

Principles & Criteria for Socially Inclusive Wind Energy

The ten best practice cases analysed in the WinWind project show that wind energy projects have a higher chance to become accepted if their deployment follows a set of specific principles & criteria for socially inclusive wind energy.

Following the successful experience of the “Guidelines for Fair Wind Energy” and a corresponding label in the German state of Thuringia, the WinWind project has developed a similar, more general set of principles & criteria through considerable cross-referencing of “what works” with regard to socially inclusive wind energy in a wide variety of regions and communities across Europe.

The criteria identified can be translated into guiding questions, which should be used, not only by wind energy developers, but also for policy development and community engagement in the planning process. The criteria are developed as a response to a series of core principles:

Demonstrate a positive impact on the local economy through local contracting, local financing and cooperation with regional/ municipal energy utility companies

Provide opportunities for active and passive financial participation of citizens

Ensure procedural participation of citizens through early and transparent communication as well as effective informal participation

Minimize the impact on landscape, wildlife and biodiversity

Ensure credibility and trustworthiness of developers by demonstrating an orientation towards the Common Good and further voluntary measures

Why start from the WinWind Principles & Criteria?

The WinWind principles & criteria for socially inclusive wind energy, allow to carry out measures and policies across a wider area.

While there is a considerable amount of flexibility on how the principles & criteria can be integrated into existing frameworks, their use provides a baseline effectively creating a level playing field for all projects in a certain region.

It is generally encouraged to consider the full list of principles, but the degree to which they are taken up should depend on already existing policies and current commitments by wind energy developers.

⇒ The WinWind principles & criteria are to be used on a “pick & choose” basis.

If, for instance, a project developer already fulfills any of the criteria or a regional or national government already prescribes any corresponding measures/practices, then it does not need to be featured in a criteria catalogue.

⇒ In the wind industry, they should be considered as a guidance to develop voluntary self-commitments and codes of conduct.

⇒ Policy makers may integrate these principles & criteria into renewable energy support schemes, other funding schemes for renewable energy and labelling schemes for fair wind energy.



Image: FFU

Creating a label

The principles & criteria may serve as the foundation for national or regional labels for fair wind energy. While the exact focus of labels and their included criteria are highly important, labels can only build trust if the organizations issuing them are trusted.

A nationwide label might be considered preferable in order to avoid an excess of different regional/federal state level labels and to ensure that the same criteria apply to all wind energy developers. This is important to create a level playing field under the auction system and competitive bidding.

Privately organised labels might be seen with more skepticism depending on the involved profit motive.

In turn, the effectiveness of state financed labels depends on the allocation of public financial resources; high dependencies on public budgets and political constellations should be avoided.

⇒ Labels should therefore be complemented by advisory services provided by neutral intermediaries.

⇒ The establishment of labels and such intermediary bodies needs strong and continuous policy commitment, organisational efforts as well as qualified staff and funding.

How can the principles & criteria be used on a local level?

Local governments act as enablers of socially inclusive wind energy projects. Their say in the planning process and role as more trusted actors goes a long way in bringing projects forward.

The WinWind principles & criteria should be considered as an opportunity for local governments to ensure that benefits of wind parks for the local community are maximized.

Public actors, including local governments, should consider integrating these criteria when making land available for wind energy projects.

The following criteria are especially beneficial to consider for municipalities, when carrying out their policies:

⇒ Encourage to offer citizens and local stakeholders the opportunity of co-ownership.

⇒ Ensure that shares are affordable for a broad spectrum of the population.

⇒ Develop benefit sharing mechanisms such as compensations, in-kind benefits and infrastructure improvements.

⇒ Ensure that local citizens can participate in the planning process.

In Belgium, local authorities can tender out the development of renewable energy projects on publicly owned land. Municipalities often integrate policy or development objectives, including citizen involvement and other criteria related to public acceptance. The City of Ghent prescribes that projects offering participation options must offer at least 30% of the shares to citizens living in direct proximity.

How can the principles & criteria be used on a national and regional level?

National governments set important framework conditions and may develop enabling frameworks, which can facilitate the voluntary use of these principles & criteria by the wind industry. Equally, they should be considered as an opportunity when developing an enabling framework for renewable energy communities and an overall more socially inclusive energy transition.

The Irish Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) entails the inclusion of a community category within the auction. Each project developer is obliged to contribute to a Community Benefit Fund at a rate of €2/MWh every year. The RESS mandates that Irish citizens or communities have access to investment opportunities in RES projects, prioritising citizens that live in close proximity to the projects.

By setting in place certain principles & criteria within regulatory frameworks, national and regional governments can encourage investors to cooperate with local communities, and therefore create more opportunities for local development.

The same applies to the field of tax legislation, often a national competence, but highly important for municipalities hosting a wind project.

⇒ National and regional governments may impose mandatory requirements on project developers/operators regarding financial participation of host communities or benefit sharing mechanisms. Not only does this have strong benefits for local communities, contributing to increased acceptance, it can also be linked to the provision of higher financial support to developers complying with such requirements.

⇒ National governments can provide special economic incentives for developers, which comply with certain fairness and inclusion criteria, for instance, by providing bonus payments in the frame of the auction system.

Integration into Renewable Energy Support Schemes

National and regional governments can directly integrate principles & criteria for fair wind energy into their support and other funding schemes for renewable energy.

The provision of financial support might be made conditional on the compliance with fair wind energy criteria ("social conditionality") therefore enhancing the positive impact on the socio-economic conditions of hosting communities.

Tenders can be organized to favour a diversity of actors and community-driven renewable energy projects using corresponding tendering design options.

⇒ Certain community engagement and benefit sharing measures might be established as part of prequalification criteria.

⇒ Through the auction system, special economic incentives might be provided to developers that comply with certain fairness and inclusion criteria, for instance, by providing certain bonus payments.

⇒ The evaluation and selection of bids can be geared towards a multi-criteria assessment, which can better account for social benefits, in contrast to systems prioritizing the lowest price only.

Regional and national governments can also consider criteria and provisions such as:

- ⇒ Payments to a community benefit fund or community association.
- ⇒ Contributions for public education and awareness-raising campaigns.
- ⇒ Complementary measures to mitigate environmental impacts going beyond statutory measures.

How can the principles & criteria be used on a European level?

In place of a European label, the WinWind consortium considers the European governance level to act as a conduit for action and an enabling agent for other policy levels. In this framework, the WinWind principles & criteria could suggest the basis for financial support schemes as well as to establish a minimum baseline to which wind energy projects either have to adhere to or to which developers are encouraged to adhere to, despite the differences in national/regional and local contexts. Based on the criteria developed, WinWind therefore suggests opting for:

- ⇒ **A voluntary self-commitment of the wind industry and to develop**

an “Alliance of fair wind energy developers”, supported by European institutions.

The new programming period 2021-2027 has the potential to unlock investments in all climate-relevant sectors and to encourage the transition towards socially inclusive renewable energy development.

The EU should consider the possibility to link the support to renewable energy projects, including wind energy, through the European Green Deal Investment Plan and InvestEU Programme, but also the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds, to the compliance with specific principles & criteria.

Here, the WinWind principles & criteria might also serve as a guidance.

Criteria might include:

- ⇒ obligations for early information of the public.
- ⇒ obligations for stakeholder engagement plans and/or financial participation of local citizens.
- ⇒ assessment and provision of community benefits.

The creation of a label certifying compliance with principles & criteria for socially inclusive wind energy at European level would likely not be able to take into account the wide diversity of the EU Member States particularly with regard to socio-economic conditions, such as income levels of citizens, ownership of land, settlement densities, and legal

frameworks (e.g. tax systems, planning and permitting frameworks and procedures, setback distances), etc.

The WinWind principles & criteria as a good basis for project development and policy making – Outlook

If socially inclusive wind energy is to be mainstreamed a solid catalogue of principles & criteria is key, not only for developers, but also for policy makers who set the required enabling frameworks.

- ⇒ Especially with a view towards the implementation of the Clean Energy Package, the WinWind principles & criteria lay down measures which do not only increase the number of “fair” wind energy projects, but contribute to overall compliance with the stipulations contained in the revised Renewable Energy Directive and the increased importance of putting “citizens at the center” of the Energy Union.
- ⇒ The principles & criteria are the result of a systematic analysis of good and best practices for socially inclusive wind energy. They are therefore applicable across a very broad range of national/regional and local contexts.
- ⇒ The principles & criteria should also be considered as a conduit for European transfers of best practices as they provide a common denominator irrespective of the difference in local contexts.

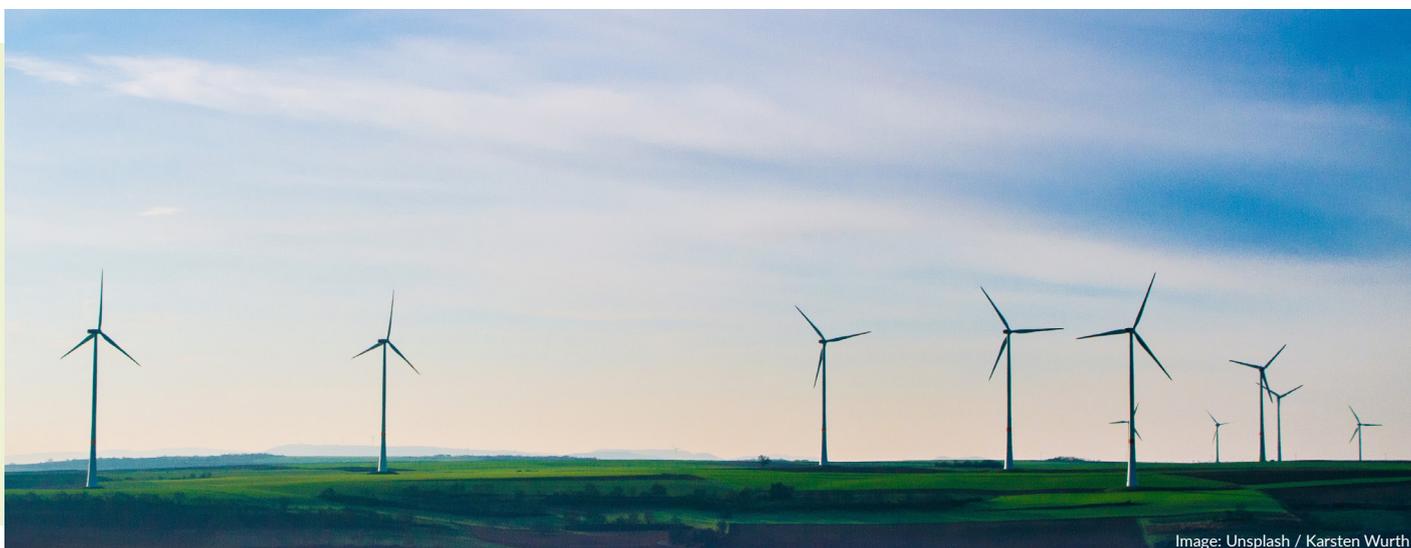


Image: Unsplash / Karsten Wurth

Reference & more information on the sources:

For a full list of the WinWind principles & criteria, please consult:

Kudrenickis, Ivars, Krug, Michael, Themann, Dörte (2020) Principles & Criteria for fair and acceptable wind energy. **Deliverable 6.3 of the WinWind project.**

Other references:

Bolle, A., 2019, [How cities can back renewable energy communities.](#) Guidelines for local and regional policy makers.

[Department of Communications, Climate Actions and Environment](#), 2019, Minister Bruton announces scheme to reach 70% renewables. Government approves key design features of first Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auction. 30% increase in renewables expected in round one.

Energy Cities et al., 2018, [Unleashing the power of community renewable energy.](#)

Authors

ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability

Arthur Hinsch and Giorgia Rambelli



March 2020



WinWind has received funding from European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement N° 764717

Project Partners



WinWind has received funding from European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement N° 764717. The sole responsibility for any errors or omissions made lies with the consortium. The content does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission. The European Commission is also not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.



- Twitter: @winwind_eu
- LinkedIn: WinWind Project
- Flickr: WinWind Project
- Sign up for the WinWind Newsletter on

www.winwind-project.eu