



GERMANY'S CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2050: INVOLVING TRADITIONAL STAKEHOLDERS AND THE BROADER PUBLIC TO DEVELOP CONCRETE IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

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ACTION AREA: Mitigation

FOCUS AREA: Engaging

COUNTRY: Germany

SECTORS

INVOLVED: All

TIMEFRAME: 06/2015-02/2017

CASE SUMMARY: In 2013, Germany's newly elected government decided to define an emissions reduction pathway with a final target of 80 to 95 percent lower greenhouse gas emissions compared to the 1990 baseline by 2050 and, to that end, develop a Climate Action Plan (CAP). Because of the envisioned societal consequences, the new government decided to develop the CAP in a participatory manner. The German Federal Ministry for the Environment set up a comprehensive public dialogue process to underpin the plan with concrete measures and secure broad legitimacy.

The scope of the dialogue process was unprecedented in Germany. It involved not only "traditional" stakeholders from the German policy making context (federal states and municipalities, industry and civil society) but also "ordinary" citizens. From June 2015 until March 2016, representatives from federal states, municipalities, associations and citizens came together to compile a joint catalogue of proposals for the German Federal Ministry for the Environment. The catalogue was subsequently used to inform the drafting process of the Climate Action Plan, alongside other technical reports and recommendations. The final Climate Action Plan 2015 was adopted in November 2016.





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BACKGROUND: In 2013, the German government decided to “define an emissions reduction pathway with a final target of 80 to 95 per cent lower greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 by 2050. We will augment this target with concrete measures, drawn up through a broad dialogue (Climate Action Plan)” (Bundesregierung 2013).

As the CAP was envisioned to cover all sectors – and thus would have a major impact on society – the government decided to involve not only “traditional” actors of the German policy making context (such as representatives of the federal states, municipalities, the private sector, interest groups like churches, associations and trade unions, and civil society) but also “ordinary” citizens. From the outset, traditional actors and citizens were invited to develop concrete proposals on how to achieve the ambitious strategic objectives.

Parallel to “stakeholder forums”, which involved the traditional actors, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB; since March 2018 the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety, BMU) organized five parallel “citizen dialogues” in different cities. There, selected citizens could develop and discuss ideas how to realize the goals adopted by the German Government. Moreover, it developed an online tool to allow the broader public to comment on submitted proposals (BMUB 2016a; BMUB 2016b). This citizen consultation process was organized and moderated by contracted experts and supported by scientific input from several research institutions to ensure broad, informed and evidence-based discussions. The results of these citizens dialogues were summarized in a “citizen report” (BMUB 2016a).

The joint outcome of the “stakeholder forums” and “citizens dialogues” process was fed into the first draft of the Climate Action Plan. This draft was then refined and negotiated within the German Government. The federal cabinet adopted the Climate Action Plan 2050 in November 2016.

- ACTIVITIES:**
- **SETTING UP THE CONSULTATION PROCESS:** To ensure broad participation, the BMUB set up two parallel dialogue formats – a “stakeholder forum” for representatives of the federal states, municipalities and associations and a “citizen dialogue” for the ordinary citizens. Both forums were tasked to identify and develop concrete measures how to achieve the outlined low emission target. The ideas collected in both forums were then discussed and evaluated in a “delegates committee”, involving representatives from the previous stakeholder forums and the citizen dialogues.
 - **CITIZEN DIALOGUE:** Based on a random selection process, 472 citizens were invited to participate in the “citizen dialogue”. They joined one of the five parallel citizen dialogue forums (IKU 2016). Starting point for the dialogue process was a paper published by the BMUB. The paper outlined the strategic objective of the CAP and structured the discussion around five topics: (1) Transport, (2) Agriculture and Land Use, (3) Industry, Commerce, Trade, Services, (4) Buildings, (5) Energy. Citizens were invited to develop concrete measures how to achieve the climate target. During the dialogue, ideas on how to achieve the climate target were clustered and constantly refined. All in all, the citizen dialogues developed 77 measures (IKU 2016).
 - **INVOLVING EXTERNAL FACILITATOR AND SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT:** For the implementation of the citizen dialogues, the BMUB hired external moderators and scientific support. The moderators facilitated the discussion and aligned different viewpoints. Scientists helped to resolve questions that arose during the discussions and prepared climate-related information which the citizens received upfront. Neither scientists nor moderators had a mandate to initiate or decline proposals (Rucht 2016). The scientists assessed whether the proposals had a strategic character. Furthermore, they merged the proposals later on with similar ones that were developed in the stake-

holder consultation taking place beforehand. 18 of the proposals developed during the public participation process had an innovative character and were included without being merged with other stakeholders' proposals, for example the request to phase out coal plants until 2030, and to introduce an "ecological footprint" label for every product that is sold (Faas & Huesmann 2017; Bertelsmann 2016).

• **ONLINE CONSULTATION:** The 77 measures identified by the citizens were then published on a website for a broader public consultation. For one month, every citizen could comment and thus "like" or "dislike" the proposals. This resulted in a "citizen report" which was presented to the Minister of Environment (Faas & Huesmann 2017).

• **BRINGING TOGETHER CITIZENS AND TRADITIONAL STAKEHOLDERS (THE DELEGATES COMMITTEE):** The ideas collected in the stakeholder forums and the citizen dialogues were then discussed in a "Delegates Committee". Purpose of the Delegates Committee was to select and refine the measures that would be recommended to the ministry. The committee involved 13 representatives from the stakeholder forums (e.g. representatives from federal states, municipalities, industry, civil society, and trade unions) and 12 representatives from the citizen dialogues. The committee delegates were voted by their respective peer group (e.g. industry representatives voted an industry representative to represent their peer group). As with regards to the citizens forum, all participants were asked if they would like to be delegated in the committee and out of those a (gender- and regionally balanced) selection was drawn. 46 of 97 measures that were included in the final package had been recommended by a majority of the represented groups. (BMUB 2016a, Bertelsmann 2016).

The final package of measures including the recommendations was submitted to the BMUB to inform the draft Climate Action Plan. The BMUB also considered other inputs and had the final say over the inclusion of measures. Even after the government negotiations, more than half of the proposed measures have been included in the Climate Action Plan in some form (Faas & Huesmann 2017).

INSTITUTIONS

INVOLVED: _____ Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB); municipalities, federal states, civil society organizations, industry organizations, trade unions, and citizens.

COOPERATION WITH: _____ Bertelsmann Foundation, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, IKU GmbH, IFOK GmbH, Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy GmbH, Oeko-Institut.

FINANCE: _____ EUR 2.5m of which approximately EUR 540.000 were used for the Citizen Dialogue Process (Faas & Huesmann 2017).

IMPACT OF ACTIVITIES: — **INCREASED ACCEPTANCE OF THE CAP AND STRENGTHENED POSITION OF THE MINISTRY:** The involvement of ordinary, non-organized citizens brought new ideas into discussion and also helped to increase the acceptance of the climate action measures. A majority of the citizen delegates and all delegates of the stakeholder forum found that the quality of the plan increased substantially because of the involvement of ordinary citizens, as evidenced by a survey (Faas & Huesmann 2017). The dialogue process was broadly considered a success (Rucht 2016). It helped to increase the legitimacy of the plan. Moreover, the involvement of traditional stakeholders and citizens strengthened the position of the ministry in interdepartmental negotiations. The ministry could come up with a set of measures that enjoyed broad backing by the population.



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WHY IS IT GOOD

PRACTICE :

- **EXTENSIVE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:** The government involved not only "traditional" stakeholders of the German policy making context (federal states, municipalities, interest groups) but also "ordinary" citizens. The extensive and inclusive consultation process provided the Climate Action Plan 2050 with substantial input-legitimacy. It increased the political acceptance of the proposed measures (Faas & Huesmann 2017).
- **SCIENCE-BASED:** The citizen dialogue was supported by research institutions that both provided scientific input and answered questions by the participants. Furthermore, they assessed whether the proposed measures have a strategic and transformative character and what their financial impact would be. Thereby, higher quality contributions could be ensured.
- **INNOVATIVENESS:** The broad consultation process was unprecedented in Germany and, as such, represents a democratic innovation. Some participants of the dialogue claimed that democratic innovations of this kind may help to counter political apathy and generate new impetus to modernize democratic representation (Faas & Huesmann 2017).

SUCCESS FACTORS:

- **HIGH-LEVEL MANDATE:** The BMUB was mandated by the government through the coalition agreement and a subsequent parliamentary decision to organize the process around the Climate Action Plan 2050 (BMUB 2016a). The Ministry set up the process and provided guidance throughout.
- **PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT:** The entire consultation process was organized and facilitated with the support of external experts. The ministry contracted and commissioned research institutions which selected citizens and provided scientific inputs before and during the discussions. Professional moderators facilitated the discussion and aligned the different viewpoints. Additional scientific staff then assessed whether the proposals had a strategic character, clustered and merged similar ones and helped to create a common catalogue of measures. The professional support enabled a smooth running and transparent process.
- **DIVERSITY OF INPUT:** A mix of citizens from various socio-economic backgrounds helped to take different formerly unheard perspectives into consideration and broaden the discussion. Even if not all ideas were incorporated in the final plan, the gathered knowledge of the development of such legislation secured legitimacy and might increase public acceptance even of unpopular measures (Schlomann 2017).

**OVERCOMING BARRIERS /
CHALLENGES:** —————

**WHAT WERE THE MAIN BARRIERS /
CHALLENGES TO DELIVERY?**

SOCIAL-CULTURAL: Ensuring diversity of participants might be challenge.

INFORMATION: Low media coverage is a barrier for participation.

**HOW WERE THESE BARRIERS /
CHALLENGES OVERCOME?**

INVOLVE PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS: To ensure a balanced and diverse group of participants, the organisers called almost 77.000 people in the hosting cities and their rural surroundings (Faas & Huesmann 2017). Applying this method, the organisers tried to bring together a diverse group of participants from different socio-economic backgrounds. It was envisioned to invite 100 participants per dialogue and a screening took place to monitor the diversity of the group and adjust further invitations if necessary (Rucht 2016).

Even though the randomised cold calls enabled participation from societal groups that are less likely to join such formats, some imbalances could still be detected. Women, for instance, were not represented on an equal basis initially; also people with a higher education background were more likely to accept the invitation. Imbalances were addressed through targeted calls (Rucht 2016; Schlomann 2017).

DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: While the governmental negotiations of the Climate Action Plan 2050 were extensively covered in the media, the public consultation received little attention. The development and implementation of a professional communication strategy could be one way to address the problem of 'under-coverage' (Faas & Huesmann 2017). Broad media coverage might also help to increase participation.

LESSONS LEARNED: —————

- **PROVIDE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL PROCESS:** The citizen participation process proved to be quite expensive but was considered a success in terms of broad citizen involvement (Rucht 2017). A public participation process of this size and scope, especially when it is unprecedented and not built on existing structures, requires sufficient time for preparation but also adequate human and financial resources.
- **APPLY AND COMMUNICATE EQUAL RULES FOR EVERYONE:** Organised stakeholder groups such as civil society organizations and industry advocacy groups are far more experienced than ordinary citizens in voicing their opinions. To create an even playing field, all participations need to be informed about the process, their role and potential impacts. Scientific support also helps in this regard (Faas & Huesmann 2017).



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- **SECURE A COORDINATED AND TRANSPARENT APPROACH:** A coordinated approach with clearly defined responsibilities and synchronized timelines is of utmost importance to ensure a successful endeavour. It is important to align the citizen involvement with existing processes in stakeholder participation, administration and parliament to ensure that (1) the outcome is achievable, and (2) neither citizens nor organised stakeholder groups nor the executive branch of the government feels left out and invalidated.

HOW TO REPLICATE

- THIS PRACTICE:** —————
- **TAKE YOUR TIME:** Setting up a broad stakeholder dialogue requires time. The organizing agencies suggest at least five months of detailed preparation to replicate such a process (Faas & Huesmann 2017).
 - **MIX PERSONAL AND ONLINE DISCUSSIONS:** The in-depth discussions during the citizen dialogues, including the availability of scientific expertise, helped to improve the quality of proposed measures. It also helped to increase acceptance of differing viewpoints. Moreover, the online tool – the possibility to comment on the proposal being made – secured additional inputs (Faas & Huesmann 2017). Hence, to ensure an informed, transparent and inclusive debate, mix personal and online discussions.
 - **MANAGE EXPECTATIONS:** While organised stakeholder groups are usually fully aware that their proposals might not automatically be translated into a government plan, citizens need to acquire this understanding as well. It is crucial to ensure that citizens realise that their input might not be represented fully or even partially in the final action plan to avoid frustration. In this context, it is also important for governments to transparently communicate every single step of the “normal” inter-ministerial negotiation process to avoid the impression of making only a symbolic effort to include participants in the decision making process

CONTACT FOR

ENQUIRIES: ————— Division KII 1 (Strategic Aspects of Climate Policy, Climate Action Plan)
Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB).
KII1@bmub.bund.de

FURTHER KEY

RESOURCES: ————— BMUB. 2017. Broad dialogue on the German government's Climate Action Plan 2050:
https://www.bmub.bund.de/fileadmin/Daten_BMU/Pool/Broschueren/ksp_2050_dialog_en_bf.pdf

WEBSITES: ————— BMU website about the Climate Action Plan 2050:
<https://www.bmub.bund.de/en/topics/climate-energy/climate/national-climate-policy/greenhouse-gas-neutral-germany-2050>

CASE STUDY AUTHORS: — Dennis Tänzler and René Kieselhorst (adelphi)

EDITED BY: ————— Frauke Röser, Katharina Lütkehermöller (NewClimate Institute)

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REGISTERED OFFICES:

Bonn and Eschborn

Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5
65760 Eschborn, Germany
+49 6196 79-3330
klaus.wenzel@giz.de

WEBSITES:

<https://www.transparency-partnership.net/good-practice-database>
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