

# Policy Brief I

March 2021

## **Citizen Participation Matters - Fostering Co-Creation for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation**

### **1. The TeRRIFICA Project**

In 2018, the European Commission described its vision for a new EU long-term strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, setting out clear priorities to achieve a net-zero carbon economy in 2050. The TeRRIFICA project developed a response and is enabled by European Commission funding.

Through workshops and regional and international summer schools, TeRRIFICA empowers local citizens and is collaboratively developing adequate solutions to local problems. Field trips to local and regional activities related to research and innovation, and broader stakeholder engagement with feedback loops are taking place (with limitations due to the current pandemic). Enabled by co-creative multi-stakeholder approaches, participants have the opportunity to expand their knowledge around climate change and innovative climate action and to identify opportunities, drivers, and barriers of implementation. Activities take into account challenges for the acceptance and feasibility, technological, and regulatory constraints in six pilot regions.

Two years into the project, TeRRIFICA has developed its first recommendations for tailored roadmaps and key performance

indicators, aiming to implement established methodologies and climate change adaptation and mitigation activities in regional practice. This Policy Brief addresses EU and national policy-makers with concrete policy recommendations on co-creative formats for tackling and adapting to climate change. The recommendations are based on [project outcomes and results](#).

### **2. Policy Review**

The European Commission has been increasing emphasis on participatory approaches to shaping public policy. This emphasis has expanded since 2013 when “President Juncker made [...] dialogues an obligation for all members of the European Commission as of 2014” (European Committee of the Regions, 2019, p.6).

Public consultations (sometimes misleadingly labelled ‘dialogues’) in particular have become more common in the EU. On the intra-national level, France was leading in the number of public consultations by the end of 2018, having conducted 1,100 of all 1,700 in the EU (European Committee of the Regions, 2019).

On the EU-level, there have been numerous public consultations related to climate change<sup>1</sup>, one of which was embedded in 2020 in the wider framework of the European Climate Pact<sup>2</sup> which is part of the Green Deal<sup>3</sup> and aims to increase cooperation between citizens and various types of organisations by supporting the exchange of information and fostering innovative initiatives. Among measures such as top-down communication with the objectives of increasing awareness and understanding of climate change, citizen assemblies are mentioned as activities to increase citizen engagement in climate change policy.

General perceptions and attitudes towards climate change and climate action have been acquired through a 2019 survey. The majority of European citizens see the need for urgent climate action to make the EU climate-neutral by 2050. The results were published in the context of climate policy.<sup>4</sup>

On the quality of the above participatory approaches, Russack (2018) has found that overall, the European Commission employs rather top-down initiatives, such as consultations and surveys, limiting citizens' power, instead of bottom-up approaches that effectively grant citizens "influence over the EU decision-making process". Additionally, they found that participation usually excludes 'ordinary' citizens and "mainly target either organised (ECI), or professional (ombudsman) interests, or experts in a particular field (consultation)" (p.37).

### 3. Literature Background

Collaborative mitigation and adaptation are highly relevant in the face of global climate change. Stakeholder involvement is even more relevant considering that climate change is also highly contextual, local, and often requires societal change (Gardner et al., 2009). For implementing Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) in general, participatory approaches are crucial as "people increasingly acknowledge that local experimental or applied knowledge can enrich the quality and impact of investigations. The work is more responsive, socially relevant and connected to affected communities" (Durose, Richardson & Perry, 2018). As Tandon et al. (2016) put it: "Engagement is the process of building relationships with people and putting those relationships to work to accomplish shared goals, i.e. involving those who are at the heart of the change we wish to see" (p.28).

Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation provides different degrees of citizen participation, where informing or consulting only describes a first symbolic level. Desirable higher levels of participation relate to power delegation or even citizen control.

However, co-creation with a variety of stakeholders can be highly complex - many barriers have been identified for advanced multi-stakeholder collaboration (see e.g. Sciences Citoyennes, 2013), many of which can be addressed by well-designed institutional frameworks (Næss et al., 2005; Tol, 2005) as they define incentives for economic and political decision-

<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/consultations\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/consultations_en)

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/pact\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/pact_en)

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/citizens/support\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/citizens/support_en)

making, capable of promoting some special interests and suppressing others (North, 1991). Simultaneously, this can enhance innovation and increase environmental and business performance (Huang Lachmann & Lovett, 2016).

## 4. Recommendations

Under the theme *Citizen Participation Matters*, this section provides practical policy recommendations for implementing and leveraging participatory approaches to more effectively mitigate climate change and adapt to the effects of climate change. The recommendations are built on available research and literature, and are based on the TeRRIFICA project's co-creation case studies and findings.

The recommendations fall under two major clusters. The first cluster relates to how *Participatory Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation* can be fostered from within the institutional environment, while the second focuses on policy providing appropriate *Participatory Framework Conditions*.

### Participatory Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

#### 1. Flexible learning pathways

Regulations in the education sector and accreditation of professional training programmes should be adapted to become more participatory and flexible. This adaptation could entail the formal adoption of micro-credentials and corresponding criteria as well as the introduction of climate change mitigation and adaptation activities and programmes which are tailored to different publics' circumstances and needs.

The focus herein should lie on targeting civil society stakeholder representatives and opening up innovation processes so that they can be more participatory and inclusive. General awareness, understanding, and therefore possibly willingness to engage in co-creation activities should be promoted by emphasising climate change in (school) curricula.

#### 2. Support measures for science communication capacity-building

A variety of support measures should be provided for science communication scholars and educators with the objective of providing participation and co-creation training to science communication practitioners, facilitators, and negotiators, but also to researchers, R&I practitioners, and policy-makers. This will help cascade theoretical models and knowledge about participation into practice so that climate change mitigation and adaptation processes can be democratised and self-sustaining.

Generally, climate change communication requires new roles for science communicators. Currently, we are observing a predominance of 'institutional mouthpieces' employing one-way asymmetrical approaches such as information dissemination and advocacy. This skew needs to be shifted towards process facilitation using dialogic and deliberative co-creation instruments.

#### 3. Incentivising scientists' engagement in participatory processes

As reliable sources of information and expertise, scientists and other R&I stakeholders are crucial to co-creative formats. Currently, there are barriers for

them to sustainably change their R&I practices to be more participatory, or to engage in extracurricular public engagement activities. The reason for this is the current system rewarding mostly research output quantity instead of incentivising more inclusive processes for achieving the research outputs, likely even contextualising the research and enhancing its quality.

To enhance participatory commitment of different publics, research's relevance and implications to the community and perhaps even individuals need to be highlighted by the respective R&I stakeholders. Proposed foci for co-creative processes are including publics in agenda-setting, research/project design, data acquisition, and data interpretation. Information dissemination, underlaid by these processes, creates ambassadorship and enhances understanding among publics through their direct and hands-on involvement.

## Participatory Framework Conditions

### 1. Support for multiregional climate hubs

Efficient and effective tools for supporting co-creative climate mitigation and adaptation efforts are multiregional climate hubs. Therefore, more funding should be allocated to support such efforts where insights like climate data, diverse stakeholder perspectives, social science data, and case studies of climate action and adaptation, policies, or initiatives can be collated and shared. A freely available multiregional climate hub allows researchers and other R&I stakeholders,

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and citizens to share insights which, in turn, provide a knowledge base for other regions to follow best practices. To ensure inclusivity and a diversity of perspectives, input from non-academic stakeholders need to be especially encouraged.

### 2. Setting guidelines for effective participatory projects

Apart from increasing the number of co-creation activities, it is important to enhance effectiveness by enriching their quality so that they can reach their full potential. For this purpose, a set of guidelines on participatory processes should be made available and accessible as a resource for participatory (climate mitigation and adaptation) activities. The following guidelines should be officially released by the EU, targeted at initiators or coordinators of co-creation activities<sup>5</sup>:

- a) **Co-creation relies on mutual trust.** Institutional frameworks should therefore be oriented towards long-term commitment to co-creative formats and building valuable relationships with stakeholders instead of hoping for immediate short-term impacts. Over time, finding common ground and shared values among stakeholders fosters trust and sustainable long-term impact.
- b) **Multi-stakeholder engagement should be employed at early stages.** Stakeholder-orientation and co-development instead of facilitator-orientation and delegation will ensure a higher

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<sup>5</sup> For further details, please see the [TeRRIFICA Guide on Engagement & Co-Creation](#) and the [Guide on Co-Creation – Executive Summary](#).

level of acceptance, commitment, and engagement. A comprehensive participatory approach would by nature consider participating stakeholders' availability, location and format preferences through multi-stakeholder leadership and sharing of decision-making power.

- c) **Facilitators, specialised moderators, or public engagement experts should be involved** at an early stage to ensure high quality dialogic and deliberative inter-stakeholder communication. Therefore, this should not only take place during the participatory activities themselves but also during the project planning process.
- d) **Co-creative processes should be dynamic and adapt according to feedback from stakeholders.** Input should actively shape upcoming or future activities by means of action plans to integrate feedback or dialogic results.
- e) **Hands-on practical activities support 'horizontality'** between all stakeholders and help reduce participation inhibitions caused by potentially unaddressed power-dynamics during the activities.
- f) **Well thought-out internal and external communication strategies should include a diversity of communication modes and means.** This implies clear and systematic communication within the multi-stakeholder project lead, a balance between face-to-face and online communication, and/or the correct intensity of communication (considering the time and

resources of all stakeholders). Persuasive tactics to acquire participants should be evidence-based and consider different audiences' attitudes. Generally, each stakeholder's responsibilities and expectations for their contribution(s) should be clearly agreed on and communicated.

### 3. Facilitating participatory co-creation in policy-making

On the EU, national, and regional levels, more decision-making power needs to be given to citizens, for instance through multi-stakeholder panels, citizen councils, or even direct voting. However, there seems to be a lack of openness for participatory policy-making within administrations. Although citizens and other stakeholders seem to be highly interested in participation, the potential of co-creation is often not recognised by the political elite either due to certain attitudes, lack of awareness, or lack of understanding of these potentials. Sharing decision-making power is a crucial step for improving the overall relevance, acceptance, and effectiveness of policies and regulations, and also for increasing trust in politics. Especially decision-making related to global crises such as climate change needs to be done with citizens.

Nevertheless, there also seems to be a need for increasing citizen commitment to participate in co-creative processes. Citizen commitment can be increased if they know their involvement will be taken into account and influence outcomes, which is why policy-makers' and administrations' own commitment to sharing power should be clearly and bindingly stated.



To further improve climate mitigation efforts and transparency, the overall influence of industry lobbyism on public policy needs to be reduced. Labelling systems and regulations together with multi-stakeholder panels (focusing on NGOs and citizens) can reduce the overall influence of industry lobbyists and more evenly redistribute power.

#### **4. Funding requirements for EU-funded participatory projects**

To improve the quality and therefore the 'return of investment' of projects involving participatory formats funded by the EU, the following funding requirements for co-creative projects should be adopted:

- a) Co-creation processes should address public policy where it is insufficient, inappropriate, or lacking entirely.
- b) When communities or community members are involved in participatory processes, transparent issue communication should be required so that all information is available and accessible, providing 'common ground' for further engagement.

- c) Ex ante stakeholder analysis should be a requirement in order to facilitate conflict-sensitive adaptation. This includes assessing stakeholders' attitudes (e.g. willingness to participate, perceptions, feelings), stakeholders' needs and concerns, and stakeholders' resources (e.g. time and money).
- d) Engagement with projects working on similar or interconnected issues/problems.

#### **5. Supporting participation of Civil Society Organisations**

Civil Society Organisations are important enablers and collaborators, supporting the development and creation of participative models, initiatives, and events. They are strong facilitators and mediators in citizen-led initiatives, bottom-up approaches, and social innovations. However, they often operate on small financial capacities, limiting their participative capabilities and decreasing their efforts' effectiveness. Therefore, there must be appropriate funding mechanisms to support Civil Society Organisations' participation in multi-stakeholder projects and activities.