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Sustainability
Transitions

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Authors

German Orejarena (Center for the Study of Democracy)
Remina Aleksieva (Center for the Study of Democracy)

Contributors

Dr. Uwe Serdült (UZH)
Marine Benli-Trichet (UZH)
Verena Balz (TUD)
Marcin Dąbrowski (TUD)
Neli Georgieva (STRATH)
John Moodie (NR)

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Table of Contents

Document Information.....	2
Revision History.....	3
Table of Contents	4
List of Figures	5
List of Tables	6
List of Boxes	7
Abbreviation list.....	8
Executive Summary	9
1. Introduction.....	10
1.1. Aims of the deliverable.....	10
1.2. Reader’s guide.....	11
2. Foundations: conceptual and methodological insights	12
2.1. Conceptual framework: Promoting active subsidiarity in place-based policies	12
2.1.1. Active subsidiarity	13
2.1.2. Citizen participation and active subsidiarity	16
2.2. Instruments for assessing participation in MLG: the DUST toolbox	19
2.2.1. Case study research: Assessing factors conditioning deliberative participation	19
2.2.2. APES	20
2.2.3. DUST survey	21
3. Barriers and opportunities for active subsidiarity in just transition policies	23
3.1. Finding trends for active subsidiarity in the evidence	23
3.1.1. Arenas for participation in participatory processes	24
3.1.2. Stages for participation.....	28
3.1.3. Actor networks for participation	32
3.2. Opportunities and barriers for promoting active subsidiarity: the community perspective	36
3.2.1. Communities and their involvement in participatory processes	37
3.2.2. Willingness and ability to participate	38
4. Summary.....	41
References	44

List of Figures

Figure 1 Conceptualizing the role of citizen participation in achieving active subsidiarity	17
Figure 2 Network density in 7 regional case studies	34
Figure 7 The 'ability' subset in DUST survey.....	39
Figure 8 The 'willingness' subset in DUST survey.....	40

List of Tables

Table 1 Objectives of the active subsidiarity principle	14
Table 2 Variables that facilitate or impede participation	18
Table 3 Identified place-based measures in the case study regions	20
Table 4 Event types and Participation levels in just sustainability transition initiatives.....	24
Table 5 Participatory processes by stage by case study.....	25
Table 6 Factors for active subsidiarity in arenas for participation	27
Table 7 Factors influencing participation in identified arenas	28
Table 8 Participatory mechanisms across stages of the policy cycle.....	29
Table 9 Factors for active subsidiarity in stages for participation	31
Table 10 Factors for participation in identified stages.....	31
Table 11 Factors for active subsidiarity in actor networks for participation.....	35
Table 12 Factors for participation in actor networks for participation.....	36
Table 13 Barriers and opportunities for active subsidiarity in summary	42

List of Boxes

Box 2 The risk of underestimating participation	18
Box 3 Key findings on arenas for participation in participatory processes.....	27
Box 4 Key findings on stages for participation	31
Box 5 Key findings on actor networks for participation.....	35

Abbreviation list

Term	Description
APES	Actor-Process-Event Schemes
D	Deliverable
DUST	Democratising Just Sustainability Transitions
EU	European Union
JTF	Just Transition Fund
JTM	Just Transition Mechanism
LEC	Least-engaged Communities
MLG	Multi-level governance
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPG	National Programme Groningen
TJTP	Territorial Just Transition Plan
WP	Work package

Executive Summary

The DUST project aims to rethink sustainability transitions across European regions by fostering proactive citizen engagement. Through innovative participatory tools and digital platforms, DUST addresses the democratic challenge of amplifying the voices of citizens, who are excluded from policy shaping, particularly in regions transitioning away from energy-intensive industries. Within the project's framework, Work Package 2 (WP2) focuses on evaluating the democratic quality of citizen participation in place-based policies for just sustainability transitions. This entails developing tools to assess stakeholder engagement across eight DUST study regions, identifying barriers faced by marginalized groups, and visualizing participation networks within these multi-level policies.

This deliverable (D) 2.4, titled "Factors Influencing Participation: Opportunities and Barriers for Active Subsidiarity in Just Sustainability Transition Policies," has two key objectives. First, it synthesizes the findings of early DUST tasks, which used tools to measure and assess participation in transition policy actions. Second, it identifies trends in participation factors that can activate active subsidiarity principles in just sustainability transition policies. Policy-relevant results will be summarized in a policy briefing on opportunities and barriers for active subsidiarity. Scientific results underlying this report will be further considered in the DUST D3.4 'Civic participation of least engaged communities in just sustainability transition initiatives: Scope, depth and determining factors', which synthesizes the results of quantitative and qualitative research performed in the DUST WP2 and 3.

Opportunities for active subsidiarity within policy-making processes lie in the effective utilization of participatory methods, including co-production, co-creation, and dynamic participatory instruments. Regions that strategically integrate these methods and align participatory structures with decision-making arenas are poised to cultivate active subsidiarity. Moreover, enhancing active subsidiarity involves acknowledging communities' willingness and capacity to participate, thereby tailoring communication and capacity-building initiatives to region-specific characteristics. Nevertheless, barriers persist in the pursuit of active subsidiarity. The emphasis on formal stakeholders may inadvertently sideline vulnerable groups, limiting their participation. Similarly, the unequal distribution of decision-making power can hinder citizens from engaging in subsequent policy-making stages. Furthermore, entrenched 'top-down' dynamics in place-based measures impede bottom-up interaction, jeopardizing participation in subsequent implementation phases.

1. Introduction

This report is a consolidation of the findings of WP2 within the broader context of the DUST project's objectives. WP2 focused on measuring the democratic quality of citizen participation in place-based policies for just sustainability transitions in eight case study regions. Another overall goal of the WP was to develop effective tools for measuring the breadth, depth and intensity of stakeholder and citizen participation in the planning and implementation of place-based policies for just transition at the relevant levels of government. Results presented in this deliverable are therefore rooted in the underlying logic of a series of methods and tools:

- the DUST Survey – a population survey on participation in sustainability transition initiatives (D2.2),
- the Actor-Process-Event Schemes (APES) tool (D2.3), and
- the Identification and assessment of participatory processes in sustainability transition measures in case study regions via documentary analysis (D3.1 from WP3).

These instruments are grounded in an extensive literature review encompassing various domains such as citizen participation, just transition approaches, multi-level governance, place-based policies, and active subsidiarity, as described in D1.1 and D1.2. Within WP2, DUST pursued objectives to measure stakeholder and citizen participation depth, identify social groups facing participation barriers, and discern opportunities for active subsidiarity within multi-level policy-making processes. This document argues that specific configurations within territorial policy can better facilitate active and comprehensive participation from a wider range of stakeholders. This ideal scenario would involve engagement in designated arenas and during focused stages of policy development.

However, simply increasing interaction between stakeholders doesn't guarantee active subsidiarity. This document also highlights the importance of clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all actors involved. These definitions should be established from the planning stage onwards. Additionally, the specific territorial context of a policy needs to be considered, even if the initial policy framework originates at the national level.

The interconnected framework of DUST underscores how this deliverable serves as a bridge to WP3, centring on the analysis of factors that shape deliberative participation within the least engaged communities (LEC) regarding place-based policies for just sustainability transitions. This involves factors associated with the design of participatory processes, with the attitudes of these communities and with broad context factors. Additionally, it aims to scrutinize the impact and role of both social and traditional media in facilitating citizen engagement in transition measures.

1.1. Aims of the deliverable

This deliverable aims to synthesize the results obtained thus far by DUST, focusing on tools for measuring and evaluating participatory processes in transition policies. It seeks to understand the intricacies of participatory dynamics within policy-making realms, shedding light on who, when, and to what extent individuals are involved in political processes, as well as on population perceptions of participation. By navigating through the conceptual and methodological construction and available results from the use of these tools, **the main goal is to identify opportunities and barriers for active subsidiarity in transition policies.**

Within the DUST project, WP2 asks the question: what is the depth and intensity of participation in the design and implementation of sustainability transitions policies in a multi-level setting? To answer this ‘what’ question, three methodological tools were developed and used, as noted above. Generated evidence allows for assessing the state of play, comparing the performance of participation across territories, refining our understanding of barriers to participation for different social groups and identifying opportunities for advancing the active subsidiarity principle in multi-level policy-making processes.

Additionally, this deliverable bridges the gap between past and future WP3 outcomes. Building on the foundation provided by D3.1, a crucial step is to analyse the tools employed, the achieved results, and the resulting guidelines established in the case studies. By examining these elements, we gain a deeper understanding of the case study findings, stakeholder involvement, their interactions, and the factors influencing participation – opportunities, barriers, and policy options for promoting it. This analysis, combining tested elements with an exploration of participation factors, serves as an intermediate outcome that strengthens future analysis. Ultimately, this will illuminate the path towards achieving active subsidiarity in the context of LEC.

1.2. Reader’s guide

This report offers a dual perspective on the development of WP2 and insights into the active subsidiarity principle in just sustainable transition policies across regions. The following Chapter 2 comprises a first section building a conceptual framework that is shaped by the literature on active subsidiarity, just transition, public participation, engagement methods, and place-based approaches. These components allow for a better understanding of the role of the active subsidiarity principle and the factors influencing participation, which have been evolving since D1.1 throughout the DUST project.

In a second section of Chapter 2, the report provides a concise methodological overview. It is first explained how initial case study research in the DUST project was carried out. The focus then shifts to the APES tool, which offers a quantitative and qualitative analysis of policy networks. It utilizes case study data to visualize the participation of corporate actors in decision-making events within public policy processes. Lastly, the methodology used in the development and findings of the DUST survey is explained. This survey aims to scrutinize citizens' participation in deliberative processes related to sustainability transitions, capturing their perceptions and shedding light on factors shaping deliberative participation across diverse communities. These factors encompass community-based elements such as trust and social capital, alongside policy-related aspects like accessibility, information dissemination, and incentives.

In Chapter 3, the report highlights the main conclusions concerning citizen participation and active subsidiarity within the context of just sustainability transitions facilitated by place-based policies. The central focus of the report examines barriers and opportunities for active subsidiarity in just sustainability transition policies. Within this section, the discussion delves into the context of participants, levels of engagement, events, and actor networks that influence participation. The report then outlines the main messages stemming from evidence using the tools and informed by academic literature, emphasizing the triangulation of research methods used and providing an overview of the forthcoming steps for policy-oriented actions.

2. Foundations: conceptual and methodological insights

2.1. Conceptual framework: Promoting active subsidiarity in place-based policies

Over the last decade, discussions about just transitions have substantially grown in literature, encompassing viewpoints that emphasize jobs, the environment, and society. The concept of just transition aims to reconcile the rights of workers and job security with the imperative need to address climate change (Galgóczy, 2021; Stevis & Felli, 2015). The International Labour Organization guidelines defined a just transition as ensuring the creation of decent green jobs, social protection for job losses, and strong social consensus on pathways to sustainability with informed consultation (ILO, 2015). Incorporated to the preamble of the 2015 Paris Agreement and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, just transition requires “respect and dignity for vulnerable groups; creation of decent jobs; social protection; employment rights; fairness in energy access and use and social dialogue and democratic consultation with relevant stakeholders” to ensure that no people, workers, places, sectors, countries or regions are left behind (Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change - IPCC, 2023).

In the context of a just sustainability transitions, public participation serves as a means for the public to exert influence over decisions within established decision-making systems. However, the extent of this influence and the methods used to exercise it can vary significantly (O’Faircheallaigh, 2010). The European Green Deal underscores the pivotal role of citizens in driving sustainability transitions, emphasizing the need to empower them for effective public participation. This perspective aligns with wider sustainability transitions, reshaping production and consumption systems, impacting societal norms, and raising justice-related questions (Shove & Walker, 2014).

Scholarly discussions stress the importance of various engagement methods and purposes, urging careful consideration for context-specific approaches (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1993). Additionally, literature highlights public participation's transformative potential, fostering creativity, knowledge, and agency while serving as a platform for environmental and social debates (Cattino & Reckien, 2021; Massari et al., 2023). Integrating participation outcomes into policymaking is a crucial topic, requiring considerations of cultural, institutional, legal, and even constitutional changes for successful implementation (European Environment Agency - EEA, 2023).

Across nations, there are multiple European Union (EU)-driven as well as domestic place-based policies for just sustainability transitions as defined more broadly. The Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) represents one example of an EU-driven measure that aims to aid coal and mining regions in aligning with the European Green Deal. Success relies on active involvement and support from these regions and their residents. The regulations emphasize a collaborative implementation involving national, regional, and local authorities, fostering shared responsibility and effective management structures. Within this framework, the EU encourages public participation and offers guidance on their meaningful engagement in the programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Just Transition Fund. Research and past

participatory practices provide successful techniques to achieve this (European Commission, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy, 2021).

Despite the aforementioned points, there is limited research on the approaches of national political actors like political parties and interest groups (Cigna et al., 2023). Furthermore, within thematic policy areas of intervention, policy instruments for governance mechanisms such as consultations and engagements, multi-stakeholder collaborative tables and coordination offices, have been poorly identified in national just transition initiatives (Krawchenko & Gordon, 2021).

2.1.1. Active subsidiarity

Place-based measures (Barca, 2008) are closely aligned with the concept of active subsidiarity and represent key tools for implementing it (Moodie, Salenius, & Wøien Meijer, 2022). Active subsidiarity acts as the linchpin holding this puzzle together, prioritizing the state and quality of participatory governance to influence global transitions, thereby impacting local economic, social, and environmental spheres. The DUST project framework recognizes active subsidiarity as a normative guide for engaging marginalized communities in deliberative governance of place-based approaches to just sustainability transitions.

The promotion of active subsidiarity has emerged as a critical response to the urgent need for a more integrated application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality within EU institutions. In 2017, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker established the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and Doing Less More Efficiently, marking a pivotal moment in the EU's pursuit of enhanced governance mechanisms. This task force aimed to foster a deeper shared understanding of the principles, advocating for a structured and consistent application throughout the decision-making processes.

Highlighted by the European Commission (2018) beyond integrating the principle of subsidiarity as a mechanism that makes decision-making from supranational institutions to local ones and other intermediate levels of governance more flexible, it also underscores the necessity for a more robust engagement of local and regional authorities in EU policymaking processes. This is crucial as the voice of these authorities often remains marginalized during the initial phases of policy formulation (Elias, 2008). From this endeavour, it is considered to have potential implications for sub-national-level actors, as highlighted by Moodie, Salenius, & Kull (2022).

Subsidiarity implies a certain degree of local or regional autonomy and self-rule for local levels of government for responsive, flexible, innovative, heterogeneous, and robust governance, to provide a counterweight against the claims (and overreach) of higher levels of government, and to increase citizens' interest in public affairs and ownership of public policies (Moodie, Salenius, & Kull, 2022; Pazos-Vidal, 2019; Wanzenböck & Frenken, 2020a). The effective governance of territorial development strategies requires the capacity to coordinate within and across different levels of government, public administrations, and agencies, as well as to engage the private sector, other public entities, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and citizen groups in the concerned territory (European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2022).

The term 'active' appended to the subsidiarity principle accentuates the significance of the smallest viable spatial scale in accomplishing strategic policy goals within place-based approaches. It aims to validate the devolution of roles and responsibilities to local authorities while forming the bedrock of knowledge dissemination within local networks. Furthermore, this principle seeks to fuel local discretion and experimental democracy, and foster communication,

dialogue, and deliberation in multi-level governance contexts (Pazos-Vidal, 2019), thus molding 'active subsidiarity' into a defining framework for bottom-up, place-based territorial governance, and policymaking. Nevertheless, the effective utilization of this principle to authentically bring policymaking closer to citizens remains a persistently challenging endeavour (OECD, 2022).

Effective active subsidiarity relies on ongoing stakeholder negotiation, transcending rigid legal frameworks at higher governance levels. This dynamic approach prioritizes collective commitment over uniform regulations, fostering partnerships among central and local governments, private sectors, and associations. Evaluation of policies goes beyond theory, focusing on practical integration into local contexts. It is a continuous, collective effort defining commitment through evolving philosophies rooted in on-ground participation and adaptation based on experiences. Legitimacy for state administration in this dynamic context stems from animating diverse stakeholder networks rather than hierarchical authority in norms (Calame, 1998).

Implementing active subsidiarity in multi-level just sustainability transition policies requires a re-evaluation of governance structures and practices (Rabadjieva & Terstriep, 2020). It involves providing resources, capacity building, and support to local authorities and communities, enabling them to actively engage in the decision-making processes. Additionally, it necessitates establishing mechanisms for effective communication, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing among different governance levels (Raunio, 2010).

This report aligns with the European Committee of the Regions (2020), acknowledging that while there exists no strict definition of the concept, it is understood to involve empowering local and regional authorities with greater autonomy and decision-making power in matters that directly affect their communities, in accordance with MLG.

The exploration of options for active subsidiarity appears intrinsically linked to the intricate factors that shape and influence participation within governance structures (see Table 1). To operationalize the "active" component in the subsidiarity principle, it is not only imperative to establish top-down conditions within governance levels but also crucial to comprehend bottom-up participation from citizens. Whether citizens harbour multiple loyalties at higher governance levels or place more trust in traditional communal hierarchies and values, legitimizing the construction of territorial public policies from citizens necessitates an understanding of participation mechanisms.

Table 1 Objectives of the active subsidiarity principle

Active subsidiarity is...*		
Multi-level governance (MLG)	Viewing MLG as a dynamic, and experimental process of jointly exercised competences at various levels of government;	(Calame, 1998) (Moodie, Salenius, & Wøien Meijer, 2022) (Morgan, 2018) (Pazos-Vidal, 2019)
	Perceiving governance as an expression of human sociality / a form of collective self-rule, which has intrinsic value for communities;	(Hooghe & Marks, 2016)

Active subsidiarity is...*		
	Forming multi-level partnerships and institutions; hereby safeguarding that these include actors operating on the ground;	(Wanzenböck & Frenken, 2020b)
	Delegating roles and responsibilities for achieving strategic policy objectives to the lowest appropriate level;	General principle
A Europe closer to citizens	Engaging citizens as equal partners (not just beneficiaries) in all arenas and stages of the policymaking cycle;	(OECD, 2022)
	Allowing for local discretion in decision-making;	(Morgan, 2018) (Pazos-Vidal, 2019)
	Highlighting the importance of local and regional authorities as key facilitators of close interaction with citizens, businesses, social partners, and civil society on a territorial basis;	(Moodie, Salenius, & Wøien Meijer, 2022)
	Aiding local and regional authorities to increase their capacity for communication with citizens;	(Moodie, Salenius, & Wøien Meijer, 2022)
	Encouraging a subsidiarity culture in EU policymaking involving all levels of governance, notably at the level as close as possible to the citizens;	(Moodie, Salenius, & Wøien Meijer, 2022)
	Pursuing the concept of 'territory' as an essential foundation of policymaking;	(Morgan, 2018)
	Aiding local and regional authorities to increase their capacity for effective place-based policymaking;	(Moodie, Salenius, & Wøien Meijer, 2022)
	Systematically foreseeing and assessing territorial impact when it is likely to be significant for local and regional communities;	(Moodie, Salenius, & Wøien Meijer, 2022) other
Place-based approach		

Active subsidiarity is...*		
	Integrating local and regional knowledge, ideas, and interests at all stages and arenas of the multi-level policymaking processes; fostering the constitution of knowledge in local networks;	(Moodie, Salenius, & Wøien Meijer, 2022) other
	Recognising that local and regional authorities are the level of governance closest to citizens, with the best understanding of territorial opportunities and threats;	(Moodie, Salenius, & Wøien Meijer, 2022)
	Taking mission-, and challenge-oriented policy initiatives;	(Wanzenböck & Frenken, 2020b) (Rabadjieva & Terstriep, 2020)
	Applying the active subsidiarity principle to strengthen transparency, inclusiveness and reinforce the democratic legitimacy of all levels of government, including the EU;	(Moodie, Salenius, & Wøien Meijer, 2022)
Deliberative democracy	Facilitating decentralized political dialogue between citizens and authorities at local, regional, national, and EU levels.	(Moodie, Salenius, & Wøien Meijer, 2022)
	Applying principles of experimental democracy, which facilitates learning from the comparison of alternative approaches, and relies on decision-making processes that are open, verifiable, experimental, and inclusive.	(Morgan, 2018) (Sabel & Zeitlin, 2012)

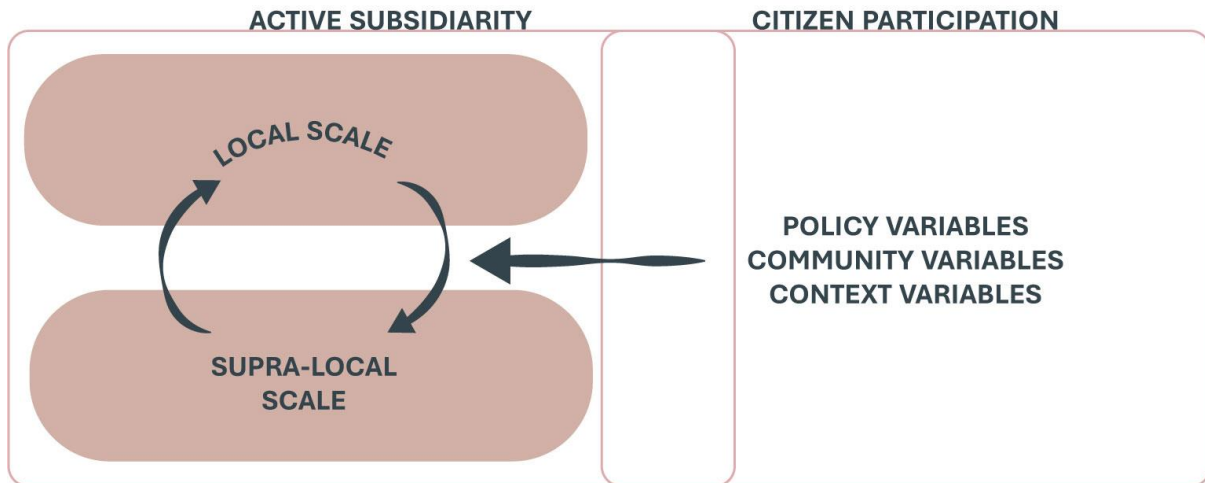
* Most principles are also established in European Committee of the Regions. Commission for Economic Policy. et al., (2020)

2.1.2. Citizen participation and active subsidiarity

Citizen participation plays a crucial role in active subsidiarity, infusing governance processes with inclusivity, transparency, and responsiveness to the pulse of communities. It entails treating citizens as partners in policymaking, fostering decentralized political dialogue, and fortifying transparency and inclusiveness. This collaborative approach not only promotes democratic governance but also bolsters the legitimacy of governing institutions while nurturing trust in the political system itself (see Figure 1). By actively involving citizens in decision-making processes, policymakers pave the way for more effective and responsive policies. These policies, enriched by diverse perspectives and attuned to local needs, embody the essence of

active subsidiarity. This approach contributes to the cultivation of a more inclusive and participatory democratic framework, where every voice is heard, and every community is empowered.

Figure 1 Conceptualizing the role of citizen participation in achieving active subsidiarity



Moesker & Pesch (2022) outline criteria for assessing successful participation within the procedural framework of the just transition concept, focusing on enabling inclusive stakeholder involvement and backing public engagement in a non-discriminatory manner. They emphasize symmetrical actor selection to ensure dialogue devoid of hierarchy, specific methods for selecting actors allowing adaptability to incorporate new knowledge, political legitimacy in the decision-making process, a fair platform for expressing concerns, and an upfront consensus on normative diversity as fundamental principles for public engagement processes.

Public participation, as intended by place-based policies like the JTM, hinges on clearly defined goals. Understanding these goals sheds light on the factors influencing citizen engagement (Van Tatenhove et al., 2010). For instance, while gathering data through surveys is valuable for understanding public opinion, it represents a passive form of participation. It doesn't necessarily empower citizens or involve them in the decision-making process. O'Faircheallaigh (2010), who studied public participation in Environmental Impact Assessment, distinguishes three main purposes. The first main purpose is to obtain public input for decisions by providing information, addressing information gaps, fostering contestability of information, and encouraging problem-solving and social learning. The second purpose is to share decision-making with the public, reflecting democratic principles and ensuring pluralist representation. The third purpose is to alter the distribution of power and decision-making structures by involving marginalized groups, shifting the locus of decision-making, and combatting the entrenchment of marginalization.

Ianniello et al. (2019) describe a series of factors found through a systematic review detailing sets of potential hurdles: contextual factors such as information disparities and attitudes of public officials, organizational structures particularly focused on criteria for community representation and process design, and patterns in process management including group dynamics and collaboration quality. As a result, a set of practical recommendations for bolstering successful citizen participation emerge. These include fostering long-term interaction, involving research participants, prioritizing diversity in participant selection, institutionalizing participation, employing diverse participatory methods, delineating clear rules

and mechanisms, establishing agreed-upon outcomes, engaging knowledgeable facilitators, avoiding hierarchical structures and bureaucratic processes, strategizing short-term gains within a long-term strategy, establishing collaborative networks with key institutions, utilizing diverse learning strategies that blend innovation with refinement, designing with sensitivity to context, and amplifying participants' goals and agendas.

Previously, Ryfe (2005), referenced by Ianniello, outlined four vital requirements for designing participatory processes: establishing rules promoting equality, civility, and inclusivity to institutionalize participation as a regular process; incorporating narratives to frame discussions effectively; defining stakes clearly, acknowledging that engagement thrives when individuals are invested in the outcome, and allowing room for learning and improvisation, recognizing that real contexts often spawn new skills and issues from complex yet guided activities.

Box 1 The risk of underestimating participation

Underestimating participation has adverse effects, as seen in Australia's handling of the just transition in Victoria's Latrobe Valley in 2012-2013 during the Gillard government's Clean Energy Future package. A committee driven by stakeholders veiled top-down decision-making, presenting a narrative of a seamless transition guided by market mechanisms. Yet, this approach sidelined local concerns, distorted issues, deepened local disempowerment, and redirected funds away from communities facing coal-fired power plant closures. This perception of injustice highlights the limitations of strategic framing in climate policy (Weller, 2019).

Building upon the categorizations by Lowndes et al. (2006) and Ianniello et al. (2019), the analytical dimension defines three types of variables — community, policy, and contextual — as independent factors that reveal what encourages or hinders citizen involvement in shaping and implementing sustainability transition policies (see Table 2). Community variables encompass crucial citizen traits such as collaboration skills, willingness to engage in decision-making, time availability, and trust in government. They differentiate between factors that classify citizens as 'unable' or 'unwilling' to participate. Policy variables encompass diverse elements associated with the attitudes and capacities of policymaking bodies, including how participatory processes are structured and executed—such as providing sufficient time and information to citizens and the intended impact of participation on policy decisions. Contextual variables consider location-specific cultural, political, and geographical factors, like the openness of the policy system, awareness of social sustainability, institutional thickness, hierarchical control at the national level, contentious policy issues, and physical distance. This framework assists DUST in evaluating what facilitates or obstructs inclusive governance in local sustainability transitions, as shown in the table below.

Table 2 Variables that facilitate or impede participation

Community variables		Policy variables	Contextual variables
Associated with 'being unable'	Associated with 'being unwilling'		
Lack of capacity (incl. technical knowledge and technological literacy); Lack of time; Cultural barriers; Social capital.	Lack of interest/apathy; Discontent and disillusionment with democracy; Lack of trust in government;	Technocratic, sectoral priorities; Disconnected 'top down' and 'bottom up' contributions;	Lack of civic capacity; Geographical distance; Low/high institutional thickness; (Culture of) Openness of the policy

	<p>Perception of powerlessness (incl. past experiences of non-recognition); Lack of self-confidence; Influential community representatives (not)willing to participate.</p>	<p>Capacity/Skills, staff, and sustainability of resources available at level of sub-national authorities; Public officials' attitudes; Asymmetries of power and knowledge/elite capture of the process; Regulatory overload; Procedural aspects related to the organisation & carrying out of the participatory/deliberative processes incl. timing; Communication (channels); selection of participants; Choice of mode of participation, (no) clarify how participation will feed into the policy process, etc.; Aspects related to the practice of deliberation and the product of deliberation.</p>	<p>system/embedded participatory governance; Strong control of the national level; (Lack of) Awareness of social sustainability; (Lack of) Practical guidance for justice and equity in sustainable development; Climate-change-sceptic political discourses and narratives; Contestation and conflict of transition related measures due to uncertainties or high interest in the issue;</p>
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Source: DUST D1.1

2.2. Instruments for assessing participation in MLG: The DUST toolbox

In DUST, WP2 and WP3 complement each other in the overarching goal of understanding and enhancing citizen participation in the multi-level governance (MLG) of sustainability transition initiatives. While WP2 focuses on investigating the "what" aspect, namely the depth and intensity of participation in policy design and implementation across MLG, WP3 delves into the "why" behind the variations observed in participation levels among different territories and communities. Conclusions presented in this report draw on utilizing the conceptual framework that was described in the previous chapter for an analysis of results that were gathered through the use of several tools and methods during the first stage of the DUST project. Tools and methods include documentary research, the Actor-Process-Event Schemes (APES) tool, as well as a population survey. How these methods and tools were applied in case study research is described in more detail below.

2.2.1. Case study research: Assessing factors conditioning deliberative participation

Within the DUST project, the main research methodology is case study research (see Table 3) in eight structurally weak regions heavily reliant on energy-intensive industries. Eight case study regions span Western, Northern, Central, and Southeastern Europe, encompassing five countries with varying degrees of democratic institutional maturity. This approach, of which initial steps were carried out between June-September 2023, reviews and assesses recent

experiences of citizen participation regarding key policies aimed at sustainability transitions. During the initial steps, the breadth and depth of participatory practices were evaluated, with particular attention paid to the arenas in which they unfold, their inclusivity, and their stage within the policy-making cycle. Predominantly grounded in documentary research, the methodology involved analysing policy reports on territorial strategies and participation, and academic literature. Observational data was also collected when case study partners directly engage in formulating place-based measures or participatory practices.

Table 3 Identified place-based measures in the case study regions

Case study region	EU Cohesion Policy	National regional policies & regional strategies	Innovation-oriented policies	Spatial planning measures
Katowicki region (PL)	Territorial Just Transition Plan of Silesia Voivodeship (TJTP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silesia Voivodeship Development Strategy (Silesia Strategy 2030) (RDS); • Social Agreement on the Transformation of the Hard Coal Mining Sector and Selected Transformation Processes in the Silesian Voivodeship (SA) 		
Belchatow area (PL)	Territorial Just Transition Plan of Lodzkie Voivodeship (TJTP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lodzkie Voivodeship Development Strategy (RDS) • Social Agreement on the Energy Sector and the Lignite Mining Industry (SA) 		
Groningen (NL)	Territorial Just Transition Plan of Groningen-Emmen (TJTP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regio Deal Oost-Groningen (RD) • National Programme Groningen (NPG) 		
Stara Zagora (BG)	Territorial Just Transition Plan of Stara Zagora district (oblast) (TJTP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Development Plan of Municipality of Stara Zagora/Gulabovo/Radnevo 2021 – 2027 (IDP) • District Development Strategy of Stara Zagora 2014-2020 • Integrated Territorial Development Strategy of Southeast Region (NUTS II) 2021-2027 (ITDSSR) 	National Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization 2021-27 (NIS3)	
Norrbottnen (SE)	Territorial Just Transition Plan of Norrbotten, (TJTP)	Energy and Climate Strategy for Gotland (ECS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Development Strategy Norrbotten 2030 (RDS) • Energy and Climate Strategy of Norrbotten (ECS) 	
Gotland (SE)	Territorial Just Transition Plan of Gotland, (TJTP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy and Climate Strategy for Gotland (ECS) • Regional Development Strategy Gotland 2040 (RDS) 		Comprehensive Strategic Plan for Gotland 2040 (CSP)
Lusatia (DE)	Just Transition Fund (JTF) / Territorial Just Transition Plan of Lusatia (TJTP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural Reinforcement Act for Mining Regions (StStG) • Lusatia Programme 2038 (LP 2038) • Lusatia Development Strategy 2050 (LDS 2050) 		
Rhenish District (DE)	Just Transition Fund (JTF) / Territorial Just Transition Plan (TJTP) Rhenish (Lignite) District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural Reinforcement Act for Mining Regions (StStG) • Economic and structural programme for the future Rhenish District (WSP) 		

Source: DUST 3.1

The assessment provided in DUST D3.1 delves into the complex territorial dynamics essential for effective place-based policies evaluation. It scrutinizes three pivotal characteristics: the territorial scope, highlighting the significance of functional connections over administrative delineations; the potential for multi-level governance, emphasizing the engagement of various governmental tiers; and the integration of themes and sectors. These criteria offer a comprehensive framework for assessing the efficacy and impact of place-based policies, acknowledging the intricate interplay between territorial dynamics and policy outcomes.

2.2.2. APES

The APES method examines the comprehensiveness and depth of participation and stakeholder engagement in just transition policy process. APES is a tried and tested software tool for tracing and mapping the participation of various actors in policy-related events over time (Widmer et

al., 2008). It is structured around three dimensions: 1) actors, 2) processes (which can encompass the entire policy cycle or specific stages within it—D2.3 focuses on the decision-making and policy implementation phases), and 3) events. These events explore how actors participate over time, ranging from information exchange between public administration and civil society to joining co-creation deliberations. Events are grouped into planning and implementation phases. Identifying actors, actor groups, and relevant policy events is crucial for conducting the APES analysis.

Incorporating the three components that constitute APES, Actor-Process-Event, three analytical dimensions serve as the framework:

- **Breadth of participation quantifies the participation per actor as well as per participation type throughout the entire policy process using quantitative and qualitative metrics for analysis.** It quantifies participation categorizing it into five-level intervals or node sizes where the largest represents the highest scale of participation. Additionally, it assesses participation qualitatively in a three-scale interval differentiated by three levels of brightness, where the darkest indicates the highest scale of participation.
- **Actor-actor centralities are established through eigenvector centrality analysis, which quantifies the influence of each actor within a network.** These centrality scores are then visualized in a target diagram, where nodes symbolizing actors are arranged according to their scores. Actors boasting higher centrality scores find themselves positioned closer to the diagram's centre, while those with lower scores are situated toward the outer edge.
- **Density of the network quantifies interactions between actors.** Using a matrix, it quantifies interactions between actors in the defined policy network, with each cell indicating connections. Network density is calculated by dividing actual connections by all possible connections.

2.2.3. DUST survey

The DUST survey embarks, amongst others, on an exploration of participatory attitudes, focusing notably on the EU's JTF-designated regions. Structured around three types of factors—community, policy, and contextual—the survey navigates through crucial aspects that hypothetically shape participatory attitudes. Community variables pertain to individual characteristics like skills, capacities, interests, and trust, influencing citizens as either 'unable' or 'unwilling' to participate. Policy variables encompass multiple factors associated with attitudes towards policymaking bodies, as well as factors related to how participatory processes should be organized and implemented, while contextual variables are specific to place, geography, and political factors. This conceptualization draws on the theoretical (D1.1) and methodological (D1.2) approaches previously outlined for the DUST project. The comprehensive framework aims not only to understand current attitudes but also to dissect the motivations, barriers, and preferences shaping civic participation across various societal dimensions.

The survey's dual structure facilitates granular subgroup analyses, comparing national samples against those from the JTF regions. This methodology illuminates potential variations influenced by geographical and economic contexts undergoing significant transition. The primary objective is to discern these nuanced variations in participatory attitudes, particularly among citizens residing in Just Transition Regions. Understanding these variations becomes instrumental in

comprehending the grassroots impacts of territorial policies, informing future participatory strategies, and shaping policy frameworks.

3. Barriers and opportunities for active subsidiarity in just transition policies

As outlined in the previous section, authors studying sustainability transitions commonly emphasize the importance of citizen participation in the transition processes. However, these processes often occur within highly challenging contextual settings for participation, resulting in enduring barriers to public engagement and hindering the emergence of active subsidiarity. The research conducted as part of DUST project's WP2 allows for the identification of barriers and opportunities for participation, with a particular focus on active subsidiarity and stakeholders' perspectives.

The incorporation of results in this section responds to the ongoing execution process of this project. Consequently, these results will undergo verification and integration in subsequent stages. The primary objective of this section is to furnish practical insights intended for the launch of a proposal for a policy perspective (D2.6). This proposal aims to stimulate participatory approaches in the decision-making process concerning multilevel governance engagement. Additionally, it aims to gauge the community perspective regarding attitudes associated with the transition itself, as well as the willingness and ability to engage in these processes.

3.1. Finding trends for active subsidiarity in the evidence

Identifying options for active subsidiarity within the policy-making process involves a deliberate exploration of avenues for empowerment local governance while fostering inclusivity, responsiveness, and effective decision-making. In this regard, three components have been identified that outline a framework from a policy perspective and are associated with the following questions:

- Where does participation happen?
- When does it happen?
- Who is participating?

The trends and analyses presented in this section, derived from the ongoing DUST workflow, aim to identify key drivers that help pinpoint factors influencing participation and, consequently, promote active subsidiarity. Collectively, the trends described here and the resulting analyses in the policy brief outlined in D2.6 will serve as inputs to promote the principle of active subsidiarity among stakeholders and communities as the factors influencing their participation are examined. Subsequently, ongoing analysis will contribute (D3.4) to a more complete assessment where results regarding the relationship between inclusive deliberative governance and contextual factors and features of participatory mechanisms will be synthesized.

3.1.1. Arenas for participation in participatory processes

Arenas for participation are the environments, spaces, or platforms where stakeholders can or have participated in a given process. APES nominates this element as "Types of Events" and based on D3.1, which identifies and assesses participatory processes across policy initiatives within case study regions, categorizes them based on participatory practices. Identifying possible events in the two assessed phases, decision-making and implementation, APES assigns a level of participation for each type of event as described in Table 4. Event conceptualization in APES establishes a framework adaptable to the diversity of governance contexts and place-based policy measures. However, it underscores that a particular event may align with one or several engagement levels.

Table 4 Event types and Participation levels in just sustainability transition initiatives

Decision making phase	
Participation level	Event types
Provision of information	Information day
Basic consultation	Resolution
Basic consultation to dialogue	Commission meeting, Expert talk
Dialogue	Committee hearing
Dialogue to engagement	Stakeholder and partner hearing
Engagement	
Engagement to partnership	Negotiations
Partnership	
Implementation phase	
Participation level	Event types
Provision of information	Information day
Basic consultation	
Basic consultation to dialogue	Technical workshops/Assistance
Dialogue	Committee Hearing
Dialogue to engagement	Community engagement initiative, Coordination meeting, Monitoring and performance review, Stakeholder and partner consultation
Engagement	
Engagement to partnershi	Compliance checks and audits, Resource allocation
Partnership	

Source: DUST D2.3

In DUST D3.1, a thorough examination of case studies sheds light on participatory processes within events. The table below offers a concise summary of the participatory mechanisms employed by each case study, categorized by the depth of engagement. Notably, the depth of participation does not progress as a constant cumulative process; rather, it seems to respond to predefined activities where stakeholders are planned/expected to intervene.

While direct comparisons across regions is challenging due to the adoption of diverse policy measures at different levels of government, identifying partnership levels in some instances illuminates the arenas of participation. These arenas showcase shared responsibilities between state and non-state actors, fostering a collaborative dynamic. Achieving the highest level of involvement at the partnership level often necessitates reliance on lower levels of engagement.

Table 5 Participatory processes by stage by case study

Participatory processes		Katowicki region (PL)	Belchatow (PL)	Stara Zagora (BG)	Lusatia (DE)	Rhenish (Lignite) District (DE)	Groningen (NL)	Norrbotten (SE)	Gotland (SE)
Basic consultation	Comment periods	Official consultation	Official consultation	Official consultation				Online access to materials for comments	Early web-based consultation on Comment period Public review
	Surveys Questionnaires	Questionnaire				Online questionnaire	Questionnaires Survey		
	Consultation meetings	Information meetings Meetings with trade unions	Information meetings Meetings with trade unions	Stakeholders' discussions Stakeholder consultation events Stakeholder meetings		Joint video conferences Revier Tours	Stakeholder meetings Mobile coffee cart		
	Interviews	In-depth interviews to collect expert opinion							
Dialogue	Public dialogue	Public hearing			Public discussions		Public conversations		Dialogue-based events
	Stakeholder dialogue	Social dialogue	Social dialogue	Social Policy Dialogue 'New energy mix' Dialogue meetings		ERDF Strategy Conference "Shaping the Future Funding Period Together" Talks Mining Area Conference		Dialogue with Sami community	
Engagement	Committees	Steering committee	Steering committee	A Cohesion Policy Selection Committee Regional Development Council		Cohesion Policy Monitoring Committee Cohesion Policy Working Group	Cohesion Policy Monitoring Committee		
	Workshops	Workshops organised to develop project proposals under the TJTP			Commission Thematic workshops	Commission Thematic workshops Regional thematic groups Citizens' vision workshop Talk group	Citizen workshops		
	Networking / project-building platform			BASE Business Academy	Citizen-led platform Bürgerregion Lusatia				
Partnership		Partnership participatory mechanisms applied			Partnership participatory mechanisms applied		Partnership participatory mechanisms applied		

Source: CSD based on DUST D3.1

3.1.1.1. Overall trends

Undoubtedly, all participatory processes allow a degree of stakeholder immersion assessed in the process and the product of transition policies, but only at the highest level is it possible to share responsibilities with citizens/stakeholders, engage in joint development of policy features, solutions, scenarios, or visions, and undertake collaborative decision-making. In the spectrum ranging from basic consultation to partnership relations, participation activities were developed across all levels of depth exclusively in the Katowicki region, representing one of the four cases where an effective partnership was identified. Conversely, the Lusatia case, while also attaining a level of partnership, primarily engaged in other participatory processes through dialogue and engagement.

In the Katowicki region, official consultations are mandated by legal regulations. Moreover, they employed fundamental consultation methods such as surveys, albeit infrequently used for

consultation, informational sessions that evolved into social dialogues, and specialized interviews with experts, unique to this particular case. The insights garnered from these consultations and discussions with stakeholders serve as pivotal inputs in the formulation of policies. Subsequently, these policies undergo validation through consensus-driven decisions made during engagements with various actors in committees, workshops, or networking events. The partnership level achieved in both Polish cases under Social Agreements can be seen as the outcomes of the rigorous negotiation processes, they entailed. These negotiations included collective bargaining sessions between the national government and trade unions concerning various aspects outlined in the document.

The opportunity to participate in various events and, perhaps, the depth of engagement in the case studies provided by DUST (see D2.3 and D3.1) is primarily linked to a single level of government, at least assuming an initiator/organizer role, while other levels of government and other stakeholders acted as guests. It is recognized that active subsidiarity seeks to streamline policy-making processes among levels of government, but it is also acknowledged that local governments are closest to citizens and can establish grounded linkages. Arenas of participation, as shown by analysis results in DUST so far, tend to be concentrated at regional government levels through events with a greater emphasis on basic consultation and dialogue. This indicates that the principle studied here is limited by the primitive organization in the construction of territorial policies. However, the two cases of Poland, Groningen, and Lusatia encourage hypotheses about the active role of citizens as partners in the construction of initiatives.

The use of collaborative participation methods in the assessed policy measures across the eight case study regions is somewhat limited. However, partnership is particularly notable in the Groningen and Lusatian cases, where participatory processes involve shared responsibility between governmental and non-governmental entities, fostering collaboration throughout various stages of the policy-making process. A diverse range of participatory mechanisms has been combined to facilitate the co-creation and co-production of sustainable transition measures among public authorities, stakeholders, and citizens.

In Groningen, citizen involvement in the *Toukomst* sub-programme, part of the National Programme Groningen (NPG), aims to encourage residential initiatives to develop projects for the programme. Funding from the NPG was allocated to develop project proposals submitted by citizens. Additionally, a citizens' panel was established to assess the project ideas and provide advice on their funding. The ideas put forward by citizens also form the basis for the 'Future Vision', which serves as a guiding principle for other NPG initiatives. The participatory process was managed and carried out by an urban design and landscape company (West 8).

In the Lusatian case, the approach to formulating the Development Strategy entrusted 50 volunteer authors from the region representing diverse sectors such as business, science, civil society, and public administration across different levels of government. This process was informed by various participatory mechanisms implemented under the project 'Workshop for Future Lusatia' between 2017 and 2020. The strategy aimed to ensure bottom-up creation, incorporating participatory instruments tailored to specific communities such as youth and ethnic minorities. The draft strategy underwent a multi-stage voting process involving approximately 100 regional representatives, district administrations, mayors, and institutional representatives.

Examining citizen involvement in Groningen and Lusatia reveals a shared trend, notably the rise of citizen-empowered participation arenas. In Groningen, residents drive project development

through proposals and influence program direction. Lusatia mirrors this by incorporating diverse citizen volunteers in strategy formulation, building on past community-tailored participation mechanisms. This shift signifies a move beyond pre-defined models, fostering participation arenas responsive to citizen needs and initiatives. Citizens are no longer merely consulted, but actively involved in shaping projects, strategies, and even the very structures for their engagement.

Box 2 Key findings on arenas for participation in participatory processes

The examined multi-governance participation arenas in Groningen and Lusatia demonstrate that shared responsibility between governmental and non-governmental entities fosters collaboration in policy-making processes. Analysis with the APES tool indicates that an increased variety of involvement levels, including co-creation elements like citizen panels or workshops, enhances interaction between governance levels and stakeholders. This aligns with research highlighting the benefits of high citizen participation in public service design. However, it's important to acknowledge limitations. APES primarily captures dynamics between formal stakeholders, limiting insights into representation of unaffiliated individuals. Additionally, while combining consultation, dialogue, and other methods can increase participation depth, it doesn't always guarantee true partnership or prevent national policies from becoming distanced from affected communities. APES itself can help identify stakeholder involvement and interaction, but it doesn't reveal the nature of these interactions (collaborative or conflictual) nor the participants' stance on the policy (supportive or contentious).

Table 6 Factors for active subsidiarity in arenas for participation

Barriers	Factors for active subsidiarity	Opportunities
Only one government level as organizer	MLG	Demonstrated active participation at sub-national levels (local, community, and functional area) indicates willingness of actors at these levels to lead participatory processes.
Local level of governance and communities usually play the same role or are treated as equal stakeholders	A Europe closer to citizens	Events at the local level are most likely to involve the community and community knowledge
Not viable if local communities are not identified with new participatory arenas	Place-based approach	The emergence of new participatory arenas around functional areas, bringing together different levels of government
Arenas for dialogue must cross boundaries between organizing and invited stakeholders	Deliberative democracy	Communities engage in territorial policies when they have a voice in the process, these are transparent. They become accountable and recognize chains of responsibility

Table 7 Factors influencing participation in identified arenas

Barriers	Factors for participation	Opportunities
Lack of interest may arise if community participation is limited to information. Discontent may also arise if organizers are unfamiliar with the community.	Community	Bottom-up experiences, like the ones documented in Groningen, build trust within communities, generate interest in shaping policies that affect their locality, and promote literacy in related topics
Policy technicalities create a barrier to the entry of participants who are unfamiliar with these processes.	Policy	Co-creation and co-design elements are methods of participation that increase the likeliness of engagement of various MLG actors. They create an environment for interaction between policy, community, and inclusive deliberation
Unfamiliarity with the context limits the recognition of participation arenas that have been tried and tested, successful, or discarded, as they may be overlooked in the search for new participation arenas.	Context	Communities understand their context, making it easier for them to identify arenas compared to external organizers

3.1.2. Stages for participation

Analysis of participatory tools should acknowledge the inherent complexity of policymaking, a multi-stage process with potentially varying participation levels across each phase. While policy development rarely follows a linear path, various models, as explored in DUST D3.1, attempt to organize it into manageable units for analysis. One such widely accepted typology describes the chronology as a series of stages, notably agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation.

As evident in Table 8, participatory tools are predominantly used in the stages ‘identification’ and ‘policy formulation’. In these stages they have played a crucial role in gathering knowledge and evidence concerning both territorial and sectoral contexts, with the aim of identifying the most pressing issues requiring resolution. This approach is emphasized in policy measures within various regions including Bełchatów, Katowicki, Stara Zagora, Rhenish District, Norrbotten, and Gotland. In the stage ‘policy formulation’, participatory mechanisms serve to collect insights into identified challenges, needs, opportunities, threats, and more. Some of these mechanisms serve a dual purpose, not only collecting views on existing issues but also revising the initial selection of priorities based on community feedback and evolving circumstances.

Participation in decision-making stages is limited, with participatory processes primarily involving the endorsement of measures. Identified participation in decision-making pertains to either the goals and provisions of strategic frameworks, or the specific solutions and investments supported under implementation programs. For instance, negotiation activities

under the Social Agreement in the Polish cases exemplify participation during decision-making stages. Another illustration is found in the Lusatian Development Strategies, where participants in four writing workshops determined the strategy's provisions. It is particularly during this stage of the policy cycle that partnership-based participatory processes become evident.

During the implementation stage, participatory mechanisms primarily aim to ensure or enhance effectiveness through coordination or other mechanisms for exchange between state and non-state actors, potentially across different levels. However, the inclusivity of these mechanisms is questionable, as they often replicate possibly non-inclusive power structures established during policy formulation. Few cases involved citizens in participatory processes aimed at collectively deploying concrete policy solutions (projects), despite their potential for involving diverse social groups and for tailoring actions to different territorial contexts. Evidence from the DUST case study regions indicates limited scope for citizen/stakeholder participation during the implementation phase, when relatively few participatory instruments are being utilized. Participatory instruments are also seldom employed in policy monitoring and evaluation stages. This indicates a missed opportunity to learn from various groups about, for instance, unintended policy effects, inequitable distribution of costs and benefits among social groups, and subsequently a need for policy adaptation.

Table 8 Participatory mechanisms across stages of the policy cycle.

Region	Issue identification and Policy formulation	Decision making	Implementation	Monitoring and Evaluation
Katowicki (PL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaire (RDS) Meetings with trade unions (SA) Information meetings (RDS; TJTP) Consultation period (RDS; TJTP) Steering committee (RDS; TJTP) Interviews (RDS) Workshops/meetings to develop transition projects (TJTP) Public hearing (TJTP) Working groups (SA) Meetings based on social dialogue (SA) Negotiation meetings (SA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering committee (Reg dev strategy; TJTP) Negotiation meetings (SA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering committee (RDS; TJTP) 	
Bełchatów (PL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings with trade unions (SA) Consultation period (Reg dev strategy; TJTP) Steering committee (Reg dev strategy; TJTP) Working groups (SA) Meetings based on social dialogue (SA) Negotiation meetings (SA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering committee (Reg dev strategy; TJTP) Negotiation meetings (SA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering committee (RDS; TJTP) 	
Groningen (NL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile coffee cart (Regio Deal) Consultation (TJTP) Online platform and physical events to collect project ideas (Toukomst) Public conversations & questionnaires (NPG) Workshops/town hall meetings (Regio Deal) Consultations (Regio Deal, JTF OP) Online meetings to bundle project ideas into clusters (Toukomst) Online and on-paper pre-evaluation of bundled project ideas (Toukomst) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizen panel for selection of projects (Toukomst) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual stakeholder meetings (Regio Deal) Consultations (Regio Deal) Expert committee (TJTP) Collaborative instruments for project building (TJTP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring committee (TJTP) Annual stakeholder meetings (Regio Deal)
Stara Zagora (BG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Development Council (ITDSSR 21-27) Stakeholder meetings (TJTP; NIS3 21-27) Consultation period (all measures) Regional Development Council (ITDSSR 21-27) Dialogue meetings (TJTP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selection committee (IDP 21-27) Regional Development Council (ITDSSR 21-27) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings to build territorial concepts (ITDSSR 21-27) BASE Business academy (NIS3 21-27) 	
Norrbottn (SE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Series of dialogue-based events (ECS; RDS) Comment period (RDS; ECS) Dialogue meetings with Sami Parliament (TJTP) 			
Gotland (SE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Series of dialogue-based events (ECS; CSP; RDS) Web-based consultation via sociotope mapping (CSP; RDS) Comment period (RDS; CSP; TJTP) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gotland Energy Dialogue (ECS) Collaboration groups (ECS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration groups (ECS)

Region	Issue identification and Policy formulation	Decision making	Implementation	Monitoring and Evaluation
Lusatia (DE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Series of public events (ERDF BB 21-27) Commission on growth, structural change and employment (StStG) Expert studies; roundtables and working meetings as part of the Workshop for future Lusatia (LP 2038) Citizen dialogues (LP 2038; RDS 2050) Joint conferences (RDS 2050) Conversations 'Lusatian treasures' (RDS 2050) Future bus /fabmobil/ (RDS 2050) Working & exchange meetings (TJTP) 4 writing workshops (RDS 2050) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring committee (ERDF BB 21-27) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thematic workshops (StStG) Platform 'Citizens' Region' Lusatia (StStG) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring committee (ERDF BB 21-27)
Rhenish District (DE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission on growth, structural change and employment (StStG) Revier Tours (WSP) Online questionnaire (TJTP) Monitoring Committee (TJTP) Working groups (JTF) Regional thematic groups (WSP) Workshops (WSP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Committee (JTF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Committee (JTF/TJTP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Committee (JTF/TJTP)

Source: CSD based on DUST D3.1

3.1.2.1. Overall trends

Analysing participatory tools across policy stages in the DUST project reveals a trend of diminishing citizen influence. While tools effectively gather local knowledge and inform priorities during **identification** and **policy formulation**, as seen in regions like Bełchatów, their impact weakens as the process unfolds. **Decision-making** often involves endorsing pre-defined options, with some exceptions like the Polish Social Agreement showcasing influence on goals. Partnership models are more prominent during this stage, but **implementation** remains a challenge for citizen involvement. Coordination tools exist, but their inclusivity is questionable, potentially replicating existing power structures. Few cases demonstrate citizen participation in deploying solutions. This trend extends to **monitoring and evaluation**, where limited use of participatory tools misses opportunities to learn from diverse groups about policy effectiveness and potential inequities. Notably, the Katowicki region stands out for balanced stakeholder representation during implementation. Overall, these findings highlight the need for more balanced participation throughout the policy cycle, ensuring inclusivity and tailoring solutions to local contexts. This could involve fostering stronger partnership models and developing mechanisms for citizen engagement in policy implementation and evaluation.

The analysis in DUST D3.1 reveals constraints on the uptake of participatory instruments in the monitoring and evaluation policy stage, with only a limited number of instruments identified. Notably, monitoring committees in Groningen, Lusatia, and the Rhenish District serve as prominent mechanisms, representing formal participatory structures focused on monitoring the operation of policy measures throughout their life cycle. In Groningen, for instance, an annual stakeholder meeting serves as a platform to gather evidence feeding into the evaluation process.

According to DUST D2.3, the case study of the Katowicki region highlights significant opportunities for participation. These opportunities primarily stem from the public sector, with noticeable involvement from civil society and, to a lesser extent, the private sector during the decision-making phase. However, during the implementation phase, all actors were relatively equally represented, indicating a balanced distribution of responsibilities and engagement. A clear pattern emerges, emphasizing the dominant role of government departments at varying levels in steering the participatory processes. This trend is initially observed in the context of the Structural Reinforcement Act for Mining Regions (StStG) in Germany and the RUS 2030 in Sweden. In both cases, engagement strategies reflect national administrative structures and political cultures. The German federal system's preference for national-level policy initiation

contrasts with the Swedish model, which often grants authority to regional authorities, particularly in matters of regional development.

Box 3 Key findings on stages for participation

Analysis of stakeholder participation across policy stages reveals an imbalance. Early involvement, while crucial for gathering sectoral knowledge, often overlooks broader public concerns. Policy formulation utilizes various instruments, some merely gauging opinion on pre-defined options, while others offer limited debate. Decision-making offers limited stakeholder influence, and implementation focuses on coordination with questionable inclusivity. The rare use of participatory tools in monitoring and evaluation misses opportunities for diverse feedback on policy effectiveness. This highlights the need for a more balanced approach throughout the entire cycle, ensuring mechanisms that empower stakeholders to contribute meaningfully across all stages, from gathering public concerns to co-creating solutions and evaluating impact.

Table 9 Factors for active subsidiarity in stages for participation

Barriers	Factors for active subsidiarity	Opportunities
Policy measures and participatory instruments are usually not designed for the interaction between different levels of governance throughout the stages of policy-making	Multi-Level Governance (MLG)	Implementation and Policy monitoring/evaluation stages, where participation is more limited, can integrate various governance levels for interaction, verification, or approval of participatory outcomes
Local/community levels are extensively included in Identification and Policy formulation stages, but their engagement decreases significantly in other stages.	A Europe closer to citizens	Citizens involved in the first policy stages should be included in the later stages, especially when their ideas, proposals, and demands are included at an early stage
Some stages of the policy process have limited scope for citizen/stakeholder participation as they are technical and exclusive, oriented towards only one level of governance.	Place-based approach	By fostering innovative tools for stakeholder participation throughout the entire policy cycle, a place-based approach can leverage local knowledge, inform decision-making, and ensure solutions truly reflect the unique needs and interests of each place
Monitoring committees along the policy stages do not guarantee decentralized policy dialogue.	Deliberative democracy	Tools such as thematic workshops or collaboration groups in advanced stages of the policy process should be regularly used to strengthen transparency, inclusivity, and community legitimacy

Table 10 Factors for participation in identified stages

Barriers	Factors for participation	Opportunities
The domination of policy stages by a select few stakeholders can erode community trust by excluding direct participation and fostering a sense of disenfranchisement.	Community	Defining roles for community actors throughout several or all policy stages can encourage these actors to actively engage in bottom-up initiatives
Stages in the policy cycle still tend to respond to EU requirements to obtain financing	Policy	Community, local, and regional levels of governance have the opportunity to internally organize and determine which stages of participation they should engage in. Thus, authorities at national and international governance levels allow other actors to participate and organize policy according to their local organizational features.
Public authorities organizing participation along stages prioritize institutional/formal structures without considering the contexts of territorial policy actions	Context	Community trust in each stage of territorial policy increases if their context is considered into the dynamics of each public policy stage

3.1.3. Actor networks for participation

As a central axis in the evaluation of participation processes, stakeholders or "Actors" constitute the third component in APES's analytical framework, providing valuable insights into the integration of actors or entire actor groups into just transition policies. APES identifies various actors in the policy process, categorized by governance levels (e.g., international, federal, regional, municipal) and organizational spheres (e.g., public, private, civil society).

Interactions among actors, regardless of their supportive or opposing contributions to the transition policies they engage with, are suitable for analysis and evaluation as they provide insights for constructing such policies. APES documents these stakeholder interactions graphically and quantitatively (find case study figures in DUST 2.3).

In the case of Stara Zagora region, the dominance of national governmental bodies in the spectrum of stakeholders stands out. They serve as architects of regulatory frameworks and decision-makers, further highlighted by their central position in the policy networks. While there is some shared influence from regional and municipal governments suggesting intermediary relationships, this hierarchical depiction underscores the pronounced dominance of national government bodies in both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of participation due to TJTP characteristics. In contrast, for the Structural Reinforcement Act for Coal Regions in the Lusatian Lignite district, the private sector emerged as the most active during the implementation phase, while the regional government predominated in the decision-making stage. The private sector participated in 33% of the participatory processes associated with the StStG. However, concerning multi-level governance, a near-centrality of the national government with regional and municipal entities was observed.

In the Rhenish lignite district, APES showcases a comprehensive approach within the StStG framework, with civil society playing a notably proactive role in policy execution. The active involvement of civil society is characterized by a variety of organizations and stakeholders. This significance primarily arises from assigning duties to the regional development agency, tasked with spearheading the region's economic, social, and environmental makeover. With the responsibility for guiding participatory and consultative efforts during the StStG's implementation in the Rhenish Lignite district, this agency holds a pivotal position.

In Groningen, public sector organizations demonstrated notable activity in the NPG, participating in over 43% of all events and often assuming leadership or active roles. Despite the underrepresentation of municipal actors in this case, APES methodology highlights regional actors as the most engaged. From the perspective of non-state actors, the analysis reveals a significant involvement of civil society, particularly individual residents, in implementing the NPG. This suggests that the NPG leans towards a more focused and community-oriented engagement approach, prioritizing the voices of ordinary citizens alongside technical experts and industrial entities.

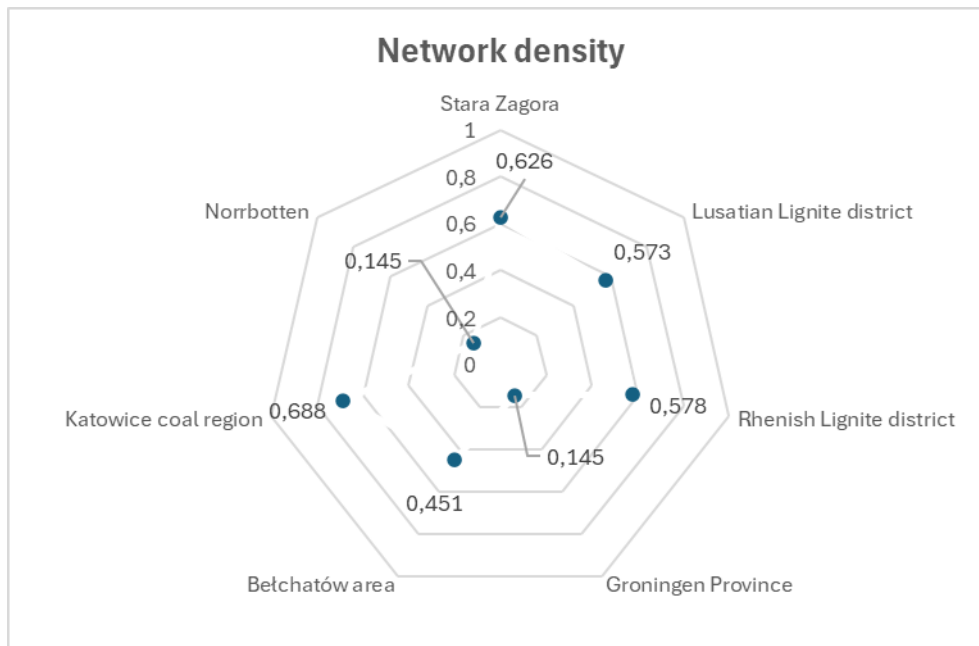
In Bełchatów, the public sector, especially government departments, plays a dominant role throughout the policymaking phase. They actively participate in half of all events and take leadership roles in over 24% of cases, emphasizing their pivotal role in orchestrating participatory processes for the TJTP in the Łódzkie region. However, this dominance diminishes notably during policy implementation (at an early stage when assessed by DUST D2.3), with no specific stakeholder emerging prominently. The actor-actor centrality score diagram (see DUST D3.1) highlights the significant roles of government departments, particularly at the regional and federal levels, exhibiting substantial eigenvector centrality values: regional government bodies at 19.1% and federal bodies at 16.82%. The integration of civil society entities into the TJTP's policy network is somewhat limited, with only a few specific organizations having a notable presence.

Similarly, in the Silesian Voivodeship, the drafting phase of the regional TJTP in Katowice was primarily led by regional government bodies, echoing the dynamics observed in the Łódź Voivodeship. Non-state actors' involvement in the TJTPs reveals significant participation from the voluntary sector and, to a lesser extent, the private sector. This active engagement likely results from the diverse presence of various societal groups and several private enterprises contributing to the process.

In the Norrbotten region, the policymaking process demonstrates a robust and inclusive engagement strategy involving various societal actors. The public sector leads this approach, participating in over 78% of all events, with government departments assuming a primary role (especially regional and municipal bodies). The actor-actor centrality target diagram (refer to DUST D3.1) highlights a significant concentration of influence among government departments and agencies. Specifically, APES emphasizes the dominant role of regional government bodies, which boast the highest eigenvector centrality scores at 27.25%. Municipal government bodies, primarily represented by the association of municipalities 'Norrbottens Kommuner', hold the second-highest centrality score at 22.9%, indicating their considerable influence on the development of the RUS 2030. Other stakeholders demonstrate lower centrality scores, suggesting their lesser influence in shaping the RUS 2030.

3.1.3.1. Overall trends

Figure 2 Network density in seven regional case studies



Source: DUST D2.3

The overall density of policy networks using the APES actor-actor matrix, shows the number of ties between actors, indicating network cohesion. Higher density (closer to 1) suggests tightly interconnected structures with strong ties among corporate actors, while lower density (closer to 0) indicates more fragmented or decentralized networks with fewer connections.

Katowice emerges as a distinct case with notably high network density, approximately 0.688. This signifies a robust level of interconnections and interactions among diverse actors within the TJTP framework. The high density underscores a deeply interconnected environment, fostering extensive stakeholder participation and facilitating profound engagement in policymaking discussions. Further examination of the APES actor-actor weighted matrix unveils intricate patterns of interaction among various sectors, particularly with the public sector demonstrating extensive intersectoral connections with the private sector and civil society. Such comprehensive engagement enhances the depth and breadth of stakeholder involvement, enriching the policymaking process within the Katowice region.

In Stara Zagora, the analysis of the actor-actor matrix uncovers a network density estimate of around 0.6266, emphasizing a moderately interconnected policy network. This density suggests a closely intertwined structure where a significant majority of actors maintain direct links, fostering robust collaboration and communication among stakeholders. Similarly, in Rhenish, despite the absence of clear leadership, the actor-actor matrix indicates a density of approximately 0.578. This finding implies a dense policy network where nearly 58% of all possible connections among actors exist, underscoring substantial connectivity among stakeholders. Such interconnectivity may facilitate cohesive decision-making processes and promote effective coordination in managing the coal transition within the Rhenish Lignite district.

In contrast, a core-periphery network structure prevails in Groningen, characterized by a network density of approximately 0.145. This relatively low level of connectivity suggests limited interaction among entities involved in the NPG, posing challenges to fostering collaboration across sectors. Similarly, in Norrbotten, a sparse network emerges with a density of approximately 0.145, indicating restricted interactions between stakeholders. This may suggest certain voices or perspectives are marginalized in decision-making processes, despite public entities driving the policymaking process. The APES analysis of the RUS 2030 in Norrbotten further highlights the dominance of public entities, fostering strong ties among regional administrative bodies and municipal offices, potentially contributing to the sparse network dynamics observed in this region.

Box 4 Key findings on actor networks for participation

Sustainability transition policies often exhibit limitations regarding opportunities for active subsidiarity. The TJTPs, for instance, emphasize a central role for national-level public actors during the policy-making stages. While the implementation of policies allows participation from all societal domains in theory, there are only few non-governmental actors who gain prominence in the process in practice. These are usually private organizations. With few exceptions, such as the Dutch NPG, policy measures lean towards a technocratic approach, economic focus, and corporatism, and thus are exclusive in terms of governance. However, there is also limited interaction between community stakeholders and other actors, as estimated by APES for Groningen. A hesitation of communities reaching out may constrain bottom-up interaction and jeopardize subsequent implementation phases.

Table 11 Factors for active subsidiarity in actor networks for participation

Barriers	Factors for active subsidiarity	Opportunities
Stakeholders leading policy processes, typically the public and regional bodies, dominate the process	Multi-Level Governance (MLG)	As territorial policies are meant to be focused regionally and locally, national and European level policy process should allow lower levels to interact among themselves and with non-governmental bodies to create synergies
Local decision-makers sometimes overlook valuable local knowledge during policymaking if they perceive it as not directly relevant to the needs and concerns of the local communities	A Europe closer to citizens	Although lower network density does not determine the success of participation processes, engagement of a wider set of stakeholders, especially non-governmental ones, increases legitimacy of transition policies by giving communities a strong representation
The decision-making phase is not always informed by place-based considerations when the objectives and roles of potential	Place-based approach	Although the leading position is limited to a specific level of public administration, local and regional inclusion of authorities would allow for the integration of ideas

stakeholders are not properly defined		and knowledge into multi-level policymaking processes
High degree of centrality of diverse stakeholders is not sufficient to ensure high quality of deliberative democracy	Deliberative democracy	Inclusion of actors at the local and regional levels will enhance assessment and recommendation actions that promote activities of democratic deliberation, such as continuous dialogue in policy construction for transition. This approach ensures more transparency and inclusiveness

Table 12 Factors for participation in actor networks for participation

Barriers	Factors for participation	Opportunities
Inclusion of the community in the policy process is not sufficient, as its members may lack knowledge of the topics discussed or the ability to react to them	Community	The inclusion of communities, especially LECs, is an opportunity for transformative education to address complex issues in ways that profoundly and enduringly transform these same communities. Changing patterns of disinterest and discontent involves including communities or, at the very least, offering them the opportunity to be included
High centrality of national and territorial government bodies hinders connecting top-down and bottom-up contributions	Policy	Active subsidiarity could help break power asymmetries in policymaking for sustainability transition, provided that stakeholders take active roles in the policy process instead of being merely spectators
Local, community, and administrative level actors lack incentives to demand measures that enable greater participation	Context	Understanding the context ultimately involves knowing in more detail what discourages or motivates actors in a particular community to participate

3.2. Opportunities and barriers for promoting active subsidiarity: the community perspective

In alignment with the preceding section, the community perspective aims to focus on findings and propositions outlined in the DUST survey (D2.2), which provides insights into the citizens views on participation in just sustainability transitions across the countries and regions under

study. This component of the DUST research, still being developed at the time of writing of this section, adds to the insights produced through APES and desk research (D2.3, D3.1), and provides new insights on the factors shaping participation identified in previous literature. To achieve this, the survey intends to investigate the national context and the regions where territorial just sustainability transition policies are being implemented. Elements indicating citizens' positions regarding public institutions, public policies, and participation processes are essential for describing citizens' determination to promote active subsidiarity and they must be supported by the contextual information that the survey intends to provide.

With the deepening of research in further stages of DUST, the partial results presented here may make more sense in identifying other barriers and opportunities that have not yet been addressed, as well as complementing or challenging the opportunities and barriers to promoting active subsidiarity if the evidence warrants it. Expected results after media analysis in each country case may complement this section to describe the community perspective. Therefore, this section aims to be an "open question" focusing on citizens' perspectives toward participation that can be resolved during the course of other activities.

3.2.1. Communities and their involvement in participatory processes

Identifying communities within participatory processes is a foundational step towards fostering inclusive decision-making and ensuring that diverse voices are heard and represented. These communities encompass a wide array of stakeholders, ranging from governmental and non-governmental institutions to organizations representing civil society, economic and social partners, research institutions, and professional associations. The recognition of these communities is vital for understanding the multifaceted dimensions of issues at hand and for tailoring policies and initiatives that resonate with the needs and aspirations of different societal groups. Moreover, community identification facilitates the establishment of structured participatory mechanisms, such as committees and working groups, which provide platforms for meaningful engagement and collaboration among stakeholders.

However, despite the intention to ensure representation, participation in participatory processes may exhibit disparities in the involvement of specific social groups. In the case studies examined by DUST (D3.1), participation in policies related to fossil fuels phase-out, market, and energy transition tends to be dominated by experts, sector professionals, trade unions representing coal mine workers, and the private sector, while representation from actors representing citizens or communities, such as civil society organizations (CSOs)/NGOs focused on ethnic minorities and gender equality, is often weaker or absent. Challenges in determining the most affected and eligible sectors and communities for policy support, tensions between targeting directly affected actors and addressing existing regional characteristics and socio-economic statuses, and varying capacities of organized civil society and professional associations across regions contribute to these disparities.

The status and conditions for communities and their involvement in participatory processes underscore the significance of engagement as a conduit for generating ground-level information and fostering consensual decision-making. Committees have emerged as pivotal arenas where stakeholders and civil society organizations contribute to issue identification, resource allocation, and progress monitoring. These committees provide structured platforms where community members can actively participate in decision-making processes, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their concerns addressed. Nevertheless, the extent of stakeholder

participation can be constrained by procedural and regulatory limitations, which may hinder the full inclusion of diverse perspectives. While workshops offer opportunities for intensified engagement, they sometimes prioritize participants with technical expertise, potentially excluding voices from marginalized communities. However, efforts are underway to incorporate perspectives from citizens and communities, fostering territorial-based contributions and promoting a more inclusive decision-making process within these committees.

Instances of citizens taking part in participatory processes aimed at collective decision-making regarding resource allocation remain scarce, indicating potential limitations in involving diverse social groups and tailoring actions to varied social contexts. Although participatory mechanisms at the local level exist under domestic regional policies or contractual agreements, their integration is limited. This gap may signify broader challenges in cultivating a culture of citizen and community engagement in policymaking, particularly within contested domains like sustainability transitions.

Emerging insights shed light on factors facilitating or hindering the involvement of marginalized or less engaged communities in place-based transition initiatives. The capacity and resource constraints faced by the LEC hinder their active participation, despite their inherent interest. Moreover, entrenched 'top-down' dynamics and the retention of decision-making authority at higher governmental levels limit the delegation of policy responsibilities and impede civic engagement. The challenge for policymakers lies in defining key stakeholders and partners, which often leads to the exclusion of certain social groups from sustainability transition measures. While efforts have been made to broaden participation criteria, these may not ensure equitable representation, resulting in the dominance of narrow actor groups and limited involvement of civil society organizations and citizens in shaping sustainability policies.

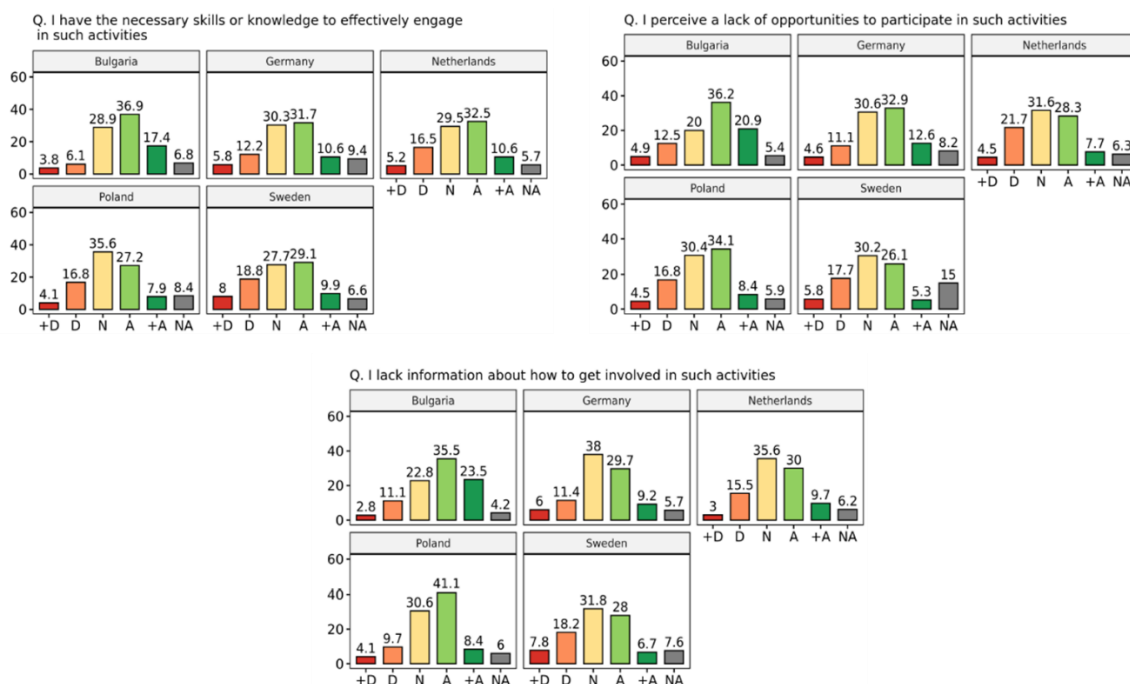
In Sweden, mechanisms for direct citizen involvement, termed *medborgardialog* (citizen dialogue), are distinguished from processes targeting formal and non-formal organizations and interest groups, known as *samverkan* (cooperation). While *samverkan* dominates to ensure public participation in Sweden's representative democracy, *medborgardialog* was formally introduced in response to declining political party memberships, lower voter turnout, and reduced trust in politicians over the last 15 years. Public participation mechanisms involving citizens are noted across DUST cases, particularly in Groningen, Lusatia, the Rhenish district, and Gotland. In Groningen, citizen participation shaped residential and municipal initiatives, while in Lusatia, it contributed to strategy-oriented regional measures. The Rhenish district utilized public participation instruments to assess formal participatory mechanisms. Notably, citizen dialogues, such as that in Lusatia, involved collaboration with municipalities to invite people directly through weighted random selection or quotas based on age, gender, and postal code, complemented by professional occupation. However, challenges persist, such as achieving desired sample sizes, as seen in Lusatia's low response rate prompting additional calls for participation via press and social media. Sustaining citizens' interest through consecutive stages of participatory processes, as evidenced by Groningen's *Toukomst*, also proves challenging.

3.2.2. Willingness and ability to participate

An initial analysis of the data, which was acquired via the DUST citizen survey in Task 2.2, provides insight into citizens' willingness and ability (or motivational and practical barriers) to participate in policymaking. It is important to note that results are preliminary.

The general results of the ability sub-module in the DUST survey, which was answered by 9,543 respondents in 5 countries, indicate that a significant portion of respondents feel they have the necessary skills and knowledge to participate, with 31.08% agreeing and 10.458% strongly agreeing. However, there is also a notable percentage who perceive a lack of opportunities to participate, with 31.353% agreeing and 9.557% strongly agreeing. Additionally, a considerable proportion of respondents feel they lack information about how to get involved, with 32.275% being neutral and 32.904% agreeing. This suggests that while some individuals feel confident in their abilities and understanding of technical language, there are still barriers and challenges that may prevent them from fully participating. Addressing these issues could help improve overall participation rates and engagement within the community. Moreover, it is essential to note that the distribution by countries may vary, as observed in the graphs below.

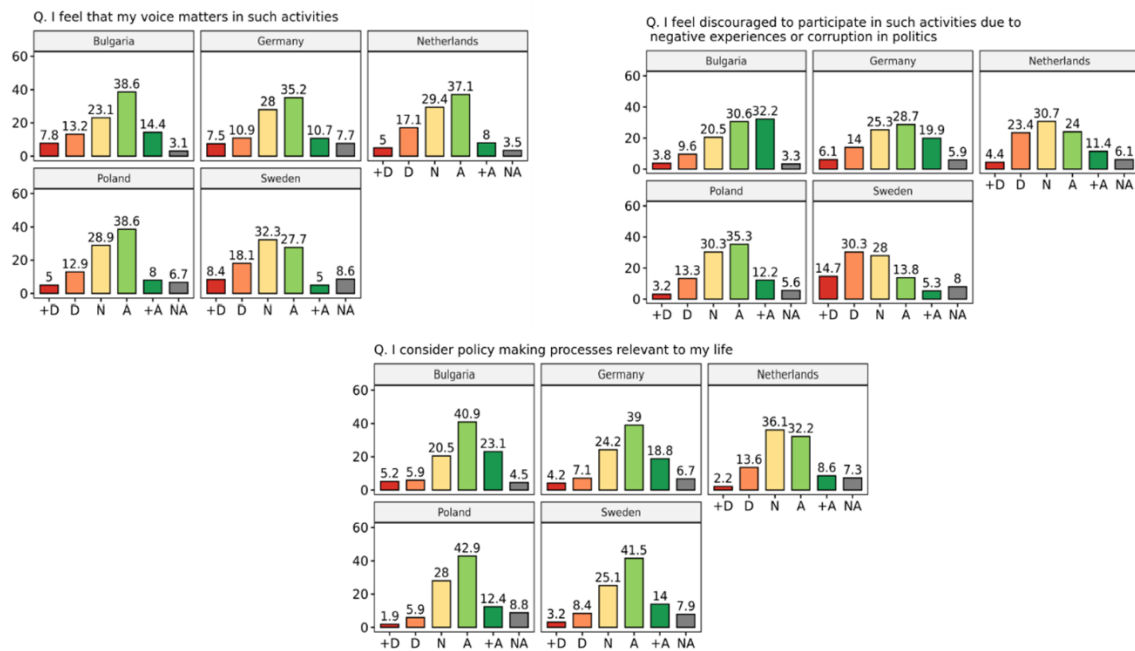
Figure 3 The 'ability' subset in DUST survey



Source: DUST 2.2 (preliminary results)

The data reveals varying perceptions among respondents regarding their willingness to participate in political processes. A significant percentage believe that their voice matters and that political institutions are responsive, indicating a strong belief in the importance of individual voices and the responsiveness of political institutions. However, a notable portion of respondents feel discouraged due to negative experiences, which may affect their participation. On the other hand, there is a consensus on the relevance of policy-making processes and a level of confidence in the approval of most people in their community, suggesting a belief in the importance of policymaking and community support. Overall, the data highlights a complex interplay of beliefs and experiences that shape individuals' willingness to engage in political activities.

Figure 4 The 'willingness' subset in DUST survey



Source: DUST 2.2 (preliminary results)

In exploring the LEC within the JTF regions, several crucial factors emerge regarding individuals' abilities, initial barriers such as access to information or opportunities, and negative perceptions toward engagement or participation with public institutions. Logistic regressions derived from survey data shed light on contextual elements that may prompt the activation of the principle of active subsidiarity or could be better addressed in the formulation of transitional territorial policies. These regressions serve as valuable tools in deciphering the nuanced dynamics of community engagement, thereby informing more targeted and effective policy interventions to foster inclusive participation and empowerment within these marginalized communities.

In the JTF regions in Bulgaria, a lower level of education is more likely to explain individual abilities to effectively engage in participation. Additionally, belonging to the age group over 40 is also associated with a significant increase in the perception of individual abilities. Respondents with high civic commitment and electoral behaviour also showed a low probability of having a low perception of individual abilities. Higher civic engagement is associated with a significant decrease in the likelihood of having negative perceptions, suggesting that civic engagement may have a constructive effect against negative perceptions. Trust also plays a crucial role, as a significant decrease in the likelihood of having negative perceptions is observed among those with higher levels of trust.

In contrast, in the JTF regions in Germany, gender is significant in explaining the perception of internal abilities, as the perception of economic difficulties could explain the initial barriers to accessing information or opportunities. However, civic engagement and trust would explain the negative perception of engaging in participation similar to the JTF regions in Bulgaria. In other cases, there are undoubtedly patterns that repeat in certain variables such as low education level, age, economic difficulties, civic engagement, and electoral behaviour.

4. Summary

Active subsidiarity is recognized as crucial for effective public participation in EU decision-making, democratic accountability, and just sustainability transitions, as envisioned in the EU Green Deal. Previous studies highlight that effective active subsidiarity relies on continuous negotiation among stakeholders, going beyond rigid legal frameworks at higher governance levels. This dynamic approach prioritizes collective commitment over standardized regulations, fostering partnerships between central and local governments, private sectors, and civic associations. Policy evaluation extends beyond theory, requiring the practical integration of lessons learned into local contexts. This necessitates continuous collective efforts that define commitment through evolving philosophies rooted in on-the-ground participation and experience-based adaptation.

Analytical findings from DUST research in the first year of the project, which are collected in this report, indicate that in cases where the primary level of governance is concentrated at the national government (Stara Zagora, Lusatian district, Rhenish district), the depth level of engagement tends to be dense, indicating strong interconnectedness among participants, while the breadth of participation typically narrows to industrial and scientific activity. Other cases where governance levels are balanced (Groningen), decentralized among lower levels (Silesian region), or focused on the regional level (Norrbotten county), tend to register varying levels of depth and have a more inclusive breadth of stakeholder engagement or focus on local communities. It is important to note, however, that this association of intermediate and balanced governance levels may vary due to specificities of local contexts.

The implementation of active subsidiarity in multi-level just sustainability transition policies demands a reassessment of governance structures and practices (Rabadjieva & Terstriep, 2020). It entails providing resources, capacity-building, and support to local authorities and communities, empowering them to actively participate in decision-making processes. Additionally, it calls for establishing mechanisms for effective communication, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing among different governance levels (Raunio, 2010). The exploration of options for active subsidiarity is closely tied to the complex factors that shape and influence participation within governance structures. This symbiotic relationship creates a circular narrative within the literature review, where the examination of active subsidiarity sheds light on factors determining participation while understanding the role of participative dynamics in the just sustainable transition context informs potential avenues for active subsidiarity.

Analysis of case studies reveals a key challenge in achieving multi-level governance for just transition policies: the limitations of current community participation efforts. While communities participate when called upon, the channels available are often restricted to communication and information gathering. This fails to harness the full potential of stakeholder skills and willingness to participate. The culprit seems to be the rigidity of existing governance structures, which limit opportunities for active subsidiarity. In essence, true active subsidiarity thrives on genuine stakeholder participation, which is currently hindered by these governance rigidities.

Identifying options for 'active subsidiarity' within the policy-making process involves a deliberate exploration of avenues that empower local governance while fostering inclusivity, responsiveness, and effective decision-making. Based on preliminary results of the research toolbox employed by DUST, options for active subsidiarity were identified, focusing on three

broad questions: “Where does it happen?”, “When does it happen?”, and “Who is participating?”. A summary of the findings is presented below.

Table 13 Barriers and opportunities for active subsidiarity in summary

Barrier / opportunity for active subsidiarity	What it means in practice	Policy-relevant implications
Opportunity	Variety of arenas and participatory increases favourable conditions for active subsidiarity.	Regions that combine two or more of these methods report higher likelihood of the emergence of active subsidiarity in participation.
	Co-production, co-creation, and co-design instruments can foster active subsidiarity.	Regions that implemented a co-creation element to their methods for participation, e.g., incorporating a citizen panels or workshops, were more likely to engage various types of multi-level governance actors and creating an environment for interplay between policy, community, and inclusive deliberation.
	More dynamic participatory instruments used throughout the policy-making process can foster active subsidiarity.	The inclusion of more dynamic instruments, such as negotiation activities under the Social Agreement in the two Polish cases during the decision-making phase, or the annual stakeholder meeting used in the Groningen case as a platform to collect evidence for the evaluation process, can boost inclusivity and participation, making just transition policies seem “less distant”.
	Good alignment of structures and arenas for participation with multi-level institutionalized arenas for decision-making.	Preliminary evaluation and planning of appropriate arenas for participation, as well as their multi-level governance aspects, can provide effective avenues for practicing active subsidiarity and implementation of the partnership principle. Effective active subsidiarity might lead to decisions being made at the level most competent to carry them out, within the context of a broader cooperative network that pools resources and experiences.
	Taking into consideration communities’ willingness and ability to participate can increase active subsidiarity.	The role of awareness raising and capacity-building initiatives to support participation of communities in transition measures is instrumental to effective just transition measures, as communication with LEC can be tailored to social, economic and political region-specific characteristics that can be accounted for in the different stages.
Barrier	Involvement focused on primarily formal stakeholders might preclude vulnerable groups from participating.	Variety of arenas and participatory processes do not guarantee better inclusion of specific social groups and communities. Entities such as government bodies, private sector firms, and civil society organizations can engage well with one another, however this does not guarantee effective

		participation of individual citizens. The emphasis on formal stakeholders precludes us from making a conclusion as to how certain social groups, often being unaffiliated individuals, are represented within the different arenas used in the case studies.
	Unequal distribution of decision-making power can potentially prevent citizens from engaging in further stages of policymaking.	The distribution of decision-making power, implementation, and evaluation risks merely replicating mechanisms from the identification and formulation stages, thereby potentially preventing citizens from engaging in further stages.
	Persistence of 'top down' dynamics in place-based measures constrain bottom-up interaction and jeopardize participation in subsequent implementation phases.	Top-down dynamics, where responsibility lies for deciding which stakeholders and communities are prioritized in just transition measures, preclude citizen participation and can hamper active subsidiarity through a decreased likelihood to establish effective partnerships within multiple levels of government and within multiple types of formal stakeholders (NGOs, trade unions, etc.).

Given that all the policies scrutinized in the case studies maintain a distinct territorial focus, it is reasonable to assume that territorial participation forms a pivotal framework in circumventing obstacles and harnessing the opportunities presented by the embrace of the active subsidiarity principle throughout the formulation of public policies. By delving into territorial levels and substrata, it becomes imperative to meticulously study and comprehend the context within which each of these public policy endeavours transpire. Within these territorial domains, the cultivation of knowledge concerning participation may be linked to various actors and stakeholders. Acknowledging the existence of participation arenas that vary across the case studies, these arenas and their occupants warrant special attention for the communal construction of knowledge in participatory activities.

Nevertheless, it is also prudent to acknowledge that not all communities and stakeholders within the territories are afforded equal opportunities for participation. LECs in the identified territories face even more formidable barriers that hinder their access to democratic participation mechanisms. While democratic participation levels may be perceived as superfluous or inconsequential, other factors tailored to their daily realities may hold more sway, such as the perception of a dearth of economic resources, the proliferation of channels of misinformation, and a persistent mistrust in territorial entities. In the forthcoming deliverables of DUST, which are framed within qualitative methodologies such as focus groups, interviews, and media analysis, it will be feasible to acquire insights that delineate the outcomes of the tools advocated in WP2.

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