



Designating Renewables Acceleration Areas

The Energy Community Secretariat, Technical Workshop on Renewable Acceleration Areas (RAAs) and RES Permitting Reform , Podgorica, 29 April 2026

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Agenda

- 1. Rationale**
- 2. State of play**
- 3. Step by step in designating RAAs**
- 4. Discussion about challenges and improvements**

The Buildout Challenge

Huge increase in renewable energy needed to achieve net zero goals

Wind and solar require a lot of land

Potential for widespread buildout conflicts — environmental, social, and land-use

This could slow progress toward a net zero future

Renewable Acceleration Areas (RAAs)

RAAs are areas where RE deployment is not expected to have a significant environmental impact.

To identify them:



Prioritise artificial and built surfaces, such as rooftops and facades of buildings, transport infrastructure, parking areas, farms, waste sites, industrial sites, mines, artificial inland water bodies, urban waste water treatment sites, as well as degraded land not usable for agriculture;



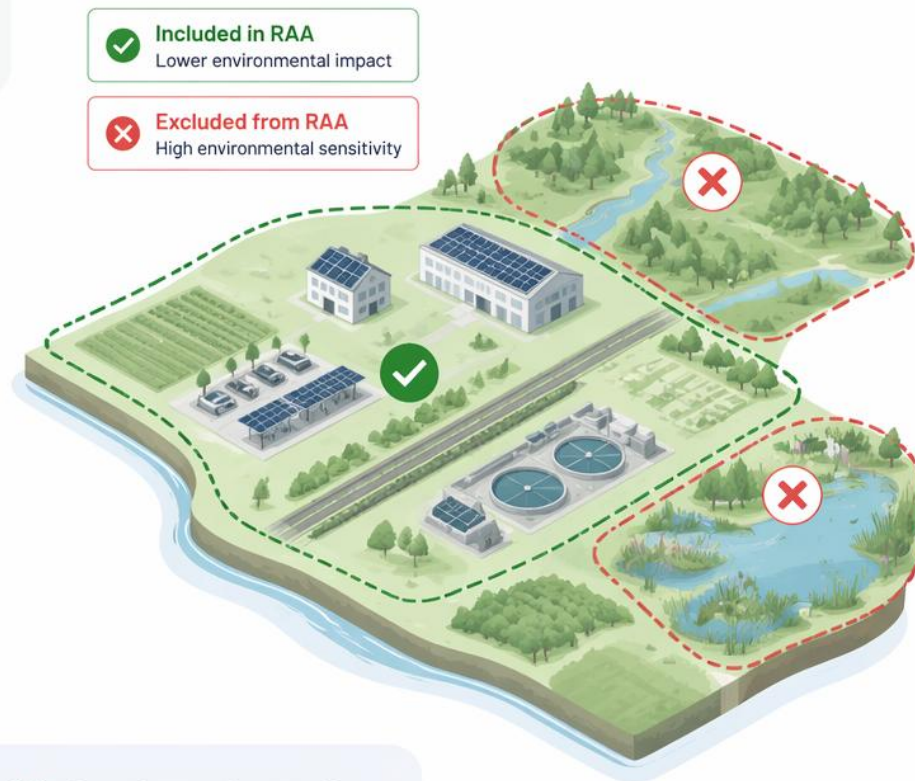
Exclude highly sensitive zones such as Natura 2000 and other protected areas, and



Use sensitivity mapping



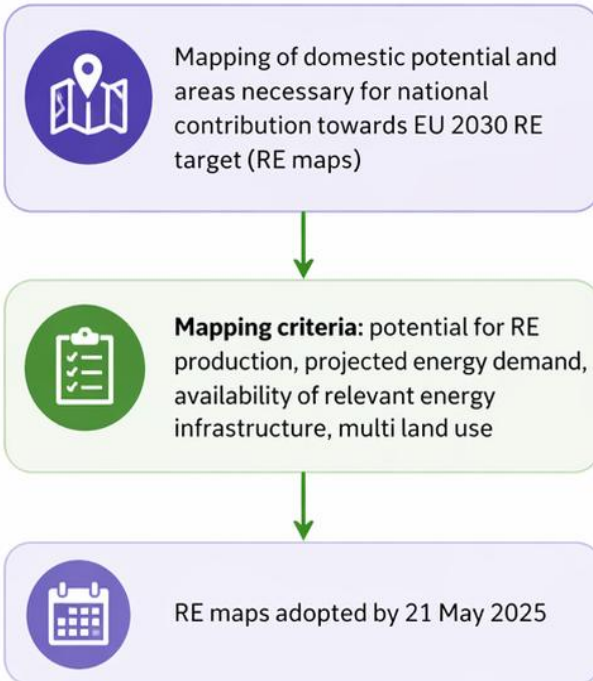
Within RAAs, permitting procedures are **simplified and accelerated**, supported by predefined **mitigation rules**.



RE mapping and RAAs designation in revised RED

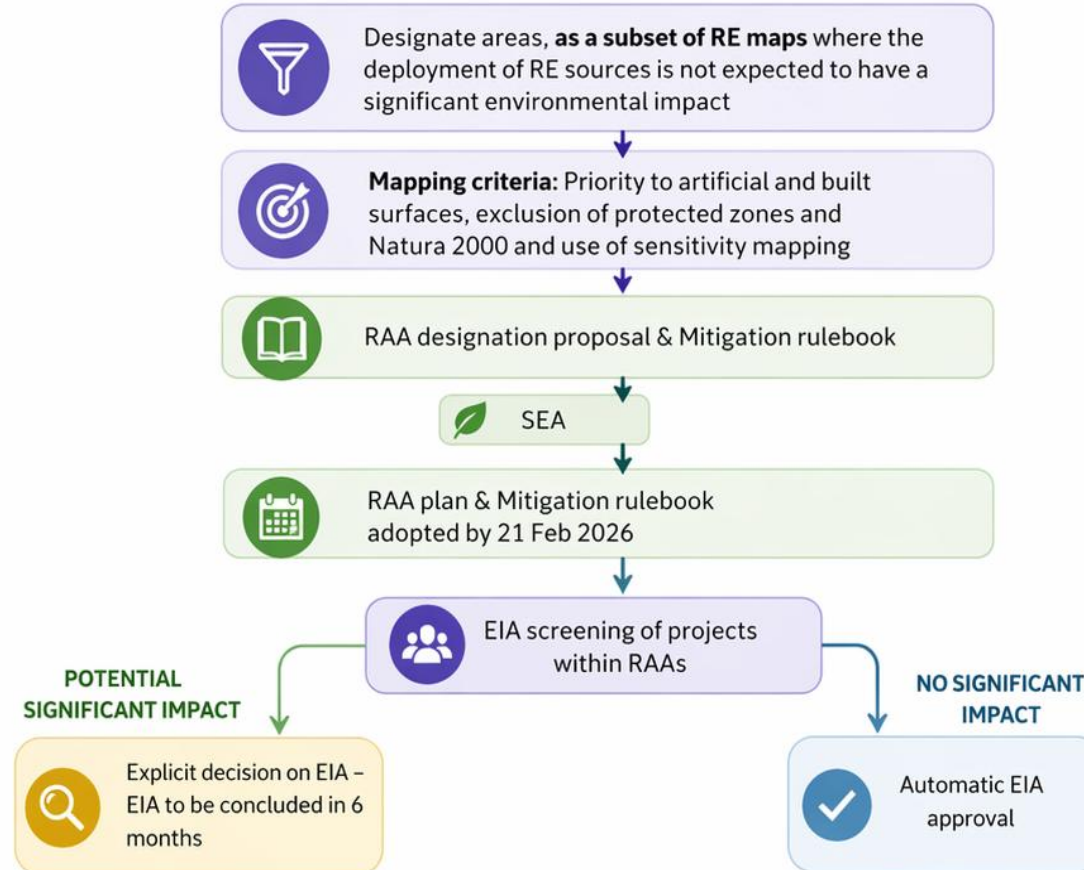
1 1st step – Coordinated mapping for renewable energy

15b Revised RED

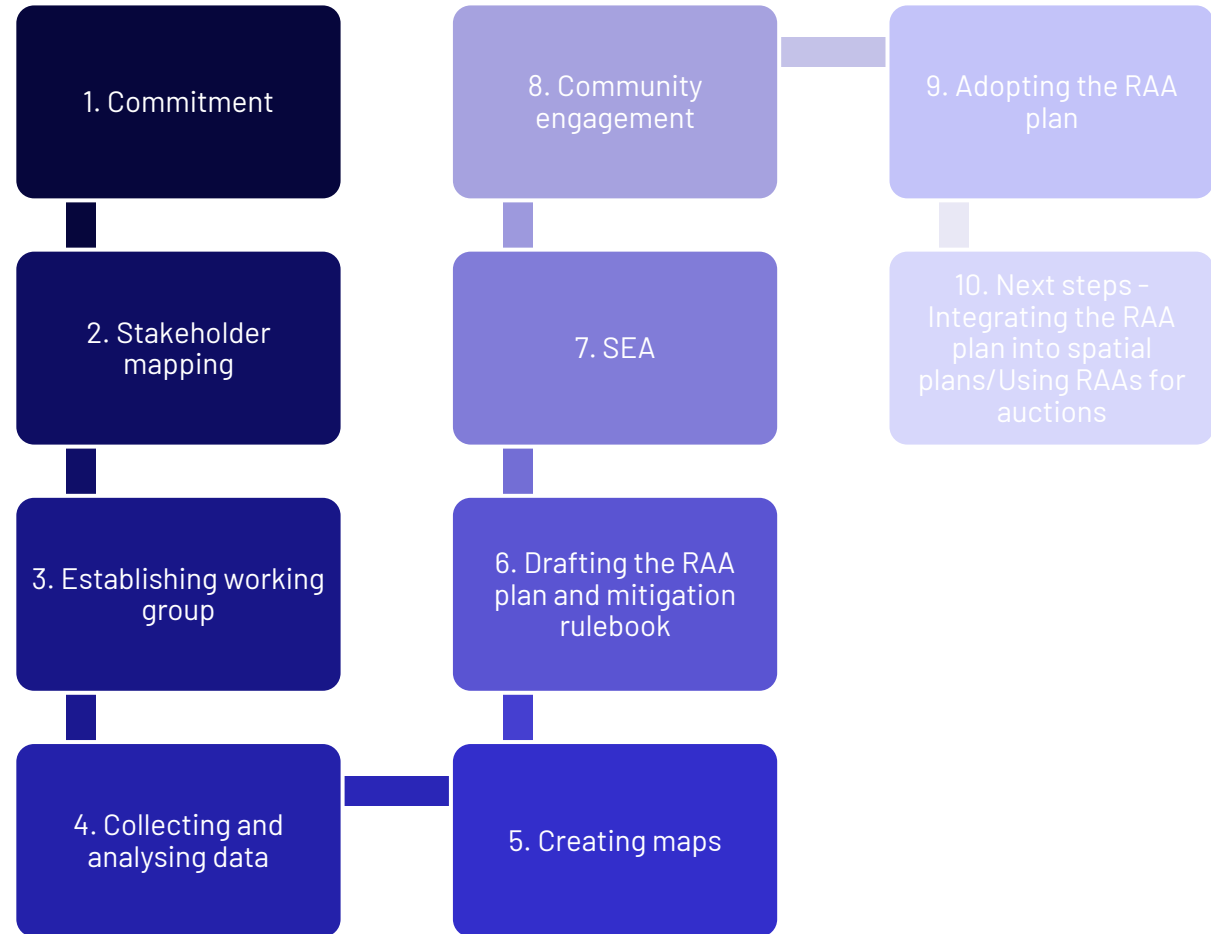


2 2nd step – Renewable acceleration areas (RAAs) mapping

15c revised RED



Step by Step in Designating RAAs

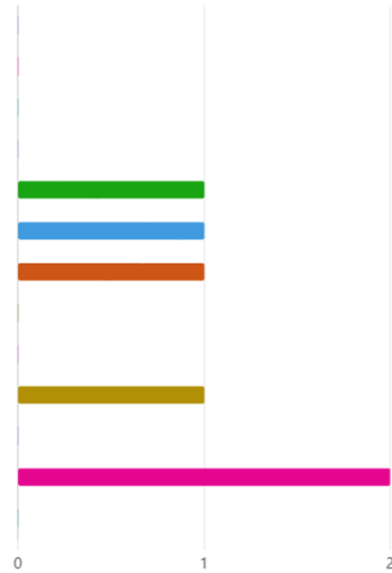


State of Play

1. At what stage is the identification of optimal locations/designation of RAAs in your Contracting Party?

[More details](#)

Not started	0
Initial discussions	0
Commitment and clear plan in place	0
Working Group established	0
Methodology under development	1
Mapping and analysis in progress	1
Locations identified	1
Drafting RAA plan	0
Strategic Environmental Assessment	0
Official designation in progress	1
Formally designated (nationwide coverage)	0
Don't know	2
Other	0



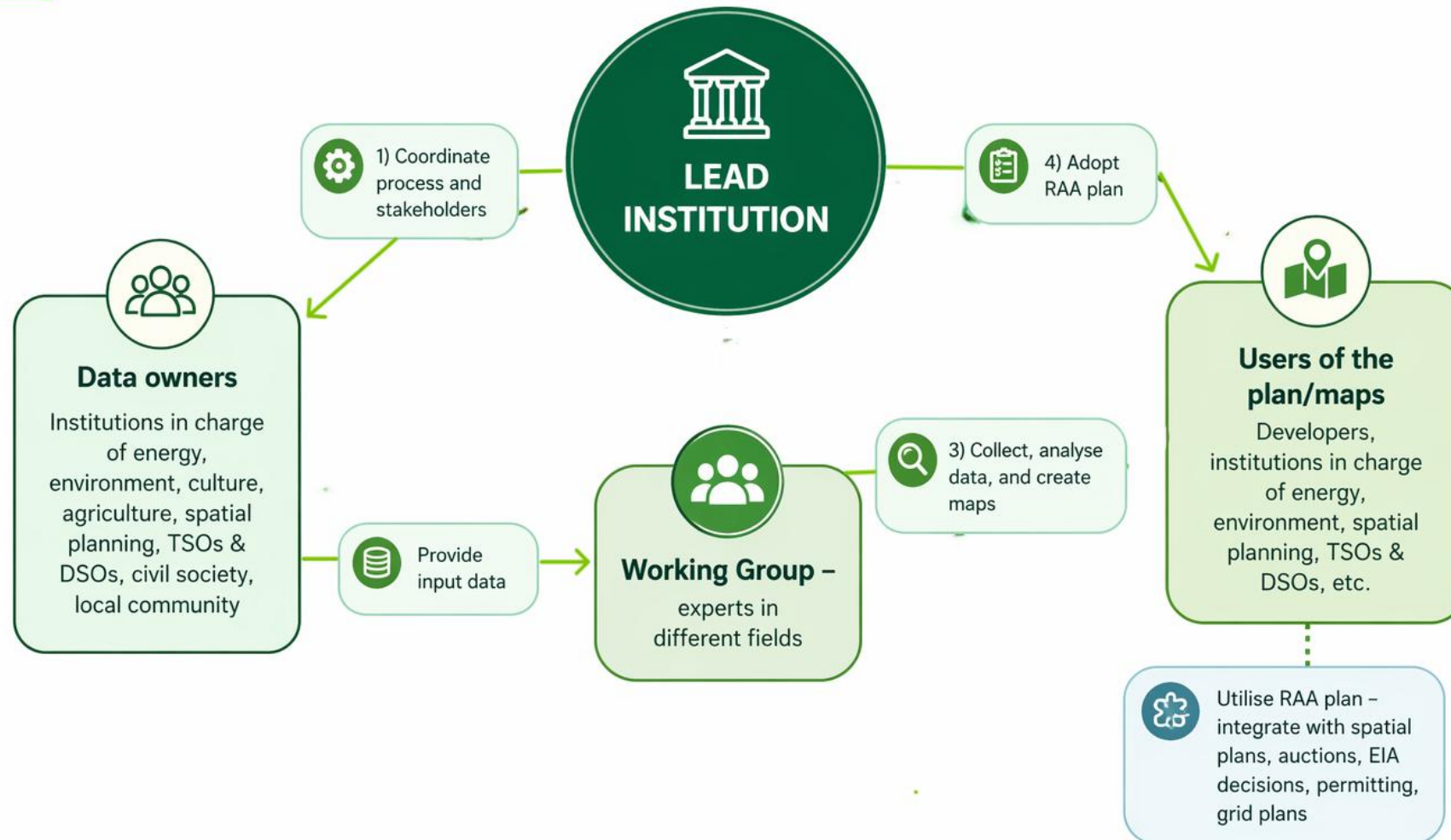
5. To what extent have solar and wind projects been developed in in brownfield (like mines, quarries, industrial hotspots, etc.)?

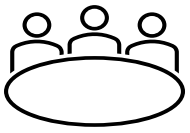
[More details](#)

Not at all	1
To a limited extent	5
To a large extent	1
Other	0



Institutional framework – Who do what?



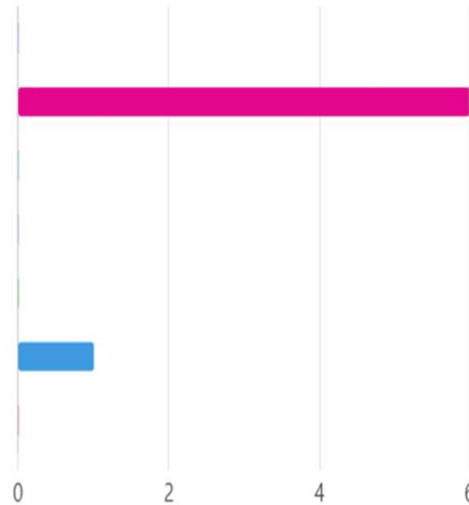


Which authority should lead the process of designation of RAAs?

2. Which authority is/should be in charge to lead the process of identification of optimal locations?

[More details](#)

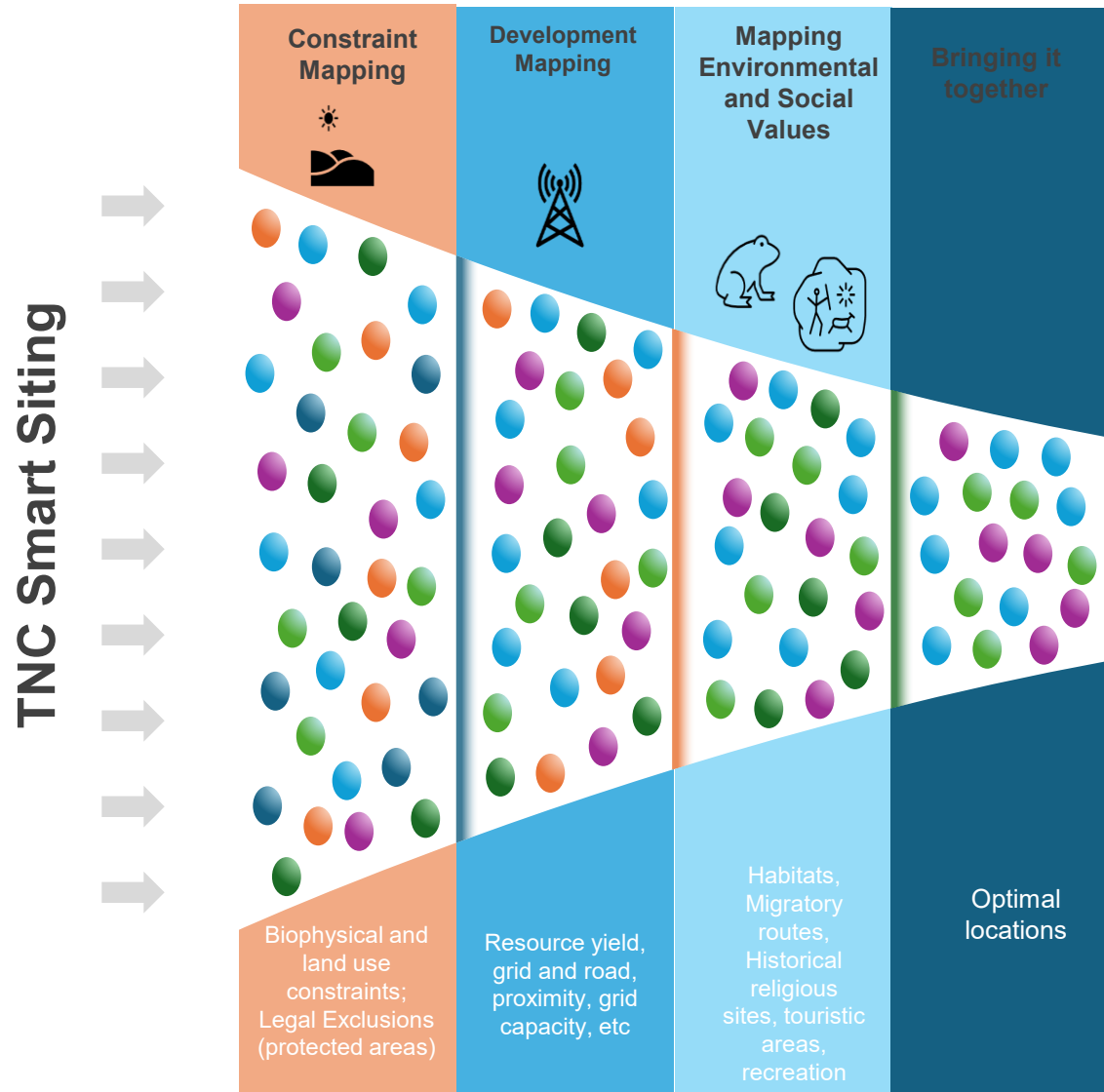
● Government	0
● Ministry in charge of renewable energy	6
● Ministry in charge of environment	0
● Ministry in charge of spatial planning	0
● Regional authorities	0
● Local/municipal authorities	1
● Other	0



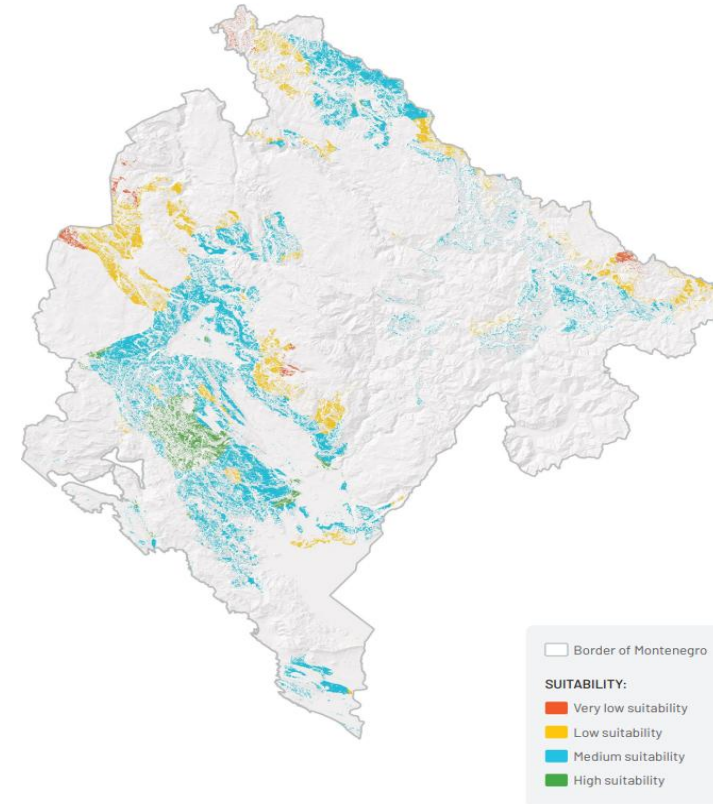
Additional Questions for Discussion:

1. What are pros and cons of top down and bottom-up approach?
2. Do local authorities have capacities to map optimal locations/areas for RE?
3. What are pros and cons of internal and external experts creating maps?

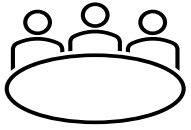
Collecting, analysing data and creating maps



Low-conflict map: Solar powerplant development for connection to the transmission grid

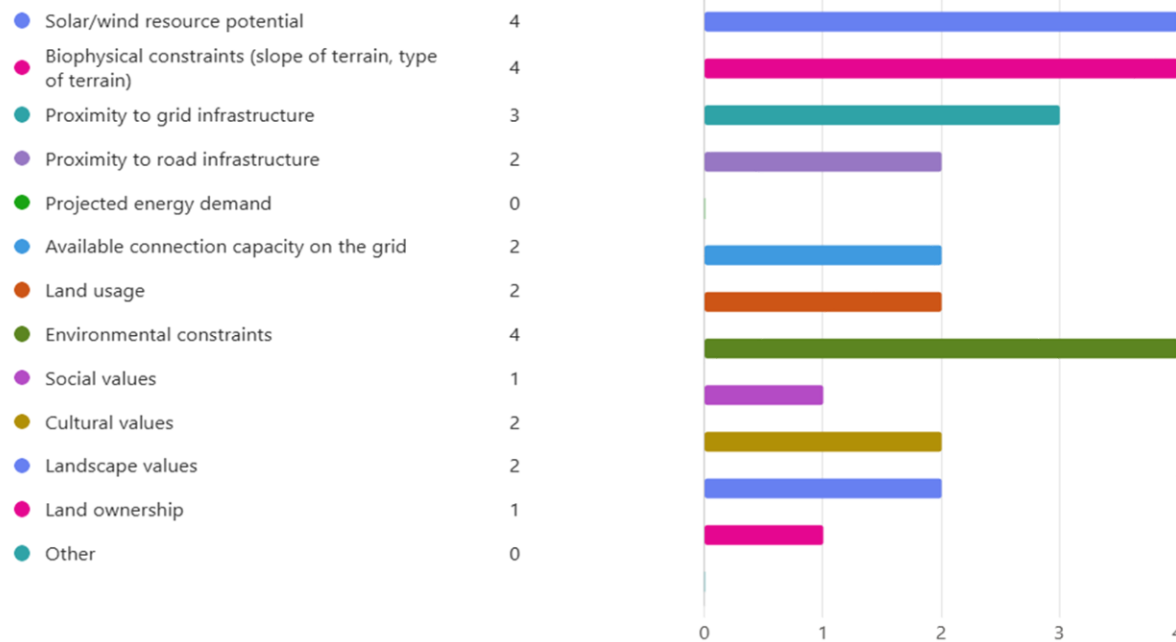


Smart Siting Guide: Montenegro



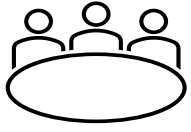
Which of the following criteria are digitalised or GIS data that can be used to identify optimal locations?

3. Which of the following criteria do you have available in GIS or other digital formats that can be used to identify optimal locations for solar and wind energy? [More details](#)



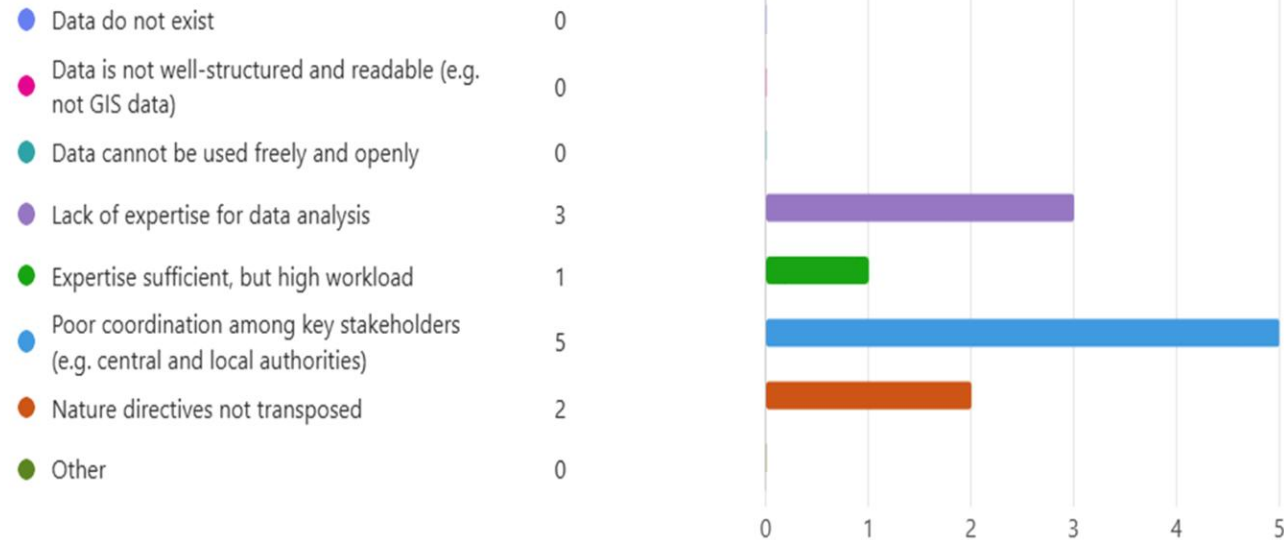
Additional Questions for Discussion:

1. Have you implemented recently or plan to implement measures that aims to improve the data quality (environmental data, spatial data)?









What are the main challenges in the process of identifying optimal locations?

4. What are main challenges/what you perceive as main challenges in the process of identifying optimal locations? [More details](#)

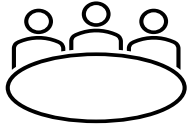


Adopting and utilising RAA plan

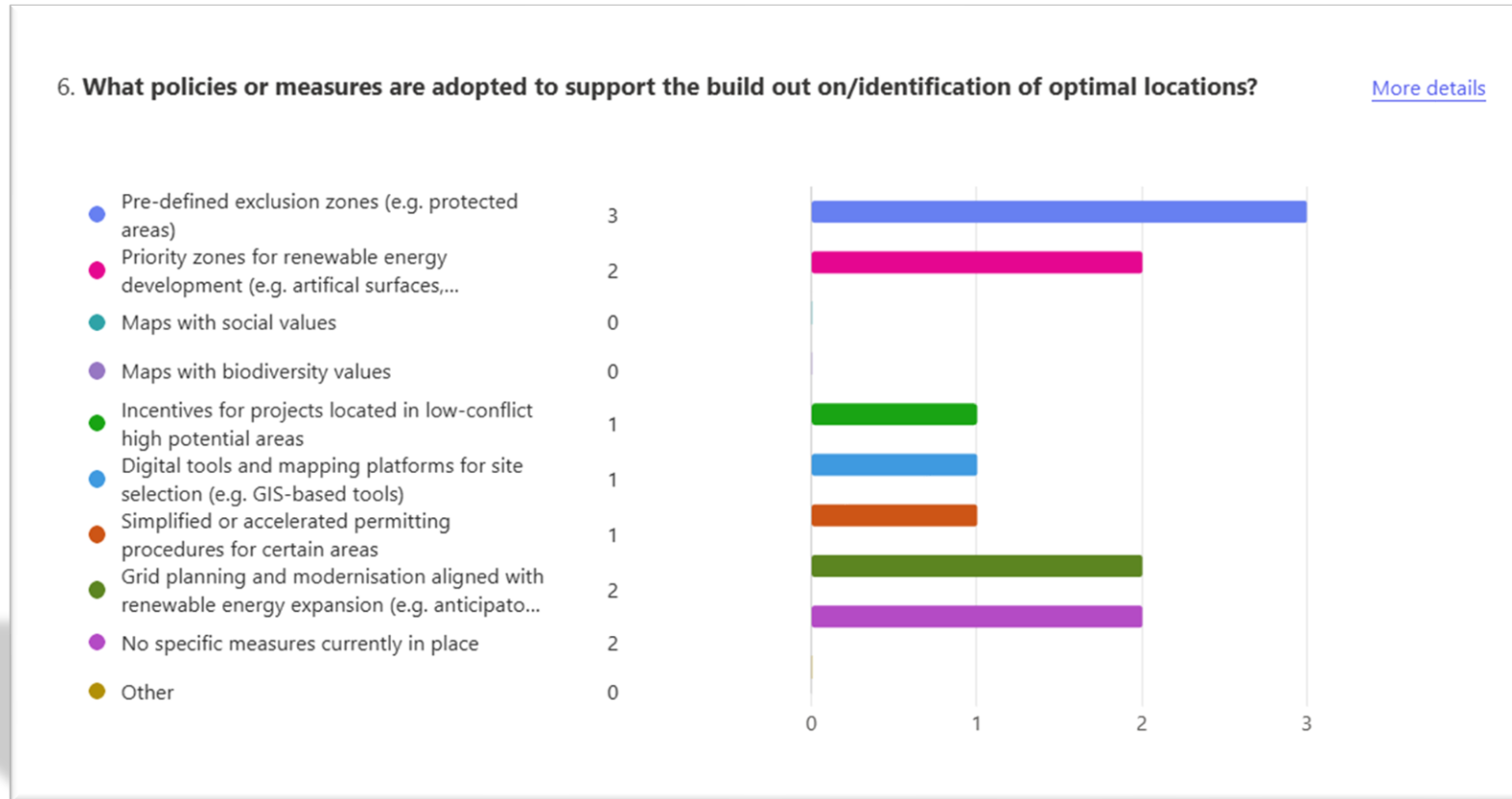
Utilisation of RAA plan and maps:

-  1 Integrating in national, regional, local **spatial plans**
-  2 Simplification of **permitting procedures** for project in these areas
-  3 Designing **auctions** (Estonia, Denmark)
-  4 Integrating with **Network Development Plans**
-  5 Upgrading **grid infrastructure** in RAAs to accommodate RE
-  6 Displaying them online to **inform developers** about optimal locations and mitigation measures





What policies or measures are adopted to support the identification of optimal locations?



Spain – priority treatment for social and territorial excellence

Projects obtaining priority treatment:



Grid access and connection procedures



Auctions for public support schemes



The status of 'preferred energy project'



Priority treatment in permitting and administrative procedures



The criteria to obtain this recognition must cover, at a minimum:



a. Citizen participation:

Go beyond legal requirements by actively involving the public, including financial involvement (e.g., crowdfunding).



b. Local benefits:

Show clear positive impact on the local area, such as creating jobs, supporting businesses, offering training, or contributing to broader community development.



c. Energy communities:

Support shared energy use and help reduce energy poverty, ensuring local people benefit directly from the energy produced.



d. Environmental standards:

Maintain high-quality practices in location, design, construction, and operation.

Key messages



There is enough **low-conflict land** for RE projects



Prioritize **socio-environmental factors** in location selection – not just development potential



Ensure institutional **collaboration**, including access to data



Ensure **good quality data**



Build and upgrade **grid** to accommodate renewables in low-conflict zones



RAAs are a tool for **accelerating permitting**



Energy
Community
Secretariat

The Nature
Conservancy 



Thank you for your attention!

Get in touch:

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Check out:

[TNC smart siting](#)