



Stakeholder Engagement

Methodological principles and rules

Consultation of a panel of stakeholders organized by Comité 21

2010



The aim of the consultation with stakeholders is to increase the degree to which the company's sustainable development strategy responds to the expectations of civil society and provide input to its reflections and commitments with regard to sustainable development. In the medium term, this should lead the company to adequately define its commitments and tailor its action plan.

■ Principles and rules

Comité 21 proposes a framework of principles and rules, which must be applied by the company, the stakeholders and Comité 21, to ensure that discussions take place in a climate of trust and mutual respect, which are necessary at all stages of the process, and to ensure the credibility and efficiency of these processes.

- **Chatham House Rule**

Comité 21, the enterprise and the stakeholders undertake to adhere to the **Chatham House Rule** during all phases of the consultation process. This rule states that:

"When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rules, participants are free to use information received, but neither the identity, nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed" (cf. <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/about/chathamhouserule/>).

Concrete examples:

A stakeholder, or the enterprise, **may** tell a person that is external (e.g.: a journalist) or internal (member/employee of their organization):

"I took part in a consultation where renewable energy and acquisitions of sector companies was discussed", or, "Within the frame of the consultation for Company X (explicitly named), a stakeholder said that it was unrealistic to talk about CO₂-free energy".

However, a stakeholder, or company, **may not say**:

"Within the frame of the consultation for Company X (explicitly named), a given stakeholder or a given person said that it was unrealistic to talk about CO₂-free energy".

The stakeholders are also informed of the existence of a summary of the meeting in which they participate (see below). This summary, drafted by Comité 21 and proposed to the enterprise, is intended to provide civil society with a formal record of the discussions that took place in a form that does not contravene the Chatham House rule explained above.

- **Courteous discussions and listening skills**

In the preparation of this dialog with the enterprise, Comité 21 ensures that the integrity of sustainable development (vision 360°) is complied with and that all aspects are taken into account in a systematic approach. Diverse but inseparable issues will therefore be addressed.

Participants are requested to listen to what others have to say and ensure that their own interventions are courteous.

The enterprise formally commits to answer all questions posed, with the exception of those of a commercially sensitive nature, even if the consultation does not presuppose the agreement and/or ability of the enterprise to provide operational and/or immediate replies to all questions posed by the stakeholders.

■ Stakeholders

Comité 21 is responsible for compiling the list of external stakeholders. This list is proposed to the enterprise, which may make changes and suggest other stakeholders, under the express arbitration of Comité 21. In the event of a significant disagreement between the enterprise and Comité 21 concerning the choice of stakeholders, Comité 21 may decide to cancel the ongoing process.

The optimum number of participants has been evaluated to be between fifteen and twenty on the side of the stakeholders, amongst which may be represented the research community, local authorities, associations for environmental protection, social solidarity, consumer protection, socially-responsible investment, etc.

Comité 21 requires the enterprise to demonstrate representativeness on its side in such a way that the number of its own participants is approximately equal to the number of stakeholders, or at least sufficient so as not to create an imbalance between the two represented sides.

■ Consultation procedure

• First session

Within the frame of a first session, the meeting with the stakeholders may be organized in two parts:

1st meeting:

An opportunity for the enterprise to listen, with the aim of understanding the points of view of the stakeholders with regard to the enterprise's activities and the challenges (economic, environmental, societal) it faces, and take stock of stakeholder proposals regarding its sustainable development strategy.

During this first meeting, listening is the main priority and as such the enterprise is not required at this stage to provide operational replies, except in the case of major factual errors (incorrect figures, contradictions, etc.).

2nd meeting:

An opportunity for the enterprise to respond, after having examined the expectations and proposals, informing the stakeholders of the decisions taken and actions effectively initiated, based on concrete and measurable commitments and an implementation calendar.

In this case, these decisions must be confirmed in the sustainable development report for the following year. During this second meeting, the stakeholders may comment on the degree to which the enterprise's responses have fulfilled the expectations expressed and propose future developments.

• Subsequent sessions

In the frame of the following sessions, the meeting with the stakeholders can be organized in one or more meetings. Each agenda item will be divided into two halves:

- A presentation by the enterprise of its commitments and their operational transposition.
- A debate with the stakeholders concerning the appropriateness of these responses with proposals for improvements.

In all cases, meetings with stakeholders are prepared on the basis of an information dossier, provided in advance, which defines the process rules, the list of confirmed stakeholders, the detailed meeting agenda, which is accompanied by a summary of the information necessary for stakeholders to formulate their opinions and proposals.

■ Minutes

Comité 21 is responsible for organizing all relations with the stakeholders and for drafting and distributing the minutes of the consultation, in the following form:

- A verbatim report shall be sent by Comité 21 to all participants, who may, under the arbitration of Comité 21, suggest amendments with the aim of ensuring completeness, integrity and the accurate representation of interventions. An audio recording of the discussions is made to allow the drafting of minutes, then to allow Comité 21 to prepare a summary.
- A summary of the consultation will be prepared by Comité 21 and submitted to the enterprise to allow it to take stakeholder comments into account.
- This summary, in its initial or simplified form, will be sent to the stakeholders with the aim of informing both these stakeholders and civil society on the progress of the consultation process.

■ Payment of an allowance to stakeholders

An allowance for the time spent - € 500 per half-day – shall be paid to the associations for their participation in the process as a whole, i.e., in the consultation meetings, when explicitly requested by them.

This is a request to the enterprises on the part of Comité 21. This possibility contributes to ensuring the long-term continuity of the actions of associations. This allowance will be paid by Comité 21, which will then be reimbursed by the enterprise.

Stakeholders not resident in the Paris metropolitan area (Ile-de-France) may request a travel and subsistence allowance (transport, accommodation, meals) from the enterprise based on a flat-rate scheme defined by the enterprise. This reimbursement will be paid by Comité 21, which will itself receive subsequent reimbursement from the enterprise.