Competences
and networks
for Environmental
Integration
and for the Improvement
of Public Administration
Organizations

Charter of Principles for Transparency and Participation in Environmental Assessments

LQS1 - Environmental Assessments
Actions to improve the efficacy of SEA
and EIA processes for programmes,
plans and projects

AQS1.4 "Transparency and Participation"

INFORMATION BROCHURE

CReIAMO PA
Per un cambiamento sostenibile

Charter of Principles for Transparency and Participation in Environmental Assessments

CReIAMO PA project - LQS1 *"Environmental Assessments - Actions to improve the efficacy of SEA and EIA processes for programmes, plans and projects"*, set out a specific project activity – AQS1.4 – dedicated to *"Transparency and Participation"*; to this end, it promoted a Charter of Principles for Transparency and Participation in Environmental Assessments.

The Charter of Principles is the result of a sharing process started with the "Transparency and Participation in Environmental Assessment" workshop, held in Rome on 20 September 2018, which introduced the subject of Transparency and Participation in Local and Central Administrations, representatives of the communications sector, persons in charge of environmental decision-making processes, environmental organizations, and several Developers of plans, programmes and projects which require Environmental Assessments. During the workshop, the Charter's principles were illustrated, and EIA/SEA participation experiences in Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna and Abruzzo were described.
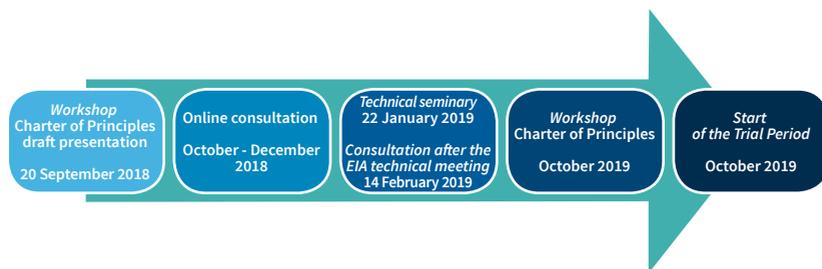
CONSULTATION ON THE CHARTER OF PRINCIPLES

Contributions provided by : Tuscany Region, Umbria Region, Lombardy Region, Piedmont Region, Molise Region, ISPRA, IS Green (Integrated design services for Engineering and Architecture), Cantieri animati, AIP2 (Italian Association for Public Participation), LIPU (Italian Bird Protection Association), INU (National Urban Planning Institute), Marevivo, WWF Italy, ENEL, ANEV , PTL Energia, Terna.

The workshop emphasized the need to identify paths and tools to improve the information, consultation and participation processes, by promoting shared and uniform methods and innovative instruments in the Environmental Assessment processes. After the workshop, a consultation was launched on the EIA-SEA-IPPC Permit Portal of the Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea through which all the stakeholders could provide their contributions to the draft document.

| Workshop Charter of Principles draft presentation 20 September 2018 | Online consultation October - December 2018 | Technical seminary 22 January 2019 Consultation after the EIA technical meeting 14 February 2019 | Workshop Charter of Principles October 2019 | Start of the Trial Period October 2019 |

The contributions show a strong interest for a participative process following all the environmental assessment steps, along the plan/programme/project entire life cycle, actively contributing to "generate alternatives" in different forms (technological, location, strategic), based on shared selection criteria. Following a series of technical meetings to define the structure and elaboration of the contributions submitted, it was found appropriate to extend the submission deadline; to this end, a seminary was held on 22 January 2019, to present and debate the Charter of Principles. Apart from those that had already submitted their contributions, the event was also attended by several Regions (Emilia-Romagna, Abruzzo, Puglia, Liguria) and Associations (Associazione Avventura Urbana, Elettricità Futura, Poliedra - Politecnico di Milano). Other contributions were collected following the Trade Associations' request, after the EIA Technical meeting of 14 February 2019. The seminary and consultations showed a widespread sharing of the Charter of Principles contents, and the paths for an "integrated" participation to the environmental assessment process were defined.

The Charter reflects, as much as possible, the multiplicity of contributions submitted, to promote a quality participatory process in Environmental Assessments, and make weighted and shared decisions that follow the plan/programme/project life cycle, from its start to its implementation and realization.

The Charter, in line with the Aarhus and Espoo international Conventions and the Kyiv Protocol, highlights the central role of transparency and participation supporting the improvement of information and communication processes, enhancing the efficacy of sustainability policies, increasing the culture of participation in Environmental Assessments, while promoting shared and homogeneous methods and knowledge on regulations, indicators and innovative tools.

The Charter represents a "decalogue" for a participated assessment where transparency is a transversal principle inspiring the entire document.

The Charter Principles

1. ACCESSIBILITY	Making environmental information available free of charge within the reach of all. Information and communication technologies are the most effective tools for accessing information.

To put this principle into practice, we must take into account the environmental information governance, by assuming an action aimed at integrating and making synergic different environmental databases, in order to network and exploit the entire wealth of environmental information available. Therefore, it is appropriate to provide for dedicated and user-friendly websites granting access to Environmental Assessments, and environmental open data and metadata, and make use of information and communication technology (ICT) to broaden remote or deferred participation opportunities.

2. CLARITY	Using a simple and relevant language everyone can understand, even someone without any technical competences, ensuring that the information supplied can be fully exploited.

To put this principle into practice, the level of competence and know-how of Proceeding Authorities and Developers in charge – by law – of drafting the technical documents need to be strengthened through targeted training activities (including focus on language aspects), to obtain, among the other things, a Summary in non-technical language of the environmental assessments that even non-experts can understand. If required, making use of the support of participation process logs, highlighting the role of the different players, the log-

ical passages, the assessment criteria; employing graphs, images, maps and mind maps – if applicable – to summarize technical and methodological steps. Furthermore, it would be appropriate to refer to standard provisions formats for Public Administrations (PA), Proceeding Authorities and Developers (public notice to the public), citizens, associations, PA (comments).

3. COMPLETENESS	Ensuring minimum basic relevant information describing the contents, the alternative scenarios considered, the environmental risks (including health risks) and the cumulative effects in a logical and comprehensive manner.

To put this principle into practice, it is appropriate to provide for: finalized guidance; technical guidelines and standards to draft the documents; shared knowledge tools (indicators, models, regulatory references); reference environmental framework, in order to ensure the completeness of the environmental assessment. Moreover, further activities should be envisaged to improve the level of competence and know-how of Proceeding Authorities and Developers on the construction of alternative scenarios and environmental assessment of actions, on the external and internal compliance analysis, and on environmental monitoring plans, also through targeted training on the document content.

4. RELIABILITY	Supplying environmental information based on scientifically valid methods and updated data derived from secured, easily verifiable and comparable sources, arranged according to nationally and internationally recognized standards.

To put this principle into practice, it is appropriate to provide for a systemic and integrated vision at the different project levels, and in the different programming and planning sectors. It is appropriate to ensure that the quotes selected are reliable; refer to sector studies; that a significant and geo-referenced indicators dataset is available, to "localize" and contextualize, as much as possible, the environmental analysis and assessments (SEA, EIA). And, where applicable, that best practices and shared databases are employed

5. PROMPTNESS	Ensuring real-time information and participation right from the start of the decision-making process, to give everyone the chance to express themselves promptly and participate in the final decision.

To put this principle into practice, it is appropriate to pursue the goal to ensure real-time information by supporting – along with traditional websites – the development, use and diffusion of *ad hoc* technological tools (Apps and social network sites) dedicated to environmental assessments, updated in real time. Furthermore, it is appropriate to synchronize the information contained in environmental assessment archives/logs (to be established also locally) with the procedure schedule. All this in order to ensure access to the tools required to strengthen public consultation phases and promote the submission of contributions and/or comments to the Public Administrations in charge of the plan, project or programme within the relevant deadlines.

6. EVIDENCE	Disseminating the results of public consultations and the information about the players involved in the decision-making process, roles, times, decisions made, documents and comments produced and results of the participation.

To put this principle into practice, it is appropriate to highlight the participative "process" aspects (following the entire plan/project life cycle), by mapping out the players, which must represent the different social groups, and underlining the participative contribution in generating alternatives – in different forms (technological, location, strategical) – by making sure they are based on shared selection criteria. Providing for the publication of comments and the summary of the consultation results on the web. Providing minimum basic information on the decision-making process (launch date, requests and integration acquisitions, suspensions, provisions issues, etc.) and ensuring that the documents are available.

7. FACILITATION	Promoting the use of methods and tools that facilitate direct citizen involvement in a clear and reasonable dialogue on the risks, benefits and answers identified.

In general, facilitation applied to participatory processes may significantly improve the quality of the results produced by participation, and of the relations and interactions of the participants from a collaborative standpoint. A good interaction is developed when the debate takes the distance from general principles to analyse the topics in substantial terms, by drawing from a solid information base. To put this principle into practice, it is appropriate to recourse to facilitators and facilitation techniques to manage the participatory processes, and, when required, to risk management and communi-

cation techniques. Facilitators can become strategic and central in guiding and structuring the decision-making process and managing any possible conflict.

8. DIALOGUE	Supporting dialogue and shared choices between developers, evaluators and local communities. Active listening of those affected by the results of the decision-making process, and a transparent and on-going debate on the effects of the decisions made.

To put this principle into practice, it is appropriate to provide for: environmental observatories and permanent expert committees that communicate with local communities. Furthermore, when applicable, it would be appropriate to make use of mediation and conflict mitigation techniques, and dedicated videoconferences for stakeholders during public debate. In addition, a transparent debate between the Administrations and the Developer – prior to establishing the prescriptive framework – may also be useful to ensure, at the same time, that the plan/programme/project goals are achieved, and that the environmental impacts are minimized with respect to the initial proposal.

9. VALORIZATION	Valorising the participation results, motivating citizens to actively participate in the decision-making process, as this can affect local transformations. Clearly highlighting how citizens' participation has affected the plan/programme or project.

To put this principle into practice, it is appropriate to provide for: information on the effects produced by the participation in the decision-making process; publication of the results and of the acceptance/non-acceptance of the suggestions made, while recognizing the added value of participation; communication, awareness, education to participation and capacity building campaigns; e-learning and remote environmental training.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	Ensuring the actual conformity between the programming results and the needs and priorities of the affected community, by providing for the participation of the environmental authorities, stakeholders and the public, also in the monitoring phase.

To put this principle into practice, it is appropriate to provide public evidence to the environmental monitoring results. In the plan and programme implementation and in the monitoring phase, consult – where possible – the participation groups previously involved, for an open debate on the monitoring results, and share any reorientation in the Plans or Programmes, in the light of the new needs and changes made. For good monitoring and participatory process results, making sure there are enough (human and economic) resources for both.