders to appropriate type of engagement, such as:

   - **Inform:** keep the stakeholder apprised of developments and progress.
   - **Involve:** invite the stakeholder to participate in certain activities, such as meetings or outreach that touch on the stakeholder's interest in the outcome.
   - **Consult:** regularly and actively seek support for and feedback on how best to achieve upcoming goals.
   - **Coordinate:** establish an ongoing relationship regarding all aspects of the transition, ranging from day-to-day operations to timing significant milestones.

2. **Assess Importance and Influence.** Once stakeholders are identified, they are typically assessed based on their importance and influence. Stakeholders can be divided according to their interest into four groups:
   - **Low interest, low influence** – those that should be kept informed;
   - **High interest, low influence** – those that should be involved and consulted;
   - **Low interest, high influence** – powerful key stakeholders that should be engaged;
   - **High interest, high influence** – partners that should be considered for collaborative relationships.

3. **Plot Stakeholders on a Map:** stakeholders are then plotted on a matrix or map based on their level of importance and influence;

4. **Understand Relationships and Dynamics:** stakeholder mapping also involves understanding the relationships and dynamics between different stakeholders. This includes identifying alliances, conflicts, dependencies, and communication channels. Understanding these dynamics can help in developing strategies for effective stakeholder engagement and management;

5. **Develop different Engagement Strategies:** based on the stakeholder map, specific engagement strategies can be developed for each stakeholder group. This may include regular communication, consultation, collaboration, or partnership-building activities tailored to the needs and interests of each stakeholder;

6. **Monitor and Update:** stakeholder mapping is not a one-time exercise but rather an ongoing process. It is important to regularly monitor changes in stakeholder dynamics, interests, and influence, and update the stakeholder map accordingly to ensure effective stakeholder engagement and management.

To sum up, it is possible to develop a stakeholder mapping through three key points:

1. **Identification process**: who might be of interest?

2. **Analysis**: what needs do they have?
3. **Involvement**: how can I include everyone while recognizing their distinctive needs and perspectives?

When determining how to engage with each group, it is important to remember to be inclusive. Taking the time to conduct a group brainstorming session is the key point for stakeholders mapping. It is fundamental to try to include those in the team who have a good understanding of the organization that is involved in the local context.

While some stakeholder groups will have different needs than others, it is also likely that individuals within stakeholder groups may also have different needs or desires than each other. Some considerations when developing an inclusive engagement plan may include: connectivity and device access, intercultural differences in communication styles or preferences, or accommodations due to age, ability, language, and otherwise.

Note: Stakeholder mapping is not a one-time process. Stakeholder groups change and evolve alongside your organization. It is important to review your stakeholder groups and update your stakeholder communication plans regularly - We recommend doing this annually, as a part of your strategy review process.

Resources

- In the Net Zero Cities website, you can download a template that can help you create a stakeholder mapping (here). This is just an example, but it can serve as a basis when building your own.

3.1.2 Building a Community of Practice

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a helpful modality of collaboration among stakeholders because it provides a way to group together organizations or institutions that share the same interests. A CoP can help in the development of a sustainable plan because stakeholders are more likely to work together to achieve climate targets when they have a common interest in doing so. It has been shown that a CoP is successful in achieving results and raising stakeholder participation during this phase. CoP consists of community members who are directly impacted by climate change consequences, thus eager to act towards environmental policies.

CoP are thought to be advantageous for the development and transferability of climate and energy policies because they foster information sharing, mutual learning, skill improvement, and growth. Besides this, they can serve as a practical tool for influencing decisions.

A local administration can support the establishment of a CoP for the definition of the common vision on CET, for example by leveraging on the participants to a training course or discussion forum.

How can Communities of Practice influence funding and policy decisions?

- CoPs need to be active: the main goal is to give members a supportive and encouraging environment so they can make decisions based on their own priorities.
- They can have different forms: face-to-face meetings, social media groups, discussions and dialogues, collaboration on projects, advocacy campaigns, webinars, group activities. It is likely that a sense of community is going to develop through encouraging steady collaborative interaction, with respect and trust acting as its pillars. This is the secret that enables the community to be a successful one.
- A Community of Practice can be implemented in a variety of timeframes, ranging from a few weeks to several years. Because of the trust and dedication that its members foster, CoPs become self-organized.

3.2 Planning and implementation

Let's delve deeper into the planning and implementation phases, and explore how to effectively engage with stakeholders throughout these stages.

In the **planning phase**, the primary task is to address the opinions of different groups of stakeholders in order to develop a climate plan that accomplishes the objectives defined in the common vision. In this phase, the power of local knowledge becomes clear in finding solutions that are appropriate for the environment. It begs the question: how can we be sure to choose options that appeal to everyone? Promoting a good communication and cooperation between all parties involved is the first step in finding a common solution.

There are a number of activities that can be used to help identify appropriate solutions. Town hall meetings, focus groups, and workshops are possible examples of engagement sessions. These exchanges provide an opportunity for gathering information, addressing issues, and encouraging a sense of ownership among participants. This phase involves more than just formulating a common idea that is beneficial to the environment and essential for energy and climate policies' creation; this phase is important at the same way for ensuring that stakeholders commit to the issue and share ownership for the execution of climate action. Let's take a closer look at one of the mentioned options, the focus groups.

3.2.1 Focus groups

Focus groups can help in finding common solutions. We can define a focus group as a collective discussion that revolves, in this case, around climate change consequences that stakeholders are noticing. The focus is on group dynamics, which can show how ideas and opinions are generated: the purpose is to stimulate a discussion, to gather proposals.

How to organize a focus group?

- **Participants**: a variety of people should be selected to ensure a representative sample of stakeholders. This diversity should encompass backgrounds and expertise. By including a broad spectrum of voices, the focus group can capture a comprehensive range of opinions and insights.
- **Moderator**: the role of the moderator is crucial. They must be able to guide the discussion, ensuring active participation, and allowing for a constructive atmosphere. The moderator is also responsible for initiating the discussion, perhaps by following a proposed agenda.
- **Logistics**: selecting a physical location that encourages group communication is advised for a successful execution. It can last from an hour and a half to two and a half hours. In the end, it is essential to provide participants with follow-up notes. This fosters transparency and ensures that stakeholders feel their input is valued.

3.2.2 Information campaigns

In order to include stakeholders and guarantee the success of projects, the **implementation phase** is essential. A part of this is the information campaign, which informs stakeholders about climate and transition initiatives by providing them with exhaustive information. It can give more information about the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the process, it can assure them what it is the outcome and how they can contribute to the success of the project.

The campaign can become a bridge among stakeholders, facilitating effective communication and providing all the necessary information. The campaign aim is to promote awareness and comprehension about the topic, which in turn facilitates meaningful participation and informed decision-making by giving stakeholders accurate and up-to-date information.

How to tailor a powerful information campaign?

To craft a powerful campaign, the first step is to identify the target audience. Since there is no one-size-fits-all approach to communication, it is extremely important to tailor it to the particular needs of each stakeholder group. Using the stakeholder map that has been produced beforehand can be beneficial in this part of the process. By doing so, it becomes easier to pinpoint the most suitable communication channels for engaging with the stakeholders involved.

It is crucial to choose the communication channels that each stakeholder group finds easiest to use as well as produce materials that complement their tastes and characteristics. By using this strategy, the campaign's impact and efficacy are increased and its intended audience can be easily reached and properly engaged.

3.3 Monitoring

Through monitoring, it is possible to ensure active participation of stakeholders in oversighting and evaluating public decisions and services. In the context of CET, stakeholders can provide feedback on how a CET action is being implemented, thus helping to identify areas for improvement or change. In the monitoring phase, it is crucial to involve stakeholders to ensure alignment with objectives, gather feedback, and make the necessary adjustments.

Here are some examples of tools that support stakeholder involvement in the monitoring phase:

- **Survey and Feedback Tools**: tools like SurveyMonkey, Typeform, or Google Forms allow stakeholders to provide feedback and insights on various aspects of the project or initiative.
- **Collaboration Platforms**: platforms like Microsoft Teams to facilitate communication and collaboration among stakeholders, allowing them to discuss project updates, share documents, and exchange ideas.
- **Reporting Tools**: reporting tools enable stakeholders to access status reports, track milestones, and monitor progress against timelines.
- **Data Analytics Platforms**: platforms like Google Analytics, Adobe Analytics, or Mixpanel provide insights into user behaviour and engagement, which can be useful for monitoring the performance of digital projects and initiatives.
- **Virtual Meeting Platforms**: platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet facilitate virtual meetings and workshops, allowing stakeholders to discuss progress, address concerns, and make decisions jointly, regardless of their location.
- **Workshop organization**: it promotes transparency, collaboration, and accountability, leading to more successful project outcomes and greater stakeholder satisfaction.

3.3.1 Workshop

Workshops can be a useful tool to engage different stakeholders and encourage them to actively participate in deliberative activities. The goal of this tool can vary among projects: for instance, one can deploy it to gather stakeholders' needs and ideas on a project tool to improve it and make it more user-friendly, or to encourage discussion on a specific topic and detect potential conflicts or shared aspirations within a specific community or among different groups. In other cases, it can be deployed for educating citizens about a certain topic.

When organizing a workshop, it is important to consider what will be the main goal, why organize and deploy such tool, who to invite, where organize the event, and when schedule it. Here is what should be taken into account when arranging a workshop:

- **Defining the main goal**: to ensure the success of a workshop and its worthwhileness, it is essential to have a clear understanding of which goal the promoters want to achieve

through this tool. It can be creating a moment of discussion on a given topic, collecting data, or testing a mock-up. Whatever the objective, it is crucial that the organizers are all aligned and share the goal and the topic of the event with the participants in a clear and understandable way.

- **Being sure the workshop is the right tool**: after identifying the main goal to reach, it is necessary to understand whether the workshop is the most adequate tool to deploy. Since the organization of a workshop is time and resources consuming, at this phase is crucial to be sure this tool is the best one to achieve the set goal. For instance, in some cases, focus groups or meetings turn out to be more suitable and effective. This is why the organizers should consider all type of engaging tools before automatically deciding for workshops. Once the organizers are sure the workshop is the right tool for their purpose and expectations, a work plan can be set.
- **Identifying the participants**: after setting the main goal and the topic, the organizers should think about who to invite to the event. This is a very delicate phase: on the one hand, identifying the right participants will ensure collecting efficient data and successfully achieving the main workshop goal. On the other hand, the organizers should be aware that, depending on the topic, there are always conflicts among different groups. Deciding who to include or exclude from the workshop could tease existing disagreements, which can complicate the stakeholders involvement. At the same time, be aware and keeping in mind such relationships can lead the different groups to confront each other during the workshop and achieve interesting food for thoughts and results on the topic of the event.
- **The workshop location**: once the participants are identified, organizers can focus on finding an appropriate location for their event. During this phase, they should consider the geographical position of the workshop, which should be easily reachable for both the participants and themselves. In this way, the organizers can transport any useful materials (e.g., blackboards, information sheets, etc.) without excessive and unnecessary effort, while they make sure not to jeopardize attendance at the event due to participants' difficulty in finding or reaching the venue. The event venue should be clearly stated on the event invitation sent to the participants. Moreover, the organizers should take time to identify an appropriate room which has the right number of seats, tables and electrical plugs if technological devices are needed. This is crucial to ensure that all participant are welcomed avoiding creating a crowded environment that compromises the success of the event.
- **The date of the workshop**: organizers should schedule the date of the event which should be communicated to the participants at least one month before the workshop will take place. This is fundamental to ensure participants' attendance and to receive a reply of participation from the persons invited in good time, and if needed, to identify other persons to be invited if a sufficient number of participants is not reached.

During the workshop is necessary to moderate the different working groups and beware that every participant has the opportunity to express their opinion. Once the workshop is concluded, the organizers should collect all results in a document to be sent to the participants. This will be useful both to make visible to the participants that their efforts were worthwhile and to thank

them once again, and to gather any additional comments or validate the correctness of the reported data.

3.4 Review/readjust

The review and readjustment phase plays a crucial role in project management and constant improvement processes. During this phase, the focus is on evaluating the outcomes and progress of the project or initiative against predefined objectives and performance indicators. Here are some key aspects of the review and readjustment phase:

- **Evaluation of Success:** the primary objective is to assess whether the work completed so far has achieved its intended goals and objectives. Success can be measured in various ways, such as meeting project milestones, delivering on time and within budget, achieving desired outcomes, and satisfying stakeholder expectations.
- **Identification of Achievements:** through comprehensive review and analysis, the project team identifies both project successes and shortcomings. This involves examining what aspects of the project went well, what did not go as planned, and what factors contributed to both positive and negative outcomes.
- **Feedback Collection:** gathering feedback from stakeholders, team members, and other relevant actors is essential during this phase. Feedback provides valuable insights into the project's performance, effectiveness of strategies and tactics, and areas that require improvement.
- **Lessons Learned:** the review and readjustment phase is an opportunity to document and internalize lessons learned throughout the project lifecycle. The project team can extract valuable knowledge and insights to inform future projects and decision-making by capturing successes and failures.
- **Decision-making for Readjustment:** based on the findings from the review process, the project team identifies areas that require readjustment or improvement. This may involve revising project plans, reallocating resources, refining strategies, or implementing corrective actions to address identified issues and enhance project performance.
- **Continuous Improvement:** the review and readjustment phase aligns with the principle of constant improvement, whereby organizations strive to systematically enhance their processes, products, and services over time. By iteratively reviewing and adjusting projects based on feedback and lessons learned, teams can drive ongoing improvement and innovation.

Overall, the review and readjustment phase serves as a critical checkpoint in the project lifecycle, enabling teams to reflect on their progress, learn from their experiences, and adapt their approach to ensure future success.

4.Citizens' engagement

Citizens are active participants whose opinions, experiences, and ideas can enhance the planning process and guarantee that energy transition and sustainability policies are in line with current community needs. Cities have gained attention as key players to combat climate change, not only because they are accountable for 78% of the world's energy consumption and 60% of GHG emissions produced, but also because adaptation and mitigation actions in cities can be successfully implemented (Zapata Arango et al., 2024). Benefits of citizen participation in climate action are fairly well-documented; when citizens have the chance to embark on the transition path that affect them, they have the tools to turn from observers into change agents. Given that a large share of the energy transition involves buildings and mobility, it is important that citizens are aware of the impacts of their choices and committed, or encouraged to contribute to the transition.

Why is it so beneficial to involve citizens?
Involving citizens is essential to promote a democratic and inclusive decision-making process. Citizens involvement allows for the identification of potential issues related to the transition, and assures the implementation of tailored and effective solutions. Moreover, it builds social cohesion, which paves the path for a for a stronger and inclusive society.

Citizens are at the centre of the energy transition, therefore their engagement is relevant at every stage of the CET process. Engaging citizens from the early planning phase through implementation and evaluation, not only helps to build consensus but also brings fresh perspectives to the table, strengthens trust and encourages participation. Various tools can be employed to facilitate citizens' engagement, and in this guide you will find suggestions and examples of the most effective ones in relation to the energy transition and towards climate neutrality.

How to motivate citizens to participate?
Motivating citizens to participate in climate-related activities can be a challenging task. One of the primary drivers for citizen engagement lies in the assurance that their contributions will have a bearing on the final climate policy decisions. When organizers demonstrate a genuine commitment to incorporating and utilizing the inputs received, citizens are more likely to perceive the impact of their effort, thus fostering a sense of meaning in their participation.

Framing participation as a social opportunity, wherein citizens can engage with others impacted by similar issues, has the potential to cultivate a sense of community and a shared determination to address the societal impacts of climate change. Citizens' interest and investment in the process can be increased by making sure that participation is both educational and enjoyable, providing opportunities to learn about solutions in energy efficiency and climate adaptation. By implementing these policies, public authorities may promote democratic governance at the local level and cultivate a community of engaged and environmentally aware citizens.

4.1 Developing a vision

The involvement of citizens is recommended at any point or throughout the entire CET planning cycle: whether it is communicating the local authorities targets, identifying the issues to tackle from the perspective of citizens, formulating the corresponding plan, implementing it, or when evaluating the progresses. This kind of involvement becomes a fundamental part of the strategy, because it gathers different perspectives and opinions to co-create a comprehensive energy and climate policy for the city.

First of all, citizens need to be aware of the co-benefits the energy transition may bring to them, that shall be communicated in the most accessible language to them. Additionally, the identification of issues within the CET that hinder the participation of citizens to the transition can inform targeted actions within SECAPs within mitigation or adaptation actions. Citizens' participation is a way to collect opinions and gather feedback. It offers a chance to co-create projects, services, or solutions that are truly needed. The involvement of citizens and collaborating with citizens to develop plans is also an opportunity to tackle community issues, and nurturing a trust-based relationship between citizens and public authorities. This is why citizen involvement facilitates the creation of plans that are tailored to meet their needs.

Example

- **TOMORROW** is a Horizon 2020 funded project, aiming at empowering local authorities to lead the transition towards low-carbon, resilient and more liveable cities. In the framework of the project, six cities will develop 2050 transition roadmaps together with citizens and other local stakeholders and serve as pilots for the transition of European territories.
- **LAB.T.E.C** is a project born from an initiative of the Emilia-Romagna Region and organised by AESS, aimed at supporting activities for local authorities. These activities include the provision of information, training, assistance, and community engagement services regarding energy efficiency, production and self-consumption. The goal is to support energy transition processes by organizing participatory meetings for citizens and associations interested in supporting and contributing to the energy transition path.
- **Grenoble: full conversion to renewable energy.** Another notable example is the city of Grenoble, which devised a two-year civic participation process involving citizens and stakeholders to address the vision, planning, and all subsequent parts of the CET plan to achieve a full conversion to renewable energy. Initially, discussion groups were created to inform citizens about the plan and enable them to contribute with competence to the draft of the roadmap. Everyone could contribute so that their inputs and data inform scenario development. The process concluded with Grenoble's establishment of a Public Energy Committee, tasked with overseeing the implementation of the roadmap and representing a successful decision-making process.

Resources

- Local energy and climate roadmaps, Energy Cities.

4.1.1 Surveys

Surveys are essential tools for involving citizens in the co-creation of energy and climate policies. They employ a systematic approach to gather information via a set of organized questions, aiming to capture opinions, preferences, issues or concerns, thereby acquiring insights into the carbon-neutral measures required at the local level.

This tool plays a crucial role in developing policies by providing citizens with a platform to voice their opinions. It allows to gain a better understanding of the specific climate challenges and needs faced by citizens demonstrating at the same time a commitment to inclusivity, transparency, and cooperation. Consequently, this becomes a powerful tool for empowering citizens to actively participate in the CET plan, contributing to more knowledgeable and participative procedures.

How to create efficient surveys?

- **Define the objectives:** outline the purpose of the survey to understand what information you aim to gather, and which is the problem you want to solve.
- **Design concise questions:** keep the questions straightforward, avoiding ambiguity. Use both closed-ended and open-ended questions, to capture quantitative and qualitative data.
- **Choose the right method**: depending on your audience, the survey can be online or offline.
- **Ensure anonymity and confidentiality:** assure respondents that their responses will remain confidential and anonymous.

Example

- **Involving citizens and city departments in Mannheim, Germany.** In the development phase of its adaptation action plan, the city of Mannheim carried out an in-depth participation process in 2018 and 2019. The process involved engaging citizens, including individuals and associations, as well as city administration and related departments. The starting point was a survey asking to individuals and to the city staff about climate change impacts already experienced in the fields falling under their responsibility and in their daily work; what future challenges they foresee; and what adaptation measures they would like to see in the city. The survey showed evident public interest in environmental issues and a strong desire to get more involved in public decision-making. Through this experience, the city managed to develop an adaptation plan that was adopted by the city council in April 2019. This plan is widely accepted by the community and implemented in the various departments.

Resources

- Urban Adaptation in Europe - EEA Report No 12/2020
- Adaptation Strategies for European Cities: Final Report

4.1.2 Citizens' assembly

A climate citizens' assembly is a democratic process that allows participants to engage in dialogue and to co-develop solutions. It aims to involve citizens in the deliberation of municipal, regional, national, and international policies on climate change. By giving citizens a seat at the governance table, they can be help to strengthen or rebuild political legitimacy and accountability in the eyes of the public. Climate citizens' assemblies represent a significant shift towards participatory democracy in addressing the complex challenges posed by climate change. Here is an overview of how they work and their potential benefits:

1. Formation and Structure:

- **Process design**: an independent expert committee is established to design the assembly's structure, including the timeframe, core topics, and follow-up plan. Here are some focus topics that have been addressed in various cities across Europe:
  - **Sustainable Energy Transition**: reducing consumption and increasing renewable energy;
  - **Sustainable Transportation**;
  - **Urban Green Spaces and Biodiversity**;
  - **Climate Resilience and Adaptation**;
  - **Waste Reduction and Circular Economy**.
- **Mandate**: the effectiveness of a Climate Assembly depends on its mandate. A clear mandate will foster trust and clarify expectations for political follow-up.
- **Selection**: assembly members are selected through a process that ensures diversity, considering factors like age, sex, income, education, and geographical location.
- **Logistics**: participants are compensated for their time and expenses, ensuring that financial constraints do not limit participation.

2. Implementation Steps:

- **Learning**: assembly members receive information and education about the topic and also the policy framework. For instance, members can be taught about climate change, its impacts, and potential policy solutions, but should also be presented with the municipality energy and climate action plan for instance. This ensures that participants have a basic understanding of the issues and of the way the public authority operates.
- **Deliberation**: participants engage in dialogue and argumentation, sharing perspectives, concerns, and proposed solutions. This deliberative process fosters collaboration and consensus-building.
- **Recommendation**: based on informed deliberations, the assembly formulates recommendations for policymakers. These recommendations reflect the collective wisdom and insights of everyday citizens.

3. Political Follow-up

The political follow-up should be clearly set out from the start to give credibility to the assembly. The local/regional authority council should have to examine, evaluate, debate and act on the proposals from the citizens' assembly.

In order for the participants and the general public to know what has and/or will be done with the recommendations, a monitoring committee should report every three to six months to which extent recommendations have received follow-up.

Benefits and Impact of citizen climate assemblies:

- **Enhanced Policy Robustness**: by incorporating diverse perspectives, climate assemblies strengthen climate policy, making it more comprehensive and responsive to the needs and concerns of the broader population.
- **Addressing Inequalities**: democratic lottery selection ensures representation from different socio-economic backgrounds, challenging entrenched inequalities and preventing the dominance of powerful interests.
- **Breaking Political Deadlocks**: climate assemblies empower citizens to take proactive measures on climate change, often leading to more decisive and timely action than traditional political processes.
- **Boosting Legitimacy and Acceptance:** involving citizens in decision-making processes increases public trust and acceptance of climate-related policies, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility.
- **Promoting Climate Awareness and Empowerment**: participation in climate assemblies not only educates citizens about the climate crisis but also empowers them to engage more actively in climate action, both individually and collectively.

Overall, climate citizens' assemblies offer a promising approach to democratizing climate governance, bridging the gap between policymakers and the public, and fostering a more inclusive and effective response to the climate crisis.

Examples of cities climate assemblies:

- Bologna, Italy: Assemblea cittadina per il clima (comune.bologna.it)
- Tallinn, Estonia: Check here! The Green Capital Citizens' Assembly approved 39 proposals - Tallinn Euroopa roheline pealinn (greentallinn.eu)
- Krakow, Poland: Krakow Climate Assembly: shaping a sustainable future together - European Commission (europa.eu)

Resources

- KNOCA - Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies
- Climate Citizens' Assemblies. Aiming for impact, by learning with, from and for European practices (cca-project.org)

4.2 Planning and implementation

Like stakeholders, citizens' participation is key during the planning and implementation phases as it helps in shaping a climate plan that meets pre-determined needs. Now, let's take a closer look at how to include citizens.

The planning and implementation phases of the CET plan mark the crucial transition from planning to action, where strategies and decisions have the pontential to drive the transition towards clean energy. A few general considerations should be made in any participatory process, such as having an efficient schedule, identifying before the material needed, and ensuring accessibility and inclusivity to participants.

Below, you can find some additional tips:

- Be sure to plan sufficient time for this phase to allow for adequate citizen engagement and deliberation. Preparing a detailed timeline helps in sequencing activities and allocating resources promptly, so that the process unfolds smoothly and reaches its objectives.
- Be sure to identify the resources needed in advance. The overall scope of the process (timeframe, number of participants), the method employed, the kind of recruitment, the instruments, and certain logistical issues like venues and facilitation are some factors that will affect the amount and type of resources needed (human, financial and technological).
- While mapping possible participants, take some time to consider the groups of people who typically do not participate or who have little representation in decision-making bodies. For everyone to be able to participate, remember to provide information in an easy language. Additionally, keep in mind those who do not have access to digital devices or the internet. Whenever feasible, offer an offline option for participation.

The next part will point out different methods throug which citizens can be involved in the CET's **planning** and in the **implementation phase**. For the first one, we will address the tool of the *participative* budgeting, while, for the second one, *communication campaigns* and *co-creation spaces*.

4.2.1 Participative budgeting

A participatory budget is a mechanism that allows citizens to influence public decisions towards energy and climate transition through the direct allocation of public resources according to the citizens' priorities. Community members can directly propose projects and influence how they would like to spend public funds allocated for the clean energy plan. Citizens can propose, debate, and vote on initiatives to be supported via a series of meetings, seminars, and deliberative processes.

We distinguish between two processes of participatory budgets. The first one is the project-based process: this process allocates a pre-defined amount of the budget to citizens' projects and ideas. The amount depends on each authority and on its own financial budget. The second one is the budget cycle process, in which anyone can take part by offering suggestions or

remarks. This can be accomplished by inviting people to participate in public decision-making bodies or by establishing a specific participatory body.

In summary, the objective of participatory budgeting is to increase the transparency, accountability, and participatory nature of public decisions, clarifying to citizens how public budgeting operates.

Examples

- **Participatory Budgeting in Lathi, Finland (2020)**. The city of Lathi has adopted the participatory budgeting measure to actively engage its citizens, giving them a say in designing local projects like parks, bike lanes, and infrastructure, empowering them to determine budget allocation. In the initial stage of the project, citizens were invited to share their thoughts on environmental matters: all suggestions needed to be non-commercial and practical. Following this, a selection process was conducted to identify the most viable ideas (which were then refined through workshop) for the implementation. Lathi's participatory budgeting has resulted in substantial investments and enhanced citizen engagement, as they feel engaged and accountable for the urban environment and urban allocation.

Resources

- Participatory budgeting, the city of Lathi. Maptionnaire**.**

4.2.2 Communication campaigns

Well-designed campaigns can motivate people to reduce their energy consumption and/or prefer active mobility options. Campaigns are strategic efforts to spread knowledge, increase consciousness, and encourage citizen participation. To affect target audiences' opinions, actions, or perceptions, these campaigns must be well thought out, organized, and maintained.

Communication campaigns aim to provide recipients with relevant information about the objectives, scope, and progress of implementation activities. This helps ensure transparency and clarity regarding the project's details. The crucial aspect of campaigning is informing people about the desired result to draw attention to the project and motivate cooperation.

How to organize a successful communication campaign?

Key aspect of a campaign designed to contribute to the energy transition are common to those to any efficient campaign. The choice of message, the tone, how the campaign is designed and the transmission channels, can all fundamentally affect the resulting impact on behaviour.

Five concepts are crucial:

- **Getting the message right**: create a concise and direct message that is so successful than can address interests and problems, deliver information and, at the same time,

motivate action using an appropriate narrative that can leverage on economic aspects (energy savings means saving money), environmental values (become part of the solution), or solidarity messages (help your community by saving energy).

- **Getting the message across**: using visuals or partnering with key industry players to develop visually engaging content, infographics, films, and photographs. It is advised to use different communication methods like: traditional media (newspapers, radio, television), digital media (websites, social media and newsletters), as well as community forums and public events.
- **Combining information with behavioural insights**: real time data can influence citizens behaviour and determine savings, as well as translating often complex to read energy bills into more understandable infographics. This information can be provided by multiutilities.
- **Campaigns for a crisis context:** the current energy crisis change the kinds of messages and campaigns that might be most effective. While energy was often a neglected topic, energy is now in the news, and changing behaviour gives an immediate and directly visible benefit (lower costs, reduced risk of blackouts), thus campaigns can be stronger in calling for collective action.
- **Communicating campaign results:** in order to keep the engagement level high, and to provide accountability, citizens shall be able to be informed about the results obtained by their behavioural choices, so that they feel they are contributing to the progress.

Resources

- A review of campaigns targeting the energy transition has been compiled by the IEA Empowering people to act.
- The European funded Nudge project has investigated how nudging (encouraging positive behaviours) can be used to best support the achievement of climate and energy policy goals in households across different European countries. The project derived policy recommendations and worked on 5 pilots in Europe.

Examples

- Playing my part campaign (IEA/EU Commission).

4.2.3 Co-creation spaces

Setting up co-creation spaces with local authorities is another way to include individuals in the implementation of climate policies. By working together, citizens and authorities can share ideas and collaborate to create solutions. These are spaces, with strong roots in the local area, serve as instruments for public policymakers to foster and generate social innovation projects. Participants can explore approaches to develop initiatives tailored to environmental preservation. By engaging citizens, these spaces can leverage local expertise to devise effective and inclusive solutions to environmental challenges.

What is a co-creation space?

A co-creation space can be a physical or virtual environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds come together to collaboratively generate ideas and develop situations. These spaces are designed to foster open dialogue, creativity, and cooperation among participants, with the goal of addressing complex challenges and fostering community engagement.

Co-creation spaces facilitate collaborative problem-solving through a number of characteristics. First of all, they need to be reachable by every member of the community. This could entail choosing places that are both geographically handy – for instance, the space should be located in the city centre or in a convenient area for accessibility.

Co-creation spaces are transparent and open so that anyone may enter and see the activities going on and how they can personally contribute. Transparency enhances citizen engagement fostering trust. Establishing co-creation spaces involves creating an environment where all voices are respected and acknowledged, irrespective of their social status or personal beliefs.

How can co-creation spaces help the implementation of climate neutral policies?
Citizens can take part in activities aimed at the implementation of policies. Here are a few instances:

- **Brainstorming or debate sessions** in which participants provide opinions, doubts, or recommendations regarding the transition (or climate policies implemented) and what they are experiencing.
- **Workshops or lectures** on topics related to climate change for different age groups, so that these instruments can be helpful to the population as a whole.

Examples

- **Villa Ester** is the first neighbourhood house in Parma, a project born from the idea of creating shared spaces between associations and citizens, creating a bridge for cooperation. Villa Ester is a common good in which citizens of the neighbourhood can find opportunities for socialization, cultural, integration and proximity social services, all in a place available to citizens. It was designed to foster social and cultural interactions among its residents, to provide an open, multicultural environment, and to serve as a gathering spot where individuals from different backgrounds can interact.
- **Urban living lab Stadslab2050,** set up in Antwerp (Belgium) by the municipality, it encourages citizens and local actors to develop new ways of thinking and ideas to build a sustainable city.

4.3 Monitoring

The term "civic monitoring" describes the people's active participation in supervising and providing feedback on how a CET plan has been implemented, thereby helping to identify areas for improvement or adjustments.

The list below provides a collection of tools that support the involvement of citizens in the monitoring phase:

- **Surveys.** Through surveys, people are actively involved in evaluating the quality and the effectiveness of the implemented plan. The responses to this feedback can be routinely gathered by public authorities, who can then utilize the information to improve policies.
- **Citizen science.** In this context, citizen science is the public participation to data collection, i.e. the voluntary involvement of citizens in gathering data to a common purpose. This can also be applied to energy consumption data, like in the AURORA project, developing an app to collect citizens energy consumption data in order to increase their awareness on energy consumption.
- **Online tools/social media.** Citizens can also monitor public opinion and report to a wider community using apps, virtual forums, social media or dedicated websites.

Examples

- **Citizen's science.** Participatory air quality monitoring – AIR BREAK project. One of the most interesting and innovative elements of the project is the participatory, citizen-science approach to air quality monitoring, whereby citizens can provide air quality data to a shared database.

4.4 Review/readjust

The review or readjust phase determines whether the work and initiatives completed up to this point have been successful. This stage is required to identify what went properly, what did not work, and what can and cannot be repeated. Based on every feedback received, it is possible to identify areas that require improvement or adjustment.

Depending on the method of participation and scale of the process, different types of review can be chosen. According to the OECD Advisory Group on Evaluating Representative Deliberative Processes, there are four principles that need to be respected to ensure evaluation's quality and integrity.

- **Independent**. Evaluations should be impartial and independent.
- **Transparent and accessible**. The evaluation process should be made accessible and open to everyone.
- **Evidence-based**. Evaluations should be based on valid and reliable data and can be collected through a variety of methods, such as surveys, interviews, observations, and a review of materials used in the processes.

- **Constructive**. The evaluation should focus on the quality and impact of a deliberative process, so that it can be useful for the future.

There are numerous actions that can be used in the review phase to assess and consider past initiatives. However, before deciding on specific activities, it is crucial to understand the target audience and the overarching purpose of the review process. Basic activities such as surveys and interviews serve as foundational tools in gathering feedback and insights from everyone in an accessible way for all the people involved. **Surveys** allow for the collection of quantitative data on perceptions and experiences, providing a broad overview of community sentiments. On the other hand, **interviews** offer an opportunity for in-depth qualitative exploration, allowing for nuanced understanding of perspectives.

Examples

- **City of Münster: roadmap to implement renewable energy source.** The city of Münster, aiming to achieve 100% energy coverage through clean energy supply, has decided to create a roadmap to reach this goal. The process began with interactive dialogues between citizens and public authorities, aimed at informing the public about the roadmap and discussing their concerns, wishes, and visions for Münster's future. Although the roadmap had already been completed, citizens were still given the opportunity to provide their input through a website where they could present additional ideas for achieving a climate-neutral Münster, thus improving the implementation process and fostering citizen participation as it was envisioned throughout the entirety of the project.

- **City of Manchester: making the city resilient to climate change**. The city of Manchester has devised a roadmap to make the city resilient to climate change and achieve zero carbon emissions. The "Manchester Climate Change Agency" is responsible for coordinating and implementing the roadmap, but citizen involvement has remained central to the roadmap's design. Manchester initiated a public consultation on the roadmap's overall vision, to which more than 700 residents and organizations responded. 85% of respondents agreed on the objective of becoming a zero carbon city by 2050, while another 6% found that this target was not high enough. Subsequently, the city respected the will of its residents and incorporated a zero carbon vision into its 2050 roadmap (Energy Cities).

Resources

- Local energy and climate roadmaps, Energy Cities.

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