

TOPIC BRIEF: PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE

The following topic brief summarizes discussions held during an EU level exchange sessions (T4.1) among BiogasAction project partners. It aims at providing the main outcomes of the discussions. Each topic brief focuses on one specific development topic for biogas in Europe. Topic briefs can be downloaded at <http://biogasaction.eu/downloads>

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Jekabsone

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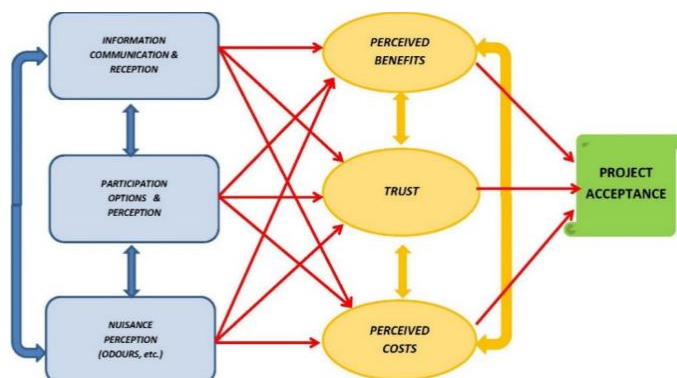
What is the topic about?

Public acceptance (or social acceptance): It is widely acknowledged that the diffusion of biogas technologies does not depend on technological advances and favourable economic conditions alone. A good understanding and a strong backing of biogas by the general public is also essential. Thus, a better understanding of public perceptions and acceptance of biogas is a crucial factor to improve conditions for biogas policies and markets in European countries.

Public acceptance is identified as a key factor influencing the broad implementation of renewable energy technologies and the accomplishment of energy policy objectives. Significantly expanding bioenergy will not be feasible without social acceptance, which is primarily established through public trust and support, and this requires a policy framework for efficient and interactive communication between stakeholders.

What is at stake?

Public acceptance depends on 3 key influencing factors: perceived benefits, trust and perceived costs. Their amplitude depends on the level of communication, potential level of participation and the perception of nuisances as illustrated below:



European Framework for the Diffusion of Biogas Uses: Emerging Technologies, Acceptance, Incentive Strategies, and Institutional-Regulatory Support
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2080/f9b77caca9c1757d6fc506d5d5e687908a4.pdf>



Partners experiences

Experience from Germany: Acceptance of various RES

- A poll in 2016 showed that 62 percent of the public would agree to a renewable installation being built in their neighborhood. Approval was highest for solar PV (73%), followed by wind (52%), while 38 percent said they would agree to have a biogas plant nearby.

Experience from Latvia: Communication strategy

- Main concerns that were raised by public include: conflict in use of resources (food vs fuel), odors, transportation of biofuels and road quality, noise and maize cultivation
- 2 kinds of approaches were implemented:
 - Public discussions before project start – inform about project and plans to deal with all public concerns
 - Once in operations – open communication with public, for example, student excursions on biogas plants.

Key findings and lessons learnt:

The current situation should be analysed considering the following elements:

- Attention for renewable energy: how well people understand and how well people are informed about biogas and its applications in general
- Biogas interest: preferred applications of biogas and preferred resources for biogas production
- Biogas project acceptance: pros and cons of biogas production in the neighborhood
- Regional Climate: open mindedness of local actors and trust in local actors
- Demands to the region: sustainability, support needed from local authority
- Individual values and commitment: concrete actions the biogas promoter might take according to local public needs

At least 2 major actions and their associated tools can facilitate public acceptance. Their selection and combination will be chosen in accordance with the above listed points.

- **Networking:** *In order to effectively improve relations with neighbours, it is necessary to combine forces in favour of goals that are to be reached by biogas applications. Networking can change alone plant owner's position from one of futile complaining to one of coordinated, concerted action.*

Associated tools: cooperating with Organizations as Resources, Roundtables, Lobbying at National level, etc.

- **Public Relations:** *Good public relations are a precondition for the development of successful actions. The concept of public relations is the management of an enterprise's or individual's public perception. When an activity is planned, this should build on a solid base of well-established relationships between the actors and the public.*

Associated tools: educational and training activities, events, site visits, face-to-face, public consultation and information, etc.

For more information: *Increasing Acceptance for Biogas Application: https://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/projects/sites/iee-projects/files/projects/documents/biogasaccepted_increasing_the_acceptance_of_biogass.pdf*

