



Document No.  
Issue date  
Dissemination Level  
Page

SiteChar D8.2  
August 2012  
Public  
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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DG RESEARCH**

**SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME  
THEME 5 - Energy**  
ENERGY.2010.5.2-1: CCS - storage site characterisation

Collaborative Project - GA No. 256705



**SiteChar**  
**Characterisation of European CO<sub>2</sub> storage**

**Deliverable N° D8.2**  
**Trust building and raising public awareness**

**Executive Summary**

This document contains a summary of deliverable D8.1 which is part of the SiteChar project:  
<http://www.sitechar-co2.eu>, Work Package 8.

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

At local level, public support has proven crucial to the implementation of CO<sub>2</sub> capture and storage (CCS) demonstration projects. Whereas no method exists to guarantee public acceptability of any project, a constructive stakeholder and community engagement process does increase the likelihood thereof.

This deliverable is a follow-up to deliverable D8.1 “Social site characterisation” (Brunsting et al, 2011a). Social site characterisation can be used as an instrument to explore, plan and evaluate a process of active and constructive local stakeholder and citizen engagement in a prospective CCS project as a parallel activity to technical site characterisation (Wade & Greenberg, 2009, 2011). It serves as an analytical tool to describe the local social circumstances in the area and to design and evaluate stakeholder and community engagement efforts with the aims of building trust and raising public awareness.

Using results from the social site characterisation of the area, the present deliverable focuses on the second purpose. It presents results from public engagement activities designed to raise public awareness and inform public opinion of a prospective CCS site in Poland (onshore) and the UK (offshore): focus conferences. Furthermore, by initiating an enhanced cooperation in planning of new storage sites between project developers, authorities and the local public, focus conferences aim to serve as a “hinge” between social site characterisation as a research effort and application to real-life project settings. The focus conferences are part of a range of public engagement activities including the setup of public information websites on generic and site-specific CCS, information meetings. A second survey eventually shall evaluate the results of the public engagement activities.

### Research overview

The aim of the focus conferences was to raise public awareness and assist public opinion forming processes of a prospective CCS site in Poland (onshore) and the UK (offshore). At the same time, it aimed to present and test a format in which project developers, authorities, and the local public could enhance their cooperation in project planning. To this end, a group of 11-16 participants recruited from the local public gathered on two weekends to be informed about CCS technology, to discuss their perceptions of the rewards and risks of CCS technology, and to state their conditions for a socially acceptable implementation of CCS projects. Experts from research, politics, industry and NGOs were invited to participate in both weekends, during which they gave presentations and answered questions from the participants. This process resulted in a positioning paper written by the participants representing a statement on CCS technology from their perspective.

### Results

Here we summarize the key messages from the focus conference participants to illustrate and integrate some points we have seen before and we feel are important to highlight to the reader. However, readers who take interest in these points are strongly encouraged to read the citizens' own wording of the issues, which are more elaborate than our repetition thereof. The positioning papers can be found in paragraph 3.7 (Polish participants) and in 4.7 (Scottish participants).



In Scotland, the participants' most important condition seemed to be that if CCS is at all worth pursuing, it should only be developed as part of a suite of options to combat climate change. More specifically, most of them think that CCS should be developed on a parallel track with renewable energies. In Poland, the majority of the participants agreed that there are too many open questions regarding risks, benefits to the region, costs, and the position of the government. In all, the Polish participants think that at present CCS is generally too costly to invest in and that locally there are too many uncertainties to justify a project that lacks a clear local benefit.

Key messages from both groups can be summarized as follows:

- Agreeing that climate change happens and that measures should be taken does not imply agreement on CCS as a suitable method to curb climate change
- Acceptability of CCS is related to other measures to combat climate change
- Pay attention to national and local advantages and disadvantages
- Pay attention to risks and uncertainties
- National and European governments should clarify their role/position
- Citizens expect public communication and participation activities

Key recommendations from the authors for the use of focus conferences in projects are:

- Ensure trust in the facilitators and allow time to create a safe environment
- Embed focus conferences in a range of public engagement activities
- Do not extrapolate findings from small group research to communities
- Balance positions taken by speakers and in discussion materials

## Conclusions

Focus conferences as public engagement activities can provide insight in the way local CCS plans will be perceived by the local public and enhance co-operation in planning of new storage sites between project developers, authorities and the local public. The research presented in this deliverable has resulted in first-hand accounts from Polish and Scottish citizens themselves on:

- Levels of awareness and knowledge of CO<sub>2</sub> and CCS
- Questions and concerns about CCS in context of other climate mitigation methods
- Expectations of CCS on (inter)national level
- Expectations of local CCS plans
- Conditions for implementation of CCS on (inter)national as well as local scale

The focus conference appears suitable for raising public awareness and to assist public opinion forming processes about complex issues such as CCS and to initiate local discussion and planning processes. Key to a constructive focus conference is trust in the independence of the facilitators. In a real life project, hiring independent facilitators would be recommended. These results inform further information provision and public engagement within as well as outside SiteChar.

Questions remain regarding the duration of the positive effects of focus conferences in citizen's attitudes and their applicability to a real project setting. Public engagement efforts are ultimately only effective if they make citizens feel listened to, involved, and empowered. In a real project setting, this can only be achieved if the citizens' suggestions are taken seriously and are truly taken into account in decisions regarding the project as well as in national policy agendas.



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### **Future activities**

The Polish positioning paper and its importance for the Polish climate strategy has been presented to the public, representatives of politics and research organizations during an information meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012 in Góra Śląska in Poland. A similar meeting will be held in the UK on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2012 at Elgin Town Hall in Scotland. Both meetings are followed by a survey to measure developments in local public awareness and opinion.