

# Participatory Processes for Long-term Energy Scenario Development

## Country Experiences, Challenges and Lessons Learned

Virtual workshop – 5 July 2023

Summary and key messages

This is a summary of the main points of discussion and key takeaways from the country workshop on participatory processes for long-term energy scenario development. 50 government scenario practitioners and researchers participated in a 4.5-hour workshop that featured presentations, moderated discussions, and interactive polling. The workshop featured presentations from 5 countries and the World Energy Council on their own methods and objectives for participatory energy scenario development, along with two interactive panel discussions.

### Objectives for holding participatory processes.

Presentations and discussions highlighted the significance of involving stakeholders in the energy transition process to be able to also meet its societal needs. It was emphasized that stakeholder engagement accelerates the energy transition and leads to trusted decisions with greater buy-in.

It was discussed that participatory processes play a critical role in democratising energy planning and fostering collaborative approaches to the energy transition, ensuring that the resulting policies and plans are well-informed, equitable, and widely accepted by stakeholders.

By engaging diverse groups, energy planning processes, especially in the context of a complex net-zero transition, can incorporate multiple and interdisciplinary perspectives, expertise, needs, and interests, resulting in more comprehensive and equitable energy strategies. This could lead to strategies that consider the specific needs of different groups, and manage the different risks of the transition with respect to different stakeholders.

Furthermore, it was mentioned that participatory processes can be used for exploring technological, political, societal, and market uncertainties within the energy planning process, shaped by valuable input from consultations with diverse stakeholders. This approach was said to enhance the robustness of the scenarios and ensure that the planning process remains dynamic and responsive to the evolving energy landscape.

### Main outcomes (results) for holding participatory processes.

The workshop highlighted different types of outcomes and results arising from stakeholder engagement efforts in the countries that shared their experiences. Among these, is the upcoming introduction of specialized platforms designed to compare model results and to share open-source models for the electricity sector widely, leading to more accessibility and transparency. In some other cases, it was showcased that participatory processes provide key inputs (data, narrative, and trends on different geographical levels) for the development of energy public policies and scenarios, and the concretization of energy plans. These inputs hold the potential not only to increase transparency but also the sense of trust. Additionally, one presentation highlighted the establishment of committees and workgroups as a strategic

method for developing consensus-building mechanisms and nurturing a culture of robust collaboration among stakeholders.

### Methods employed to involve different stakeholders.

Presentations highlighted the importance of stakeholder participation through online and in-person workshops (in different formats such as the World Café, Me-We-Us, among others), public presentations (such as public hearings), surveys and interviews. Collaboration with key institutions, technical support groups, and multidisciplinary teams was emphasized, with face-to-face engagement being highlighted.

Regarding the tools for communication, visualisations, such as graphic data and visual tools, were emphasised as effective for communicating technical scenario modeling to non-experts. Workshops, seminars, and scenario "plays" were also mentioned as useful tools for engaging stakeholders and facilitating discussions.

### Main challenges to holding participatory processes.

- **Stakeholder engagement limitations and reluctance:** Participants highlighted the challenge of engaging stakeholders, particularly in terms of the limited time available for different stakeholders to engage in these activities.
- **Power dynamics and consensus:** Addressing power dynamics between different stakeholders (whether through economic, political, or societal power, or simply "louder" stakeholders") and achieving consensus among diverse stakeholders were recognised as significant challenges. Balancing differing interests, negotiating, and finding common ground were emphasized as important for reaching meaningful outcomes.
- **Conflicting interests:** Managing conflicting interests and incompatible/different goals among stakeholders was mentioned as a challenge. The need to prioritise objectives and focus conversations on broader goals rather than getting lost in detail was highlighted.
- **Varying levels of knowledge:** Stakeholders with different levels of knowledge and expertise pose a challenge in ensuring meaningful engagement. Incorporating social issues and environmental impacts into scenario modeling, which often focuses on techno-economic aspects, was recognised as an area that needs improvement.
- **Resource constraints:** Limited financial resources, time constraints, and a lack of technical expertise were identified as challenges for stakeholders' engagement in scenario development. The availability of resources and the need for dedicated efforts were highlighted.
- **Evaluating and measuring impact:** Evaluating the impact of participatory processes was recognised as an important stage to ensure their effectiveness. Monitoring, reviewing, and continuous improvement of stakeholder engagement efforts are essential. Collaboration with universities, internal review processes, and clear evaluation criteria can help in measuring success.

### Most significant lessons learned.

- **Importance of effective communication:** Effective communication was highlighted as crucial to educate the non-experts about the importance of energy, and for sharing

insights about technical modeling with non-expert stakeholders during participatory processes.

- **Role of stakeholder engagement:** The significance of involving stakeholders from the beginning to the end of the process was emphasised, encompassing scenario design, validation, revision, and communication. Lessons learned included the importance of transparent and inclusive energy planning processes for enhancing the acceptability of plans, fostering good relationships with stakeholders, and therefore reducing implementation time due to possible increased consensus.
- **Collaboration and coordination:** Collaboration among ministries, research institutions, and various stakeholders was highlighted as crucial for successful participatory processes. It was noted that different ministries and organisations should work together to ensure a comprehensive approach to decision-making.

### **Institutionalization and legislation of participatory processes.**

There were discussions about the need to establish a legal framework and coordination mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of participatory processes for energy and climate planning. Participants recognized the importance of embedding the participatory process (and/or public consultations) within a legislative framework and ensuring that it is supported by institutional capacities. It was suggested by some participants that participatory processes including public consultations could be made mandatory as they are in some countries already, and there was a discussion on how to ensure their application.

### **Possible topics to be discussed at upcoming workshops.**

Upcoming workshops will aim to feature a diverse set of stakeholders and discuss topics that were not explored in depth in this workshop, including but not limited to:

- **Engaging underrepresented groups:** Focus on strategies to actively involve underrepresented stakeholder groups, such as citizens, civil society, vulnerable communities, small and medium-sized enterprises, NGOs, and academia, in the scenario planning process.
- **Institutionalization:** Explore methods to institutionalize participatory processes in the energy policymaking landscape. This could include developing legal frameworks, guidelines, and incentives to encourage ongoing stakeholder engagement.
- **Evaluating the impact:** Focus on evaluation frameworks to measure the effectiveness and impact of participatory processes in energy policymaking and scenario development.
- **Coordination between energy and climate planning:** Study methods to facilitate effective coordination and collaboration between energy and climate planning processes to align their goals and objectives.
- **Resource mobilization:** Investigate strategies for mobilizing financial, human, and technological resources to support participatory processes in energy scenario development. This includes exploring funding mechanisms, partnerships with research institutions, and capacity-building initiatives to ensure that stakeholders have the necessary resources to actively engage in the planning process.

- **Future needs:** Explore possible future needs and challenges for engaging stakeholders based on current and foreseen trends (i.e., more digitalization, bigger data processing, decentralization, etc.).

