

Engage4Energy: an interactive tool provides guidance for a meaningful public engagement in energy infrastructure projects.

Public engagement for energy infrastructure is of increasing importance as public opposition to projects such as wind farms or electricity grids poses challenges to meeting climate and energy targets. As energy infrastructure moves closer to people's homes, there is a call for effective and meaningful public engagement in energy infrastructure projects. The Public Engagement for Energy Infrastructure Task provides solutions to this.

Results and policy recommendations

The Task found that public engagement with energy infrastructure can be driven or hindered by different factors. People are motivated to engage with energy infrastructure projects if they are affected, have the mandate to influence decisions, and can financially benefit. Institutions and developers can improve involvement mainly by (a) engaging the public early and continuously, (b) addressing the concerns of affected people, (c) communicating timely and transparently, and (d) devolving decision-making power to the public. Identified barriers relate to the public's lack of awareness about projects and their benefits, and of trust in developers or local authorities. Key barriers for institutions and developers to engage with the public are insufficient knowledge, lack of consideration for citizens values and needs, deficient skills to and incomplete legal frameworks.

The Task drew three main policy recommendations to overcome current challenges in public engagement and to help create an environment for meaningful engagement:

Policy Recommendations to Create Meaningful Engagement



Need for communication

Policymakers must better communicate about the engagement opportunities, as well as the benefits for the public. National climate policy should also create awareness about the **need for energy infrastructure**.



Capacity-building

Greater awareness and capacity building is needed for businesses, including planners and developers, on the importance of public engagement for a **rapid and just energy transition**, including best practices for public engagement.



Collaboration

Policy makers should incentivise different actors to **share experiences & knowledge** within and across energy technologies, ensuring participation and engagement processes on the ground are inclusive.

The review of different cases related to public involvement in energy infrastructure showed that public engagement can positively impact the project development process and its outcomes. However, the quality of engagement is crucial for a sustainable and just energy transition. In this content, stakeholder engagement processes should:

Recommendations for Effective Stakeholder Management

01

Be **inclusive** while engaging the public and consider outreach to hard-to-reach groups

02

Build trust in and between various actors through inclusive, transparent and equitable processes.

03

Engage the public **early and continuously** in the process, even start before the planning phase

04

Consider creating local and regional **added value**, during construction and in long-term

05

Enable the public to become **co-owners** of the process by involving them in decision making

06

Define a **budget for engagement**, as it can reduce project costs related to opposition and delays

07

Establish **clear and transparent** engagement processes, sharing information openly.

08

Explain how results of engagement processes **influenced the final design** and operation of the project

Major achievements during 2023/24

- The Task published the **report** on “**Drivers and barriers of public engagement in energy infrastructure**”, accompanied by a **slide deck** and a **factsheet**.

- The Task published the **report** “**Impact assessment of case studies. Assessing the impacts of public engagement in energy infrastructure projects**”.

- The Task completed a **comprehensive review** of academic and grey literature to collect and review different socio-psychological, socio-technical, and institutional drivers and barriers of public engagement in energy infrastructure developments.

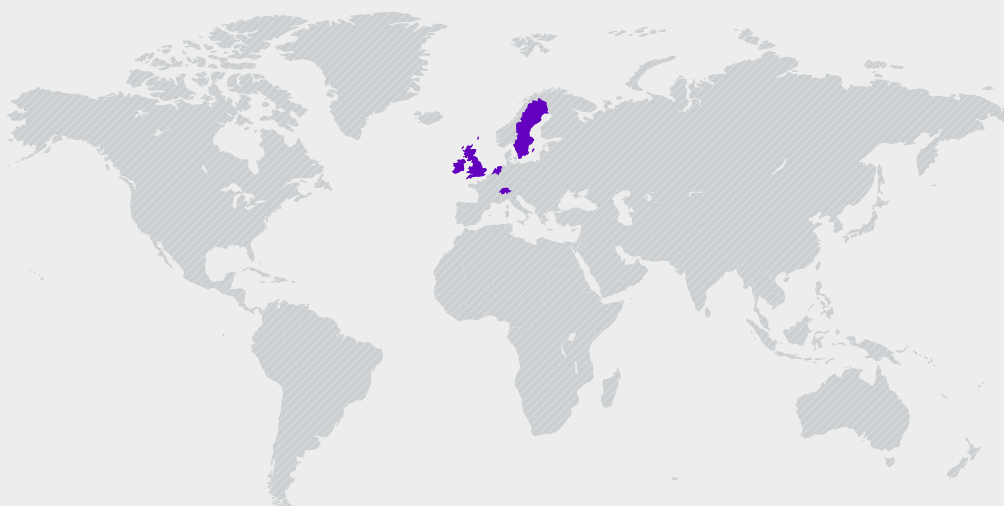
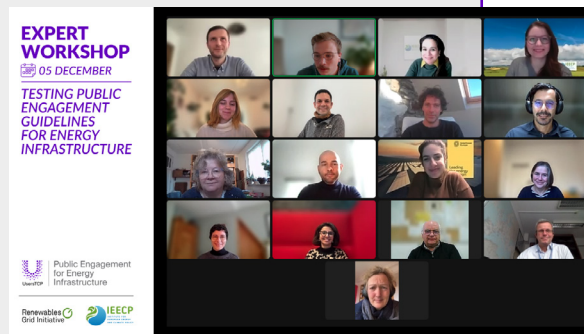
- The Task completed **25 semi-structured interviews** to discuss key drivers and barriers, as well as good practice cases of public engagement around energy infrastructure with experts.

- The Task assessed **98 diverse cases of public engagement in energy infrastructure** projects to identify the impact of public engagement on the projects.

- The Task completed an **online expert workshop** on guidelines for effective engagement.

- The Task launched an **interactive tool** guiding meaningful engagement in energy infrastructure projects during a **webinar** contributing to the **UsersTCP Academy**.

- Furthermore, the Task was present at **various policy and scientific events**, including the 9th Energy Infrastructure Forum, High-Level Electricity Grids Forum, the General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) and the Behave2024 conference.



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