Multi-level governance – kesako? An intro to the NECPlatform project

eceee summer study

Presented by Marine Perrio, Senior Communication Expert | IEECP

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Multi-level governance: involving subnational authorities and other stakeholders in national energy and climate policy making

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Governance ≠ Government
Then what?

- **Governance** = the **process of governing** (companies, countries, NGOs, etc.).
- **Multi-level governance (MLG)** promotes **collaborative decision-making, inclusiveness & the effective use of resources** and expertise across different levels and sectors of governments and society.

“The point of departure for this multi-level governance approach is the existence of overlapping competencies among multiple levels of governments and the interaction of political actors across those levels. (...) Instead of the two-level game assumptions adopted by state centrists, MLG theorists posit a set of overarching, multi-level policy networks. (...) The presumption of multi-level governance is that these actors participate in diverse policy networks and this may involve subnational actors — interest groups and subnational governments — dealing directly with supranational actors.” Gary Marks (1996)

- 2 main components: **vertical** (different administrative levels) & **horizontal** (different sectors of society).

![Diagram](image-url)
The EU Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action (1999/2018).

### Article 11
Multilevel climate and energy dialogue

Each Member State shall establish a multilevel climate and energy dialogue pursuant to national rules, in which local authorities, civil society organisations, business community, investors and other relevant stakeholders and the general public are able actively to engage and discuss the different scenarios envisaged for energy and climate policies, including for the long term, and review progress, unless it already has a structure which serves the same purpose. Integrated national energy and climate plans may be discussed within the framework of such a dialogue.

### Article 10
Public consultation

Without prejudice to any other Union law requirements, each Member State shall ensure that the public is given early and effective opportunities to participate in the preparation of the draft integrated national energy and climate plan — as regards the plans for the 2021 to 2030 period, in the preparation of the final plan well before its adoption — as well as of the long-term strategies referred to in Article 15. Each Member State shall attach to the submission of such documents to the Commission a summary of the public’s views or provisional views. In so far as Directive 2001/42/EC is applicable, consultations undertaken on the draft in accordance with that Directive shall be deemed to satisfy the obligations to consult the public under this Regulation.

**EU CLIMATE LAW – Art. 9**

The Commission shall engage with all parts of society to enable and empower them to take action towards a just and socially fair transition to a climate-neutral and climate-resilient society. The Commission shall facilitate an inclusive and accessible process at all levels, including at national, regional and local level and with social partners, academia, the business community, citizens and civil society, for the exchange of best practice and to identify actions to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of this Regulation. The Commission may also draw on the public consultations and on the multilevel climate and energy dialogues as set up by Member States in accordance with Articles 10 and 11 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1999.

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Origins of “MLG” and timeline

1996
Gary Marks introducing the concept

2009
Committee of Regions White Paper using concept to describe coordinated action between diff. governance levels & other stakeholders

2018
Art. 11 Governance of the Energy Union Regulation operationalises for the 1st time in EU legislation the concept of MLG

2020
First version of NECPs

2023
First version of NECPRs (March)

2024
Final updated drafts of NECPs (June)

2029
Next version of NECPs and a strengthened Gov. Reg.?
How you doin? are countries
State of the Energy Union (October 2023)

5 Multilevel climate and energy dialogues

Most of the Member States reported activities related to the set up of national multilevel climate and energy dialogue that they were required to set up, if not already in place, in line with the Article 11 of the Governance Regulation - in which local authorities, civil society organisations, business community, investors and other relevant stakeholders and the general public should be able to actively engage and discuss the achievement of the Union’s climate-neutrality objective and different scenarios envisaged for energy and climate policies, including for the long term, and review progress. Integrated national energy and climate plans may be discussed within the framework of such a dialogue.

Various levels of maturity of the dialogue can be identified. Some have been in place for several years and are well established such as the Energy Efficiency Platform in Germany or Austria, which highlights the National Climate Change committee, established since 2017, which meets annually, and which discuss and supports the co-ordination of climate change related measures, gathering representatives of the relevant federal ministries, federal provinces and local government, representatives of social partners as well as from science, energy and industry interest groups, environmental NGOs and the political parties represented in the first chamber of the Parliament. Other Member States indicate processes that are only in place since 2022 or in the process of being set up. Several Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, and Romania) specifically indicate that such dialogues are being set-up in their countries through the NECPlatform71 project, funded by the LIFE Clean Energy Transition sub-programme.


https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b27b8b93-725d-11ee-9220-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

2.4. Multilevel dialogue

Multilevel dialogue is a fundamental tool to gain buy-in across society on the need for the energy transition and the achievement of the 2030 climate and energy ambitions. Most Member States reported activities related to the setting up of national multilevel climate and energy dialogues, referring to the creation of various engagement fora, platforms and committees. These involved local authorities, civil society organisations, the business community, investors, other relevant stakeholders and the general public.

However, the level of maturity, sophistication and structure of those dialogues varies substantially between Member States. Some Member States refer to structures or methods that have been in place for several years, even before the Governance Regulation entered into force, while other Member States refer to processes in place since 2022 or which are in the process of being set up.

Several Member States succeeded in putting their process in perspective, highlighting the regularity and permanence of their initiatives, qualifying and quantifying their activities, the outcomes and the impacts reached, where other Member States rather listed their consultations and events without explaining the overall approach or how their initiatives are interlinked. The inclusion of local authorities has been a strong focus for several Member States but is not applied prominently.

Many Member States limit the scope of their multilevel climate and energy dialogues to the NECP development process, while the Governance Regulation seeks for a more comprehensive framework, requiring Member States to set up multilevel dialogue covering the different scenarios for energy and climate policies, including for the long term, and to review progress.

“...[MS are] invited to exploit the potential of the multi-level climate and energy dialogues to a greater extent, actively engaging with regional and local authorities, social partners, civil society organisations, the business community, investors, and other relevant stakeholders, and discussing with them the various scenarios envisaged for its energy and climate policies”. European Commission Communication (2020), « An EU-wide assessment of National Energy and Climate Plans »

In its assessment of the draft updated NECPs submitted (mostly) in June 2023, the EC states that:

“LRAs are important for the implementation of energy and climate policies. However, very few MSs demonstrate concrete evidence of how they involve them in the process of preparing the draft updated NECP, and even fewer are building on an established multilevel dialogue for this process”. European Commission (2023)
Still lost in translation?

National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs)

Understanding the legislation and the Dialogue Platforms

**NECPlatform**

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**NECPlatform**

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**Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union**

The Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union has established the European System of Energy Governance (EU-ESG), which is designed to ensure the efficient and sustainable development of the EU’s energy systems. The ESG includes the following principles:

- Energy efficiency and decarbonisation
- Coordination and cooperation between Member States
- Transparency and accountability
- Participation of other stakeholders

**NECPs**

Under the regulation, all Member States are required to develop National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) covering the period from 2021 to 2030. These plans have been submitted in 2020 and will be updated in 2023 (Stage 1) and 2027 (Stage 2). The NECPs are key to achieving the targets and objectives set forth in the European Commission’s Energy Strategy for 2030, which includes the EU’s Green Deal and the climate neutrality objective.

**Assessment of the final NECPs submitted in 2020**

In its assessment of the final NECPs submitted by the EU, the EC assessed that the plans are not yet aligned with the goals of the EU’s Green Deal and the climate neutrality objective set forth in the European Commission’s Energy Strategy for 2030. The EC recommended that Member States should address the following issues:

- Integration of energy and climate objectives
- Strengthening of cooperation between Member States
- Improved data collection and transparency

**Guidelines for the next draft of NECPs**

In the latest Guidance to Member States for the updates of their NECPs, published in December 2022, the European Commission emphasises the need to include a more comprehensive approach to energy and climate policies and highlights the importance of promoting the different strategies envisaged for energy and climate policies and aligning the EU’s Energy Governance System with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Guidelines encourage Member States to:

- Strengthen their energy governance frameworks
- Enhance cooperation and coordination with other EU bodies
- Strengthen the involvement of stakeholders

**Multi-level Governance**

Under Article 11 of the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Governance (EU-ESG), the European Commission is required to engage with stakeholders at all levels, including the local and regional levels.

- The Commission is responsible for coordinating and aligning its strategies with the needs of local and regional authorities.
- The Commission is also required to involve the stakeholders in the planning and monitoring of the implementation of the NECPs.

**Climate and Energy Dialogue Platforms (CEDP)**

The Climate and Energy Dialogue Platforms (CEDP) will be established as part of the EU’s Green Deal, engaging in waste, energy, and climate strategies. The platforms will be responsible for:

- Facilitating the exchange of information and best practices among Member States
- Supporting the implementation of the EU’s climate and energy policies

The platforms are expected to be operational in 2023, following the completion of the NECPs. They will be key to achieving the EU’s climate and energy targets and will play a crucial role in ensuring that the NECPs are effectively implemented.
Introducing…
Collaboration is the key

Rethinking the governance of climate and energy policies
The NECPlatform project aims to support six EU Member States to set up multi-level dialogue platforms, raising the voices of local and regional decision-makers and stakeholders in national energy and climate policies.

Where do we stand in June 2024?

**Number of dialogues and lead organisers**

**European Level**

**National Level**

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The updated NECPs first draft was **due in June 2023** and the final versions **due end of this month! (June 2024)**

Over this period, the NECPlatform project contributed to making sure that EU Member States bridge the gap that has been highlighted by the European Commission’s assessment of 2019 plans.

**Mention of NECPlatform in...**

Submitted draft updated NECP

1. Provide a clear and detailed overview on how the consultation process enabled public participation from all relevant authorities, citizens and stakeholders, including social partners, in the preparation of both the draft and the final updated plan. Provide a summary of the views expressed by different actors, and a summary of how the plan integrates the views expressed during the consultations.

2. Ensure inclusive public participation within a reasonable timeframe and broad participation of local authorities and civil society in the preparation of the plan. Provide a clear and more detailed overview on how the consultation process has enabled participation from all relevant authorities, citizens and stakeholders, including social partners, in the preparation of both the draft and the final updated plan, including information on the timing and duration of the different consultations. Provide a detailed summary of the views expressed by different actors during the consultations and a summary of how they have been taken into account.

Several Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, and Romania) specifically indicate that such dialogues are being set-up in their countries through the NECPlatform project, funded by the LIFE Clean Energy Transition sub-programme.

Several Member States, however, did not sufficiently describe their multilevel climate and energy dialogues: some do not refer, for instance, to the periodicity of the activities reported, the long-term perspective, the active engagement process with the local authorities or with key stakeholders etc. Some only list punctual consultations or events without explaining the overall approach or how the initiatives listed are interlinked. Other Member States stated that they set-up multilevel climate and energy dialogues without describing sufficiently the parties involved nor the processes put in place (Czech Republic, Slovakia). Member States are encouraged to better define the quality and the impacts of the dialogues and to demonstrate the active engagement of the parties involved. They are encouraged to explain how the views expressed in these consultations have been considered.
Best practices and lessons learned

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Multi-Level Governance

encourages cooperation in decision-making, inclusivity, and the optimal use of resources and expertise across multiple tiers of government and various sectors of society. It has two key aspects: a vertical dimension that involves different administrative levels, and a horizontal dimension that involves different sectors within society.

The project shortlisted and analysed 21 successful examples of multilevel governance initiatives in the EU and beyond and we identified some common features of the leaders of these MLG processes that seem to contribute to their success:

- Independence from the political sphere
- Flexibility
- Persistence and regularity
- Legitimacy
- Patience

Full report available here

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Tips: see our report!

**BE INDEPENDENT**
Independence is a crucial feature when national and local levels are not aligned. Acting as a neutral third party is an advantage in order to properly moderate and mediate amongst different actors.

**BE PERCEIVED AS LEGITIMATE**
Legitimacy is an important feature of MLG processes. This can be provided by carefully selecting some of the stakeholders who should by all means participate in the process (these could be, for example, representatives of the national level).

**BE PATIENT AND SPEND TIME ON DEVELOPING THE PROCESS**
Comprehensive MLG processes involve a wide range of stakeholders from different levels that can represent up to millions of citizens and can come down to a high level of granularity (districts, neighbourhoods, individuals). Although it is urgent to integrate energy and climate action to all levels of administration, it is crucial to take the necessary time to build a robust, coherent structure, which can last in a long-term perspective.

**KEEP A BALANCE BETWEEN VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL COMPONENTS**
Unilateral, central decision-making is obsolete; energy and environmental challenges are so complex and intricate that a lot more expertise is needed. This knowledge is brought by the stakeholders who need to be consulted sporadically. Researchers, civil society, associations, etc. involving all of them early on and on equal terms increase the chances of relevance and overall success.

**ALleviate LRA’s ADMINISTRATIVE LOAD**
When application time comes to obtain funding from EU, national, private philanthropy programmes or in daily activities, local administrations usually optimise their workforce. In order to gain the most outcome possible within the allocated budget, meaning that existing teams have no extra budget and little leeway to get involved in time-consuming MLG activities. Therefore, initiatives that wish to involve public authorities should make their contribution blend in with their other activities and ensure the smallest possible budget. On the other hand, administrations should invest in their teams and allocate...
MLG initiatives: an analysis

- Similar stakeholders involved.
- 3 main categories of power direction of interaction identified:
  - **Top-down initiatives** to transfer high-level programmes to local levels.
  - **Consultative initiatives**, to involve stakeholders in both horizontal and vertical ways, to have a say on and influence broader energy and climate policy-making.
  - **Bottom-up initiatives**, aiming at implementing change at local level and organising themselves as network to influence higher level policies.

- Dutch gas phase out strategy, Sustainable Romania, Japanese Regio Decarbonisation Roadmap
- Italian Rivers Contracts, French National Council for Ecological Transition, Peruvian Metropolitan Environmental Committee
- DK2020, Swedish Viable Cities, Moroccan Jiha Tinou
“Multi-level Climate and Energy Dialogue (CED) are platforms bringing together representatives from national, sub-national authorities and other relevant stakeholders, such as representatives from civil society, academia, industry, financial sector, NGOs, etc. Their purpose is to manage, in a collaborative process, the design, implementation and monitoring of climate and energy policies to make them coherent across levels of governance (e.g. European, national and local) and areas of competence. These platforms are also meant to ensure national policies are consistent with participants’ capacities and needs to engage in an ambitious and fair ecological transition with common objectives.”
NECPlatform

1.5 years of « dialogue »... lessons learned
Main takeways from the dialogues

The implementation of the Climate and Energy Dialogues in the 6 Member States is challenging and heterogeneous.

- Building **trust** (inspiring confidence as facilitator, to be perceived as impartial by the participating institutions) is a **fastidious** exercise but is essential for these dialogues to be successful.
- Different competences and power allocations are crucial and should be carefully considered: it is important to use the **appropriate narrative**

**When addressing the national level:**
- Contribute to making **national energy and climate policies more robust and coherent.**
- Prepare and motivate **sub-national authorities**, responsible for a large part of the plan’s implementation.
- Align the existing **bottom-up monitoring and verification** system.

**When addressing the local level:**
- Bring to the national level’s attention some issues that are not visible (e.g. lack of funding, lack of know-how, lack of resources, regulatory barriers, etc.).
- Present best practices which can be scaled and replicated elsewhere.
- Feeling **empowered** and part of an organic process / concerted mechanism.
Possible difficulties for the national level

- Used to working with a methodology that foresees a **top-down only** approach for drafting, implementing and monitoring national policies, not seeing the added value of including additional actors.

- Tendency **to work against European deadlines**, rather than perceive the need of having long-term plans and strategies as a structured and continuous process.

- Sometimes seeing NECPs as a **bureaucratic tool rather than a political priority**.

- NECPs seen as one-off exercise and not as a process.

- Tendency **to think in silos**, which means energy and climate objectives are sometimes perceived by other Ministries as contradictory to other objectives (economic growth for example).

- **Lack of staff**.

- Influenced by the non-binding nature of the NECP trajectory and the long-term horizon of the reduction targets, which might lead national governments to dedicate **little focus on the implementation of these targets and the necessary measures**. The main challenge for any national planning exercise is to put it into practice.
Climate and Energy dialogues should be the place to co-define the path for reaching climate neutrality while, at the same time, defining the means (e.g. financial instruments, human resources) to do so, as well as the specific role each actor must play to reach a common result. Moreover, the control and the monitoring of these plans should be improved and addressed as well.

Our suggestions

• Reiterate even more strongly a better implementation of Article 11 by MS in its assessments of updated NECPs & anticipate the assessments with a written recommendation.

• Pay attention to the quality of the dialogues and distinguish between well-structured and robust processes versus consultations at the end of the process.

• Push MS to establish such Climate and Energy Dialogues as structured long-term advisory groups not limited to the development of NECPs, but to all energy and climate planning.
• NECPlatform will soon start a replication / peer learning programme working with other countries!

• And publish a Guidance for the implementation of Climate and Energy Dialogue Platforms.

• More policy briefs coming up.

• A final event in Brussels in February-April 2025.
Did you know?

The United Nations launched at COP28 UAE a new

**Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (#CHAMP) for Climate Action.**

What is the goal of this initiative?

To enhance cooperation, where applicable and appropriate, with subnational governments in the planning, financing, implementation, and monitoring of climate strategies, to maximise climate action, including through coalitions such as the NDC Partnership.

72 signatories commit to these multilevel partnerships by the next COP, with a view towards collectively pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and increase adaptation and resilience, including NECPlatform countries France, Italy and Bulgaria.

We can only encourage more countries to join the CHAMP!

Questions?

What about your countries, do you know of ongoing dialogues?

Do you have examples of MLG you’d like to share?
Many thanks for your attention!

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