

## National Energy and Climate Plans: a strong tool to implement the Paris Agreement but only if participative and ambitious

Engaging in a dialogue with all stakeholders is imperative for effective policy making, to ensure that the measures put forward can count on public support, and guarantee proper implementation. In the coming months, a particularly important opportunity for the active engagement of multi-level stakeholders will be the development and implementation of National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs). It is of paramount importance that countries develop strong and inclusive plans as they represent a key tool for Europe to fulfil its commitments to the Paris Agreement.

### Why are participative NECPs important?

NECPs have the potential of turning the Paris Agreement into tangible actions, act as capital raising instruments and involve citizens and civil society in key issues of the climate transition that will affect us all.

By the end of 2018, all EU Member States need to prepare and submit a draft of their own NECPs, that outline their national 2030 energy and climate targets along with strategies and measures to reach these targets. Given their broad scope, NECPs are seen as one of the most powerful tools for Member States to transition to net-zero emission societies.

However, the overall targets and objectives set forth by the EU climate and energy legislation establish merely a minimum expected ambition level. It is therefore fundamental that individual member states design NECPs that set far more ambitious goals than this required minimum.

A crucial ingredient to the success of NECPs is the active dialogue between all members of society, including local authorities, academia, civil society organisations, investors, trade unions and the general public.

Multi-stakeholder engagement is key for a transparent and inclusive process, and the overall success of its implementation, as it ensures comprehensive use of knowledge and resources and increases public acceptance.

### How far have we got?

Two months before the deadline, only one country has submitted the draft of its energy and climate strategy. Sweden has published its NECP in August 2018, thus – in theory – allowing plenty of time for public consultations.

Since then, no other plan has been made public anywhere else. The other 27 EU countries are lagging behind and are likely to fail to publish their plans enough in advance of the deadline to enable early and effective opportunities for public participation.

Reports from EU Council meetings suggest that all countries are committed to meet the December 2018 deadline, thus avoiding the consequences of not complying with the Governance Regulation, but in some cases, we can expect NECP drafts to be a mere “check-the-box” exercise with the sole purpose to meet the deadline.

### What's next

Even if the Governance Regulation is not particularly stringent in terms of timings and number of public consultations required in the development of NECPs, this widespread delay does not send a positive signal.

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Member States should instead prove their serious commitment to public participation, avoiding missing a crucial opportunity to ensure that NECPs are developed in an inclusive and transparent manner and not jeopardising their successful implementation.

The Governance Regulation lays out the ground rules for such process and inter-alia includes the following rules for public consultations:

- Member States need to ensure early and effective opportunities for public participation in the preparation of the final national climate plans well before their adoption.
- Member States need to make the **draft and final NECPs publicly available**, as well as the NECP Progress Reports, the national projections and relevant assessments of the costs and effects of national policies.
- Member States must set reasonable timeframes allowing sufficient time for the public to be informed, participate and express its views.

To support civil society organizations in giving impetus to this dialogue that is both needed and foreseen, Carbon Market Watch has recently published "[National Energy and Climate Plans and the transition to carbon-free societies](#)" – a civil society guide explaining NECPs, the context in which these plans have to be developed, and three potential issues and recommended solutions for public engagement with NECPs.

There are only two months left before the first draft has to be ready and submitted to the European Commission. The Commission will then review the plans and issue recommendations by the end of June 2019, giving Member States 6 more months to finalise the drafts. Member States will then notify the Commission of their final NECPs covering the 2021-2030 period by December 31, 2019.

While there is virtually no time left to influence the first draft of NECPs, there will still be plenty of time to feed public consultations before the final plans are adopted, provided that Member States ensure their timely publication. Therefore, we encourage all NGOs involved in this process to actively engage their national governments and insist on meaningful public consultation and participation in the development of these NECPs.

NECPs are vitally important in the transition to climate-friendly societies and as such need to be strong, inclusive, and developed through transparent public dialogue.