



Open and Inclusive Policy Making

Background

The OECD launched a project on ‘open and inclusive policy making’ as a result of the Ministerial Meeting of the Public Governance Committee in Rotterdam, in 2005 where the OECD members identified ‘open and inclusive policy making’ as one of the themes of particular interest.

“More open and inclusive policy making can strengthen trust in government, thereby contributing to social stability.” (2005 OECD Ministerial Meeting, Rotterdam) ■

Definition

‘Open and inclusive policy making’ is transparent, accessible, and responsive to as wide a range of citizens as possible. ■

How OECD defines government-citizen relations in policy making?

► Information

Government disseminates information on policy making on their own initiatives. It also allows citizens’ access to information on their demand, so as to ensure citizens’ right to know in the policy making process.

In this phase, government and citizens have one-way relations, where government produces and provides information to citizens for use. ‘Passive’ access to information is delivered upon demand by citizens, while ‘active’ access by government to provide information to citizens.

► Consultation

Government receives feedback on policy making from citizens. In so doing, government defines whose views are required for which issue in policy making. Consultation creates a two-way relation between government and citizens where citizens’ views are being sought and required based on the prior information provided to them.

► Active Participation

Citizens actively engage in decision-making and policy making by exchanging their views on policy-making and proposing policy-options. The government-citizen relation can be defined as an advanced two-way relations based on partnership. However, the responsibility for final decision or policy formulation rests with government. ■

^ More details : [Engaging Citizens in Policy-making : Information, Consulation and Public Participation](#)

What are the main trends in policy making?

Information for citizens is now an objective shared by all OECD countries. The scope, quantity and quality of government information provided to the public has increased greatly over the past decade.

Consultation and opportunities for citizens to provide feedback on policy proposals is also on the rise, but at a slower rate. Large differences remain among OECD countries.

Active participation and efforts to engage citizens in policy making on a partnership basis are rare, undertaken on a pilot basis only and confined to a very few OECD countries. ■

OECD countries : Progress & Barriers

In 2001, OECD countries identified a set of **10 guiding principles** for information, consultation and active participation : commitment, rights, clarity, time, objectivity, resources, co-ordination, accountability, evaluation, and active citizenship.

The quantity of information provided by government has increased in OECD countries. In spite of some progress in engaging citizens, the results of citizen engagement are significantly less satisfactory than expected among them.

The survey of the results over the past 5 years has been presented by Ms. Joanne Caddy, policy analyst of the OECD at International Conference on Enhancing Citizen Participation in Public Governance hosted by OECD Asian Centre for Public Governance (former OECD/KOREA Policy Centre) and the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission of Thailand in Bangkok. ■

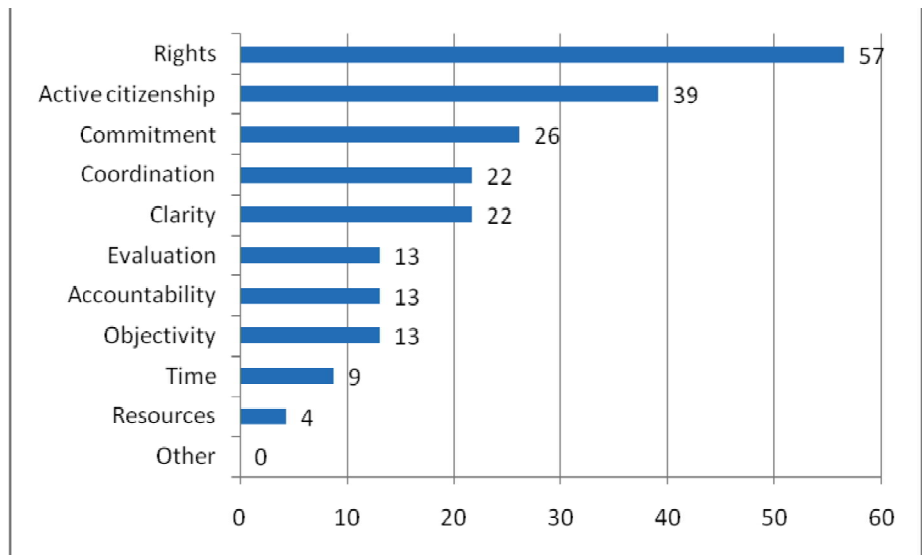
^ More information : [Bangkok Conference: Session 1](#)

OECD Guiding Principles for Engaging Citizens in Policy-making

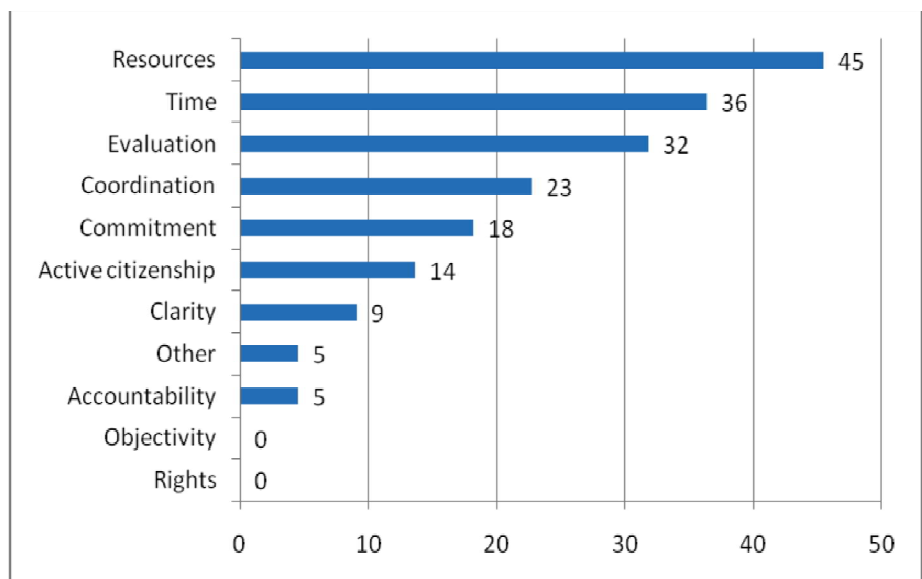
Approximately 57% of countries identified ‘providing rights to citizens’ as the principle that has seen most progress over the past 5 years. The extent to which countries have an active civil society differs widely and depends for example on their historical and cultural background.

A discrepancy between countries in the sense that progress made in ensuring commitment from higher administrative levels as well as from the political level is relatively high (26%), but other countries state that commitment is the most difficult principle to meet (18%). ■

▲ **Figure 1**
Principles with most progress achieved over last 5 years (%)



▲ **Figure 2**
Principles most difficult to meet over last 5 years (%)



What are the barriers to engage citizens?

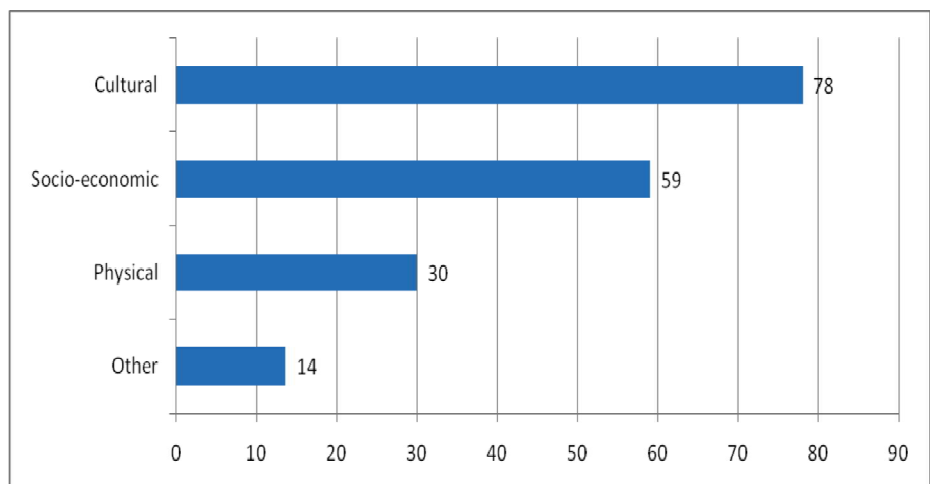
The barriers for citizen engagement can be classified as below :

- ▶ ***People who are willing, but unable*** : they face barriers of entry to participation in policy making: these barriers may be cultural (e.g. language barriers), socio-economic (e.g. illiteracy) or physical (e.g. people with disabilities)
- ▶ ***People who are able, but unwilling*** : they face barriers of a more personal nature : although these people are generally perfectly equipped to exert influence on the policy making process, they lack the interest or motivation, or may feel that they have no influence over policy.

Approximately 78% of OECD countries see cultural barriers as the most significant factor that hinders those who are willing but unable to participate (See figure 3). Specifically, a large majority of countries mentioned ‘language problems’, often referring to recent immigrants’ insufficient language skills.

Ethnical affiliation, different traditions, values and/or beliefs and even a culture of confidentiality in civil servants are also mentioned for the other cultural barriers.

▲ **Figure 3**
Willing but unable :
barriers to engagement
(%)

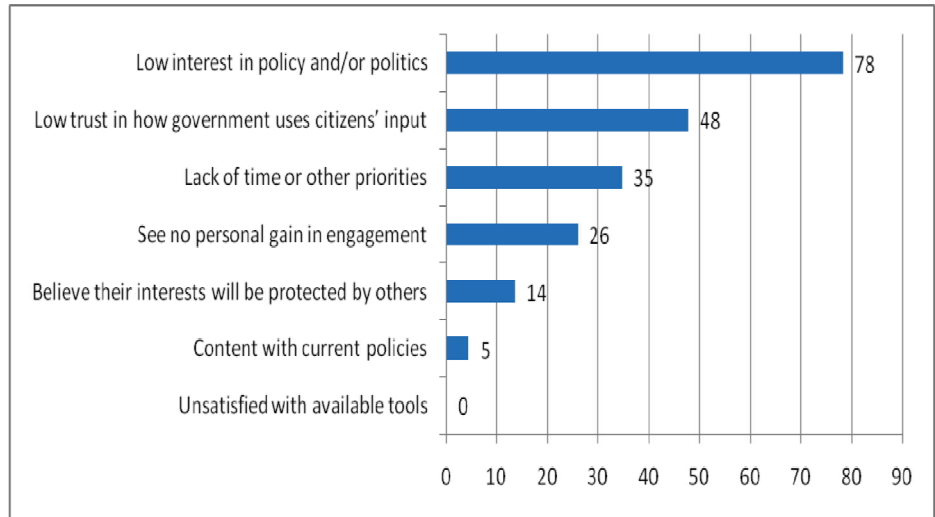


On the other hand, the most important reason for the ‘able but unwilling’ to engage in policy making is a low interest in policy and politics (See figure 4).

A polarization between countries on “low trust in the use

governments will make of the citizens' input" 50% of countries see this as a very important reason, whereas approximately 41% of countries see it as of no or very low importance. ■

▲ **Figure 4**
Able but unwilling : reasons why not to engage (%)

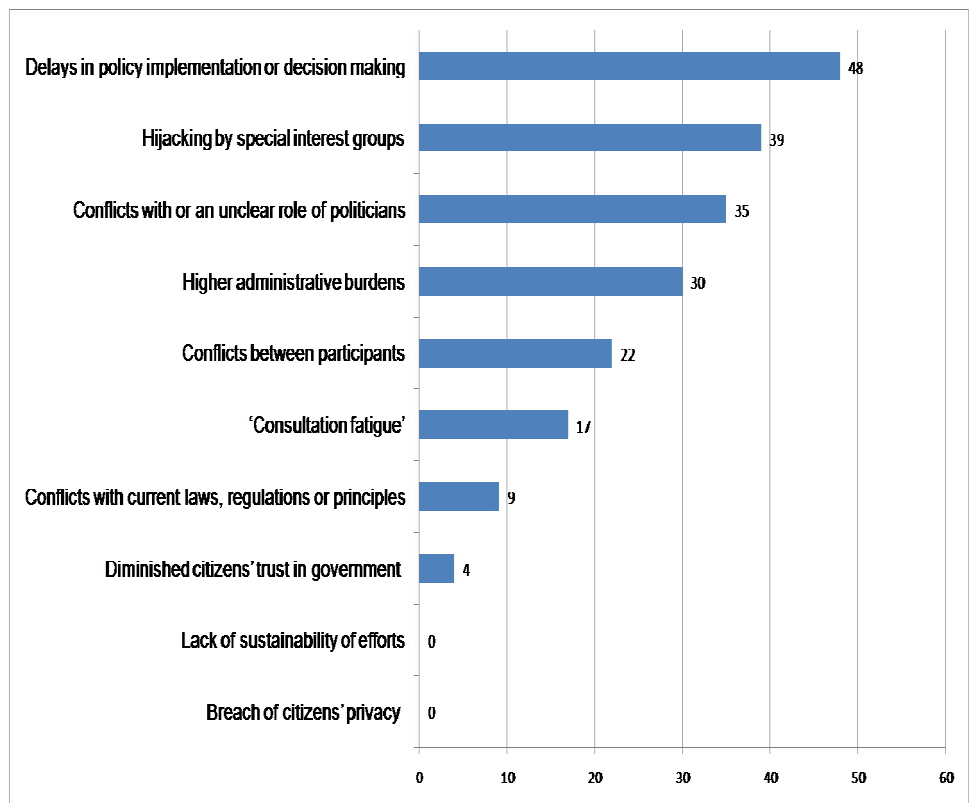


Other Consideration

Risks for Government in Engaging Citizens in Policy-making

Over a third of countries indicated that delays in policy making, hijacking of the process by special interest groups and conflicts with politicians might be very significant risks for government (See Figure 5). ■

▲ **Figure 5.**
What are acknowledged as typical 'risks' for government (% of countries indicating this as a (very) important risk)



What needs to be considered for further development?

While the opportunity for citizen participation has increased, there still exist objective(language, time and lack of recognition etc.) and subjective(lack of trust in government and confidence etc.) barriers.

To lower the objective barriers, capabilities and skills for effective participation should be developed, along with the environment where citizens are able to participate when they want.

For those who are able but unwilling to participate, more opportunities for new knowledge, social network and self-efficacy should be provided through the participation.

Furthermore, the appropriate use of new technology, especially web 2.0 (blog, mash-up etc.) enables government and citizens to more actively communicate one another in policy-making processes. ■

REFERENCES

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