

Project ENES-CE - Collaboration between public bodies and citizen energy groups in implementing local energy strategies in Central Europe

# D.T3.14.4 - TRANSNATIONAL GUIDELINES

## GUIDE TO THE READER

**CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN LOCAL ENERGY PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING CONCRETE ENERGY COMMUNITY ACTIONS AND INVESTMENTS IS THE KEY FOR HELPING THE PUBLIC BODIES IMPLEMENT THEIR ENERGY STRATEGIES IN A MORE EFFICIENT AND BOTTOM-UP APPROACH.**

This document developed in the frame of the project ENES-CE provides guidance on specific topic related to engaging citizens into development of Sustainable Energy Action Plans/Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SEAP/SECAP) and outlines the included project partners actions in overcoming the barriers to successful citizen engagement into the process of local energy planning and implementation of SEAP/SECAPs or similar strategic plans.

In the field of sustainable energy (e.g., renewable energy production, energy savings, investment in local energy transition projects, etc.) as well as in the broader field of citizens' concern for better and more sustainable quality of life (new modes of housing, mobility, lifestyles, sustainable food systems and communal wellbeing etc.), collaboration between citizen initiatives and local authorities plays a vital role. To succeed in reaching the goals of an energy transition, moving away from carbon emitting energy resources to renewables, everyone needs to participate in its implementation. For everyone to participate, engagement practices are key, and local authorities, being the closest body of government to people, are strategically important. Accordingly, it is very important that citizens become more actively involved in development of different local action plans related to the environmental protection and energy in general.

Accordingly, these guidelines provide tips for changing citizens behavior and habits to help implement SEAPs/SECAPs in Central European countries.

### WHY CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT MATTERS?

*Ensures better understanding of citizen needs.*

*It leads to more equitable, sustainable public decisions and improved liveability of local communities.*

*Contributes to a better image of local authorities in terms of caring for citizens, respecting their views to the extent that they implement measures that benefit them and the community.*

*Considered to be a key to building public support for the energy transition.*

## INTRODUCTION

Engagement of relevant stakeholders, starting from citizens, has received increasing attention from public institutions as a way to be more inclusive and responsive to citizens' needs, views and expectations. At the same time, civil society and citizens alike have been striving for having a greater say in public decision-making, helped by the rise of technological innovation and greater connectedness that facilitate the process, enable wider participation and the development of new tools and methods that make public engagement more broadly accessible.

Since in many cases citizens and other stakeholders are involved in local energy planning only at the end of the process, i.e., at approval phase of local energy action plans this creates an atmosphere of mistrust which makes challenging to implement energy plans in the future. This can only be solved by active involvement of local governments in applying effective engagement mechanisms or developing relevant set of tools which can be used by public authorities in order to increase citizen participation in local energy planning.

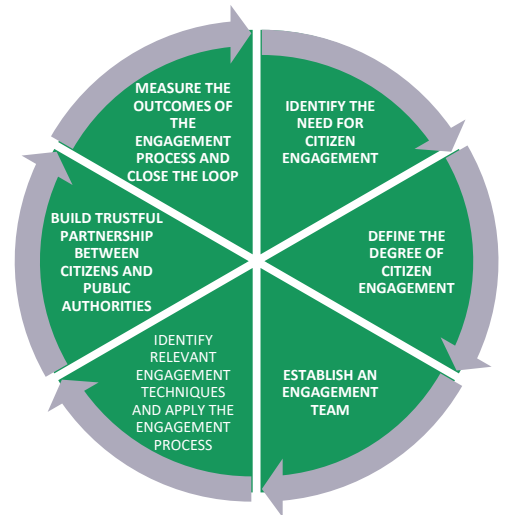
Many local governments in the process of engaging citizens in local energy planning face different challenges which are further aggravated by lack of financing, being understaffed and lack of acceptance and participation in general. In order to overcome all the challenges, for local governments it is important to get the public support and find legitimacy for their actions. No less important is to ensure engagement of wider public which ensures the diversity of experiences, perspectives and viewpoints which are brought into public decision-making process. Accordingly, the aim of this document is to boost the engagement of citizens in implementation of SEAPs/SECAPs in Central Europe by local authorities so in the context of this document, citizen engagement means engagement on municipal level.

These guidelines follow six-step process in engaging citizens in implementing SEAPs/SECAPs (see the figure to the right) from identification of the need for citizen engagement till the measuring the outcomes of the engagement process end elaborates the experience of ENES-CE project partners in process of engaging citizens in SECAP development and implementation.

## WHAT IS SEAP/SECAP?

Following the adoption of the European Union's Climate and Energy Package in 2008, the European Commission launched the Covenant of Mayors initiative, to endorse and support the efforts deployed by local authorities in the implementation of sustainable energy policies addressing climate mitigation by means of a reduction in fossil fuels consumption. In October 2015, following a consultation process on the future of the Covenant of Mayors, the European Commission launched the new integrated Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, which goes beyond the objectives set for 2020. The signatories of the new Covenant commit to reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 40% and to adopt a joint approach to tackling mitigation and adaptation to climate change by 2030.

Signatories of the Covenant of Mayors and later Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy have committed to develop Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs, SEAPs before 2018) in two years from the date the adherence. SEAPs and SECAPs are the key documents which outline the activities and measures set up to achieve CO<sub>2</sub> reduction target by 2020, i.e., by 2030 on local government level. Since the defined activities and measures are defined for various sectors, the engagement of relevant stakeholders from public and private sector plays a key role in the whole process of developing SEAPs/SECAPs especially in the part related to defining and implementing mitigation and adaptation measures.



CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE COUNTRIES HAVE A LONG-STANDING TRADITION OF CENTRALISED GOVERNANCE AND UNFAVORABLE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS.

THERE ARE MANY BARRIERS TO A TRUSTFUL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN



## POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

- Citizen involvement and participation is crucial in growing consensus for the energy transition to occur at faster rate.
- To ensure inclusivity and fairness due to need for technology to change, the need for procedural and ownership models also has to change.
- Engagement and participation allow communities to shape the energy transition in a way that best suits citizen's needs, goals and aspirations.
- Citizen participation embodies the difference between something being imposed upon a community and something being chosen by the community to pursue themselves.
- A more collaborative approach between local authorities, external actors, such as citizens, is also an effective and practical means of achieving energy transition objectives.
- Citizen participation can lead to raising public awareness of a particular matter, including raising awareness.



## WHY ENGAGE CITIZENS IN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SEAP/SECAP?

Many Central European countries need support in the development of local and regional energy strategies and action plans, since they are lagging in their implementation and thereby threatening regional competitiveness. Creating a functional low carbon economy plans (like SEAP/SECAP) requires tapping into the human and financial potential of citizens. The aim of the citizen engagement is to help the public bodies implement their strategies in a more efficient and bottom-up approach. We are witnessing that both citizen participation and engagement are the building blocks for good governance. In this way local authorities share information and make citizens a partner in decision making process. Three main factors which are causing low citizen engagement in creating local energy plans include:

- general lack of communication between local governments and citizens,
- lack of mechanisms for local governments to reach out citizens and actively involve them in creation of local energy policies and strategies,
- low public awareness on energy and climate issues.

In addition, for local energy planning process to be successful, engagement of citizens may be undertaken at all stages, from development of local energy plans till the phase of their approval and implementation. Citizen engagement and collaboration with local governments is becoming beneficial to successfully face future climate hazards, especially to understand the main impacts of climate change on the population beyond climate data. Citizen engagement can bring multiple benefits to local communities, municipalities and other stakeholders. One of the main benefits is the strengthening of democratic structures and a broad consensus on implemented energy strategies and measures.

Engaging citizens within ENES-CE project proved to be very important activity in the process of revising existing local energy plans and co-creation of the new ones. This created the atmosphere of trust in targeted regions which will in the future facilitate the implementation of SEAPs/SECAPs and other local energy plans in the future.

## PRINCIPLES OF GOOD CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

While implementing citizen engagement process in development and implementation of SEAPs/SECAPs it is important to adhere to certain principles. This ensures the success in working with citizens as well as understanding the importance of citizen engagement in shaping local energy policies. In creating and implementing effective citizen engagement activities, local governments should be **INTENTIONAL** which means to be clear about the purpose of engagement. Quality designed engagement generates public awareness on importance of local energy planning and trust that people can make a change working together.

During the process of co-creating local energy and climate plans local governments should be **PEOPLE-ORIENTED**, i.e., every problem should be approached from citizen point of view. Accordingly, the engagement approach should be customized in terms of location, time and language. The greatest effect can be achieved through direct contact with citizens through various mechanisms including round tables, forums, workshops and similar gatherings. In process of developing and implementing SEAP or SECAP, communication with the public is useful and it should include dissemination and collection of feedback from a large number of citizens.

While working with citizens two-way/mutual communication should be established which entails collaboration and partnership where each issue or challenge should be viewed as opportunity for collaboration and relationship-building. The collaboration and cooperation also entail creation of new participatory methods which will help in co-deliver new and amplify existing ideas. The good engagement process requires from local governments to be **TRANSPARENT**, i.e., upfront about the objective of engagement process and provide all the information and data to help citizens understand the issue and how they can be involved. Finally, to achieve positive results of engagement process for future energy investments and actions one should be **INCLUSIVE** and reach out to as many stakeholder groups that may be affected by SEAP/SECAP implementation.



## PLANNING PROCESS FOR ENGAGING CITIZENS IN IMPLEMENTING SEAP/SECAP

Citizen engagement has been recognized as vital for ensuring that local energy planning interventions have maximum impact, but the process is often viewed as complex, time consuming and costly with a lack of capacity at local level for implementing engagement activities. However, the benefits are clear: participatory process builds acceptance and improves the efficiency of actions by understanding the end-user needs. The success of citizen engagement is largely determined by how thoroughly and thoughtfully it is planned.

Planning for public engagement is a crucial step in ensuring that engagement efforts are effective. During this planning phase there are several issues which should be taken into account. The planning process helps local governments refine goals, identify the community's needs, determine key audiences, and plan for an evaluation of the initiatives' success. Answering the main questions that imply effective planning of citizen engagement (WHY? WHO? WHAT? HOW?) first provides the level of specificity necessary for success.

Effective planning process requires development of a plan for citizen engagement which is considered to be the first step towards engaging more effectively with community members. Using a plan to direct and coordinate citizens actions helps local governments ensure the cohesive execution of energy strategies. Citizens are more willing to get involved when they are acquainted with a concrete engagement plan, which includes objectives, issues for discussion, timing of consultations, and explanations of how their proposals will be considered. Making unrealistic promises may lead to a negative perception of the process.

Although ENES-CE project partners approached the process of engaging citizens from the very beginning with a great deal of expertise and cooperation with local governments, yet they encountered certain problems and challenges. Regardless, they managed to achieve all initially set goals by including citizens in revision of existing Sustainable Energy Action Plans and other local energy planning documents, development of new Sustainable Energy and Climate Action plans and revised local energy plans, in selecting measures to be implemented within the pilot actions and finally to take part in those actions and benefit from their results. This positively influenced the establishment of citizen energy cooperatives and other forms of citizen energy groups which resulted in greater citizen acceptance and became a major driver of new energy investments in the future.



### EFFECTIVE PLANNING TOOL FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

#### WHY?

*Specify the goals and the purpose*

#### WHO?

*Identify the right people to be involved in the engagement.*

#### WHAT?

*Define a clear message and quality arguments*

#### HOW?

*Use effective communication and dissemination methods and suitable engagement modes.*

What made the whole process successful is the fact that the project partners seek to obtain and use the public input in delivering project outputs and weren't seeking only citizen buy-in to an already determined outcome. The included citizens were led by the feeling that they can actually make a difference when acting together with other citizens and stakeholders. Furthermore, through citizen engagement in the context of ENES-CE project positive change in everyday life was emphasized through implementation of pilot projects and organized interactive and collaborative workshops where the participants were relaxed enough to share their views, opinions and concerns.

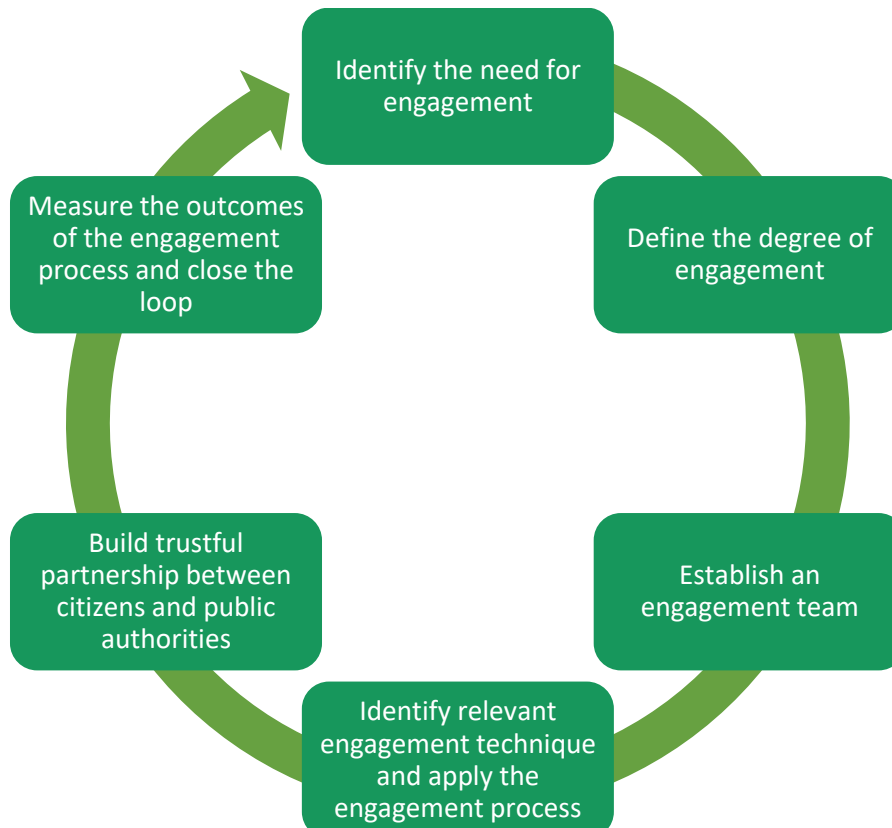
## STEPS IN ENGAGING CITIZENS IN IMPLEMENTING SEAP/SECAP WITH FIRST HAND EXPERIENCES OF INCLUDED ENES-CE PROJECT PARTNERS

While cooperating with relevant local governments in the whole process of engaging citizens in local energy planning, there is possible to identify **six main steps** that need to be taken in order for the engagement process to be successful (see the figure below).

These steps actually illustrate critical elements necessary to ensure smooth and meaningful engagement and provide brief description of each element. During all six steps the most beneficial thing is to emphasize the role of citizens in discussing energy and climate issues with their local authorities. Thanks to that it becomes possible to establish a common vision for the future, define the steps that will make vision to come true, and invest the necessary human and financial resources.

The whole process of engaging citizens in ENES-CE project was the starting point for stimulating the citizens behavioral changes that are needed to complement the technical actions contained in the SEAPs/SECAPs.

*ENGAGED CITIZENS CAN PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN MAKING PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS MORE TRANSPARENT, ACCOUNTABLE, EFFECTIVE, AND CONTRIBUTING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES.*



## 1<sup>st</sup> STEP: IDENTIFY THE NEED FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

In order to ensure a meaningful engagement with citizens all interactions must be undertaken in a well thought out and planned manner wherein all stakeholders must be able to share their concerns and their needs connected to energy issues.

Before going into the depth with identification of the need for citizen engagement or objective for which such an engagement is being proposed one should consider work directly with citizens and other relevant stakeholders because communication and consultation are two-way/mutual processes that encourage participation, exchange of ideas and flow of conversation.

In addition to a need assessment, within this phase it is important to identify the obstacles which may cause low citizen engagement or for it to be exploited to its full potential. One of the obstacles can be **the limited trust in local government**: it is seen that generally, government actions are often low on public trust due to many reasons such as not fulfilling promises that have been made publicly or not taking into consideration community ideas on priority areas for development. The second one refers to **political reluctance**: if the engagement process isn't formalized or conducted in a structured manner, people are often reluctant to participate. Citizens are well known by their **limited capacity to engage** so in order to engage meaningfully in public policy debates on energy issues, it is essential that the participants have knowledge about issues at hand. This was proved also in ENES-CE project where project partners were upfront with the needed level of knowledge of citizens who want to engage. In addition to limited capacity to engage, citizens at least at the beginning of project implementation have shown a **lack of commitment** which was later overcome by intensive activities related to increase awareness on the importance of involving citizens in energy planning process.

Citizen engagement may be undertaken at all stages of the policy or project development process and is an iterative process that continually infuses citizens' priorities in policy making/project implementation. In processes of citizen engagement, citizens may be represented themselves as individuals and sometimes through interest groups such as energy communities.

As proven many times within the project ENES-CE implementing citizen engagement based on the needs of people helps increasing public satisfaction and trust. It is also essential to engage population groups that are difficult to reach, such as poor people, very young and older people, migrants, people with disabilities, and to aim for gender balance in engagement. A focus on energy, environmental and social justice can contribute towards an energy transition that is inclusive and fair.

### Municipality of Forli, Italy

The citizen engagement is the most delicate and precious issue in the definition of a wide planification document as a SECAP. An atmosphere of trust and cooperation is as difficult to be obtained as useful to successively implement the defined actions.

The invitation is the first approach both to an economic stakeholder or an environmental association: if the Mayor or the Environment Office Assessor personally sends a communication explaining the project and the interest of the Municipality to involve the organization in the process, there might be more possibilities to get the attention on the proposed focus.

A light and focused questionnaire, to be sent after the presentation of the project, is a quick way to confirm the importance of the opinion of the people reached and helps collecting the effective need in the field of the survey.

The suggestion, and later confirmation, of the steps of a participative path to be travelled together with the help of a professional facilitator will help setting a warm mood for a fruitful discussion.

An important point, during the participative path workshops, is to refer to the needs pointed out in the survey and to discuss and expand the argumentation and the possible transfer to an implementable action.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> STEP: DEFINE THE DEGREE OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

In an ideal scenario in citizen engagement, the citizens should collaborate from the beginning, from identification to implementation of community energy projects and are even empowered to reject or alter the project design at a later stage of the project. Within the ENES-CE project, project partners tended to provide the full citizen engagement from very beginning of local energy planning process, from revision of existing, development of new local energy plans and even in identification of measures to be implemented as part of pilot projects in different project partner regions in order to stimulate the co-creation of citizen energy cooperatives and other forms of citizen energy groups. According to existing practices on local level in different project partner regions through development of relevant participative tools for citizen engagement municipalities ensured satisfactory degree of citizen engagement and in fact provide them with pivotal role in creating their local energy strategies. When talking about degrees of citizen engagement three main levels can be identified:

- information of citizens by local authorities (**awareness raising**),
- consultation of citizens by local authorities (**informing citizens and considering their feedback**)
- participation of citizens (**empowering of the citizens**).

The level of citizen engagement increases as one progress from information to participation. Participation is the highest level of citizen engagement and should be implemented by municipalities for those projects that require high acceptance. To reach participation level of citizen engagement, it is important to start with awareness raising initiatives (distribution of leaflets, brochures, publication of articles in local newspapers, information on local government website and social networks, organization of events like living labs, roadshows, seminars, energy and climate days or weeks, etc.). It is also possible to have different levels of engagement for different group of stakeholders. The awareness rising initiatives continue with consultation initiatives such as municipality website with feedback loop, citizen assemblies, surveys and questionnaires, workshops, working groups, green offices with feedback loop, etc. In order to reach the highest level of citizen engagement, citizen should be involved in pilot projects, in energy communities, crowdfunding, etc.

Local governments in cooperation with project partners and other relevant stakeholders managed to implement all three levels of citizen engagement and thus ensure the full potential of citizen engagement process which eventually resulted in high awareness on their own impact on local energy and climate goals and that they are not alone in the struggle and that actually it is possible to act collectively in order to reach higher aims.

Thanks to the good engagement of the very beginning, some of the citizens interested in green and sustainable projects, which took part in ENES-CE project activities in addition to their involvement in established citizen energy cooperatives and groups have shown the interest beyond the project

implementation and were interested in further promotion of renewable energy sources in their local community. This was the goal from the beginning, provide a momentum for further energy community investments and actions.

It can be concluded that in order to achieve the goals of citizen engagement, local governments should involve citizens at an early stage: citizens should already be involved in the stage of creating energy-related visions, roadmaps and action plans on municipal level and in pilot projects.



### Town of Prelog, Croatia

There is no one-size-fits to foster a community energy projects or initiatives with thriving citizen engagement, but one of the keys to encourage citizen engagement on energy and climate related matter is inclusivity. Based on experience of Croatian project partners in order to ensure the highest level of citizen engagement in development and implementation of SEAPs/SECAPs and other energy plans and to avoid negative aspects of such engagement, the following five things' municipalities should consider to do:

1. Provide an interactive easy-to-use platform for engagement which simplifies the engagement process and where citizens are able to quickly retrieve data, submit forms and find the information they need.
2. Empower citizens in order for them to have some authority and power in the decision-making process as they can provide insights on funding allocations and energy issues, and help develop community partnerships.
3. Develop a comprehensive communication strategy which will help in reaching out and broadcasting to citizens.
4. If it's possible provide incentives for both citizens and government employees with budgetary and legal restrictions.
5. Provide success metrics which will help in setting goals, objectives and measurements to track citizen engagement initiatives, and allocate sufficient staffing and resources to the initiative.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> STEP: ESTABLISH AN ENGAGEMENT TEAM

The key success factor of an engagement process in the implementation of SEAP/SECAP is a quality engagement team. At very beginning it is necessary to clearly define who is responsible for development and managing the implementation of SEAP/SECAP. This team should be entrusted with the following responsibilities:

- ✓ developing necessary background information,
- ✓ publicize all de efforts in developing and implementing SEAP/SECAP,
- ✓ identify and recruit participants of the engagement,
- ✓ select valuable tools for citizen engagement,
- ✓ report the outcomes of the process,
- ✓ make recommendations based on the outcomes.

In addition to public officials from local governments it is important to include various stakeholders and experts from the energy and climate sector who will provide guidance in the whole process of developing SEAP/SECAP. In the process of establishing an engagement team follow these steps:

1. define the level of professionalism and expertise of included members,
2. define their role,
3. establish a structured process for organizing the meetings and exchange of ideas and knowledge,
4. define the timeline for SEAP/SECAP development and implementation,
5. define the process of managing available resources.

For local governments to be valuable for the team, it is also important to be trained in climate and energy issues and involved in relevant projects, to enhance their credibility with citizens.

Contrary to the initial assumption within the project, local governments have played an important role as “knowledge hub”, i.e., as interface between energy experts and citizens, and were focused on raising public awareness (for example, through information activities about the benefits of energy savings and/or of solar PV electricity - including cost benefits). The involvement of technical experts who have relevant knowledge in the field of energy and climate planning and who will collect all the information and data which are needed for the further development of mentioned documents should also be considered.

Each member of engagement team should help in establishing a good relationship with various citizens which will help to leverage resources, create opportunities to discuss the costs and benefits of mitigation actions and potentially develop new and innovative ways to build community resilience and it is important to have in mind that each member should have certain competencies, which will support the development of a detailed energy and climate plan.

Based on ENES-CE project identifying who should be involved/consulted in the engagement process was perhaps one of the most difficult parts.

Finding the right mix of participants, and ensuring that no group is unintentionally (or perhaps, deliberately) excluded, is essential to provide legitimacy and credibility to the engagement process. It is sensible to identify the broadest pool of stakeholders, so that all affected parties and fields can have a chance to be represented, and later on there can be no accusation of being left out.

#### Municipality of Koper, Slovenia

A team for developing SECAP/SEAP should include various stakeholders. At municipality a steering group must be set up. In Slovenian case the person leading the steering group is the so-called coordinator. The coordinator's task is to guide the document developer through the SEAP/SECAP development process, actively monitor the production of the document at all stages, provide full support in obtaining all necessary data needed for production, organize meetings, and actively participates in all meetings/presentations during the development of the document. The coordinator is supported in his work by a steering group within the local community and as such acts in its interest. The steering group is also involved in the implementation of individual SEAP/SECAP activities, if necessary, on its own initiative or at the initiative of the Municipal Council, the mayor or the person responsible for the implementation of SEAP/SECAP.

The steering group comprises representatives of municipal offices directly involved in planning and implementing measures and activities in the field of promoting sustainable energy and environmental protection (Mayor's Office, Office for Environment and Spatial Planning, Office for Social Activities and Development, Office for Public Utilities and Transport, Investment Service...). The primary task of the steering group is to provide guidance to the developer in the preparation of SEAP/SECAP, which aims to produce a quality document. The coordinator is also the fundamental link between SEAP/SECAP developer and the local community. Document developer must include in his team experts with a thorough knowledge for individual sectors (energy, water, agriculture, forestry, health, tourism).

An important part of the team are also different stakeholders and general public.



## 4<sup>th</sup> STEP: IDENTIFY RELEVANT ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS AND APPLY THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Citizen engagement process is always an ongoing process and it is important to note that there are different levels of engaging citizens, from information dissemination and information gathering all the way to genuine consultation and involvement in decision making. The corresponding engagement technique should be adjusted to the expected level of engagement. The relevant engagement techniques as well as tools with guidelines are very useful for explaining the mode of operation of citizens and crucial for success.

In order to include citizens in the local energy planning process from the very beginning the useful techniques, i.e., tools in engaging citizens in the process of SEAP/SECAP development were developed (see in the text below). They for sure were beneficial for motivating citizens to activate themselves during the various event organized in the frame of project activities. The most useful techniques for citizen engagement identified within the project are:

- **stakeholder forums** - engaging stakeholders often starts with organizing meetings, forums and based on the personal contacts acquired through these events, cooperation can continue in written forms, with some forums to discuss sub-results;
- **questionnaires, surveys** - this method requires less organization and enables access to large samples of individuals. However, questions to be asked must carefully be considered, preferably put together with the help of a survey expert;
- **written contributions** - in many stages of the work this method can be applied. When a draft or part of the (revised) plan/strategy is ready, it can be distributed among stakeholders, asking for their written contributions;
- **personal interviews** - this method can be applied at fields which are of high priority to the municipality, or which needs the most intervention. Locals engaged in that field can be approached personally for interviews about related issues and problems.

In connection to applying the engagement process, communication skills are very important. If the skills do not exist within the municipality or the project team to deliver the engagement process, then professionals such as facilitators can provide valuable contribution, especially if the issue is likely to be controversial or when the independence of the facilitation could be an issue. There is no one right way of undertaking citizen engagement. It is always influenced by context specifics and the outcomes will depend upon planning, commitment and capacities of involved stakeholders. For each engagement goal, engagement team must consider the circumstances, willingness and ability of engaged stakeholders and the nature of the stakeholders' desire and need to participate.

### City of Budapest, XIV. district Zugló Municipality, Hungary

Examples of effective engagement techniques:

1. **Citizen's assembly in Budapest to define main climate goals** - a community assembly brings together randomly selected people to discuss a given topic and make recommendations to the municipality on how to address the problem. At the assembly meeting, participants learn new insights about the issue, share their thoughts, and finally formulate the commonly agreed recommendations.

Duration: app. 2 weekends + 2-3 months of preparation

1 expert in such events + 4-8 topic experts are needed for the implementation

2. **Covenant of Mayors best practice on citizens questionnaire** in Kispeszt - see <https://www.covenantofmayors.eu/support/library.html>

Search for: SKispeszt (Budapest), Hungary: Tackling local needs: the development of an adaptation strategy using a citizen survey

3. **Workshops with citizens** - main aim of these events is to gain local knowledge from citizens and to better define territorially the problems, needs and opportunities. Maps of the settlement/district can be printed in A/0 size and with the guidance of an expert, people can put colored post-its or spots on it (each color have different meanings)



## 5<sup>th</sup> STEP: BUILD TRUSTFUL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

As already mentioned before, citizen engagement is a collaborative effort between citizens and the government in partnership which is built on trust. Real citizen engagement involves talking with the community, actively listening, and working alongside them to develop local energy plans and when working to bring citizens together, reckon with common issues it is possible to find something in common worth building which is the heart of public service. Effective citizen engagement initiatives require local government to understand the strategic importance of the energy transition and encourage strong collaboration with local stakeholders.

It is, however, the responsibility of the government and other included experts to convey the importance of collaboration to citizens so that quality exchanges can take place and citizens can get involved meaningfully. Local governments need to have systems and processes in place that allow citizens easy and comfortable access government. Especially in countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), characterized by a long-standing tradition of centralized governance and unfavorable economic conditions, the local level of governance - i.e., the municipal level - is the most important for creating a trustful partnership between citizens and government.

For a trustful partnership, political commitment on municipal level is needed to see citizens as partners and key players in the energy transformation! Also, citizens' level of trust in local government to handle the municipality's problems must be elevated. Local governments need to show their active role in solving energy issues and that they have skills and tools to do so. In this context, local governments play an important role as "knowledge hub", i.e., as interface between energy experts and citizens, and should focus on raising public awareness. In addition, they should involve citizens at an early stage: citizens should already be involved in the stage of creating energy-related visions, roadmaps and action plans on municipal level and in pilot projects.

Implementing citizen engagement based on the needs of people helps increase public satisfaction and trust. It is also essential to engage population groups that are difficult to reach, such as poor people, very young and older people, migrants, people with disabilities, and to aim for gender balance in engagement. In addition, citizen engagement helps people understand the complexity of decision-making. It is important to consider existing initiatives, for example, energy-relevant NGOs, and involve them in the citizen engagement process on the municipal level.

Beyond that, every municipality should be keen on creating a common vision of the future. This can be a very strong link and make work easier, also in rough times. To find a shared vision, a transparent and honest exchange is the most important basis.



*Citizens should be at the center of each work. While serving citizens, they can also be included as partners in shaping a common future.*

### Municipality of Pfaffenhofen a.d. Ilm, Germany

Citizen engagement on energy and climate issues is a collaborative effort between citizens and the government in partnership but the government has the responsibility to convey the importance of collaboration to citizens so that quality exchanges can take place and citizens can get involved meaningfully in creation of sustainable local energy policies and strategies. In addition, local authorities need to recognize that solutions often lie within their communities.

For successful engagement process, the government needs to have systems and processes in place that allow citizens easy and comfortable access government. This is especially relevant in countries in Central and Eastern Europe, which are characterized by a long-standing tradition of centralized governance and unfavorable economic conditions where the local level of governance is the most important for creating a trustful partnership between citizens and government.

The key element in building trustful partnership with citizens and public authorities lies in the legitimacy of public institutions as well as in their efforts in creating a better environment and quality living conditions for their inhabitants. In addition, for a trustful partnership, political commitment on municipal level is needed to see citizens as partners and key players in the energy transformation. Also, citizens' level of trust in local government to handle the municipality's problems must be elevated. Local governments need to show their active role in solving energy issues and that they have skills and tools to do so.

## 6<sup>th</sup> STEP: MEASURE THE OUTCOMES OF THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AND CLOSE THE LOOP

Measuring outcomes helps better in capturing what is wanted out of partnerships between citizens and other involved in SEAP/SECAP development and implementation. Deeper modes of citizen engagement are ultimately aimed at social outcomes such as stronger social capital, civic responsibility and behavioral changes. In case of ENES-CE project the general idea of citizen engagement was to include citizens in local energy planning process from very beginning and include them in the implementation of SEAPS/SECAPs, i.e., measures which consist of real investments or initiatives that are community relevant. To measure the outputs, it is important to decide on what should be measured to understand the impact of engagement. Some of measuring parameters could be:

- number of included citizens,
- the level of gained experience,
- number of projects launched upon citizen initiatives, etc.

In addition to measuring outcomes of citizen engagement process, the feedback loop should be closed by providing a summary of the feedback obtained and the outcomes of the engagement, and what will be done because of the engagement - not just by the government, but also other stakeholders. The governments should provide the citizens with the results of their engagement because otherwise the process would be incomplete and will negatively influence the citizen perception of the whole process of citizen engagement and their engagement in the future. In case of developing and implementing SEAPs/SECAPs, citizens should know in what extend their input influenced the final conclusions delivered by local governments and all involved in SEAP/SECAP implementation process.

### Lubelskie Voivodeship, Municipality of Niemce, Poland

The residents, entrepreneurs, local authorities and other stakeholders were involved in energy planning and activities of the ENES-CE project from the very beginning of the project. A survey was created and distributed, answered by 34 respondents and the first workshop meeting was held with 23 participants. The stakeholders of the Niemce Commune were asked for their opinion on the so far implemented investment activities for the use of RES, included in the municipal low-carbon economy plan (LCEP). In addition, questions were asked about the proposals for further RES investments important for the municipality and its inhabitants. The survey that was one of the means to measure knowledge, needs and willingness of residents to engage in the process of energy planning and investments in RES in the municipality.

In total 6 workshops were organized with participation of 136 people who proposed their RES investments. Some other of the proposals from meetings participants were discussed and after the exchange of experiences, transfer of knowledge, answer to questions, conclusions and consensus on investments in RES and EE they were included in the update of LCEP as a result of the involvement of residents in the energy planning process. This method of social dialogue engaging citizens in cooperation was approved by inhabitants and entrepreneurs. After creation of the "Energy Cluster Niemce", they decided to implement a pilot action of ecological education for the local community. As part of the pilot action, 3 meetings were carried out, attended by 68 people. Members of energy cluster wanted to reach other inhabitants, raise awareness of the possibility of reducing low emissions and inform through which investments in RES they can contribute to clean air. In addition, cluster members promoted the idea of cooperation within the energy cluster and the possibility for potential new members to join and join the common bottom-up energy planning in Niemce Commune. In order to measure the achievement of the goal of the pilot action, a survey was carried out, which was answered by 36 respondents. As a result of the pilot action, 91% of the surveyed participants increased their knowledge and awareness of the possibility of reducing low emissions. Moreover, 44% of the respondents declared their willingness to be a member of the energy cluster. The respondents expressed their opinion on the implementation of the ENES-CE project: 69% of the respondents stated that the ENES-CE project, the creation of an energy cluster and meetings are beneficial for the inhabitants of the Niemce Commune, as they involve them in jointly activities to reduce air pollutions as well as energy planning in the municipality with the use of RES. After the pilot action, a meeting summarizing the pilot was organized (14 people participated in the meeting). Based on the results of the survey, the outcomes and conclusions of the pilot action were presented as well as information about next activities of the energy cluster, including partial inventory of land suitable for PV or wind installations and planned further meetings with residents and about an educational meeting with 18 primary school students, which was conducted.

By showing the effects of joint work, it is possible to build confidence in a wider group of residents and stakeholders and encourage them to cooperate in the future, and surveys and meetings are an excellent form of giving an opportunity to express stakeholders themselves and measuring involvement in the energy planning process of residents and other stakeholders.

# ENES-CE TOOLS FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

One of the tasks within ENES-CE project was to develop participative tools for citizen engagement in local energy planning and financing. The developed toolbox includes a combination of analytical (toolbox) and procedural tools (guidelines) intended to support rational and sustainable decision-making of public authorities and address citizen engagement as a cornerstone for sustainability of local energy actions. This set of tools was developed based on a methodology for support a toolbox to citizens integrated energy planning and financing.

The developed set of tools have proven to be extremely useful in the citizen engagement in revision of existing SEAPs and other local energy plans, development of new SECAPs and local energy plans as well as in identification of measures from newly developed SECAPs and other local energy plans to be implemented within the pilot activities of the project.

## TOOL 1 CO-DESIGN WORKSHOP METHODS FOR ENGAGING PARTICIPANTS INTO LOCAL ENERGY PLANNING

Workshop manual concentrates on the methods for successful implementation of interactive and collaborative workshops given that workshops are usually key to encouraging citizen participation. These methods include visualization and ideation exercises through which participants are engaged in expressing their concerns, ideas and visions for the future energy systems.

LINK to the TOOL:

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/200117-1950-D.T2.2.1-Tool1-Co-design-workshop-methods.pdf>

## TOOL 2 ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR COMMUNITY ENERGY PROJECTS

Assessment Tool for Community Energy Projects is a Microsoft Excel based spreadsheet, developed as a part of ENES-CE Interreg Central Europe project aimed to development of local and regional energy strategies and action plans, together with the required set of tools needed to support local communities in development of community-based energy projects. This tool is designed to be as generic as possible in order to be able to provide quantitative financial and qualitative impact-oriented assessment of the community projects of any kind. It can provide indication about potential profitability, size of the investment and financial return of the project as well as visual positioning of the project in regard with multiple qualitative social aspects. The tool should be used as a support

to lead informed discussion about the energy projects, both within community and project developers as well as with representatives of (local) public authorities. The tool should be used in project inception and planning phase.

LINKS to the TOOL:

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/201009--Assessment-Tool2-Community.xlsx>

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/201009-Tool2-V2-Guidelines-for-use.pdf>

## TOOL 3 COMMUNICATION METHODS FOR LOCAL ENERGY PLANS AND CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF ACCEPTANCE

To effectively communicate the results of local energy plans and make them accepted within both local and wide community, a set of methods should be developed. This manual tool represents a set of suggested communication practices with focus on projects and initiatives within green energy ad

sustainable development - both the ones as part of ENES-CE initiative and ones globally.

LINK to the TOOL:

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/200117-1950-D.T2.2.1-Tool1-Co-design-workshop-methods.pdf>

## CONCLUSION

**THE MAIN FOCUS OF THESE GUIDELINES IS TO ASSIST CONCERNED DECISION-MAKERS (LOCAL GOVERNMENTS) AND PRACTITIONERS IN STRENGTHENING THEIR INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES TO DEVELOP RELEVANT SKILLS TO ENGAGE CITIZENS INTO SEAP/SECAP DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION.**

Creating a functional low carbon economy plans (like SEAP/SECAP) requires tapping into the human and financial potential of citizens. This challenge is addressed by the project **ENES-CE - Collaboration between public bodies and citizen energy groups in implementing local energy strategies in Central Europe** through improving the adoption and quality of energy plans with a bottom-up quadruple helix approach, where citizens play a pivotal role. Having this in mind, the main goal of the project is to stimulate citizen engagement in creating local energy strategies in different Central European regions and beyond.

Unlike traditional types of engagement such as communication and consultation, citizen engagement is considered to be an interactive two-way process that encourages participation, exchange of ideas and flow of conversation. It reflects willingness on part of government to share information and make citizens a partner in decision making on energy and climate issues. Accordingly, citizen engagement should be carried out since the beginning of the local energy planning process.

Since the implementation of ENES-CE project follows the main steps in citizens engagement process of developing and implementing SECAPs, several relevant documents have been prepared to support local governments during the local energy planning process, including these guidelines for citizen engagement in implementing SEAP/SECAP in Central Europe where ENES-CE project partners based on their experience shared some useful tips on how to ensure quality citizen engagement in the context of SEAP/SECAP development and implementation within the six main steps of citizen engagement process identified through a series of activities implemented within the ENES-CE project.

As has been recognized several times during collaboration with citizens, the successful citizen engagement in SEAP/SECAP development and implementation also depends on a clear communication strategy which in the end should be integrated in the SECAP. Communication should also give visibility to the commitments of the local governments and acknowledge the results achieved.

Throughout these guidelines, it has been shown that the relationship between local authorities and citizens is crucial in encouraging a more collaborative approach to the local energy planning. The relationship between local authorities and their citizens, needs much more emphasis, in order to realize and develop the possibilities of collaborative approaches.

Cooperation also needs to be viewed as a longitudinal process, where citizens are co-designers and co-deliverers of community energy projects and initiatives (rather than consulted once) and where local authorities are “deciding with citizens rather than for citizens. Communities and citizens need to be central to energy development projects, not just seen as a peripheral group to be ‘dealt with’ or insincerely consulted with.

Citizen engagement, as seen in community energy projects, joint ventures and activism also embodies what is desired from an active, strong civil society, allowing citizens to determine developments for a communal good, rather than having projects thrust upon them with little sense of power and self-determination. The same can be applied to the development of visions and policies - although much more practical (and research) work is needed to further this agenda.

### SUCCESS FACTORS FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT ON MUNICIPAL LEVEL:

- > *Citizen engagement should be a continuous and long-term process (start with programmes in pre-schools and schools).*
- > *Local authorities must live up to a credible and consequent energy and climate strategy, the concept and measures for energy efficiency and renewable energy. This perceived credibility is a precondition for citizens to get engaged and invest their time.*
- > *Local authorities or other representatives on national level should participate in relevant events and workshops for citizen engagement.*
- > *Raising awareness is an important initial step for citizen engagement.*
- > *Using existing, well-implemented communication channels/instruments increases the success of citizen engagement.*



## ANNEX I

# EXAMPLE of the TEMPLATE/CHECKLIST FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

*(Developed and used by Climate Policy Institute and Applied Communications Association - Energiaklub in the frame of project MULTIPLY funded by European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 785088)*

NAME OF THE MUNICIPALITIES: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Communication of the Energy Plan/SECAP/Climate strategy...</b>	
<b>The Energy Plan's communication strategy should include:</b>	
<b>The co-benefits of the Energy Plan/SECAP/Climate strategy, (i.e., what makes the Plan catchy helps the communication):</b>	
<b>Main tasks necessary for successful communication:</b>	
<b>The subject of communication:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- the Energy Plan/SECAP/Climate strategy<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· content</li><li>· advantages</li><li>· progress of implementation</li></ul></li><li>- the relating activities of the municipality (e.g., projects under implementation)</li></ul>
<b>Communication options:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- In preparing the Energy Plan/SECAP/Climate strategy<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· strategy, vision</li><li>· specific CO<sub>2</sub> emission, energy consumption reduction ambitions</li><li>· involving local stakeholders</li><li>· completed projects</li><li>· <b>measures needed to achieve the objectives</b></li><li>· <b>budget for the implementation of the measures</b></li><li>· quantifiable targets</li></ul></li><li>- Implementation of it</li><li>- Monitoring/review</li></ul>
<b>Possible channels for communication:</b>	

## Opportunities for community participation in the Energy Plan/SECAP/Climate strategy

### Questions to be answered:

- Who will be affected by the implementation of the Energy Plans/SECAP/Climate strategy?
- Who are the actors inside and outside the municipality that contribute to the development/implementation of it?
- Who will develop the Energy Plan/SECAP/Climate strategy?
- Who will be responsible for implementation and coordination?
- Who is expected to support/oppose the Energy Plan/SECAP/Climate strategy?

**Who should be involved in the development/implementation of the Energy Plan/SECAP/Climate strategy from the following local stakeholder groups? (Concretely as possible)**

- citizens and local stakeholder groups
- economic actors
- municipal actors
- other actors

**When/in which frequency should the above listed actors be involved?**

1. In forming the local/internal group for the strategy development
2. In preparing the
  - strategy, vision
  - specific CO<sub>2</sub> emission, energy consumption reduction ambitions
  - communication strategy and involvement of local stakeholders
  - completed projects
  - measures needed to achieve the objectives
  - budget for the implementation of the measures
3. In selecting/developing measures
4. During the implementation of the Energy Plan/SECAP/Climate strategy
5. During monitoring/review

**Form/channel of involvement of the above actors (HOW/WHERE?):**

