WinWind

Increasing the acceptance of Wind Energy

A WinWin(d) for all

THE HANDBOOK FOR SOCIALLY-INCLUSIVE WIND ENERGY

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WinWind

IMPRINT

Date: February 2020
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Design and layout: www.rebekkadold.de

About the project: The overall objective of WinWind is to enhance the socially inclusive and environmentally sound market uptake of wind energy by increasing its social acceptance in 'wind energy scarce regions' (WESR). The specific objectives are: screening, analysing, discussing, replicating, testing & disseminating feasible solutions for increasing social acceptance and thereby the uptake of wind energy. The project considers cases of WESR in Germany, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Norway and Poland from multidisciplinary perspectives.

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FOREWORD

Wind power plays an important role in the energy transition. However, while the initial rollout of wind energy projects has been considerable, recently the momentum is starting to be lost. Aside from market, policy, technical, and geographic factors, a lack of social acceptance has a considerable negative impact on further rollout of wind energy projects. Too often benefits are perceived to be reaped by external investors with little, or no positive impact on local communities. Furthermore, there are increased concerns about the environmental consequences of wind parks. If wind energy development is to continue leading the energy transition, a change in thinking is required and benefits for all affected stakeholders need to be made an essential part of every project. The current debates on wind energy projects demonstrate that stakeholder involvement is essential to drive the clean energy agenda forward. Active engagement of stakeholders and fair participation procedures are the most important ingredients for working out a successful strategy to overcome barriers to wind energy acceptance.

There is no need to start from scratch. Already a significant number of socially-inclusive wind energy projects exist, often facilitated by forward-looking policies at different levels of government. The European Union's Clean Energy Package contains ambitious rules for how citizens need to be enabled to take part in the energy transition. This opens up new windows of opportunity: governments now have the chance to set appropriate enabling frameworks and to scale-up socially-inclusive wind energy projects.

This handbook, "A WinWin(d) for all," provides guidance on how public engagement for socially-inclusive wind energy projects can be approached. It should be considered as a snapshot of results produced by a diverse consortium spanning six countries as part of the EU-funded WinWind project. By establishing active stakeholder desks in six countries, the project has reviewed critical barriers that hold back social acceptance and completed a comprehensive analysis of the barriers and drivers to achieve socially-inclusive wind energy projects from economic, social and environmental perspectives and indicated promising best practices.

I invite readers, particularly policy makers, wind energy developers and interested citizens to be inspired by solutions presented here and to consider that wind energy can become synonymous with local value creation and can be done in a way that enhances participatory and inclusive decision-making planning procedures.

Maria-Rosaria Di Nucci
Coordinator of the WinWind project
Freie Universtät Berlin

WHY SOCIALLY-INCLUSIVE WIND ENERGY?

Opposition to wind turbines takes place at the local level and the debate on wind energy can very quickly escalate and lead to a standstill or even failure of projects.

This often results in a situation in which the full benefit of wind energy for the local community and for all involved stakeholders cannot be exploited. **These benefits are considerable!**

The WinWind project focuses mostly on analysing community acceptance of specific wind energy projects, and narrows down the overarching concept of "social acceptance." This primarily refers to the acceptance of siting decisions and wind energy projects by local stakeholders, in particular residents and local authorities.

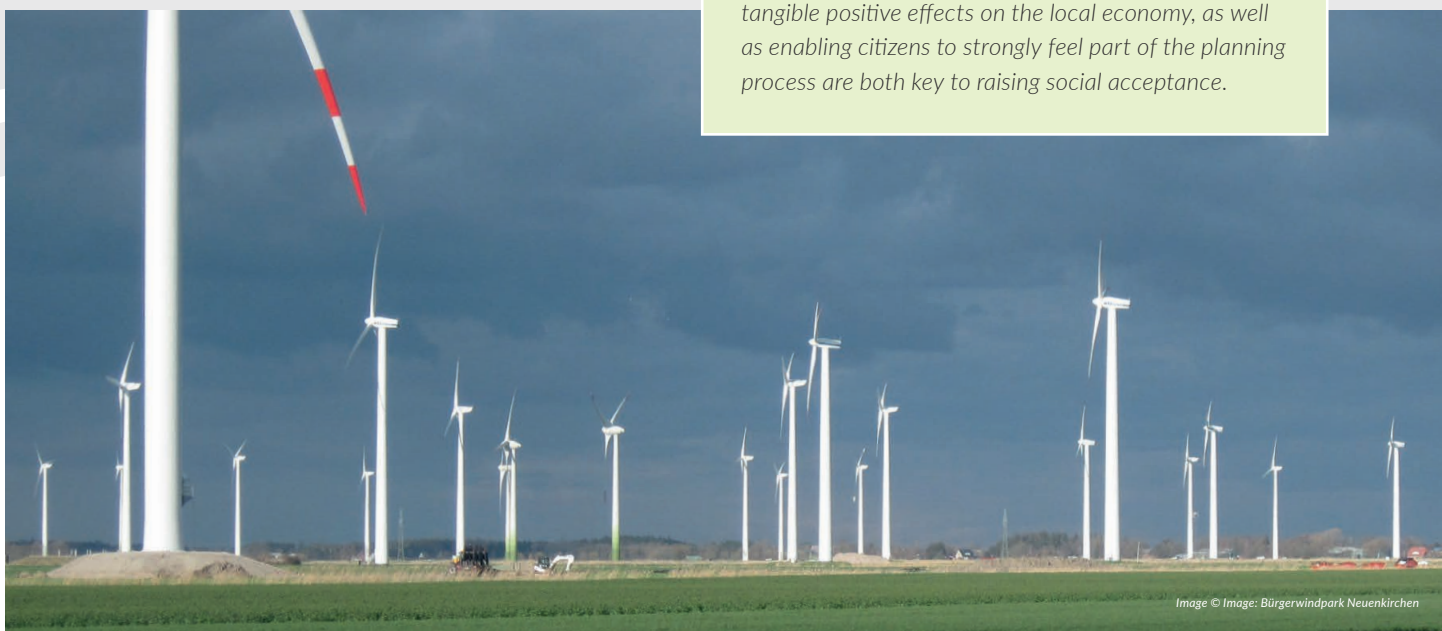
WinWind considers wind energy projects to be socially inclusive if they make effective use of public engagement to guarantee good performance across the three main fronts of sustainability: **economy, society and environment**. Such projects create a positive impact on the local economy by channelling revenue streams into the local community and (or) enabling citizens to profit from the project directly. Throughout their planning phase, these projects are transparent and forthcoming in their communication and thus make effective citizen participation and consultation possible. Through this, they show respect for local needs and (natural) heritage, and effectively aim at mitigating impact on the environment and wildlife as much as possible.

Of course, the extent to which wind energy projects encompass these factors is highly context dependent. This is because every project is unique, facing unique challenges and opportunities, rooted in the local context.

WinWind has identified a series of universally applicable drivers, which help to explain why projects are considered socially inclusive. Efforts to strengthen existing drivers and reduce existing barriers must consider any location-specific factors that ultimately shape community acceptance of specific wind energy projects.

Understanding that the degree of acceptance of a particular wind energy project depends on the interplay of many factors, this handbook is thus structured according to three streamlined questions:

While socially-inclusive wind energy projects are successful due to a combination of factors, creating tangible positive effects on the local economy, as well as enabling citizens to strongly feel part of the planning process are both key to raising social acceptance.



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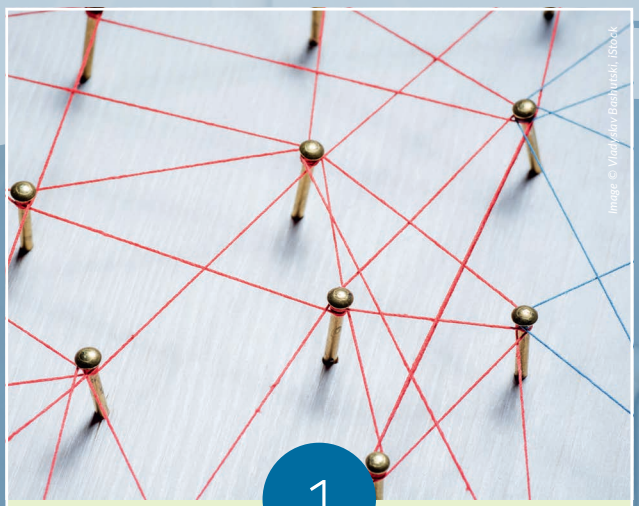

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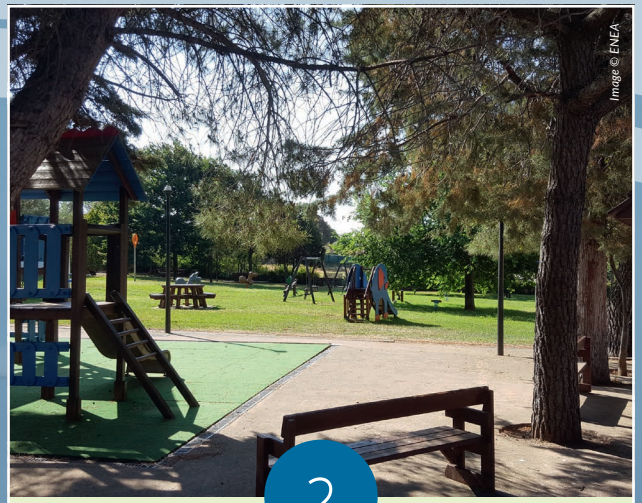
How can wind energy planning be made more inclusive?



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How can the economic benefits of wind energy be shared with society?

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How can socially-inclusive wind energy be made the new normal?

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1 HOW CAN WIND ENERGY PLANNING BE MADE MORE INCLUSIVE?

The procedures governing the siting and operation of wind parks differ among EU member states. What can generally be observed is that if laws and institutional procedures exclude local communities, then local acceptance of wind energy projects tends towards zero.

Often, **wind power plants are perceived more as a threat rather than as an opportunity for local value creation**.

Wind energy projects that feature more intensive participation of the local community in the planning and authorisation phase tend to have a higher chance of succeeding and are less prone to being perceived as "external" projects.

Opposition to wind parks often generates conflicts and comes with suspicion from citizens if inclusive planning is not considered from the very beginning. **Stakeholder consultation and direct engagement** are the most important elements needed to ground a successful strategy.

Such participatory processes cannot only focus on the technical aspects of the project, but have to be mindful of the **relationship between the people and the places in which they live**. This should also consider how a new wind park would impact a community's identity, sense of place and heritage.

Strategies to overcome barriers to wind energy acceptance therefore require substantial public involvement, with supporters and opponents brought together in a common space for consultation and debate.

The engagement of multiple stakeholders at an early stage in a project's planning phase is therefore essential.

Policy should facilitate the early provision and dissemination of transparent and objective information presented in easily understandable language. This should occur from the very beginning of the project. Such information and dissemination should be required as a condition for obtaining permits.

SPOTLIGHT:

On the island of Gran Canaria, information campaigns were particularly successful. Before concrete work on the wind park began, promotional videos were made, in cooperation with the local municipalities, and were disseminated through local television and radio channels. Large, educational posters were designed and exhibited in numerous public spaces such as bus stops, streets, schools and administrative buildings. Brochures and books were distributed, particularly within schools and huge educational campaigns took place (and continue today).

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SPOTLIGHT:

In the Norwegian district of Fosen, the national permitting authority NVE arranged about 30 public meetings, and approximately 35 meetings were held with local and regional authorities.

The large number of meetings, though time and resource intensive, gave the public an arena for expressing their views and identifying aspects that should be investigated before deciding whether a project is feasible.

EFFICIENT INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

The public needs to be well informed about the benefits of the wind park, but also on steps to mitigate negative impacts.

EFFECTIVE DIALOGUES

The climate debate is increasingly entering public discourse; energy market stakeholders, policy makers, and the general public are all increasingly perceiving wind energy as key for the energy transition.

Too often, opposition to wind parks is dismissed as residents simply lacking knowledge or being misinformed.

To be effective, dialogues have to take into consideration that **objectors are often very knowledgeable**, rooted in the local context and can therefore greatly contribute to the quality of the discussion.

Whilst one should avoid a situation whereby a few active opponents dominate local events, it should also **not be assumed that objectors to wind power are always wrong**.

It is therefore advisable to hire **professional mediators, and make use of a variety of appropriate dialogue formats**. These techniques can go a long way in facilitating a more fruitful exchange.

Intermediary and neutral organisations can also help to create an open and constructive communication culture. If properly funded, they can also act as initiators of informal dialogue processes.

Dialogues are clearly an important informative and advisory measure. They increase understanding of the particular project among the population, while the **population's feedback** should advise the authorities and developers about what local aspects need to be considered in impact assessments.

Local governments and local leaders, such as mayors, given their close connection to citizens, are especially **well placed to encourage developers to engage with the local community**.

It is crucial that developers proactively and meaningfully engage with the local community in all steps of the participatory process. This means being responsive to local concerns from the outset, and being flexible with planned steps in order to address these concerns. The developer must work closely with the relevant authority to uncover and carry out the most effective means of informal participation of citizens. In doing so, they must also show willingness to listen, adjust and make clear and realistic commitments.

WinWind`s analysis has shown that projects with stronger involvement of the municipality – either directly as part of the legal entity of the wind park, or through indirect means – are perceived to be more inclusive and trustworthy.

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2 HOW CAN THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF WIND ENERGY BE SHARED WITH SOCIETY?

Financial benefits from wind parks do not have to flow out of the local community. In fact, retaining economic value and **keeping it circulating within the local community** is one of the most enticing arguments for greater stakeholder engagement.

Tax revenues for municipalities, as well as increased activity for local businesses and local employment, are very strong drivers for social acceptance.

Measures to maximise economic value for the local community can be either "**direct**" **or** "**indirect**."

Economic benefit is generated either through the active involvement of citizens/communities as direct shareholders of a wind energy project, or by generating "indirect" involvement such as benefits from taxation and land lease payments.

Benefit sharing mechanisms are most effective in countries in which such measures are actively enabled by clear and supportive **policy and regulatory frameworks**.

ENABLING FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION

Setting the financial bar for participation low will make it more attractive for citizens to partake in the project and will increase the degree to which a wind energy project is perceived as being inclusive.

There is a variety of organisational structures or legal entities, which can be a conduit for "fair" financial involvement of citizens in wind energy projects. It is generally important to consider who the main initiator of a project is, and the degree of democratic control (by local residents) of the project, both in planning and operation.

Wind energy projects should be set up in such a way that allows for citizens and local governments to become part of the legal body operating the wind park. While the exact legal form can differ across contexts, this effectively creates energy communities in which citizens can become shareholders of the wind park and receive a certain percentage of their investment as remuneration each year.

This follows a more general trend in the energy market landscape in which consumers are increasingly at the centre of renewable energy production. They are, essentially, becoming "prosumers" – profiting and contributing to the (local) energy transition.

Developers should enhance financial citizen participation in projects by making available shares that are more affordable. Actively cooperating with the local government to set up and inform citizens about financial participation formats is also recommended. Local governments should proactively stimulate energy communities and invest some of their own resources into wind energy projects as a way of leading by example and demonstrating confidence in a particular project. They should actively encourage developers to engage with the local community.

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EXTERNAL INVESTOR-INITIATED

- Typically larger projects where developer voluntarilly offers opportunities for active financial participation.
- "Fairness" in terms of voting rights is relative to amount investment.
- Usually, this favours investors, or citizens with more money to spend.
- Provides a good degree of planning security, as those undertaking development planning are usually fixed from the beginning, providing long-term financial security.

COMMUNITY-INITIATED

- Typically smaller scale projects with lower financial bar for participation.
- "Fairness" in terms of voting rights relative to one-person-one-vote principle.
- Usually, project members can withdraw from the project within a year's notice.
- Often (not always) projects rely on voluntary engagement, as is often the case with cooperatives.

IDEAL-TYPICAL TYPES OF WIND ENERGY PROJECTS

In reality, the lines between these two categories can be blurred.
Hybrid forms, depending on the initiators and exact legal form chosen, do often occur.

SPOTLIGHT:

In the German state of Schleswig-Holstein, wind farms have been initiated by local farmers and land owners. The initiators, mayor and planners took great care that benefit opportunities were open to all local citizens, rather than just the few initial initiators.

SPOTLIGHT:

The Spanish energy cooperative Som Energia actively enables financial participation of locals. Citizens have the opportunity to become members of the cooperative and to, among other options, become co-owners of a wind park. Through Som Energia's democratic annual assembly, members are able to contribute towards the processes and strategies of the energy cooperative.

TURNING INDIRECT ECONOMIC BENEFITS INTO DIRECT SOCIAL BENEFIT

Of course, active financial participation of citizens in the legal entity of the wind park is not the only way in which economic benefits can be shared with society.

Owners of the land on which turbines are being built usually receive land lease payments. To increase acceptance, these payments should be extended to a **pool of landowners** including landowners on whose land no turbines were installed, but who were affected by the projects.

SPOTLIGHT:

In the Polish town of Kisielice, farmers on whose land the turbines have been built are paid on average 5,000 EUR in land lease fees per year for each turbine. Additional easement fees are paid to land owners for providing access to build power lines connecting the turbines to the grid.

Such an approach is particularly relevant for rural areas where farmers are highly important stakeholders in local decision making processes.

In cases in which the anticipated willingness to participate financially might not be very high (this interest can be estimated during the citizen consultation rounds during the planning phase), there should be possibilities for indirect financial benefit sharing.

SPOTLIGHT:

In the German municipality of Neuenkirchen, 1% of the annual remuneration of wind-based electricity went to a non-profit local civic association, to ensure that all members of the local community would benefit in some way. In other cases, in kind benefits and the creation of a community foundation to support social purposes and energy-saving measures were chosen.

Generally, wind farm operators pay local business taxes and, if the operating company is registered where the project is located, the hosting municipality should receive 100% of tax revenues.

Central to such approaches is that a very **broad range of individuals and families benefit from the generated income**.

SPOTLIGHT:

In the Italian municipality of Tula, 2% of gross revenue achieved annually for every kWh produced and fed to the network is given to the local municipality. This has led to investment totaling 400,000 EUR, which has been used to support environmental education of students, the establishment of new public pathways, the renovation of sports facilities, as well as a lowering of housing and waste taxes. Notably, the allocation of this income was done with the involvement of the local community.

If the decision on how to make use of municipal tax revenues is made in a participatory manner, this becomes even more effective.

SPOTLIGHT:

In Norway, wind park developer Statkraft has employed local workers during the construction of the parks. Power lines have been strengthened and road improvements have been made. In fact, an estimated 600 people have been employed during the period with the most hectic construction activity the Fosen Vind DA projects in Fosen.

Capital raised can contribute significantly to the overall municipal budget, and can be utilized and invested in ad hoc funds or revolving funds to finance projects of community interest. Where possible, wind park investors could cover the cost of modernisation of municipal roads connected to the project and installation of power lines thereby further supporting municipal budget.

In order for local communities to become aware of the way in which they passively benefit from wind farms, developers – who have the best technical and financial understanding of their projects – must strongly disseminate information on the specific benefits to the relevant authority and the local community.

CREATING LOCAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

If done correctly, wind farm development can have a significant positive effect on local employment, particularly if local businesses are contracted to carry out most of the infrastructure work. This applies to the construction phase and repowering processes, when restoration of the road network and grid connection are foreseen.

Image © Cicero

3 HOW CAN SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE WIND ENERGY BE MADE THE NEW NORMAL?

Socially-inclusive wind energy projects can and should be the future. Rather than considering inclusive projects as the exception, such approaches should be the new normal.

The conditions facing wind energy projects can differ significantly across countries. WinWind has identified a broad range of universally applicable drivers, which contribute to increasing community acceptance across a broad range of different contexts. This ensures that the transfer of best practices, though slightly adapted for different contexts, is feasible. The continued **sharing of experiences and best practices** is key to making socially inclusive wind energy a normality. An effective transfer process cannot only have an immediate impact on the development of a project, but can also highlights, which strategic changes need to be made in the overall enabling policy framework. Within WinWind, knowledge and experience exchange has taken place between different regions in Europe. This acts as a significant catalyst for future action and ideas on how effective measures can be implemented in different contexts. By increasing such exchanges, more awareness around the value of socially inclusive wind energy projects will be generated together with an increased capacity of all stakeholders to facilitate proper public engagement.

As a general baseline, and in order to speed up the uptake of best practices, it is advisable to assess wind energy projects based on a set of principles and criteria.

These have been developed by the WinWind project, based on the "Guidelines for Fair Wind Energy" in the German state of Thuringia, following considerable cross-referencing of "what works" with regard to socially inclusive wind energy. In order for such wind energy projects to be mainstreamed, they should adhere to and demonstrate to the following principles.

1. *Demonstrate a positive impact on the local economy through local contracting, local financing and co-operation with regional/municipal energy utility companies*
2. *Provide opportunities for active and passive financial participation of citizens*
3. *Ensure procedural participation of citizens through early and transparent communication as well as effective informal participation*
4. *Minimize the impact on landscape, wildlife and biodiversity*
5. *Ensure credibility and trustworthiness of developers by demonstrating an orientation towards the Common Good and further voluntary measures*

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These core principles form the basis for any socially inclusive wind energy project. They are further sub-divided into a comprehensive catalogue of criteria, which can be applied on a “pick and choose” basis in order to adequately reflect different national/regional/local contexts and enabling frameworks.

Depending on the applicable context, there are many options on how the principles and criteria can be applied, or integrated into existing frameworks. This can, for example, be done through their integration in labelling schemes for fair wind energy or green electricity. Alternatively, they can be integrated into RES support schemes, specifically as criteria for wind energy auctions, as well as in support programmes for rural development, structural and cohesion funds. Municipalities and regional planning authorities can consider integrating these criteria when making land available for wind energy projects. The wind industry is also encouraged to take this up and to consider them as voluntary self-commitments and codes of conduct.

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THE WIND IS BLOWING FOR ALL – WHY NOT SHARE ITS BENEFITS?

Social acceptance of wind energy in communities across Europe can only be achieved if projects consider both: how local communities can participate in the planning process, and how financial benefits can be more widely shared. The possibilities offered by and for public engagement presented in this report, are aimed at providing policy makers, developers and citizens with a clearer picture of the opportunities available. In order to arrive at a more institutionalised approach to public engagement, principles and criteria are presented that could form the basis for any wind energy project.

The WinWind project has provided a consistent analysis of barriers and drivers for increasing community acceptance. It has shown that specific solutions are always tailor-made, but share certain universally applicable drivers. Projects that aim to be socially-inclusive can therefore rely on existing experience, as the one analysed throughout this project. In response to changes in European legislation, EU member states are now expected to set up more favourable policies encouraging a more inclusive energy transition in which citizens increasingly take centre stage. In turn, it is local and regional governments who are most effective in nurturing acceptance, especially since municipal decision-makers are closest to citizens. A more stable, favourable and clear regulatory framework concerning e.g. community energy, would therefore enable local governments to "lead by example" and to co-invest in community wind farms.

This handbook encourages (concerned) citizens to call for more social inclusivity in local wind energy projects, so that projects can be carried out while respecting the needs and concerns of the local population, ensuring the highest possible community benefit.

A complementary instrument to this handbook is the online interactive tool "Pocket WinWind" It provides further insights responding directly to the specific informational needs of developers, public decision makers and citizens. The tool provides support regarding how to approach challenges and make use of opportunities to achieve socially inclusive wind energy projects.

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WinWind has received funding from European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement N° 764717. The sole responsibility for any errors or omissions made lies with the consortium. The content does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission. The European Commission is also not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.