

## Stakeholder consultation in developing climate strategies: insights from experiences in Germany and France

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### Introduction

Meeting the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement requires profound changes to current patterns of socio-economic development including consumption, employment, and infrastructure affecting all parts of society including stakeholders. Therefore, consulting with stakeholders needs to be at the core to prepare and enable the global transformation. Acknowledging the importance of stakeholder engagement, new legislation by the European Union (EU), the Regulation for the Governance of the Energy Union, mandates the establishment of a so-called Multi-Level Climate and Energy Dialogue to discuss climate and energy policies, if similar structures are not yet in existence.<sup>2</sup> To date, examples of completed and genuine stakeholder consultations based on a broad inclusive process and setting up distinct organisational structures in EU Member States are few. Evidence for consultations, that are believed to have impacted the national long-term climate strategy and governance framework, is particularly scarce. Two cases, for which there is documentation, are Germany and France. Both countries conducted broad consultation processes that were of unprecedented scale in organisational effort and underlying structures and, in addition, strengthened stakeholder involvement in their respective climate governance frameworks. This brief describes the organisation and structures of these stakeholder consultation processes and draws lessons from them.

### Insights from experiences to date: examples in Germany and France

To derive lessons learnt from the stakeholder consultations conducted in Germany and France, their set-up is briefly presented below.

#### The German stakeholder consultation “Citizen Dialogue” (“Buergerdialog”)

Mandated by the Coalition Agreement of 2013 this consultation took six months over a period of 1.5 years, from November 2015 to March 2016. The key output of the consultation was a joint stakeholder catalogue of climate protection measures that aim to reach the German target of 80-95 % reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 compared to the 1990 baseline.

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<sup>1</sup> The author kindly acknowledges input received from the project team colleagues on this brief.

<sup>2</sup> See Council of the European Union (2018).

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The German consultation had a two-pillar structure: i) a citizen consultation, and ii) a consultation of so-called “classical” stakeholders such as municipalities, business associations and federal states. The two processes joined up in a committee consisting of 12 representatives from each group that consolidated the proposed climate measures into a catalogue.

The citizen consultation process involved a range of instruments, such as online platforms, kick-off and final events, a citizens’ day, and stakeholder platforms. Over 70 thousand citizens were randomly selected and about 500 of them gathered in person at various locations to discuss climate protection measures. They developed 77 measures that were structured around five key sectors: transport, agriculture/land use, industry and services, buildings, and the power sector. The consultation of “classical” stakeholders was organised in a similar fashion and resulted in the development of 66 measures. Consolidated by the joint committee of delegates, the final catalogue consisted of almost 100 climate protection measures and were handed to to the Environment Minister in March 2016.<sup>3</sup>

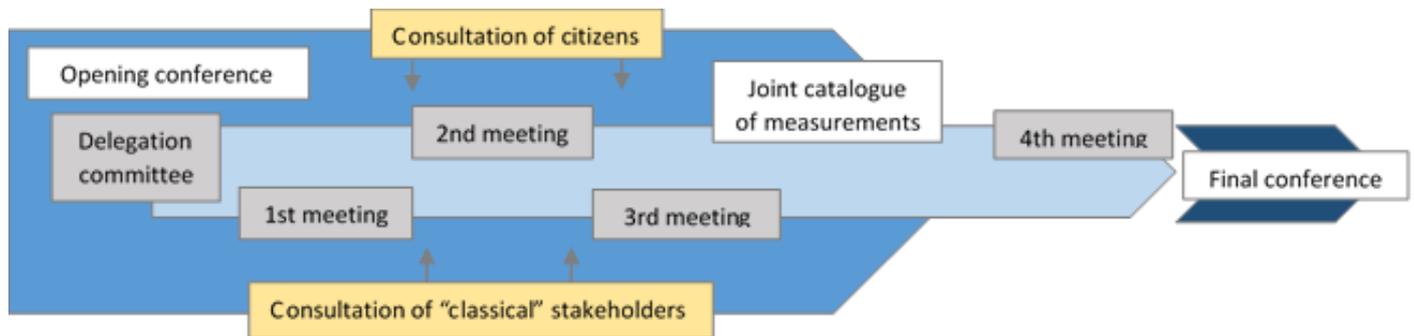


Figure 1: Stakeholder consultation in Germany - Source: Faas, T. et al. (2017) (modified)

## The French stakeholder consultation “National Debate on the Ecological Transition” (“Débat National sur la Transition Energétique” - DNTE)

The trigger for the French DNTE was the nuclear accident in Fukushima in 2011, which placed the role of nuclear energy back at the top of the political agenda.<sup>4</sup> The debate lasted 9 months, from November 2012 to July 2013, and was structured around two key objectives, namely the reduction of nuclear energy in electricity consumption from 75% to 50% by 2025<sup>5</sup> and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2050 compared to 1990.

As in Germany, the consultation consisted of a public (citizen) debate and an institutionalised stakeholder debate. The French process however had a more complex structure and a much higher degree of institutionalisation. The entire consultation process was overseen by a Steering Committee of five independent experts and a high-level political chair (Laurence Tubiana). In addition, the consultation process was supported by a General

<sup>3</sup> See BMUB (2017), Faas, T. et al. (2017).

<sup>4</sup> The share of nuclear energy in electricity mix amounts to 72 % in 2016 in France.

<sup>5</sup> The reduction of nuclear energy resulted from subsequent political compromise in response to the nuclear accident in Fukushima.

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Secretariat. The institutionalised stakeholder debate had an eight-party governance structure including Members of Parliament, local authorities, companies, and consumer federations, representing 112 stakeholders in total. Each group worked on different aspects of the transition, including, for example, competition, financing aspects, or renewable energy. The debate thus encompassed all key levers necessary to tackle the decarbonisation challenge. The public debate consisted of a citizen day, a website for public involvement and local debates around France. There were particularly extensive as they united some 170.000 participants in over 1.000 events.<sup>6</sup>

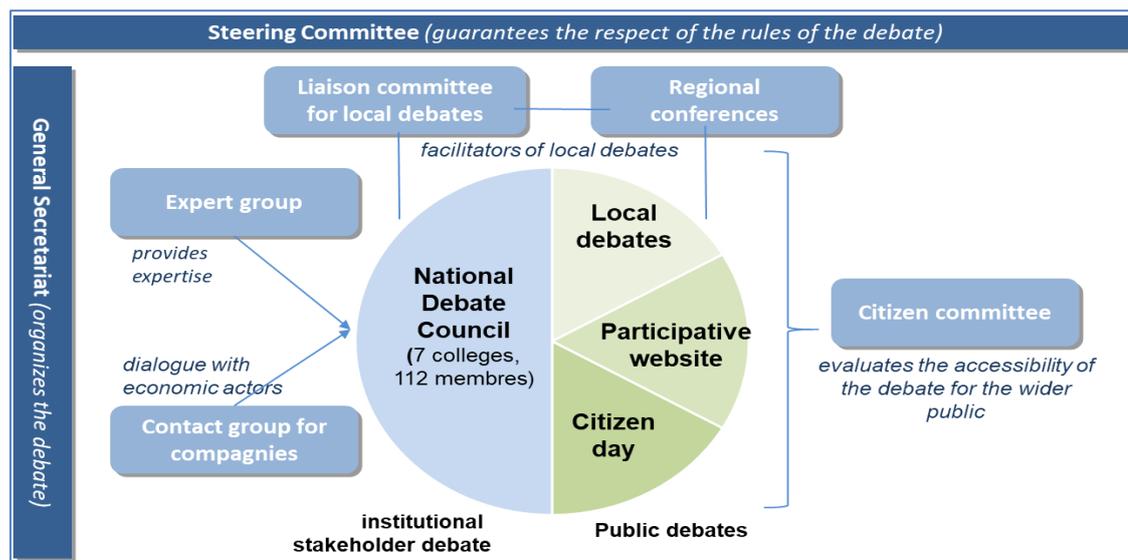


Figure 1: Organizational structure of the French energy transition debate - Source : IDDRI based on CNTE

Several lessons can be drawn from the consultations in Germany and France:

## 1. Challenge: A resource-intensive process

First, both processes required a lot of additional money and human resources compared to former consultations on climate policies. Costs for the German consultation amounted to 2.5 million EUR where 0.5 million EUR accounted for costs of materials, traveling, and personnel expenses for the citizen consultation. Also the French process was also considerable in the financial resources applied and manpower involved, in particular for the numerous debates taking place including the outreach to the territories. Nevertheless, in both cases high costs came with benefits create general approval on the necessity and value of the national long-term climate targets in France and high appreciation for the entire process conducted in Germany.<sup>7</sup> In France, each of the working groups assigned to decarbonisation levers issued reports with recommendations for tackling the decarbonisation challenge, thereby leading to enhanced understanding of the transition and fostering buy-in to the national climate objectives. In Germany, the involvement of a large number of citizens including the involvement of classical stakeholders particularly associations helped to raise awareness on the German climate targets. Furthermore, the random selection of citizens achieved high representation through taking into account

<sup>6</sup> See CNTE (2017).

<sup>7</sup> See Ruedinger, A. (2018), Fass, T et al. (2017).

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geographic and socio-economic criteria (e.g. age, gender and education levels) and thus contributed to bottom-up multiplying effects.<sup>8</sup>

To effectively use resources, according to an evaluation process of the German consultation,<sup>9</sup> it is recommended considering time requirements for the preparation, conduct and follow-up process of consultations already within national programmes, which in the German case was the coalition treaty. For example, preparation processes may take several months which however depend on a number of contextual factors such as the degree of ex-ante institutional structures for consultations. Furthermore, the higher the degree of institutionalisation, the less resources are necessary, notably as a result of learning effects and standardization of procedures.

## **2. Success: A foundation for a lasting commitment to transparency**

Disappointingly, legislative processes for adopting the climate strategies were seen both in France and Germany as lacking in transparency and being disconnected from the results of debates conducted ex-ante. In France, there was no indication as to how recommendations by stakeholders would be taken up in the climate law. Furthermore, the parliamentary process lasted for 12 months and has proved surprisingly conflictual with over 150 hours of public discussions and extensive amendments on the negotiation text.<sup>10</sup> In Germany, the ministerial process lasted only half a year but was similarly conflicted.<sup>11</sup> For example, the final version of the German Climate Plan was significantly watered down, with some of the concrete measures (e.g. a date for coal exit) developed during the consultation process being dropped from the plan. Noting in addition, that the 2050 Climate Plan to a great extent does not reflect concrete measures but more so elements that govern the transition towards the target achievement. Therefore, the consultation can be associated with a process for raising awareness and creating greater approval for the necessity of reaching the co-called extensive greenhouse gas neutrality (80-50% in emissions reductions).<sup>12</sup>

Legislative processes resembling a black box, in addition to extensive debates and subsequent agreement on the common lowest denominator, cannot be entirely avoided as being part of the democratic process. However, in France, criticism was mitigated through the establishment of a permanent stakeholder body that needs to be involved in all climate legislation and thus enhances visibility and involvement of stakeholders.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, as part of the recommendations of the German evaluation process, it was concluded that continuous and open communication to all stakeholders including the ministerial administration on all steps of the consultation process needs to be ensured.

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<sup>8</sup> See Fass, T et al. (2017).

<sup>9</sup> See Fass, T. et al. (2017), BMUB (2017).

<sup>10</sup> See Ruedinger, A. (2018).

<sup>11</sup> The relative swift adoption of German 2050 Climate Plan despite extensive ministerial debates can be credited to the political momentum resulting from the international climate conference in Marrakesh, Morocco, where Germany wanted to present its long-term climate strategy.

<sup>12</sup> See Duwe, M. et al. (2017).

<sup>13</sup> See Ruedinger, A. (2018).

### **3. Opportunities and benefits: Tailoring the climate framework to citizens' priorities and integrating expertise**

Thirdly, consultations in both countries shaped the national climate governance frameworks. In France, a permanent stakeholder committee, the so-called National Council for the Ecological Transition was set up which has to be mandatory consulted for all legislation regarding sustainability including climate policies.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the French climate law established an independent expert committee which is directly linked to the ex-ante stakeholder debate where independent expertise was deeply ingrained along the process.<sup>15</sup> For example, during the consultation, a working group tasked with the consolidation of energy scenarios managed to consolidate four national trajectories for decarbonisation from which one was selected as the national decarbonisation pathway. This expertise is widely seen to have benefitted the process and significantly contributed to make an informed decision on the French decarbonisation pathway.<sup>16</sup> In Germany, 53 of 97 measures elaborated by citizens and stakeholders did find its way into the 2050 Climate Plan which reinforces the significance of the consultation, even though some critics lamented that the measures were blurry and insufficiently visible. In addition, to ensure the achievements of milestone targets, a programme of measures will be developed in consultation with the German national parliament and civil society groups. What is more, a scientific platform comprising of selected research institutions will be appointed for revision and updates of programme measures.<sup>17</sup> Finally, Germany established a multi-stakeholder coal commission consisting of federal ministries, states, parliamentarians, and experts from scientific institutions and NGOs to govern the German coal-phase down, which can be associated with the ex-ante stakeholder consultation.<sup>18</sup>

Engagement with different stakeholder groups and integrating perspectives and proposals for the design of national climate governance frameworks can support ownership and buy-in into the long-term goals and means of the transition. On the other hand, different stakeholders with their respective sectoral or cross-sectoral expertise may significantly contribute to explore on previous unknown levers to enable target achievement as much as they can shed light on and complement knowledge of real world constraints.

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<sup>14</sup> See MEEM (2018a).

<sup>15</sup> See MEEM (2018b).

<sup>16</sup> See Criqui (2014).

<sup>17</sup> See BMUB (2016).

<sup>18</sup> See Sartor et al. (2017).

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