

The ITA Process™

*The Institutionalised Transparency and Accountability Process
for clarity in policy making*

Kjell Andersson, Karita Research AB
kjell.andersson@karita.se

Clas-Otto Wene, Wenergy AB
clas-otto.wene@wenergy.se

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Foreword

Concerns about the lack of trust in societal institutions has made EU institutions as well as member countries convinced that citizens should be more involved in the decision processes. The Plan D¹ of the European Commission as well as the White Paper on Communication² are visible expressions of commitment in this direction, as well as the European Transparency Initiative³. However, we believe that these initiatives by the Commission as well as participatory processes developed in member states need to be complemented with new arenas that provide transparency, awareness and accountability in the policy making process.

Areas such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, synthetic biology, food safety, sustainable energy production and security have a high technological and scientific content, however, they also contain social concerns, ethical aspects and major democratic challenges. It is thus critical that politicians and citizens get insight so that societal decisions are made with clarity and awareness. In this report we define a process aimed to increase the clarity of issues, especially those with a high technical and scientific content, among citizens, stakeholders and policy makers.

Kjell Andersson

Clas-Otto Wene

¹ The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate COM(2005) 494

² White Paper on A European Communication Policy. COM(2006) 35

³ European Transparency Initiative. Green Paper. COM(2006) 194

The ITA ProcessTM

In this document the ITA ProcessTM (*Institutionalised Transparency and Accountability Process*), to be applied by *ITA Projects*, is defined by eight points supported by five annexes.

Introduction

The ITA ProcessTM rests on four principles given in [Annex 1](#). It sets a framework for how narrow framing and fragmented information on complex policy issues can be replaced by increased awareness of all aspects and for increasing stakeholders mutual appreciation of each others values and arguments. This helps building a high quality decision-making basis without having the purpose to make participants agree on certain positions or decisions. The ITA ProcessTM aims to support *transparent* policy making, for example within the framework of representative democratic assemblies, with *clarification of factual and value-laden arguments*. With public insight the Process enhances democratic *accountability*.

1. Initiation of an *ITA Project*

An *ITA Project* can be initiated by proposal either by Karita Research AB, Wenergy AB (KARWEN)⁴ or by an external body such as a governmental body, a non-governmental organization (NGO), a parliament, a scientific committee or an industry. In case a cluster of projects are organized in cooperation between KARWEN and an external body⁵, each project has to follow the ITA ProcessTM with its own Project Team, Reference Group and Reference Group Agreement. An *ITA Project* should have a political body (a parliament, a government or equivalent at local, regional, national, EU or international level) as “end user”, i.e. there should be an expressed political interest in the Project. In some cases, however, a specific political body may not be identifiable as end user in which case “society at large” would be the end user.

2. Early actions

The KARWEN investigates the feasibility of proposed projects by preliminary contacts with potential participants and by seeking funding from appropriate sources. If the KARWEN takes decision to proceed with the proposed project a Project Team is organized and members of a Reference Group are identified. The early actions may include an analysis of the organizational prerequisites for transparency in the area proposed for the project.

⁴ In the following, KARWEN stands for Karita Research AB and Wenergy AB

⁵ Such a cluster of projects may be given an umbrella name, such as “European Transparency Arena” if set up in cooperation between an EU institution and the KARWEN.

3. The Project Team

The *Project Team* consists of KARWEN personnel and external persons with competence needed for the specific ITA Project. All members of the Project Team shall make a declaration of interest (Annex 2) before the first meeting with the Reference Group or, if called in at a later point in time, before they start to work with the ITA Project. They shall also take part in a two day course on the ITA ProcessTM (Annex 3). The Project Team should provide the Reference Group with an organizational analysis of the system of stakeholders having responsibilities in the area in focus for the ITA Project and propose aim and context for the ITA Project in accordance with Annex 4.

4. The Reference Group

A *Reference Group* is established with stakeholder participation (e.g. industry, academia, authorities, NGO:s). Following proposals from the Project Team, the Reference Group decides on context and aim of the ITA Project. The Reference Group oversees how the Project Team conducts the ITA Project, and how the Project Team applies the ITA Principles in Annex 1 to the ITA Project. The participation of all stakeholders is important from the initial phase to ensure the fairness of the entire process. Non-Governmental Organizations, for example, should not just be expected to participate without having taken part in the project design.

5. ITA Reference Group Agreement

The Parties represented in an ITA Reference Group set up an Agreement between themselves that covers the objective of the Project, its organization, activities to be performed, economic reimbursement and reporting. An outline for an *ITA Reference Group Agreement* is given in Annex 5. The Agreement tells how the general ITA ProcessTM is implemented in the specific Project at hand. The contents of the Agreement is thus adjusted to the particular project and the Agreement may also include additional items than given in the annex outline.

The Agreement is confirmed by minutes from a meeting with the Reference Group.

6. Knowledge building activities

The activities of an ITA Project may include seminars or other forms of knowledge building activities that take place before, or in parallel with, hearings. The aim of such activities is to secure high quality hearings, specified in point 7, and otherwise to provide a common knowledge base between the Parties.

7. Hearings

Hearings are organized where factual, normative and ethical aspects are all illuminated and made clearly visible. The agendas, decided by the Project Team after consultation with the Reference Group, are tailored for *stretching* (See Annex 1) the arguments made by Parties for

the purpose of clarifying factual and value-laden elements. The hearings are made as public as possible and preferably with media attendance. This can be combined with other activities such as seminars and group work. It is important that the hearings take place at a neutral venue and are hosted by a body with high public trust.

8. Documentation

At the end of an ITA Project, the results are reported to the end users and disseminated to the general public. The extent and forms of documentation is decided on by the Project Team after consultation with the Reference Group and will obviously depend on available resources. Since the identity of the ITA ProcessTM is the clarification of issues as such, the project should not end with recommendations on decisions about e.g. if a certain technology should, or should not, be accepted. Conclusions can, however, be made about how to reach high quality decisions in the area based on the clarification of factual and value –laden consequences of alternative decisions.

Annex 1

The ITA Principles

1. A multi-perspective starting point

As issues are discussed in public, various points of view crystallize - they may even become congealed. Crystallization usually takes the form of "frames". Interests, emotions, values, cognitive styles and ingrained ways of thinking cause groups to frame issues by defining what each issue is really about. Once a person or a group has established a frame for a disputed issue, that frame affects the notions of what evidence is relevant and what considerations should be declared out of bounds. This often leads to a great deal of unprofitable discussion, premature closure, and lack of attention to minority views. Such narrow framing, which can be technical or social, should be avoided. The ITA ProcessTM should allow a wide range of participants to take part representing diverse perspectives on the issues at hand.

2. Stretching capacity

Making policy makers, citizens and stakeholders aware of new perspectives requires procedures for elucidating the issues from all possible angles. For example, the arguments of a proponent of a certain project must be tested from different perspectives and alternative solutions must be discussed, as well as alternative outcomes. The ITA ProcessTM should have the capacity to evaluate factual, normative and ethical issues and uncertainties about all the three types of issues. It should also offer the possibility to evaluate the authenticity of decision-makers, participating stakeholders and experts, and to explore possible hidden agendas. The concept of *stretching* is part of the *RISCOM Model of transparency* which gives a definition of transparency in terms of validity claims and provides a means for structuring debates (which can be used in ITA Projects) at different levels of meaningful debate⁶.

3. Impartiality and fairness

The ITA ProcessTM must be perceived as impartial – intellectually neutral as to ideology and with no vested interest. Fairness also means that participants must have a real possibility to influence agendas, i.e. how these principles are set into action. Agreeing upon and making public the “rules of the game” among the parties involved as early in the process as possible, is an important element of transparency. Different viewpoints must be given opportunities to participate.

⁶ See e.g.:

Andersson, K., Espejo, R., Wene, C-O. Building channels for transparent risk assessment, SKI Report 98:5, RISCOM pilot study, Stockholm 1998.

or:

Andersson, K., Drottz-Sjöberg, B-M., Espejo, R., Fleming, P.A. and Wene, C-O., Models of Transparency and Accountability in the Biotech Age. Bulletin of Science Technology Society. 2006; 26: 46-56.

4. Publicity

Awareness and transparency of an issue can be achieved within a group of people or stakeholders, such as an ITA Reference Group, without much public insight. This may be a valuable achievement as such, but is not enough in a democratic society. Also the public at large should be given insight into the same issues since only then can citizens hold the political decision makers accountable for their decisions. Discourse for awareness creation and stretching thus requires access to information channels and mass media. Efforts to gain such public insight is thus an indispensable part of the ITA ProcessTM.

Annex 2

Declaration of interest for ITA Project Team Members

Name of ITA Project (area being investigated) following the ITA Process™ :

Surname:

Forename:

I, the undersigned, hereby declare :

A) THE FOLLOWING PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

B) THE FOLLOWING PAID FUNCTIONS OR ACTIVITIES:

C) THE FOLLOWING FINANCIAL SUPPORT RECEIVED IN RECENT THREE YEARS FROM ORGANIZATIONS RELATED TO THE AREA BEING INVESTIGATED

D) FURTHER INFORMATION (E.G OTHER UNPAID ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO THE AREA BEING INVESTIGATED):

Date:

Signature:

Annex 3

*Contents of two day course
on the ITA ProcessTM*

The course is provided by KARWEN. It contains the following subjects:

- Habermas: communicative action versus strategic action
- The RISCUM Model: stretching, levels of meaningful debate
- Relations between transparency, representative democracy and deliberative democracy
- The ITA ProcessTM

Annex 4

The ITA ProcessTM in CATWOE terminology

Peter Checkland⁷ has defined the mnemonic CATWOE to describe a human activity and its situation as part of the *Soft Systems Methodology*. From the perspective of a specific World View (“Weltanschauung”), a proposed or existing process can be seen as Transforming a defined input into a defined output. This Transformation is performed for Customers by Actors. The activity is controlled by Owners, and occurs within an Environment that sets certain conditions on the activity. The elements of CATWOE are thus Customers, Actors, Transformation, Weltanschauung (world view), Owner and Environment. It is clarifying to describe the ITA ProcessTM in these terms.

Customers - those who may benefit or suffer from the process

All participants benefit by increased clarity and understanding. In a political context, democracy is enhanced by increased clarity and understanding among both political decision makers and citizens at large. Parties that act for narrow framing and fragmentation will find such activities more difficult to achieve.

Actors- Those who carry out the main activities within the system.

The Project Team does the actual project work. The Reference Group meets regularly to follow up the Project, evaluate recent events and discuss the planning for coming events. It consists of stakeholders that are also Customers (there is thus a certain overlap between categories in CATWOE).

Transformation

Narrow framing and fragmented information on complex policy issues is replaced by increased awareness of all aspects and participating stakeholders gain mutual appreciation of each others values and arguments. This helps building a high quality decision-making basis without binding participants to certain positions or decisions.

Making policy makers, citizens and stakeholders aware of new perspectives requires procedures for elucidating the issues from all possible angles. For example, the arguments of a proponent of a certain project must be tested from different perspectives and alternative solutions must be discussed, as well as alternative outcomes. The process should have the capacity to review and evaluate issues of facts, norms and values. It should also offer a possibility to test the authenticity of decision-makers, participating stakeholders and experts, and to explore hidden agendas.

Weltanschauung – World view

Societal development benefits from awareness in political decisions of all factual and value-laden elements of alternative directions, clarity of discourse, public insight and political accountability. In a representative democracy this implies that elected representatives and the arms of government have the resources to create the necessary awareness, and that citizens have the insight to gain the same level of awareness, thereby being able to hold the elected representatives accountable for their decisions.

⁷ Checkland, P.B. *Systems Thinking, Systems Practice*, John Wiley & Sons Ltd. 1981, 1998

Owners – those who control the activity and have the power to stop it

In CATWOE terminology, KARWEN owns the ITA ProcessTM. Funding partner(s) are often defined as Owners of an activity. Certainly, an ITA Project can not be realized without a sufficient level funding, however, the funding is in this context seen as part of the Environment.

Environment - constraints from the 'world' in which the activity takes place

An ITA Project is dependent on trust from the Partners in the Reference Group and from the surrounding society. The Projects must address issues that are relevant matters for societal debate and policy making. They must also be handled in such a way that hidden agendas cannot be suspected, a matter that includes the sources and management of funding.

Annex 5

ITA Reference Group Agreement (Outline)

(This is an outline for an ITA Reference Group Agreement which will be adapted to the specific projects. In principal, all matters that can be foreseen to become issues of controversy between the Parties should be dealt with in this Agreement or otherwise solved between the Parties at an early stage of an ITA Project.)

We (the Parties) agree to serve as Reference Group for the (NAME OF PROJECT) to be carried out during (PERIOD OF PROJECT). This Agreement regulates the objectives, organization, activities, economic reimbursement and documentation of the (NAME OF PROJECT). The Agreement sets into practice how the (NAME OF PROJECT) shall be conducted according to the ITA ProcessTM .

Objective

The objective of the (NAME OF PROJECT) is to increase our common awareness of all aspects of (THE ISSUE TO BE DEALT WITH) in order to improve the prerequisites for a high quality (E.G. EXPECTED DECISION). Efforts will be made to give the general public full insight into project activities and results.

Organization

The Project Team does the actual project work. The Reference Group meets regularly to follow up the Project, evaluate recent events and discuss the planning for coming events.

This Agreement should specify the following matters:

- *Reference Group chair and vice chair*
- *Host organization(s) for seminars and hearings*
- *Rules for entrance of new Parties, observers*
- *Other relevant organizational aspects*

Activities

Activities are identified, including a preliminary estimation of the number of seminars, hearings for stretching and meetings with the reference group.

The sequence of events, as well as detailed agendas, are discussed in the Reference Group with reference to the ITA Principles. Here, the RISCUM Model gives support in structuring the issues to be dealt with during the project.

In lack of agreement in the Reference Group the Project Team takes decisions.

Economic reimbursement

Normally, stakeholders take care of their own expenses for meetings with the Reference Group, seminars and hearings etc. However, the Project budget should allow for certain

economical support for expenses of resource weak Parties. In case a Party claims reimbursement from the Project budget, the Project Team takes the decision after consultation with the Reference Group.

Reporting

The extent and forms of documentation is decided on by the Project Team after consultation with the Reference Group and will obviously depend on available resources. Since the identity of the ITA ProcessTM is the illumination of issues as such, the project should not end with recommendations on decisions about e.g. if a certain technology should, or should not, be accepted. Conclusions can, however, be made about how to reach high quality decisions in the area, clarification of the factual and value –laden consequences of alternative decisions, which aspects seem to be lacking in the public debate, etc.

The Project Team is responsible for the reporting. A draft report is given to the all the Parties for review and comments. In addition, a Party can provide a two page text that will be included in the final report as an Appendix.

Confirmation

This agreement is confirmed by minutes from meeting on (DATE) at (PLACE). .

PARTIES

Organisation	Contact Person
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