

Why Public Acceptance Matters

A successful energy transition is not only a technical challenge, but a societal one. It is essential for achieving climate goals and fostering sustainable development. Yet technical solutions alone are not enough. The active support of the population is crucial. Without broad public acceptance, even the most advanced technologies and ambitious policies will struggle to take root, particularly at the local level where renewable energy projects are implemented.

Surveys show that 86% of the population in Germany support the expansion of renewable energy in principle. However, this high level of general approval often does not translate into support for specific projects in their immediate surroundings. Local resistance is rarely based on opposition to the energy transition itself, but rather on a lack of trust in planning processes, insufficient opportunities for participation, and limited communication.

The Key Challenges and Recommended Action

Missing Participation



Many citizens feel excluded from planning and decision-making processes. Without genuine opportunities to participate, people are less likely to support local projects.

What Can Be Done? Introduce citizen panels or local energy forums early in the planning process to enable co-creation, dialogue, and local ownership.

Poor Communication



Insufficient, unclear, or overly technical communication about the risks and benefits of projects can lead to confusion and misinformation.

What Can Be Done? Establish neutral communication platforms and assign local contact persons (e.g. energy liaison officers) to provide continuous, transparent information.

Technical Uncertainty



A limited understanding of renewable technologies can create feelings of insecurity and reduce confidence in the projects safety and reliability.

What Can Be Done? Offer guided tours, interactive simulations, or school programs at existing energy facilities to make technologies tangible and build public confidence.

Unfair Distribution



When the costs (e.g. noise or landscape change) are borne locally while the benefits are perceived as external, acceptance tends to decline.

What Can Be Done? Provide direct financial benefit, such as community investment opportunities or fixed payments to municipalities. Ensure that local areas share in the project's economic value.

Concerns about Nature and Health



Residents often express fears about landscape degradation and biodiversity loss or the potential health impacts. Especially in areas close to wind turbines or transmission.

What Can Be Done? Ensure transparent environmental assessments, and use visual tools to simulate landscape impact. Invite public participation in planning decisions.

Lack of Awareness



Many people are unaware of compensation mechanisms, participation opportunities, and the longterm benefits, which can prevent them from engaging with projects.

What Can Be Done? Provide easy-to-access online portals, flyers, and local info events explaining rights, opportunities, and concrete local benefits.

Call for Action: Shared Responsibility for the Energy Transition



Achieving a successful energy transition relies on the commitment of all societal actors. This means embedding transparency, fairness, and engagement into planning and decision-making processes. When local communities are not just informed but actively involved, and when the benefits of renewable energy are felt close to home, projects gain credibility and long-term support. Building trust, encouraging dialogue, and fostering a shared sense of ownership are essential conditions for a socially supported transformation.