Activity A4.4
Policy change peer-review

GUIDELINES FOR THE JOINT PEER-REVIEW OF TERRITORIAL POLICY CHANGES

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Región de Murcia

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the context of BIOWIND activity A4.4 "Policy change peer-review" the present document contains Guidelines on how to prepare and implement the peer-review evaluation of policy changes, which entails the setting-up and operation of a joint working group.

In particular, **section A** serves as an introduction. It presents the objectives, content and timeline of Activity A4.4, as well as its linkages with other project activities.

Section B presents a set of nineteen policy recommendations, organised in five policy areas, aimed at supporting BIOWIND partners in selecting and implementing improvements in their Policy Instruments (PIs). This section also describes the steps through which this composite set built on the main results and conclusions from the joint thematic analyses (A1), interregional policy-learning activities (A3), and stakeholder meetings (A2).

Section C specifies two evaluation criteria and recommends alternative evaluation indicators applying to each of the recommended policy changes; these will facilitate the evaluation of the policy changes by the joint working group. It moreover specifies how BIOWIND partners will evaluate the (already identified) best practices.

Section D presents a peer-review framework specifically tailored for the BIOWIND partnership, specifying the content of the policy evaluation steps and the process that the joint working group will follow to assess (in Semester 6) the achieved policy changes and their resulting territorial impact.

Section E provides guidelines for the establishment and operation of the joint working group. It includes criteria for selecting representatives from partner regions and stakeholder groups, as well as an implementation plan and a dissemination strategy.

Finally, **section F** includes, as Annexes, supporting material for the conduct of the evaluation process, including an input form template (for documenting policy improvements), a policy evaluation template and an agenda of the peer-review evaluation sessions.

A. INTRODUCTION

BIOWIND Activity A4.4, titled "Policy change peer-review", prescribes the formation of a working group (consisting of a representative from each partner) to jointly evaluate partners' actions for territorial policy changes, monitor policy implementation progress and assess the impact of these changes. The peer-review process will leverage each partner's expertise, alongside insights from the joint thematic analyses (A1), interregional policy learning activities (A3), and stakeholder meetings (A2), thereby ensuring that the knowledge exchanged will be effectively utilised across all participating territories and that the desired policy changes will be endorsed by regional stakeholders.

The joint working group will convene for its first session during the partnership meeting in Semester 4, in a dedicated breakout session. This meeting will initiate the peer-review process, outlining its structure and implementation. During this meeting partners will also discuss and approve a final version of the list of policy recommendations specified in the present document (*see sections B and C*).

The process will resume and conclude in Semester 6, with the joint working group convening virtually at least twice to finalise the joint assessment of the achieved policy changes, while also offering recommendations for further improvements and updates. In addition to this joint evaluation of policy changes and an assessment of their (observed and anticipated) impact on public attitudes regarding wind energy projects, the working group will also assess the integration of the pilot action's results into territorial Policy Instruments (PIs) and will evaluate the effectiveness of best practices identified and applied by BIOWIND partners during the core phase.

The Region of Murcia will lead the activity, by coordinating all the working group meetings, while also developing the present guidelines. Upon completion of the peer review meetings, the Region of Murcia will compile, and issue policy recommendations based on the outcomes and lessons learnt by partners during the process (Semester 6).

As implied above, Activity 4.4 has strong linkages with most project activities, including the pilot action, as it essentially: a) translates previously identified best practices, gaps, and policy insights into actionable recommendations for policies and measures to drive policy changes in territorial PIs; b); focuses on the evaluation and assessment of adopted policy changes and best practices, identified and elaborated during the project's lifecycle. Moreover, the comprehensive set of recommendations will inform possible action plans, to be prepared in case policy improvements are not achieved by partners by the end of the project's core phase.

B. KEY RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE CORE PHASE ACTIVITIES

This section will outline the main results and conclusions from the joint thematic analyses (A1), interregional policy learning activities (A3), and stakeholder meetings (A2) conducted throughout the core phase of the project, until the commencement of semester 4. It focuses on collecting key conclusions, findings and assessments – indicatively regarding key factors and drivers, barriers and gaps, good practices and recommendations – and adjusting them into a composite set of policy recommendations. This set will support BIOWIND partners in selecting and implementing improvements in their PIs and will form the basis of policy evaluation (presented in section C).

The **steps** that were taken towards creating a set of policy recommendations, which **reflects** key project results and stakeholder insights took place as follows:

Firstly, all prior BIOWIND outputs addressing various aspects of the project's thematic focus have been analysed and their core findings have been identified. In particular, they were:

- A1.1 "Joint elaboration on the environmental and socioeconomic drivers of public opposition to wind power project";
- A1.2 "Comparative analysis of partners' territorial RES and wind development policies", focusing on barriers and gaps within these policy areas;
- A1.3 "Good practice report", focusing on the selection and presentation of twenty-four good practices by project partners;
- A1.4 "Identifying organisational needs and capacities of public administration regarding wind power in BIOWIND territories";
- A1.5 "Policy recommendations for the proliferation of wind energy communities in project territories";
- A3.1 "Workshop report on developing measures to promote civic participation and engagement in wind energy planning";
- A3.2 "Summary report of the workshop of a comprehensive environmental plan and effective system for biodiversity monitoring";
- A3.3 "Summary report of the workshop on sustainable approaches to wind turbine decommissioning".
- A.3.4. "BIOWIND A3.4 Study Visit Finland Input Paper_Final_02_2025"
- A.4.3 Encapsulating lessons learnt as policy briefs and participation in policy learning platforms:
  - o "Biodiversity Management and Conservation Systems"
  - o "Civic Participation and Engagement"
  - o "the Finnish Example"
  - o "Wind Turbine Decommissioning"

Secondly, the key findings and suggestions of these reports have been compiled into a list and, subsequently, categorised under five broad policy areas that emerged as prevalent through the analysis: 1) Community engagement and public participation; 2) Regulatory and

governance reforms; 3) Environmental management and biodiversity protection; 4) Socioeconomic and financial support mechanisms; 5) Planning and capacity development.

Thirdly, stakeholder meetings that have been organised by BIOWIND partners in their territories were analysed; in total, 19 summary reports (from 9 partners) have been evaluated. This analysis focused on identifying recurring themes. The ten most common issues across BIOWIND territories (brought up by representatives of key stakeholders participating at the meetings) are included in the following list *restated as policy recommendations*:

1. **Improve transparency and communication**: Foster early, open, and continuous communication between developers, local authorities, and communities to address concerns and build trust.
2. **Streamline permitting processes**: Simplify and harmonise administrative procedures to reduce delays and inconsistencies in project approvals.
3. **Develop clear compensation mechanisms**: Establish equitable and transparent systems to provide financial or infrastructural benefits directly to local communities.
4. **Strengthen public education initiatives**: Launch campaigns to educate communities about wind energy's benefits, addressing misinformation and misconceptions.
5. **Encourage community involvement**: Enable municipalities to lead engagement efforts and empower residents to participate actively in planning and decision-making processes.
6. **Implement environmental safeguards**: Introduce measures to mitigate biodiversity impacts, including location-specific solutions and standardised approaches to address ecological concerns.
7. **Promote community ownership models**: Encourage cooperative ownership or local participation in wind projects to foster a sense of shared benefit.
8. **Align regional and EU strategies**: Align regional wind energy plans with EU directives to streamline goals and improve resource use.
9. **Support sustainable decommissioning**: Create policies for eco-friendly wind turbine dismantling, including recycling materials and restoring project sites.
10. **Explore offshore wind opportunities**: Expand focus to include offshore wind energy, ensuring the adequacy of pertinent regulatory and planning frameworks.

Fourthly, the two lists, which shared a significant number of insights and recommendations, were synthesised in a common set of policy recommendations. Essentially, the identified themes and recommendations from the stakeholder meetings' list informed the list encapsulating findings from BIOWIND reports; thus, both partners' and stakeholder views are reflected in the resultant set of policy recommendations, organised along the five aforementioned policy areas, that follows[1]:

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[1] Items in brackets indicate key sources of the respective policy recommendations, i.e. project reports (e.g. A1.1, A3.1) and stakeholder meetings (SMs).

Policy recommendations, based on (a) best practices, gaps and insights from previous project reports and (b) stakeholder meetings.

1. Community engagement and public participation
Objective: Foster trust, inclusivity, and collaboration with local communities.

   i.   **Mandatory public consultation**: Integrate lifecycle-long public consultations (including information sessions and open public forums), especially during planning and decommissioning phases, to address concerns and gather feedback; the establishment of grievance redress mechanisms constitute a reinforced form of public consultation (A1.1, A3.1, SMs).

   ii.   **Knowledge-sharing & communication campaigns**: Establish regional wind energy centres and platforms for collaboration among stakeholders, as well as training seminars and educational initiatives to address knowledge gaps among citizens and support the establishment of wind energy communities (A1.5, A3.1, SMs).

   iii.   **Community engagement guidelines**: Develop a toolkit for project developers to facilitate constructive engagement throughout the project lifecycle (A3.1).

2. Regulatory and governance reforms
Objective: Enhance transparency, efficiency, and coherence in administrative processes.

   i.   **Streamlined permitting processes**: Consolidate and simplify individual permits into unified frameworks (e.g. combining environmental and urban planning into one process), reduce administrative burdens, and decrease the overall time and resources required (A1.2, A1.4). The development of a GIS-based, multi-criteria decision-making mechanism is an example of such a framework.

   ii.   **Land-use planning integration:** Align national and regional land-use policies with EU energy and climate goals to streamline permitting processes and reduce administrative barriers (A3.4, A4.3).

   iii.   **Regulatory compliance monitoring**: Ensure that adopted policies include mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and enforcement of environmental and social standards.

   iv.   **Clear Regulatory Frameworks**: Establish comprehensive and consistent regulations for wind energy projects and community energy initiatives, accommodating advancements in wind energy technologies (A1.5, A1.2, A1.4); for example, define setback distances and zoning criteria to harmonise with cultural and environmental considerations.

   v.   **Coordination among authorities**: Clarify roles and improve collaboration across governance levels to reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies (A1.4).

vi.   **Digital tools**: Develop interactive tools like map-based siting frameworks and online cartographic viewers to identify low-conflict zones and advance transparency (A1.2, SMs).

3. Environmental management and biodiversity protection
Objective: Mitigate environmental impact and promote sustainable practices.

i.   **Cumulative environmental impact assessments**: Use advanced data science techniques in environmental impact assessments and AI tools to address habitat loss, bird and bat fatalities, ecosystem disturbances (A3.2), as well as to report carbon emission reductions (where applicable). Involving local experts in these processes is, moreover, an important aspect.

ii.   **Application of a mitigation hierarchy**: Prioritise avoidance and minimisation of biodiversity harm over restoration (A3.2).

iii. **Biodiversity-sensitive siting guidelines**: Define strict criteria for wind farm locations, avoiding critical habitats, migration routes, and Natura 2000 sites (A4.3)

iv.   **Monitoring systems**: Develop standardised tools, as well as location-specific measures, with the involvement of local environmental groups for assessing and mitigating impacts on wildlife and ecosystems, regularly reevaluating biodiversity impacts during operation and decommissioning phases (A1.2, A3.2, SMs). Implement real-time monitoring systems, such as radar and bioacoustic sensors, to track bird and bat populations and mitigate collision risks (A4.3).

v.   **Sustainable decommissioning practices**: Establish policies for turbine reuse, repurpose and recycling (possibly in tandem with a landfill ban on decommissioned wind turbine blades) and restoration of project sites (e.g. legislate complete excavation of turbine foundations to restore land integrity) (A3.3, SMs).

vi.   **Adaptive assessment and management plans:** Re-evaluate assessments at regular intervals to sufficiently account for regulatory, infrastructure, land-use and environmental changes potentially not foreseen in the prior assessment. This can enable addressing new emerging threats or adjust current conservation efforts. Equally important is the assessment of the outcomes of previous biodiversity management decisions and taking into consideration feedback from stakeholders. This can help to adjust or refine monitoring protocols and mitigation action plans (A4.3).

4. Socioeconomic and financial support mechanisms
Objective: Ensure financial viability and equitable benefits for communities.

i.   **Targeted financial incentives for small-scale projects**: Introduce low-interest loans and differentiated feed-in tariffs for small-scale projects (A1.5, A3.1).

ii.   **Compensation schemes**: Implement compensation schemes such as reduced electricity tariffs, community trusts, tax revenues/tax reliefs, land lease payments and public land donations (A3.1, A1.5).

iii. **Shared ownership and benefit-sharing models**: Design schemes that mandate local reinvestment and benefit-sharing schemes for affected communities, such as direct financial participation of local communities (community co-ownership of wind farms), and prepayment of community development programs and infrastructure improvements (A3.1, A1.5, SMs).

iv. **Improved regulatory framework for environmental bonds, including financial guarantees for decommissioning**: Secure early-stage funds to cover decommissioning and site-restoration costs effectively (A3.3, SMs).

v. **Circular economy incentives:** Promote financial mechanisms that encourage innovation in turbine material recyclability and sustainable dismantling practices (A3.3, A4.3).

5. Planning and capacity development
Objective: Strengthen organisational resources and capabilities.

i. **Integrated spatial planning**: Utilise multi-criteria assessments to balance ecological, social, and economic factors in identifying suitable areas for wind plant sitting and explore offshore wind potential (A1.2, A1.4, SMs).

ii. **Inter-municipal collaboration**: Encourage collaboration among neighbouring municipalities (or regions) to share costs, maximise wind resource use, and enhance grid stability (A1.2).

iii. **Training and workforce development**: Offer programmes to build specialised skills on wind (and other RES) strategic planning and project management among public administration personnel (A1.4).

C. CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING POLICY CHANGES AND PI IMPLEMENTATION

The set of policy recommendations essentially represents an extended, comprehensive list of measures, practices and solutions that advance the attainment of the BIOWIND policy objectives. **Depending on their territorial needs and priorities**, partners will initiate improvements in the PIs (including the associated policy frameworks) along the recommended lines.

The policy improvements will be evaluated based on two criteria (or dimensions):

- **Evaluation criterion 1: Outcomes** (PI improvements): This criterion focuses on measurable, **short-term** improvements in the Policy Instruments of BIOWIND partners, such as new tools, processes, regulations, or funding allocated, directly linked to the **implementation** of each recommended policy. It needs to be stressed that the joint working group *will necessarily focus more on this criterion*, as policy changes need to be adopted and implemented by the end of the project's core phase, i.e. Semester 6 (when the joint evaluation will take place).

- **Evaluation criterion 2: Territorial impact** (public attitudes): This criterion will primarily support the improvements in public attitudes towards wind energy projects and the degree of increased civic participation in planning and other processes; secondarily, it will focus on environmental or socioeconomic results. However, **such effects necessitate a certain period of time to materialise**; thus, it will not be possible for the joint working group to have (in most cases) a sufficiently comprehensive understanding of the territorial consequences to be evaluated[2]. Therefore, the working group evaluations will need to be mostly based on primary evidence (regarding the impact of the adopted policy changes) and on informed estimations and joint elaborations by the working group members (including the stakeholder representatives that will be invited to offer their assessments). The conduct of a public opinion **survey** by BIOWIND partners in their territories after the introduction of the policy changes would significantly facilitate the evaluation of their impact at this early stage. Particular attention should be given to the above in countries (e.g. Hungary), where wind power adoption remains limited.

To ensure the evaluation process remains meaningful and methodologically valid, a set of **indicators** is recommended for each proposed policy change, regarding both evaluation criteria. These indicators will facilitate both the reporting of policy improvements on behalf of each partner and foremost, the joint evaluation process that will take place with the peer-

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[2] An alternative way to clarify the differences between criteria 1 and 2 is the distinction between "outcomes" and "impact": the former usually refer to shorter-term results, whereas as the latter to longer-term, broader or "deeper" effects.

review working group. Table 1 details these suggested evaluation indicators per policy recommendation and per evaluation criterion.

*Table 1 **Recommended evaluation indicators for policy changes***

Policy Recommendations	Indicators for evaluation criterion 1 (Outcome)	Indicators for evaluation criterion 2 (Impact)
1. Community engagement and public participation		
Mandatory public consultation	Number of new public forums and consultations initiated; targets in PIs promoting binding public engagement.	Improved public attitudes as measured by surveys; higher levels of civic participation in project discussions.
Knowledge-sharing & communication campaigns	Establishment of new wind energy centres or educational platforms; changes in the funding allocated to public knowledge initiatives (public awareness campaigns).	Reduction in misinformation and improved public understanding of wind energy benefits, as indicated by surveys.
Community engagement guidelines	Development of toolkit for public engagement addressed at project developers; new calls for proposals targeting community engagement.	Increased satisfaction among community members regarding wind energy project transparency and inclusivity.
2. Regulatory and governance reforms		
Streamlined permitting processes	Reduction in the average time taken for permitting; number of previously individual permitting processes integrated; number of updated permitting frameworks introduced; establishment of a dedicated complaints handling system; development of a standardised, GIS-based, multi-criteria decision-making mechanism.	Higher approval rates for projects due to simplified procedures; faster and more efficient accommodation of public complaints during permitting.
Land-use planning integration	Number of policies aligning national and regional land-use with EU energy targets.	Increased spatial compatibility of wind energy projects; smoother project implementation.
Regulatory compliance monitoring	Number of regulatory compliance frameworks adopted; number of compliance audits conducted; adoption of standardised reporting templates for regulatory monitoring results.	Reduction in violations of environmental regulations; improvement in biodiversity / other environmental indicators.

Clear regulatory frameworks	New zoning and setback regulations enacted; introduction of compensation mechanisms; frequency of updates to regulatory policies.	Reduction in conflicts over zoning issues; improved alignment between regulations and community concerns.
Coordination among authorities	Number of inter-agency coordination mechanisms established; reduction in bureaucratic overlaps.	Increased perception of efficiency in governance processes; higher stakeholder satisfaction levels; higher effectiveness mitigating wind farm environmental impact.
Digital tools	Deployment of map-based or interactive siting tools; increased funding for digital transparency initiatives.	Enhanced trust in project planning transparency; greater usage of tools by public authorities and stakeholders.
3. Environmental management biodiversity protection		
Cumulative environmental impact assessments	Implementation of advanced AI or data science techniques in assessments; increased funding for environmental impact assessments.	Reduction in biodiversity-related public complaints; measurable decreases in adverse environmental impacts (e.g. bird fatalities).
Mitigation hierarchy application	Number of projects prioritizing avoidance and minimisation strategies; updates to mitigation planning frameworks.	Higher community approval ratings for wind farm projects; lower recorded ecosystem disturbances.
Biodiversity-sensitive siting guidelines	Number of guidelines developed; Number of projects adhering to strict siting criteria.	Decreased impact on critical habitats and migration routes.
Monitoring systems	Creation of standardized biodiversity monitoring protocols; provisions for mandatory participation of local communities and environmental groups representatives in monitoring bodies.	Demonstrable improvements in wildlife conservation outcomes; increased stakeholder confidence in monitoring efforts.
Sustainable decommissioning practices	Introduction of reuse, repurpose and/or recycling codes and regulations for decommissioning (including a landfill ban for blades); increase of restoration funding; tools developed to establish criteria for sustainable decommissioning and repowering.	Higher public satisfaction with decommissioning processes; improved site conditions post-project; reduction of authorization times for repowering and decommissioning projects.
Adaptive assessment and management plans	Introduction of reassessment of environmental impacts and	Frequency of reassessment of environmental impacts; Better

	management plans into regulations.	long-term adaptability to changing environmental conditions.
4. Socioeconomic and financial support mechanisms		
Targeted financial Incentives for small-scale projects	Number of new financial incentive schemes introduced (e.g. low-interest loans); increased funding applications for small-scale projects.	Increased participation in renewable energy projects by local residents; measurable improvements in local economies.
Compensation schemes	Implementation of new compensation schemes (e.g. community trusts, reduced electricity tariffs, public land donations); increased funding for community compensation initiatives.	Greater public support for projects tied to fair compensation; increased financial benefits distributed to communities.
Shared ownership and benefit-sharing models	Regulatory/financial incentives for the establishment of co-ownership schemes or community shares in projects; legislation of incentives advancing the prepayment of community development programmes.	Higher number of co-owned wind farms; increased community satisfaction with shared benefits.
Environmental bonds for decommissioning	New regulatory frameworks for environmental bonds; funds allocated for site restoration guarantees.	Measurable improvements in decommissioned site restoration; increased community trust in environmental compliance.
Circular economy incentives	Financial mechanisms developed to encourage innovation in turbine material recyclability and sustainable dismantling practices	Percentage of turbine materials repurposed or recycled; Reduction in environmental footprint of wind energy.
5. Planning and capacity development		
Integrated spatial planning	Development of multi-criteria spatial planning tools; updates to siting regulations incorporating ecological considerations; increased number of applications for industrial zones and/or offshore projects.	Increased suitability of project sitting decisions (avoidance of ecologically sensitive areas; minimal disruption of existing land uses); higher acceptance levels for wind farm locations.
Inter-municipal collaboration	Number of inter-municipal agreements signed; funding	Enhanced grid stability and resource sharing; growth in

	allocated to joint infrastructure projects.	the utilisation of regional wind energy potential.
Training and workforce development	Introduction of new training programmes on wind project management; number of participants completing workforce development initiatives.	Increased local employment in wind energy projects; higher technical capacity among local administrative staff.

D. PRESENTATION OF AN OPTIMAL POLICY MONITORING AND PEER REVIEW FRAMEWORK

This section will present an optimal policy monitoring and peer review framework, specifically tailored for the BIOWIND partnership, providing **precise instructions and strategies to facilitate the joint assessment of the achieved policy change**s and their resulting territorial impact.

Types of policy evaluation in the context of the policy cycle

Policy evaluation is a critical step within the broader "policy cycle," which is usually considered to encompass the following phases: agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation[3]. A non-linear understanding of the policy cycle treats policy evaluation as not simply the final stage of the policy cycle, but also as the starting point for the next; this feedback loop supports the continuous improvement of policies.

In terms of its temporal character within the policy cycle, evaluation can be distinguished into *ex-ante* evaluation, essentially a pre-assessment of a designed policy, *ongoing* evaluation and *ex-post* evaluation. Ongoing implementation, also termed as process implementation, aims to feed relevant information back into the implementation process. It is, thus, similar with policy *monitoring*; indeed, monitoring is closely linked to evaluation and in many occasions policy monitoring and evaluation is considered to constitute a unified process. **Ex-post evaluation**, however, constitutes the prevalent form of evaluation, performed after a period of policy implementation[4].

Still, ex-post evaluation may focus on different aspects or phases of a policy. *Input* evaluation focuses on resources like funding and personnel allocated to a policy and, similarly, *design* evaluation focuses on the interpretation of a policy's results in terms of its initial formulation. *Process evaluation* examines the implementation steps and the procedural efficiency of a policy. **Output** evaluation constitutes the "classical" form of policy evaluation; it assesses the social and political outcomes of a policy, with an emphasis on tangible and long-term impacts (positive and negative). Following a sub-categorisation that is often made in the relevant literature and policy analysis, one can distinguish between **outcome evaluation**, focusing on measuring the extent to which specific policy outcomes have been achieved or not (e.g. the implementation of educational initiatives on wind energy project benefits), and **impact evaluation**, focusing on the broader, longer-term policy effects (e.g. more positive public

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[3] J. E. Anderson, 2003, *Public policymaking: An introduction,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin; W. Jann & K. Wegrich, 2017, "Theories of the Policy Cycle", in F. Fisher et al. (eds) *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*, Taylor & Francis Group, pp.43-62.

[4] H. Wollmann, 2017, "Policy Evaluation and Evaluation Research", in F. Fisher et al. (eds) *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*, Taylor & Francis Group, pp.493-402.

attitudes regarding the development of wind farms)[5]. This distinction corresponds to the two **evaluation criteria** recommended in section D.

Thus, this BIOWIND activity employs an understanding of policy evaluation as an examination and appraisal of the results and consequences of a policy, aiming to ensure that it effectively addresses its goals and that lessons are learnt to inform future policymaking.

Evaluation Steps

The evaluation (or monitoring and evaluation) process has been described as encompassing several steps, typically ranging from four to ten steps. A representative set of steps includes the following[6]:

- Formulating outcomes and goals.
- Selecting outcome indicators to monitor.
- Gathering baseline information on the current condition.
- Setting specific targets to reach and dates for reaching them.
- Collecting data to assess whether the targets are being met.
- Analysing and reporting results.

Given the scope and character of BIOWIND's A4.4 activity, as well as the (short) timeframe between policy implementation and policy assessment, the evaluation process will adopt a simplified structure. **The working group will focus on the last two steps** (data collection and analysis/assessment), while the preceding steps are assumed to be addressed through other project tasks and outputs, including the present Guidelines. In particular:

Outcomes and goals: The set of policy recommendations presented in section B specifies targets, goals and broader objectives. Targets essentially correspond to individual policy recommendations. Goals are aligned with the 5 policy areas identified, i.e. "Environmental management biodiversity protection", "Regulatory and governance reforms", etc; the goal is that partners achieve improvements in selected policy areas *among those recommended*. Evaluation objectives are directly related to the two evaluation criteria, i.e. to improve PIs and to advance more positive public attitudes towards wind energy projects.

Outcome indicators and specific targets: Alternative indicators are specified per policy recommendation (*see Table 1*); for example, regarding "Streamlined permitting processes" four indicators are named (reduction in the average time taken for permitting; number of previously individual permitting processes integrated; number of updated permitting frameworks introduced; establishment of a dedicated complaints handling system).

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[5] UNDP, 2002, *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results*, available at https://www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/handbook-monitoring-evaluating-for-results; J. Z. Kusek & Ray C. Rist, 2004, *Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System,* The World Bank, available at https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/f87d81cf-54e9-5a35-ab9e-dc24fc61f85a/content.
[6] Kusek & Rist 2004, p.23.

Depending on the availability of data and the particular features in each BIOWIND territory, partners *may employ one or more indicators*; indeed, they *may propose alternative indicators* deemed more suitable for their territory when they document PI improvements (in the provided input forms, *see Annex I*). The evaluation indicators specified in the input forms will be subsequently employed by the joint working group to assess the policy improvements introduced by each partner.

Baseline information on the current situation: It is expected that each partner representative in the peer-review working group has a solid understanding of the state of affairs in their territory, i.e. the situation *prior* to the introduction of the policy improvements (indeed such knowledge and level of expertise is considered as a prerequisite for their participation in the working group, as mentioned in section E). Such information includes regulatory frameworks, the level of development and the prospects of wind energy initiatives, community perceptions of wind energy projects and local socio-economic and environmental conditions. Concluded BIOWIND reports and activities constitute a valuable resource that provide an overview of the current situation in all partnership territories.

Data collection: Working group members will report (via the input forms provided) on policy improvements in their territories, or at the national level in case such local/regional policy changes are non-applicable; subsequently, they will share results with all working group participants prior to the conduct of the online peer-review sessions. As aforementioned, the suggested outcome indicators will guide them to the collection of relevant information. It is suggested that the collected data, both qualitative and quantitative if possible, should accurately describe the results of adopted policy improvements and will contain sufficient information that will facilitate all working group members to participate in the collective / peer-review evaluation process. Lack of tangible effects, negative effects and limited data availability should be specified and explained.

Collective analysis and evaluation processes: The core responsibility of the peer-review working group is to evaluate the collected data, i.e. to determine the extent to which policy recommendations have been implemented and their impact on governance and territorial conditions. To strengthen the deliberative and collective character of the peer-review process, as well as to advance the broader BIOWIND objective of enhancing civic engagement in planning and operation of wind energy initiatives, *elements* of the Participatory Policy Evaluation (PPE) *are recommended* to be adopted during the assessment.

The key suggestion is that two **stakeholder representatives** from each BIOWIND territory are invited in the working group sessions. At least one of them should represent communities affected by the ongoing development of wind farms or environmental groups actively engaged with wind energy projects; in any case, if stakeholders are invited to participate at the evaluation process, they should be able either due to their experiences (e.g. local economic actors, civil society organisations) or due to their activity focus (e.g. renewable energy agencies, energy cooperatives, regional development agencies) to report and assess the effects of adopted policy improvements. The possible inclusion of stakeholder representatives in the evaluation process would be highly beneficial as: a) it would improve the accuracy of

the assessment of the territorial situation, thus improving the efficiency and comprehensiveness of the evaluation findings; b) it would enable stakeholders to influence the evaluation outcomes and would, at a minimum, facilitate the consideration of their views.[7]

BIOWIND peer-review evaluation: phases and processes

The peer-review evaluation process will take place in the framework of the online sessions of the joint peer-review working group. It is hereby emphasised that **reporting of policy improvements** (through the Input form provided in Annex I) should be concluded **before** the conduct of the online peer-review session. It is recommended that, to facilitate the peer-review process, all partners should have returned their forms completed to CARM one month before the convening of the joint working group; completed input forms will be made available to all BIOWIND partners.

Regarding the peer-review session per se, it is recommended that in order to enhance interaction among partner representatives and stakeholders and to facilitate collective analysis and learning, the evaluation process takes place in two phases; each phase is designed to take place in one online session, as indicated in the Agenda included in Annex IV. In particular, the evaluation process takes place along the following steps:

- The **first evaluation phase** entails an assessment for each BIOWIND territory, actively engaging stakeholder representatives:
  - I. **Presentation by regional working group members**: The working group member representing the respective BIOWIND partner, will deliver an account of findings included in the input form regarding the policy improvements in the given territory. This presentation will include a justification of the ratings provided in the input form, which use a discussion of strengths, weaknesses, and unique contextual factors that influence policy implementation in each region.
  - II. **Stakeholder perspectives**: Subsequently, the stakeholder representatives from each region will share their own perspectives regarding the implementation of policy changes against the two evaluation criteria (PI improvement, impact on public attitudes). Points of agreement and disagreement with the assessment of BIOWIND partner representative should be explicitly highlighted by stakeholders; this will facilitate the juxtaposition of "expert" and "community" accounts.

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[7] *Institute of Development Studies* website, "Participatory Monitoring and evaluation", available at https://www.participatorymethods.org/methodology/participatory-monitoring-and-evaluation/; S. Lindemann-Komarova, 2019, "Participatory Policy Evaluation Toolkit to improve democracy, human rights and governance outcomes", EvalPartners Innovation Challenge initiative, available at https://vopetoolkit.ioce.net/sites/default/files/resources/2.4_participatory_policy_evaluation_toolkit.pdf; *Better Evaluation* website, "Participatory evaluation", available at https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/participatory-evaluation.

III. **Open discussion:** A short open discussion with the participation of all working group members will follow, allowing the provision of clarifications regarding any differing assessment and the identification of commonalities among the various perspectives.

- The **second evaluation phase** will constitute a consensus-building procedure to finalise evaluations and agree on key findings. It will contain:
    I. **Collective analysis session**: An open, deliberative session with the participation of the working group members (i.e. BIOWIND partnership representatives). Working group members will use **comparative analysis** across regions to identify patterns and shared challenges. This discussion will include the exchange of experiences, thus facilitating a broader assessment of the type and scope of policy interventions that appear to address more efficiently public concerns on the socio-economic and biodiversity impacts of wind farms.

    Final consensus decisions: A final discussion that will lead to a **consensus decision,** which will take into account stakeholder perspectives presented at the first phase, regarding the assessment of the policy improvement effects for each BIOWIND territory. This assessment will employ: A) a five-point Likert scale ranging from "not effective" to "highly effective" in terms of policy implementation and impact, to assess the two evaluation criteria; B) a brief qualitative appraisal with specific recommendations for further improvements[8]. These two evaluation components are reflected in the template evaluation form, included in **Annex II**. Moreover, the consensus decision will inform the activity's **final report** that will present and elaborate on working group findings.

    __Alternative option: peer-review pairs__: As an alternative to collective deliberative assessment, the second phase can be conducted using a peer-review approach. In this scenario: a) working group representatives form pairs; b) each pair elaborates on and discusses the assessments and stakeholder perspectives from the first phase; c) each member drafts a short assessment of the other participant's region, which includes ratings based on the five-point Likert scale and a qualitative evaluation with recommendations.

*The specifications and guidelines above do not take into account the **pilot action**, which will be implemented and evaluated in semester 5. Partners are encouraged to integrate pilot action results and assessments in the discussions they will conduct during the evaluation sessions as well as in the policy recommendations / additional measures they will propose.*

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[8] These improvements and **additional measures**, if needed, will be integrated by partners in their PIs in the period until the conclusion of the project core phase.

Involvement of partners with no policy improvements or without a policy instrument

Due to its very "peer-review" character, all BIOWIND partners are expected to be involved in the evaluation process. Further clarifications are below offered regarding the mode of participation of two types of partners:

Partners without a Policy Instrument (PI): The Advisory Partner (PROMEA) and the Discovery Partner (Active Alliance for Albania) will not complete the input form, as this refers to reporting policy improvements achieved regarding a PI, nor will they be evaluated by other partners during the peer-review process. However, their representatives will participate in the online peer-review sessions, providing insights and recommendations to other partners during open discussion and collective analysis procedures (as described above). Regarding the University of Patras (UPAT), which addresses the same PI with the Region of Western Greece, it will assist and cooperate with the latter in reporting policy improvements (through the input form) and discussing comments and recommendations with other partners (during the online sessions).

Partners that have not achieved policy improvements: The Interreg Europe Programme Manual (p.56-7) specifies three types of policy improvements, i.e.: 1) a new type of project; 2) a change in the management of the PI (improved governance) and 3) a revision of the PI addressed (structural change). The Programme Manual also specifies that partners that do not achieve policy improvements by the end of the core phase (Semester 6), will need to produce an action plan, detailing how they will introduce policy improvements during the follow-up phase. It is possible that certain BIOWIND partners will not have introduced policy improvements in their respective PI. **Regarding these partners:**

A. They will provide an explanation in the input form (using the same template provided in Annex I) on why the introduction of policy improvements was not possible or applicable in their case. Moreover, they will indicate (if applicable) which policy changes they intend to achieve during the follow-up phase (via the action plans they will need to produce).

B. They will participate in the peer-review sessions, sharing their views and recommendations to other partners (similarly with those partners that do not address a PI). It is recommended that these partners invite stakeholder representatives from their territories, as other partners will do.

C. They will discuss with other BIOWIND partners (during the first evaluation phase) reasons for not implementing policy improvements and they will present suitable envisaged changes that will be included in the action plans.

D. Although the evaluation form will not contain any policy assessment, it will include a set of recommendations and suggested improvements to be included in the action plans.

E. OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE FORMATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORKING GROUP

Agenda

The recommended content of the peer-review evaluation process has been specified in the previous section. A **template** with the working group agenda, including the break-out session that will be held in the current (4th) semester is provided in Annex IV.

Potential representatives from partner regions

Each BIOWIND partner with a Policy Instrument (PI) will appoint a representative to participate in working group activities. It is recommended that the designated representative possesses as many of the following traits as possible:

- Prior involvement in BIOWIND activities.
- Technical knowledge and experience in BIOWIND's thematic areas (wind energy, biodiversity).
- Knowledge of the territorial situation regarding the development of wind energy projects (main policies and regulations, familiarity with main public concerns regarding the socio-economic and environmental impact of wind farms).
- Involvement in planning and/or implementing policy changes in the respective PI. This primarily refers to policy changes undertaken in the framework of the BIOWIND project; alternatively, any experience in the design, adoption or implementation of policy changes.
- Familiarity with policy evaluation (including impact assessment), policy monitoring and/or comparative policy analysis.
- Familiarity with national and EU legislation and practices regarding wind energy, including shared ownership models, mechanisms for enhancing local community benefits and/or best recycling and other environmental practices.
- Experience in working and consulting with diverse stakeholders during the policy-making process (especially regarding the wind energy sector, or more broadly RES projects).

Implementation plan

The online (virtual) character of the core part of the policy change peer workshop, as well as its two-day duration, implies that several issues need to be addressed to ensure smooth implementation.

Key advantages of online meetings include their flexible format, cost-effectiveness, and time efficiency compared to onsite meetings. This format, importantly, facilitates the inclusion of stakeholder representatives in the event, rather than limiting participants to project partners. On the other hand, online meetings are associated with reduced interaction among participants and limits in the organisation of small group activities. However, such issues are addressed to a considerable degree not only through the functionalities of modern video conferencing platforms and tools (*see below*), but also by the inherent character and structure of the evaluation sessions. These sessions are designed to foster active participation by encouraging the expression of diverse perspectives, facilitating consultations and open discussions, and enabling the formulation of assessment judgments through collective analysis and consensus-building (*see the specification of the evaluation process in section D, as well as the recommended agenda in Annex IV).*

Regarding the video conferencing platform that will be used for the conduct of the workshop, factors to be considered for its selection include the ability to accommodate the expected number of participants (i.e. 30-40); accessibility and user-friendly character; compatibility with most common operating systems; sufficient security features. Most widely used platforms (e.g. Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Webex, Zoom) adequately meet the aforementioned criteria. To support the interactive and consultation-centered character of the evaluation sessions, the partner responsible for the implementation of the peer-review group (CARM) is advised to valorise tools available in such platforms (file sharing, document collaboration, real-time editing capabilities, separate "meeting rooms") or use other programmes (indicatively: Mentimeter, Slider, Miro) with features such as virtual collaboration boards and interactive polling.

Regarding more technical aspects of the online workshop, it is recommended that: all participants have access to high-speed internet, as well as the selected conference platform; a brief and clear set of technical instructions might have to be sent to the participants in advance; an IT specialist should be standby before and during the working group sessions, ready to resolve technical issues and address possible queries.

Dissemination plan

The peer-review evaluation activity takes place towards the end of the BIOWIND's core phase and constitutes a key task for the attainment of a core project objective, i.e. improvement of the policy instruments. Thus, effective communication actions are essential not only for raising awareness and maximising engagement among diverse target groups - including local communities, environmental organisations, territorial authorities, and prospective developers or investors in RES projects - but also for promoting the long-term sustainability of the project's interventions as a whole.

In alignment with the project's communication strategy, partners may also carry out the following *additional* communication actions:

- Before the conduct of the evaluation sessions, UPAT can provide essential information (through a press release and/or a post at the project's online outlets) on the objectives

and format of the peer-review evaluation process, focusing on the assessment of policy improvements and emphasising how these encapsulate lessons learnt and exchange of experiences from BIOWIND activities. All other BIOWIND are advised to offer summaries of this information through their social media accounts.

- After the conclusion of the evaluation process: A) UPAT, as the Communication Manager, with the input of each partner regarding their policy improvements, will prepare a press release and related social media material (e.g. through infographics or other accessible formats, focusing on: a) the participation of stakeholders in the policy assessment process; the interactive and deliberative character of the evaluation process; c) key findings from the implementation of policy improvements across BIOWIND territories, including a first assessment on their impact on public attitudes. B) All partners will translate the press release in their languages and will provide additional content highlighting policy changes and their effects in their own territories. Besides disseminating improvements brought by the project, these actions aim to encourage continuous involvement of target audiences.

Stakeholders

As specified in the previous section, two stakeholders from each BIOWIND partner with a Policy Instrument will be invited to participate in the peer-review evaluation process. **At least one** of them should be a representative of a local community affected by the development of a wind power project, or of an environmental group that closely monitors the impact of wind energy projects in the given territory. Representatives from BIOWIND's other target groups (e.g. public authorities, renewable energy agencies, research groups focusing on wind energy technologies, local economic actors) can fill the second stakeholder position. As discussed in Section D, stakeholders selected by partners should fulfil **two criteria**: a) a relevance to BIOWIND's focus, due to their experiences or expertise, and b) the capacity to offer and justify their assessment of the implemented policy changes, i.e. the ability to juxtapose the situation before and after the BIOWIND-induced policy intervention. An **invitation template** for selected stakeholders is provided in Annex III.

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F. PROVISION OF SUPPORTING TOOLS AND MATERIALS

ANNEX I. Input Form template (monitoring policy improvements)

Participant Information			
Name		Surname	
email			
Country	☐ EL ☐ FI ☐ IE ☐ BE ☐ HU ☐ PL ☐ ES		
Organisation			
Job title			
Policy improvements			
Policy improvement 1			
Title of the policy:			
Relevant section of the Policy Instrument (if applicable):			
Short description of the policy (*goals; main provisions; other information that will facilitate evaluation*)			
Relevant policy recommendation(s) (*see list in section B)*	- - -		
Relevant evaluation indicator (s) (*among those proposed in Table 1; if another indicator was used, specify it*)	- - 		

Policy improvement 2	
Title of the policy:	
Relevant section of the Policy Instrument:	
Short description of the policy (*goals; main provisions; other information that will facilitate evaluation*)	
Relevant policy recommendation(s) (*see list in section B*)	- - -
Relevant evaluation indicator (s) (*among those proposed in Table 1; if another indicator was used, specify it*)	- -
Policy improvement 3	
Title of the policy:	
Relevant section of the Policy Instrument:	
Short description of the policy (*goals; main provisions; other information that will facilitate evaluation*)	
Relevant policy recommendation(s) (*see list in section B*)	- - -
Relevant evaluation indicator (s) (*among those proposed in Table 1; if another indicator was used, specify it*)	- -

ANNEX II. **Evaluation Form template (**monitoring policy improvements**)**

NAME OF PARTNER evaluated	
Number of policies (policy improvements) evaluated	
Title(s) of policies evaluated	- - -
Evaluation criterion 1 (Outcomes)	
Quantitative evaluation	
Please rate the overall level of efficiency of the policy improvement(s), based on the input forms and the results of the first evaluation phase (Day 1). Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Slightly' and 5 is 'Greatly' efficient implementation. ☐ **1**　　　☐ **2**　　　☐ **3**　　　☐ **4**　　　☐ **5**	
Evaluation indicators	
Please identify which evaluation indicator(s) was/were used for each policy improvement. Select an item among those recommended in Table 1 (Section C), e.g. number of regulations, number of new calls, etc*; if another indicator was used, please explicitly identify and shortly present it*. - Policy improvement 1: - Policy improvement 2: - Policy improvement 3:	
Qualitative assessment	
Please provide a brief qualitative assessment of the implementation of the identified policy improvements, essentially justifying the quantitative evaluation. Describe in short to what extent and how policy changes introduced by the BIOWIND partner have improved the respective Policy Instrument. - Policy improvement 1: - Policy improvement 2: - Policy improvement 3:	
Evaluation criterion 2 (Impact)	
Quantitative evaluation	

Please rate the level of impact that the evaluated changes in the Policy Instruments have on public attitudes regarding the development of wind energy projects.

Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Negative', 3 is "None / Neutral" and 5 is 'Positive' impact. ***Please rate only if sufficient data is available; otherwise, move on to the qualitative assessment***.

☐ **1**   ☐ **2**   ☐ **3**   ☐ **4**   ☐ **5**

Basis of evaluation: What type of evidence did you use to perform the quantitative evaluation?

E.g. public survey; number of wind energy projects stalled before and after the introduction of the policy changes; number of legal appeals against wind energy projects filled; interviews/discussion with X number of local stakeholders.

Qualitative assessment

Please provide a brief qualitative assessment of the impact of implemented policy changes on public attitudes and citizen involvement in the various stages of wind energy projects. Please indicate clearly if this appraisal is an estimation (due to limited evidence) or an assessment based on concrete evidence (even if not conclusive)

- Policy improvement 1:

- Policy improvement 2:

- Policy improvement 3:

Recommendations

Please identify further improvements that the partner can implement to optimise the policy changes introduced or additional measures that can be adopted:

Policy improvements:

Additional measures:

ANNEX III. Invitation letter template for stakeholders

[BIOWIND logo]

[date]

Dear [*XXX*],

We are delighted to extend our invitation for you to participate in the BIOWIND Activity A4.4, titled "Policy change peer-review", and contribute to the evaluation of policy improvements related to wind power implemented in [*region's name*].

The BIOWIND project aims build the capacities of participating partners on how to secure social acceptance for wind energy projects while protecting biodiversity. The BIOWIND partnership has chosen to include stakeholder representatives in the peer-review evaluation process. This decision aims to amplify the visibility and impact of their perspectives on regional wind energy policies, while also enhancing the participatory nature of the policy assessment process.

As a member of [*group/organisation name*], you are one of the two stakeholder representatives from [*region's name*] that are kindly invited to contribute with their solid understanding of wind energy policies, and their effects, in the joint policy evaluation.

This policy assessment and evaluation process will take place in [*date*], towards the conclusion of the project's "core phase". The joint working group, with the participation of one representative from each BIOWIND partner and two stakeholder representatives from BIOWIND territories, will convene online for two days. You will participate at the first day of the evaluation process, which entails: a (self-) assessment by project partners on the effects of policy improvements and their (estimated) impact on public attitudes regarding wind energy projects; a presentation of stakeholders' perspectives on those issues; and an open discussion on each BIOWIND territory.

By participating at the evaluation procedure, you will have the opportunity to share your perspective on wind power-related policies and developments in your region. More importantly, your input will directly influence the policy evaluation decisions that will be jointly taken by project partners at the second day of the event. Moreover, you will have the opportunity to familiarise yourself with relevant policy developments in other BIOWIND territories and equally participate in the open discussions and deliberations that will take place.

Thank you for considering our invitation, we eagerly anticipate your participation.

Sincerely,

[*Name, title, organisation, logo*

ANNEX IV. Peer-review process agenda

	Break out session (semester 4)
15 minutes	**Welcome and introduction** • Overview of the peer-review process and its role in the BIOWIND policy evaluation. • Objectives and expected outcomes of the session.
60 minutes	**Discussion & finalisation of details** • Discussion of possible modifications to the set of policy recommendations, followed by final approval. • Discussion of possible modifications to the two evaluation criteria and the evaluation indicators, followed by final approval. • Discussion of the recommended evaluation process; decision on the evaluation procedure to be adopted (collective peer-review or peer-review pairs).
15 minutes	**Next steps and closing** • Summary of key points and agreed-upon items. • Timeline for preparation leading up to the online evaluation event. • Closing remarks by the session facilitator.
	Joint working group online sessions (semester 6) **Evaluation phase 1: Territorial Assessments**
09:30 – 09:30 (CET)	**Welcome and introduction** • Opening remarks by event moderator. • Overview of the agenda and objectives for the event.
09:30 – 10:05	**Assessment of policy improvements in BIOWIND territory 1** • Presentation / self-assessment on behalf of project partner representative (**10 minutes**). • Assessments on behalf of the two stakeholder representatives (**10 minutes**). • Open discussion / Q&A session (**15 minutes**). *Each territorial assessment session will follow this format.*

10:10 – 10:45	**Assessment of policy improvements in BIOWIND territory 2**
10:50 – 11:25	**Assessment of policy improvements in BIOWIND territory 3**
11:30 – 12:05	**Assessment of policy improvements in BIOWIND territory 4**
12:10 – 12:45	**Assessment of policy improvements in BIOWIND territory 5**
12:45 – 13:15	**Lunch break**
13:15– 13:50	**Assessment of policy improvements in BIOWIND territory 6**
13:55– 14:30	**Assessment of policy improvements in BIOWIND territory 7**
14:35– 15:10	**Assessment of policy improvements in BIOWIND territory 8**
15:15– 15:50	**Assessment of policy improvements in BIOWIND territory 9**
15:50 – 16:00	**Day 1 Wrap-up** • Summary of key points from the first evaluation phase. • Brief overview of Day 2 objectives
	Joint working group online sessions **Evaluation phase 2: Collective evaluation decisions**
09:00 – 09:15	**Welcome and Recap** • Summary of Day 1 outcomes
09:15 – 11:45	**Collective analysis session _(basic scenario)_** • Discussion of policies (presented during Day 1) and potential improvements. • Comparative analysis; identification of shared challenges. • Identification of most effective examples and types of policy improvement. • Elaboration of a general set of recommendations (for further policy improvement).
11:45 – 12:15	**Break**
12:15 – 14:00	**Final consensus decisions** • Collective assessment (through consensus) of policy improvements per BIOWIND territory (5-point scale assessment; brief qualitative assessment; recommendations for additional measures / improvements, taking moreover into account the **pilot action** results).
14:00 – 14:30	**Event closing** • Summary of key findings and consensus decisions. • Next steps for the final report. • Closing remarks by event moderator.

09:15 – 11:15	***Alternative scenario*: Peer-review pairs** • Formation of pairs and discussion of assessments from Day 1. • Draft short evaluations of the other participants' region
11:15 – 12:15	Break
12:15 – 13:15	Presentation of short evaluations; open discussion
13:15 – 13:45	Event closing