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Draft Social Acceptance Pathways (SAPs)

Boosting wind energy projects: Guidelines to communicate, engage and cooperate strategically

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Background & objectives of the SAPs

Who are the intended users of the Social Acceptance Pathways (SAPs)?

This toolkit is designed for all stakeholders involved in onshore wind projects** and presents key guidelines to enhance social acceptance for onshore wind projects (generation and grid connection*).
Various social acceptance activities are already applied by stakeholders for wind energy project development. The WISE Power project, funded by IEE, aims at supporting these activities by making key knowledge on social acceptance measures accessible, by developing more systematic delivery routes for their use (Social Acceptance Pathways) and by promoting the use of social acceptance practices across different EU countries.

What information sources have been used?

The draft SAPs are the result of a range of research which has been undertaken within the WISE Power project. In total 55 social acceptance manuals and reports have been assessed, approx. 300 interviews have been conducted with key stakeholders in 13 countries*** and two focused workshops were held. **Identifying innovative financing* models** involving public participation was a core area of assessment.

Your feedback is appreciated!

These draft SAPs are a starting point for developing and promoting the final Social Acceptance Pathways. In order to do so, further exchange, testing, validation and capacity building through seminars, workshops etc. is planned in 2015 / 2016. Please contact **your national WISE Power project partner** (http://wisepower-project.eu/contact/) to find out more about these events.

We would be happy to receive your comments on this draft, especially regarding the **usability in real cases** of wind project planning. Please use the **online form** (http://wisepower-project.eu/draft-saps/) or contact us.

** Onshore wind industry, local and regional public stakeholders (municipalities, authorities), citizens, financiers, political decision-makers (regional, national, EU level), NGOs, cooperatives, energy suppliers and grid operators, banks and associations.

*** WISE Power target countries: Denmark, Germany, UK and Spain – considered as advanced markets*; Greece, France, Italy, Ireland and Belgium – considered as growth markets*; Croatia, Finland, Poland and Romania – considered as emerging markets*.

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User instructions & content overview

This toolkit intends to:

1. Help you **access key knowledge** on social acceptance practices and promote their use throughout various project phases. You will therefore find a comprehensive overview of social acceptance measures as well as further reading advice (toolkit documents) on the slides. A summary of a comprehensive literature review is included in the annex.
2. Guide you to **undertake strategic social engagement planning** during the development of a wind project. See overview on slide 6.
3. Stimulate **knowledge exchange & discussion** on the presented concepts: Questions to be raised in relation to concrete application of guidelines in real case-scenarios (transferability to specific projects, opportunities and risks) are included on the charts.

The information provided here is also **interactive:**

Cross references between thematically-linked content help you to orient yourself quickly and carry out targeted research. Clicking on an icon takes you to content on related topics.

Hyperlinks to important toolkits and guidelines have been integrated into the draft SAPs. Clicking on an icon takes you to the original source.

Other icons / references used:

Special facts and references (from secondary and primary sources) that should be taken into account.

Debate & discussion hints for planning of social acceptance measures.

Terms that are defined in the WISE Power Glossary are marked with a star **(*)**

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Why and how? - Starting to design a social acceptance strategy

Two main elements from research on social acceptance for wind project development need to be considered:

Background - why an effective social acceptance strategy is crucial	Open questions to be considered	Use of the draft SAPs
1. “Effective community engagement* and public consultation* is a cornerstone for a successful wind energy development. Continuous, proactive community engagement is a vital investment for long-term success of your project”. (CANWEA Guideline)	How to design continuous, proactive community engagement*?	Summary of guidelines for **SAP action fields** to keep in mind along the project life-cycle.
2. “Every project is unique and requires individual matching, taking into account the local context” (IEA’s Task 28)	How to achieve **‘tailor-made’ matching** (adopted to individual circumstances)?	Summary of guidelines to **support thorough analysis along the project cycle** of social, technical, planning aspects that can influence social acceptance* and possible response measures.

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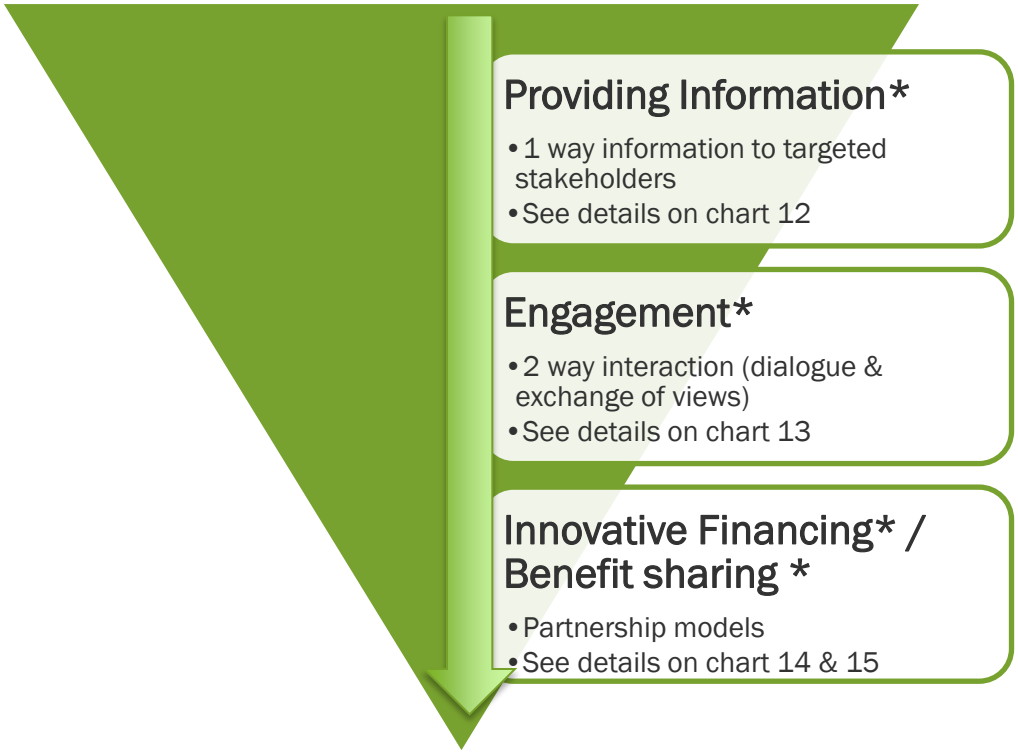
What it is all about – SAP action fields

The core pillars for social acceptance* are “Providing information*, Engagement*, Benefit sharing / Innovative Financing* -> The objective of this toolkit is to guide you to move from isolated activities to a strategic social acceptance action plan which encompasses the core pathway components as far as possible:



Information and engagement activities are the basis of stakeholder interaction. Innovative financing / benefit sharing schemes have to be derived from and supported by continuous information and engagement with local stakeholders concerned with the project.

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Overview of building SAPs

The objective is to develop a **consistent yet bespoke participation strategy**.
Firstly the desired **degree of participation** (high / medium / low involvement) needs to be determined.
Derived from this consideration, the following steps ensure the **identification and implementation** of appropriate Social Acceptance Pathways*:

Objectives	Deliverables to establish and execute an adequate strategy
Assess the socio-economic project context	List of social, economic, and political influential factors for the project
Review internal project team competences	**Team competence table**: incl. resource allocation for **external support**
Build stakeholder* mapping	**Stakeholder list**: Ranking relationships
Establish communication strategy	**Communication** measures plotted along project life cycle (incl. implementation plan)
Establish engagement strategy	**Engagement plan** throughout project life cycle (incl. implementation plan)
Establish Innovative Financing / Benefit Sharing Scheme	**Financial cooperation models** / Compensation strategies (incl. implementation plan)

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How to assess the context of wind projects?

Assessing **the project background** is an essential, but often neglected task. The contextual factors can be clustered into several dimensions, listed in the box below:

Criteria	Risk assessment: List positive / negative aspects
Location	Can the location trigger public debate?
Region, Geography	What is the socio-economic background of the population? Which socio-economic factors are decisive?
History	Have similar developments taken place in the area/ might they affect how willing groups are to engage?
Politics	What is the political background (region, municipality)?
Technology & Impact	How might stakeholders perceive effects on the environment and health?
Values / Culture	Does the project raise any fundamental questions (values: heritage etc.)?
Relationship	Is the relationship with stakeholder groups characterised by distrust?

Local and regional aspects are often much more important than national and international aspects (e.g. Touristic regions may have higher reluctance to allow wind farms due to the importance of landscape, heritage)

You may add any relevant historical facts, for instance if there are any **wind energy developments or any projects blocked or delayed.**

Useful tool: In order to gain insight into positive and negative contextual factors, establish two lists with positive and negative factors surrounding your project. What are e.g. positive political factors?

Further Reading: The ESTEEM-Tool can help with more detailed project context analysis.

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How to review your team's competences?

In order to boost successful wind project planning, it is essential to thoroughly assess one's own internal competencies. This can be done through an **open discussion guided by the following questions**:

Technology	Communication	Legal	Finance & Controlling
☐ How open are we to alternative technical solutions?	☐ How well do we explain technical solutions?	☐ How well do we understand the legal framework?	☐ How well do we estimate the development costs of the project?
☐ How well do we manage uncertainties?	☐ How well do we build trust and communication with supporters & critics?	☐ How well do we cooperate with the authorities?	☐ How well do we compare similar projects and their cost drivers?
☐ How well do we interact with non-technical users?	☐ How well do we handle supportive & critical media?	☐ How well do we deal with the public (hearings, etc.)?	☐ How well do we identify cost risks associated with acceptance problems?
☐ How well do we integrate new external knowledge?	☐ How well do we handle social networks?	☐ How well do we counsel on how to avoid legal disputes?	☐ How well do we simulate costs associated with risk analyses?
☐ How well do we understand the social environment?	☐ How do we assess the performance of campaigns?	☐ How able are we to find alternative conflict resolution?	☐ How well do we advise the executive on alternative solutions and their costs?
☐ How well do we deal with emotional issues?	☐ How well do we plan and organise participation processes?	☐ How well do we participate in and manage conflicts?	
☐ How well do we highlight the advantages of wind energy?	☐ How well do we coach technical managers?		

-> Establish a summary of internal and external competences in the table (consider and list skills possessed and any gaps):

	Skills possessed and gaps	Skills possessed and gaps	Skills possessed and gaps	Skills possessed and gaps
Internal				
External				

As a result one can gain an overview of qualifications and expertise, communication skills etc. available internally. On the other hand internal gaps and **external support resources** to close these can be determined.

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How to undertake a successful stakeholder mapping exercise?

Identifying and mapping stakeholders can give insight into potential influences of individuals, existing dependencies, networks, relationships and potential future collaborations.
Further cooperation possibilities (with those in support of the project) and potential conflict management (with those who oppose the project) can be identified.

Guiding questions for a wind project stakeholder mapping exercise are:

- Who are the relevant stakeholders* surrounding the project? (-> Establish a list for each project) How do stakeholders interact between one another?
- What drives stakeholders? (Refer to socio-economic context and add individual components, such as issues, emotions, interests, objectives, values, preferences, trust)

Summary of key stakeholders:

Onshore Wind Industry	Political decision-makers (regional, national, EU level)	Citizens / Local residents	NGOs / Social groups	Cooperatives	Local businesses	Land managers	Community councils
Local development trust	Housing associations	Other existing community groups	Local environmental bodies	Local Chamber of Commerce	Energy suppliers	Financiers	Grid operators

The identification of stakeholders is a cyclic process – by exchange with one group you can identify further stakeholders, until you reach a near-complete picture.

Once appropriate contacts have been identified, these stakeholders can be invited to form a contact group or "community liaison group" to take forward further discussions, or any other appropriate method of working together can be developed.

Challenge & Debate: How can the most representable group be identified? What can be done when there is no community body present?
Further reading: The ESTEEM-Tool can help with more detailed stakeholder analysis.

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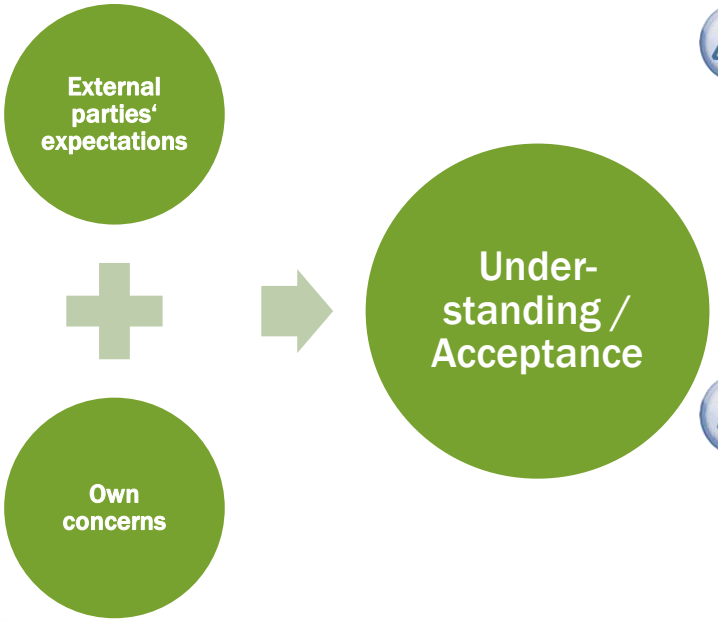
How to build your SAP strategy?

Discussion question for **match-making process** : **What do you want? What do the others want? How to create Win-Win?**

Input factors to achieve a Win-Win-Process:

- Initial engagement and feedback
- Understanding the community dynamics
- Managing expectations from very early on – explaining the planning process and the expected timescales
- Recognition of all elements in support and in opposition, including economic benefits, short and long term, direct and indirect effects.



Goal: Acceptance by all of a majority view, reach compromise: Accept that all stakeholders have a say.

Risks:

1. Own concerns (capacity constraints, economic factors) determine choice, not actual local needs & expectations.
2. Lack of understanding for stakeholders' expectations (see chart 7), need to manage expectations

Challenge & Debate: Which internal concerns may hinder the development of a consistent participation strategy in your context? Brainstorm how you can mitigate these risks (e.g. financial constraints, lack of flexibility).

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How to set up an implementation plan?

Define guidelines that **ensure implementation of your strategies** (ensuring continuous interaction with stakeholders):

Which milestones (action undertaken) will be reached, when, by whom?

Definition of **roles** within the project team	Definition of **rights and responsibilities** within the project team	Define **right timing** of processes

Which resources must be ensured at what time?

Knowledge, **skills,** personnel	**Time**	**Funding**

Which improvement measures are foreseen?

Quality assurance measures	**Evaluation** criteria (success, failure)

Timing is key: The implementation plan must ensure early involvement measures for stakeholder groups, as this is a major success factor for wind projects.
Time and effort is needed to communicate the **long-term benefits** of wind energy projects.

Challenge & Debate: Strategic planning within the development phase of a project is often skipped due to economic reasons. Where can one find supporters (internal / external) or funding for these initiatives? How can one ensure flexibility*, inclusiveness* and consistency when implementing social acceptance strategies?
Further reading : VDI 7000 (2015)

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Overview: Information measures*

List of possible pathways:

- Press releases
- Community newsletters
- Letter notification
- Public meetings
- Mail drops
- Use of social media and internet
- House visits
- Information road show
- Letter, email or telephone contact
- Formal consultation documentation
- Mobile exhibitions

Communication should focus on spreading positive messages and emotions, and should seek to reduce objections (by acknowledging and addressing fears etc.). Honesty, openness*, responsiveness*, accountability* and transparency will be fundamental in delivering convincing arguments.

Debate & Discussion:

1. How can the most suitable methods of communication be identified? Please rank the measures in categories (e.g. *obligatory, **basic, *** facultative)
2. In which project phase should one deliver the measures?
3. How to balance early provision of information while preserving competition for project sites?
4. Which further activities, in view of new media could be planned?
5. Which external risks can jeopardize information processes? How to mitigate these risks?

Further reading on successful Information measures: GP Wind, Final Report

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Overview: Engagement measures

List of possible pathways:

Community drop-in sessions	Presence at local community events	Stakeholder forum/workshops	Telephone hotline
Workshops and focus groups	Web-based consultations	Meetings in homes	Street stalls

Particular care is needed with engagement processes. One has to keep in mind that substantial time and effort is required.

Trust is very important: One has to focus on dialogue, and creation of an environment where individuals feel empowered.

Engagement processes require skilled people who are able to deal professionally with any emotional confrontation or dialogue.

Debate & Discussion:

1. Please rank the measures in categories (e.g. *obligatory, **basic, *** facultative)
2. In which project phase should one foresee the measures (e.g. initial planning, permitting, operation phase)?
3. Which legal boundaries do exist in your project environment for engagement processes (country, region, municipality)?
4. Which external risks can jeopardize engagement processes? How to mitigate these risks?
5. How do you know when you have achieved successful engagement?
6. How can one engage with the 'silent majority' who are often overlooked?
7. How can different measures be linked ? Are there complementary effects that can be levered?

Further reading on successful Engagement measures: CANWEA (2010)

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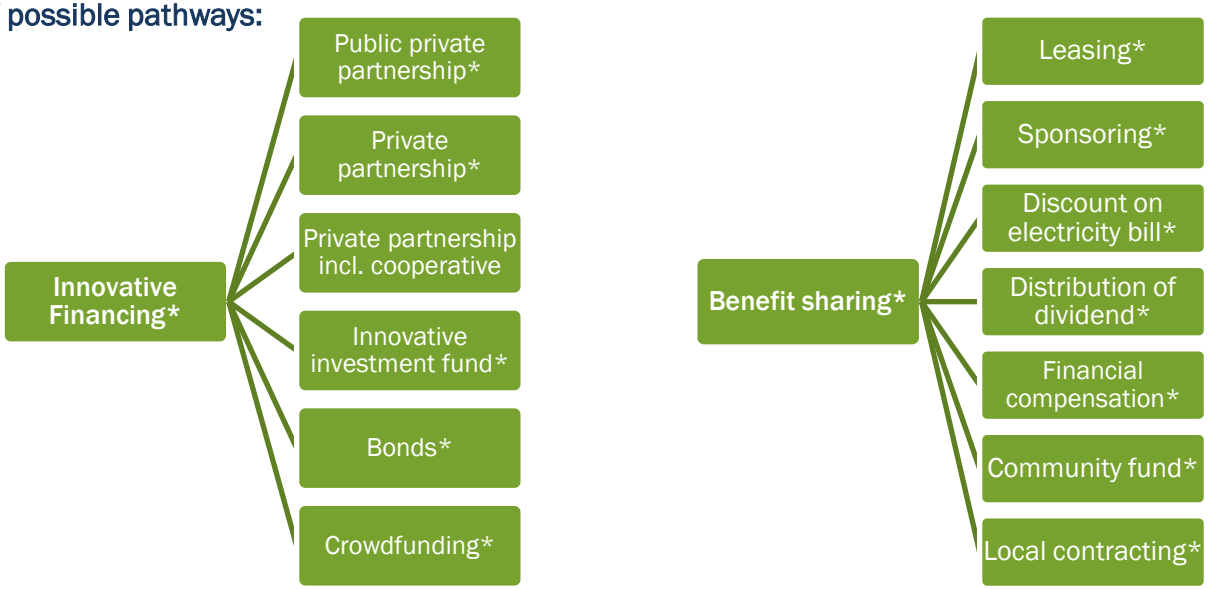
Overview: Financial participation measures

List of possible pathways:



Financial participation schemes have to be site-specific. This means exploring all possible options, incl. recognition that innovative financing*/shared ownership* may not be appropriate for every community. The focus should be on what is reasonable, based on the partners' (community, citizens) ability to invest & negotiate. In general, community benefits are more suitable than payments to individuals.

Debate & Discussion:

1. What regulatory frameworks exist in your project environment (country, region, municipality) for innovative financing* / shared ownership*?
2. How can you identify the partner's ability to invest & negotiate? How can you create ownership opportunities* for groups of non-residents, especially where there are legal constraints on local land?

Further reading : WISE Power Report on innovative financing models for wind farms & WISE Power Report on Innovative Financing & Impact on Social Acceptance

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Overview: Financial participation measures

Success factors of financial participation models

- Clear, understandable, comprehensive information (financial product, financial conditions*, origin of investors, deposit amount, legal status, administrative expenses)
- Financial flows generated by the projects should be made as transparent as possible
- Create real participation: Adapt financial participation schemes to address stakeholders (emphasize participation of the local community - the citizens)
- Once cooperation partners are confirmed, follow-up and manage wind projects in a timely and professional way
- Minimise financial risk (liability, contract duration)
- Ensure stable return on invest

Financial participation models in wind projects are encouraged for the following mutually beneficial reasons:

1. They help **building relationships**, creating greater positive public feeling and support for the project.
2. They strengthen the project due to the involvement of **local knowledge** of partners.
3. Shared ownership* offers an opportunity to further **improve trust and reputation** of the renewables industry at large.

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Executive summary: Building acceptance throughout the project life-cycle

Determination of need*	Site Selection / Feasibility*	Planning & Permitting*
This first phase covers the national or regional processes for determining the need for wind energy site development. Integrating the public into this early step and providing transparency about project development scenarios are among the foundations for social acceptance in later steps (top down planning approach).	Research into the social context of the community should also be undertaken for promising sites. This includes identifying and mapping relevant stakeholders as well as first consultations* with key members of the community such as the local administration, landowners and (environmental) civil society groups. Later formal presentations to the public in the community follow in order to investigate whether the proposed undertaking also seems feasible from the community's point of view. It is important to manage expectations from the start, which means striving for realistic expectations concerning additional annoyance / disturbance and future benefits to share (e.g. financial participation).	The established communication /engagement / financial cooperation channels should be maintained and enhanced by pro-actively seeking opinions about the project and any amendments where possible. Where possible, suggestions from the community should be implemented in order to minimise impact and to foster the acceptance of the project.

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Executive summary: Building acceptance throughout the project life-cycle

Construction*	Operation*	Decommissioning / Repowering*
During construction, proactive engagement methods are necessary as the construction process usually leads to annoyance for local citizens e.g. via noise, heavy transport. Up-to-date information of upcoming events and a contact point e.g. via a telephone hotline, for local citizens to register complaints are therefore advised.	Maintain all communication /engagement / financial participation channels and keep in contact with the relevant local stakeholders.	Promptly introduce ideas about what is going to happen after the operation phase to communities and relevant stakeholders to create opportunities to raise issues and concerns, and discuss expectations (in particular dividend / benefit sharing*).

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Annex: Shortlist of guidelines, toolkits and best practices

- Canadian Wind Energy Association: Wind Energy Development - Best Practices for Community Engagement and Public Consultation (2010)
- Centre for Sustainable Energy: Delivering community benefits from wind energy development: A toolkit (on behalf of the Renewables Advisory Board) (2009)
- Centre for Sustainable Energy : The Protocol for Public Engagement with Proposed Wind Energy Developments in England (on behalf of the Renewables Advisory Board) (2007)
- Clean Energy Council: Community Engagement Guidelines for the Australian Wind Industry (2013)
- GP-Wind: Final Report (on behalf of the European Commission) (2012)
- Impuls: Praxisleitfaden Bürgerbeteiligung - Die Energiewende gemeinsam gestalten (on behalf of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety) (2013)
- International Energy Agency: Social Acceptance of wind energy projects - Expert group summary on recommended practices, Task 28 (2013)
- Local Energy Scotland: Scottish government good practice principles for community benefits from onshore renewable energy developments (on behalf of the Scottish government) (2014)
- Roland Berger: Study regarding grid infrastructure development: European strategy for raising public acceptance (on behalf of the European Commission) (2014)
- Association of German Engineers (VDI): VDI 7000, Early public participation in industrial and infrastructure projects (2015)
- 100 Prozent Erneuerbar Stiftung: Akzeptanz für Erneuerbare Energien (2012)

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