

D9.10 Report on 5 public BESTGRID workshops – Part 2 Berlin, October 23, 2014

Theresa Schneider, Renewables Grid Initiative



Co-funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe
Programme of the European Union

The sole responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the authors. It does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Union. Neither the EACI nor the European Commission are responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

2nd BESTGRID international dissemination workshop
“Innovation trough Collaboration”
23rd October 2014 in Berlin
A workshop hosted by 50Hertz

Agenda

Morning sessions: presentations of two BESTGRID pilot projects in Germany (Bertikow-Pasewalk) and the UK (Nemo Link i.a.) from responsible TSOs (50Hertz and Nationalgrid) and cooperating NGOs (regional BirdLife partners Nabu and RSPB)

Afternoon sessions: 4 world café tables on increased collaboration to identify PCIs, innovative collaboration formats, the initial steps of good collaboration and joint development of community compensation measures, respectively; fish bowl discussion on the social responsibility in grid development discussions

Participation

~ 70 participants from TSOs, NGOs, politics, authorities, industry and academia

1. Introduction

Olivier Feix, Head of Corporate Communications & Public Affairs at 50Hertz, welcomed all participants to the event and expressed his happiness that BESTGRID is a project that delivers on the ground and implements objectives that previously only existed on paper. RGI's Executive Director Antonella Battaglini followed and said, that BESTGRID has so far and continues to be a source for important new knowledge and a remaining task is to find out how to use these learnings better.

Theresa Schneider, Project Manager at the Renewables-Grid-Initiative, then shortly presented the rationale behind the BESTGRID project. She led over to the presentations about the pilot projects by saying that in some of pilot projects tests are being done at the open heart – NGOs and TSOs sit together and develop action plans and aim to introduce practices to the grid development process that have not been attempted before.

2. The BESTGRID pilot projects from TSO and NGO perspectives

50Hertz' project from Bertikow to Pasewalk

50Hertz' Head of Project Communication, Dirk Manthey, shared the steps that 50Hertz has taken so far under the umbrella of BESTGRID. The 50Hertz pilot is a new 380 kV line that

that will be constructed over the length of 30 kilometres in place of an old 220 kV line between Bertikow and Pasewalk. In 2014, 50Hertz organised two corridor workshops during which different corridor options were discussed with interested citizens and stakeholders. The official project conference (Antragskonferenz) was held in September this year. To answer any remaining questions, 50Hertz did an additional information campaign as part of BESTGRID, for which a mobile citizens' office stopped in 11 villages and towns directly affected by the new grid project. They informed the interested public on the state of the planning progress and talked about electric and magnetic fields (EMF) with citizens.

The subject of EMF was chosen as an additional voluntary information activity of the campaign because it is highly technical and reasonably unknown, often making it a source of uncertainty. The assumed health risks also regularly trigger feelings of anxiety and powerlessness. Uncertainty about and fear of EMF thus habitually contribute to opposition against grid development projects.

For that reason 50Hertz aimed to provide clear and convincing information material, that put technical facts into perspective, and actively approached people to build confidence and cancel out distrust and prejudice harboured against transmission system operators. They also carried out EMF measurements underneath the current 220 kV power line to give people an idea of the extent of such fields.

A first evaluation of the experiences made during the information tour showed that citizen's generally liked the offer and showed up to seek additional information. Approximately one in two visitors was interested in the EMF topic and people took 50Hertz up on their offer to join the field measurements under the local grid lines. In general, visitors stayed for a long time and talks were mostly friendly and to the point. The tour also proved useful to establish contact with important stakeholders such as landowners in the area and it also drew local media attention.

The following discussion revolved around the right way of building trust when it comes to topics that are as heatedly discussed as EMF and whether 50Hertz had found a good way to achieve this. It was criticised that 50Hertz did not measure under a 380 kV line but rather under a 220 kV even though the planned lined will be a 30 kV one. The response was that the idea behind the measuring project was to inform people about how distance from a power line affects the intensity of fields and to show people a real situation but the message should not be that the intensity of the field is always the same. The 220 kV line was chosen only because no higher voltage lines were close by. It was also offered to repeat the measurements once the new line is built.

It was also discussed whether the measuring was a good way to inspire trust in general. It was voiced that since health implications are not yet known for sure it might be better to always keep a distance of 400 meters to settlements and 200 meters to single houses without compromise. Others noted that basing grid decisions on political decisions always has drawbacks.

In addition, Antonella Battaglini shared notes of UK based organisations Revolt and Gridwatch, who had shared beforehand that in their view power companies should not be afraid of EMF. They believe that the considerable research done on the past years should be openly shared and that every project developer should follow the same guidelines as differences only increase insecurity among affected residents.

The BirdLife perspective on 50Hertz' project from Bertikow to Pasewalk

Eric Neuling from NABU, the German chapter of BirdLife, subsequently shared his impressions of the 50Hertz and BirdLife collaboration through BESTGRID. NABU is dedicated to finding the best solutions for the Bertikow-Pasewalk in terms of nature protection as early as possible instead of engaging in damage control afterwards. They are convinced that there are clear chances for nature protection through foresighted line planning, management and compensation. To exploit these chances as good as possible they have decided to become part of BESTGRID and accompany the planning procedure from the beginning, attend meetings and scopings, do stakeholder mapping and lend support for Environmental Impacts Assessments and scopings. Since the Northeast of Germany is the hotspot of rare birds in Germany, bird protection is the most important environmental issue with regard to the Bertikow-Pasewalk project.

The NABU presentation then mainly focussed on experiences made during BESTGRID so far. The collaboration with different stakeholders went smoothly in terms of organisation. There were no limitations in terms of which stakeholders were allowed to participate and all input was allowed and treated without prejudice by the TSO. However, invited stakeholders did not necessarily recognise the importance of participation at such an early planning stage and some occasionally showed distrust towards cooperation with a TSO. Nevertheless, the stakeholder events itself triggered productive discussions and were comprehensively evaluated. In terms of planning, it was positively received that 50Hertz consulted detailed cartographical material, integrated an alternative corridor option upon request and will take ecological lining management into consideration on all future projects. Less well received were a lack of data on bird populations and differences of opinion between NABU and 50Hertz when it came to data acquisition, upper lashing of biotopes, bird protection markers and pole designs. Overall, BESTGRID so far created a constructive work basis in which both sides feel comfortable and able to give direct feedback. Which they can be sure is heard.

Added value of NGOs in the planning and implementation of grid projects shaped the discussion after the presentation. 50Hertz stated that they had a very positive experience working so closely with NABU and that they are already thinking about how to integrate NGOs better in future projects. However, power lines are not always very high on the agendas of local NGO chapters, even though there are many chances to influence decision-makers during the development process. However, there is quite often controversy within the NGOs itself on the topic of renewable energy. This makes it harder to engage.

Concerning the lack of data on bird populations mentioned in the presentation, it was suggested from the audience to use pylons to apply monitoring/data collecting machines.

- COFFEE BREAK -

BirdLife's overall involvement in BESTGRID (excluding the 50Hertz project discussed in the previous presentation)

Since many different BirdLife Partners are directly or indirectly involved in BESTGRID, Ivan Scrase, Senior Climate Change Policy Officer at RSPB, the British BirdLife Partner, started his presentation by introducing the BirdLife International and European partnerships of national NGOs. All four BESTGRID pilot projects run with the participation of BirdLife. Nabu Lower Saxony, a regional German BirdLife Partner, is working on TenneT's pilot project SuedLink. They are focussing on issues of connectivity and habitat diversity and are also dealing with such topics as land ownership. In private forests for example the commercial pressures are much higher and consequently planning to protect or enhance nature is more difficult than in public forest areas. For example private owners are more demanding in terms of compensation for any loss of forest area, so opening up land for biodiversity is less likely to be possible.

On Elia's Braine-l'Alleud – Waterloo project Natagora, a Belgian BirdLife Partner, evaluated ecological sensitivities and mapped designated areas and habitats. The collaboration with Elia was not very intense, however, since the grid project, which by now has been dropped, was not very ecologically sensitive.

The cooperation between National Grid and RSPB in the UK builds on a different approach due to the different nature of the pilot project. National Grid is reviewing the experiences they made with Nemo Link and five more of their own grid projects. The RSPB is likewise evaluating their experience as a consulted stakeholder for six projects, through archive work and interviews with casework officers. The main value of this exercise is to identify challenges and opportunities for improved grid planning strategies and engagement with NGO stakeholders, for future projects. In the past a lack of coordination has been observed among offshore wind developers and grid planning. This seems to be driven by competition among developers as well as by time pressure and can lead to inefficiency in terms of more power lines being built than might actually be needed.

Looking at the six National Grid projects, it varied to what extent environmental authorities were involved and there are also differences in terms of when RSPB was able to become involved. The difficult question for TSOs to solve here is: how can one engage early enough, but not so early that unnecessary problems are caused? A big part of RSPB's work involves looking at Environmental Impact Assessments and the quality of work that has been done. There can be problems from both sides when it comes to continuity. The RSPB for example

often has capacity issues that prevent continued engagement in important projects. TSOs sometimes drop a project that stakeholders already have invested time in. Ensuring re-engagement if a project is re-started, or if a stakeholder has temporarily ceased engaging, is a challenge. Another issue is that stakeholders do not always know what has been done with their representation, which they might have invested a lot of time and resources in. This is a particular problem when consultations are carried out through big public meetings.

Apart from being engaged in the different pilot projects, BirdLife will also develop a handbook on power lines and nature. Amongst the pilots and other sources, input will be gathered through NGO workshops that BirdLife will organise in the UK, Brussels, Slovenia, Lithuania and Romania.

The subsequent discussion focussed on the importance of transparency in TSO-NGO cooperation. In order for NGOs to better understand the big picture including all on-going processes and thus develop an increasingly useful and strategic approach to engagement, they should know how a project is connected to the business plan of the TSO and who the relevant contact persons are. And they should be informed about the technical planning and its connection with environmental planning. This way NGOs can also understand the TSOs' time pressure better. National Grid was named as a TSO who is already doing this. They have a manual of procedures, which informs readers about the relevant processes. Providing such an overview for stakeholders is mandatory for PCIs and many of the participants agree that this should be standardised across Europe.

Transparency is also discussed in terms of cooperation with external environmental consultants for the environmental planning of a new grid project. Many in the audience voiced their wish that this process should be handled more transparently and that it should be coordinated better between a TSO's engineering and environmental units. At Terna for example, engineering and environmental units work together. The external experts are coordinating with the two units and Terna additionally asks for feedback from two NGO.

National Grid's pilot project Nemo Link

Phil Pryor, former Project Director at National Grid, gave an overview of the British TSO's progress with their pilot project. They are looking at stakeholder engagement in the marine environment and specifically how they can speed up permitting and which new and additional measures could be sensible to increase acceptance by stakeholders and the public. Since the permitting process for their pilot project Nemo Link is already completed they are doing a reflective evaluation of the grid project in order to identify lessons for future projects. Apart from their main pilot Nemo Link, for which they are focussing on the land-sea interface and the subsea part, National Grid is also drawing on experiences from a range of other projects.

To answer the question posed, the National Grid project team started by reviewing and analysing previous stakeholder engagement processes. They reviewed the permitting

process and looked at what worked and what did not work well from their side as well as the stakeholder's sides. From that the team drafted a document of lessons learnt.

At the moment National Grid is in the process of conducting interviews with stakeholders. They aim to find out if stakeholders agree with National Grid's own assessment and how they perceive National Grid's performance overall. The info they have already gathered will be discussed in four workshops, two on public acceptance and two on speeding up permitting (these workshops have by now taken place – on the 12/13th and the 26/27th of November).

This exercise is being done because of the extreme importance of stakeholder engagement. Developing trust is one of the keys, as is understanding each other's perspectives. Just as important are clarity of empowerment and sharing insight between different regional groups to make sure that time is being used efficiently. National grid has already developed best practice materials for their onshore projects. The BESTGRID process shall now result in a dedicated marine brochure. It will include general principles and the relevant steps throughout the process, which should be applicable throughout Europe even though specific legislation might differ a lot.

The discussion after the presentation mainly revolved around the topics of self-learning and consistency of approaches. TSO representatives agreed that for them passing on relevant experiences to colleagues is crucial. This needs high-level guidance and a solid understanding of key processes. At Eirgrid, for example, the policy team has a presence in all projects and aims at writing all learnings into the company's policies. Red Eléctrica disseminates best practices within the company with each project as well. By now they have also started to communicate them outside of the company in order to show stakeholders which are the practices that are being put into place to try and improve projects and address stakeholder concerns.

But a trustful relationship with stakeholders also depends on trustworthy contractors. TSOs have to be sure that contractors actually deliver the best practices that they are contractually obliged to do, including the machines that were agreed upon, as a different choice of machinery could have a more negative effect on the seabed for example. If something does not go smoothly in such an area a lot of distrust can be created between TSOs and stakeholders.

- LUNCH BREAK -

3. World Café discussions

Group 1: The European grid: how to increase collaboration to identify PCIs

Olgerts Viksne from the European Commission's DG Energy gave a short opening statement on the PCI selection process. The European Commission has recently confirmed that EC Regional Groups, which are a neuralgic point in the selection process shall be opened to NGO participation – however, it still needs to be defined what the concrete purpose of engagement will be, how outcomes can be integrated into the further selection process or how NGOs - generally operating either at a national or European, but not on a regional level - can build the needed capacity to provide substantial input at a regional level.

Discussions about the question how stakeholders can collaborate in the procedure to identify PCIs made obvious that a substantial lack of clarity exists among stakeholders. More information regarding the procedure, when to give input on what, who is responsible for which step and the impact of consultations, was requested. Suggestions on how to deliver this information were made, and included a procedure manual, email alerts for consultation instances, and stronger involvement of member states in the communication exercise.

Group 2: Innovative collaboration formats: from participation to collaboration

Dr. Andreas Brandtner from VDI (The Association of German Engineers) briefly introduced the organisation's guidance document (<http://www.vdi.de/karriere/vdi-7000/>) on early stakeholder engagement for large industrial and infrastructure projects. The participants of the first round expressed the wish to discuss the question „Do we stakeholders really want more/better information?“ or „Do we simply distrust the decisions taken by the (so called) experts?“ Various aspects of delegated responsibility, democratic representation and the differences between participation and collaboration were debated. The discussion concluded that the call for transparency is often a symptom of distrust. Openness, respect and fairness are crucial to establish a trust- and meaningful relation between grid operators and their stakeholders. Building on a trustful relationship the partners can explore means of collaboration to find better solutions collectively. The second round of discussion focussed on new ways of engaging stakeholders. It was discussed that main objections against infrastructure projects stem from elderly, often retired target groups. The discussants highlighted that social media could play an important role to engage younger generations who might understand the importance of modernising the existing grid infrastructure to power their personal future.

Group 3: The initial steps of good collaboration – how does it work on the ground?

Impulse speaker Mátyás Prommer from MME (Hungarian BirdLife) opened the discussion with a recap of MME's experience collaborating with Hungarian TSO Mavir for almost 30 years. Over the time of their collaboration the two organisations installed artificial nesting

platforms on grid pylons, engaged in bird monitoring activities, and created a yearly birds and grid conference. As key factors in their collaboration he named personal communication, high-level communication, available funding and a changes in the regulatory framework.

The following discussion mainly focussed on key success factors and key obstacles for cooperation on the ground. Among communication on all levels, a willingness to learn and motivated individuals were named as being most important. Additionally, all cooperation partners should be really convinced of the project and not only engage in it because it might be perceived as useful by others. Just as relevant are regular meetings between all parties and a joint decision making process. Discussants also mentioned the pertinence of a diversified spectrum of opinions and a guiding framework or facilitator.

Key obstacles, that were named, included reservation or resistance of peers, restrictive legislation that might hamper a project as well as a lack of willingness to compromise.

Group 4: Joint development of community compensation measures

Kai Gildhorn from Mundraub (a German organization that implements a biodiversity project as a compensation measure for 50Hertz) was the impulse speaker at table 4. He talked about an experience orchard that they are implementing together with 50Hertz. The later discussion centred around preconditions that need to be fulfilled in order to get a local affected community to enter into such an exchange and get engaged.

Factors that were named as important preconditions included an attractive offer to the affected community or an added social value for them. To achieve such an added value it was deemed important to create a trustful environment and include community representatives in the development of the compensation measure from the beginning. Discussants also stated that project developers should under no circumstances give the impression that the compensation activity serves green washing purposes.

Specific compensations measures that were named during the discussion included mitigation, off-setting and benefit sharing, the latter of which the group deemed as a sensible topic for RGI to do research on in the future.

4. Fish bowl discussion

Social responsibility in grid development discussions

The questions discussed during the fish bowl session, that included TSO, union and church representatives were: Could we reach a broader societal consensus for grid infrastructure by involving more societal groups – and if yes, how? Is a broader and louder expert support necessary to disperse doubts about the need for new lines? Would a totally new approach of informing the public make a difference?

All discussants stated that their organisation saw the need for new grid projects in light of the on-going energy transition; all, however, also named some challenges they saw – among them the need for a fairer and more transparent decision-making process. Roman Hagen, as the representative of Swissgrid, pointed out the specific obstacles that slow down grid projects in Switzerland. As a TSO in a direct democracy, Swissgrid has to rely on the people to approve the lines – a process that can take up to 30 years in some instances. For this reason, approaches that result in faster and broader societal consensus would be highly beneficial for Swissgrid.

Widening the scope of the discussion was proposed as one possible solution, e.g. discussing alternative options like CCS, which in the current debate in Germany is considered as far too dangerous. Others said, that the energy transition was mainly a communication exercise, as it is possible to change people's minds and behaviours, but creating the understanding that underlies such changes can sometimes take a very long time and needs the right communication strategies. Addressing young people was considered one of the most relevant issues in the fishbowl discussion, since they are the ones who will be most affected by the upcoming changes in the energy sector, but also the ones whose voices are not being heard as loud as those of other generations. When asked if they believed that current public consultations fulfilled the needs of this younger target group, the panellists proposed as stronger focus on social media, on finding the right messages and on other, more recent tools, such as presenting 3D models to the public. Social media was considered such a highly important part of communications as the panellists saw it as the best way to engage people and give them a sense of being included all the way through a project.

Another general challenge that discussants saw was that policy and economy don't always have the same language. It is only a few people who are personally affected by new lines, but who make a lot of noise. Politicians hear this, but economical interrelations are so much more complex and it still needs to be solved how to bring the two together.

The role of education in the context of public consultations was also discussed. Participants shared their experience that much of the time in public consultation events is spent on simply explaining the consultation process. It was suggested that if topics like this would be taught in school, people would more easily be able to understand the process and make an educated decision and more willing to accept necessary conflict.