



Future Pathways for Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)

How to direct future efforts relating to ACE to effectively contribute to the ultimate objective of the UNFCCC



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Policy Brief

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“A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for”

John A. Shedd

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KEY MESSAGES

- ACE objectives are implicitly grounded in either a democratization or a neoliberal narrative of climate action, generating profound ambiguity.
- The ambiguity surrounding ACE objectives diminishes ACE's effectiveness by making it difficult to formulate and agree on goals that are measurable, specific, and attainable.
- Clarification of ACE narratives and objectives when engaging in ACE implementation, dialogues or negotiations is essential to set clear targets and collective goals.
- Explicit objectives, concrete goals and a crosscutting approach can facilitate action and a more balanced implementation of the six pillars of ACE.
- Steering ACE towards specific roles (i.e. ACE as a monitor, accelerator or networker) can provide a first step towards clarifying the objectives of ACE.

Introduction

Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) refers to Article 6 of the Convention on Climate Change and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement. It provides a legal basis to foster climate education, training, public awareness, public participation, and public access to information. The eight-year Doha Work Program on ACE concludes in 2020 and the upcoming COP26 will provide the possibility to reflect and create a new framework. The potential of ACE has not translated into practice up until now, and continuing business as usual in the next implementation phase would likely be ineffective. Yet, what would be an effective approach? Future action, starting with the renewal of the Doha Work Program, should be guided by a meaningful strategy that addresses current challenges.

This policy brief draws on academic literature, grey literature including policy documents, and interviews with a wide variety of experts and practitioners of ACE (see Annex III). Based on these sources of information we have identified key challenges to the implementation of ACE, out of which we have distilled pathways forward. These pathways have been designed considering feasibility and focus on future efforts related to COP26.

ACE & the UNFCCC

Action for Climate Empowerment is a term adopted by the UNFCCC to refer to work under Article 6 of the Convention, and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2020a). The overarching goal of ACE is to empower all members of society to engage in climate action through six pillars (see Figure 1). Engagement in these pillars should lead to a transition to a low-emission and climate-resilient world, the ultimate objective of the UNFCCC (UNFCCC, 2020a). So far, 121 (out of 197) member states to the UNFCCC have assigned an ACE National Focal Point (NFP). NFPs serve to ensure the implementation of all ACE elements at the national level through a diverse range of activities, e.g. by fostering synergies with other conventions or implementing educational activities within formal and informal education. In addition, yearly dialogues on ACE are organized and provide a regular forum where all Parties to the UNFCCC and other stakeholders share their experiences, ideas, good practices and lessons learned with regards to ACE implementation (UNFCCC, 2020a).

Competing narratives in climate governance: Democratization and Neoliberalism

Efforts relating to climate governance are shaped by different narratives. The ACE domain is itself situated in this context, meaning that the goals and outcomes of its implementation are shaped by the different interpretations and perceptions that actors have of ACE. The institutionalization of ACE “plays out within a broader global governance context shaped by a liberal democratic push for individual liberty, choice and participation; but also by a neoliberal privileging of market-based solutions to environmental and social challenges and support for “light touch regulation of the private sector” (Gupta, 2010, p.6). In short, the two dominant narratives in climate governance in which ACE is situated are on the one hand, the democratization of climate action and on the other hand, a neoliberal push. These narratives explain different perspectives and discussions about the fundamental merits of ACE.

The democratization narrative emphasizes the role of ACE in empowering citizens to participate in climate policy decision-making, as this is believed to be emancipatory, enhance deliberative processes and foster accountability. Typically, these objectives are expressed in terms of citizens' rights to climate education, access to information, and participation in environmental decision making. For example, the Aarhus convention mentions that to assert citizens right to a healthy environment they must be “entitled to participate in decision-making” (UNECE, 1998, p.2).



Figure 1. The six pillars of ACE

Similarly, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' submission for the ACE dialogue in 2020 stressed that "education is a right in and of itself, but also a necessary enabling condition for effective enjoyment of the right to participation" (OHCHR, 2020, p.6). This narrative holds that a rights-based approach will lead to better environmental outcomes. For example, the Aarhus convention stresses that enhanced public participation "enhance[s] the quality and the implementation of decisions" and "further[s] the accountability of and transparency in decision-making"(UNECE, 1998, p.2).

The neoliberal narrative promotes ACE to empower citizens to become climate conscious consumers and responsible actors in their own community. It stresses the role of education and awareness raising, rather than public participation (although this is sometimes understood as a tool to increase awareness). For example, the Lima Ministerial Declaration on Education and Awareness-Raising states that "education and public awareness programmes should promote the changes in lifestyles, attitudes and behaviour needed to foster sustainable development and climate protection and to prepare our societies to adapt to the impacts of climate change" (UNFCCC, 2014, p.1). Similarly, SDG 12.8 stresses that by 2030 everyone should have "relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature" (Sustainable Development Goal Solution Network, n.d.). This narrative also comes forward in this year's ACE submission review documents. For example, the Least Developed Countries and the African Group of Negotiators group stated that "ACE is fundamental for the long-term

transformation to a carbon neutral lifestyle, requiring everyone to get on board with solutions and take climate action on the ground" (African Group, n.d., p.2).

In practice we see that the neoliberal narrative is currently dominant in the ACE domain. Many interviewees stressed how ACE dialogues are dominated with stand-alone best practice presentations on education and awareness programmes while implementation of participation remains marginal. Similarly, the ACE secretariat, in their review of the Doha Work Program, found a "trend towards reporting in National Communications³ in more detail on education, training and public awareness, and to a lesser extent on public participation, public access to information and international cooperation in those areas"(UNFCCC-SBI, 2020, p.16). This approach aligns with larger trends in climate governance where a focus on voluntary action dominates. This neoliberal trend contrasts the balance found in international legal texts, which emphasise both narratives, as can be seen in Annex II.

Each of these narratives hold their own promises and risks, as elaborated in table 1. Although presenting them as a typology is useful, they are not mutually exclusive, making conceptual clarity even more important. Table 2 shows how key concepts of the ACE agenda are interpreted very differently depending on which narrative is applied. The ambiguity of the concepts outlined in Table 2, may foster agreement and consensus on their importance. At the same time, it can complicate the formulation of goals and indicators that are measurable, specific and attainable.

Table 1. Narrative-based meaning of key concepts of ACE

	Democratization Narrative	Neoliberal Narrative
Promises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emancipation of marginalized groups Better decisions through deliberation and learning Enhanced implementation through legitimacy and accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumers/ individuals drive sustainability transition through behavior change in own life and community Create a durable transition through a shift in social norms (coming from consumers and individuals).
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on procedure, hereby deflecting attention from substantial outcomes Difficult to implement in practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to monitor effectiveness Might result in the 'drowning of disclosure' (Gupta & Mason, 2016)²

Table 2. Key promises & risks of ACE per narrative

	Democratization Narrative	Neoliberal Narrative
Empowerment	Structural inclusion of marginalized groups in climate policy – Enhancing 'power over' (Rowlands 1997) ¹	Enable individuals to take climate action in their own life or community – Enhancing 'power within' (Rowlands 1997)
Education	Education about power structures and policy processes that deal with climate change – focus on reflexivity and participation	Education about consumer practices that cause environmental harm – focus on innovation and growth
Participation	Ensure everyone has the right to engage in and influence environmental decision making, paying special attention to the inclusion of marginalized groups	Stakeholders present at the table, to inspire own constituents later
Access to Information	Disclosing information that fosters political scrutiny of power structures and policy processes that deal with climate change	Disclosing information on the severity of climate change, and on the role of consumers herein

¹Power within refers to the development of an individual's awareness, agency and self-confidence to take action (Galièa and Farnworth, 2019).

²This means that the empowering potential of transparency is eroded because of excessive or irrelevant information, thereby overwhelming the recipients (Gupta & Mason, 2016).

Current Challenges

Rooted in these different understandings of ACE and in the narratives shaping the global climate agenda we have highlighted four challenges that compromise the successful implementation of ACE: a structural lack of funding, a lack of measurable targets and indicators, an unbalanced implementation of ACE, and a siloed approach. These four challenges both stem from and lead to the overarching problem: a lack of prioritization of ACE in the global climate agenda. The challenges are represented in the infographic (see Figure 2) and discussed below.

First of all, ACE activities are structurally underfunded. The UNFCCC ACE secretariat received inadequate and unreliable financial resources to carry out its ACE agenda. Many developing countries have had issues accessing international support to implement ACE programs, although some steps have been made in accessing funding from the Green Climate Fund. Many NGOs and youth organizations active in the ACE domain work under serious resource constraints. ECOS, the main umbrella organization, coordinating NGOs and youth groups active on ACE is fully run by volunteers. This stands in stark contrast to the Marrakesh Partnership on Global Climate Action, which stems from the Lima-Paris Action Plan aimed at engaging a broad variety of non-state actors including youth, indigenous peoples, cities, and businesses. The Marrakesh Partnership, in practice, closely involves businesses and cities and is a well-funded program that organizes major events. While the Marrakesh partnership could legally fall under ACE and contribute to its goals by providing further funding and resources, these two are in practice separated.

Secondly, ACE lacks clearly defined and measurable targets. This undermines the possibility to trace progress of and adjust ACE programs where needed. Although countries are required to report on ACE in their National Communications³, this reporting remains incomplete, unsystematic and often only highlights best practices rather than monitoring progress in a consistent manner. The same holds true for the review document of the Doha Work Program prepared by the secretariat (UNFCCC-SBI,2020). The absence of clear targets also complicates the work of NFPs on ACE, who often struggle to define their mandate. Lessons can be drawn from the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan (UNFCCC-COP,2019) and the Marrakesh Partnership (UNCC,2020), both of which also have broad and crosscutting objectives yet have managed to translate them into a clear set of targets. The ambiguity around the current pillar structure of ACE allows for widely ranging interpretations of ACE. On one hand this can be beneficial as it gives room for actors to adapt ACE to local contexts, such as the ability to have a differentiated focus on climate adaptation or mitigation in developing and developed countries. Conversely, it can be problematic if some goals are structurally favored over others as well as if certain interpretations of ACE become dominant.

Thirdly, ACE implementation is skewed towards education, casting public participation in its shadow. As mentioned before, ACE is often interpreted as a platform to foster climate education and awareness, while action regarding public participation and engagement in drafting climate policy has been less prioritized. The lack of targets and the ambiguity of main objectives allows actors to ‘cherry pick’ among the six pillars of ACE, with education receiving most of the attention. As educational institutions are already in place it might be ‘easier’ to mainstream climate education into society, while creating mechanisms for meaningful participation is a longer, more challenging, and potentially controversial process. Additionally, ACE has implicitly favored the neoliberal interpretation of ACE and its goal of creating climate-conscious consumers, while the democratization narrative and its goal of engaging the most marginalized in climate action has often been neglected.

Lastly, ACE operates in a silo. Overarching and crosscutting approaches to implementation that foster connections between the pillars, different governmental departments, and different stakeholder groups has been lacking in the implementation of ACE. Although the pillar structure provides useful, clear, and distinct domains of action, it also reshapes these domains into isolated parameters. At present, ACE is mostly operationalized within environmental departments. However, it is relevant to create synergies with other governmental departments to ensure comprehensive and meaningful implementation. Furthermore, ACE dialogues and conferences often lack involvement of public and private stakeholders with decision making power and means to implement or fund actions. Efforts are currently made to improve this, an example being the 2020 ACE regional dialogue for Latin America and the Caribbean, in which several congressmen and lawmakers took part. However, despite these efforts, ACE still has a long way to go to reach the level of collaboration necessary for public and private stakeholders to implement action.

These four challenges are both a cause and an effect of the fundamental lack of prioritization of ACE in the national and international agenda. In practice this leads to less funding and fewer efforts to monitor its progress and ensure that all pillars are adequately dealt with. The latter results in less effective and widespread ACE activities, which eventually leads to a lower prioritization of ACE. The next section identifies strategies to overcome this negative feedback loop: by tackling the aforementioned challenges, this downward spiral of decreasing prioritization can be transformed into a process of increasing the prioritization and effectivity of ACE.

³ National Communications are reports that are submitted every four years by the Parties to the UNFCCC on action taken to implement all aspects of the Convention, including ACE

Potential strategies

Tackling the challenges identified above requires an incremental improvement of existing features of ACE (see Annex I). Yet, an incremental approach will not be enough. This section outlines three possible strategies to tackle the root causes of the challenges from the previous section while the next section elaborates on how these strategies can feed into future roles and pathways for ACE.

1. Clarification of Objectives

Currently, the ambiguity of ACE objectives allows parties to ‘cherry-pick’ their actions according to their own priorities. Making the individual ACE objectives explicit requires extensive deliberation and perhaps even negotiation. Table 2 can help in identifying different objectives and making them more explicit, as it outlines the different meanings of core concepts related to ACE. Exploring how current ACE activities and their objectives are linked to the interpretation of the 6 pillars within the democratization or neoliberal narrative could provide a starting point. This process should push actors to make decisions based on a collective understanding, which will ultimately be crucial to engage in the next strategic point.

2. Concretization of Targets

The breadth of the ACE domain makes concrete targets that are specific, measurable, and attainable pivotal to effective implementation. Still, these targets will need to consider the variety of different needs and capacities of regions and countries. This concretization effort should aid national focal points in making a case at the national level to enhance action on ACE. Moreover, these targets could represent a go-to resource for developing countries drafting funding proposals. Lessons can be drawn from targets in the Marrakesh Partnership and the Gender Action Plan.

3. Cross-cutting Approach

As identified earlier, ACE has resulted in a siloed approach. Facilitating a more crosscutting approach means that ACE should maximize its use of existing platforms, initiatives, and institutions to support ACE implementation. This applies both on the international level, where ACE should be mainstreamed into the UNFCCC at large (i.e. incorporation with the domains dealing with mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, finance etc.) and at the national level, where ACE should reach across ministries and include civil society and the private sector. Such a crosscutting approach has been adopted by the Gender Action Plan and lessons could be drawn from there. This also means that ACE will need to reposition itself and forgo the safety of being at port and venture out to sea to advocate for their goals to be adopted by other institutions to effect real change.

These strategies together lead to an increased prioritization of ACE as illustrated in the infographic (see Figure 2). How these strategies should be prioritized depends on the overall governance role that ACE is to assume. The next section explains the future roles of ACE and pathways forward.

Future Roles & Pathways

This section places the above strategies within the context of the governance roles that ACE could assume. Based on interviews with ACE experts and academic literature on global climate governance three ‘roles’ have been identified. It is important to note that these different roles are not mutually exclusive and could play out simultaneously.

ACE as Monitor

In this approach the primary objective of ACE is to specify goals, targets, and indicators. This could be done in a fashion similar to the SDGs. In doing so, parties are pushed to have meaningful deliberations over the merits of ACE, and what they want to achieve. The metrics developed by ACE could feed into NDCs, NAPs, NAMAs and other authoritative plans, thereby ensuring political priority. Moreover, it could help mainstream the reporting on Article 6 in the National Communications. Having a clear set of metrics could also leverage funding both for new and existing ACE initiatives through existing channels.



Key strategies: (2) Concretization of targets & (3) crosscutting approach.



Key strength: Possible to measure progress and adjust programs where needed.



Key challenge: Politically difficult to reach consensus & reduced flexibility and adaptability.

ACE as Accelerator

This approach emphasizes promoting and facilitating bottom-up action. The role of ACE then focuses on mobilizing the widest possible audience including civil society, NGOs, the private sector, academia, and so on. This could be fostered by organizing show-case conferences, dialogues and other meetings that aim to stimulate dialogue between different stakeholder groups, assigning ACE champions, and draft best practices lists. The Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action currently works in a similar manner, often receiving more attention than ACE-related activities. However, given its embeddedness in the text of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, ACE has the potential to become a more effective platform for these kinds of activities, fostering sustained and impactful climate action. Certain initiatives such as the Burgenland Declaration on ACE are already moving in this direction. In this pathway the scope of ACE is deliberately left broad so that interpretation can be attuned to local needs and circumstances. Nevertheless, making ACE objectives explicit is fundamental to reaching the full potential of this role.



Key strategies: (1) Clarification of objectives & (3) Crosscutting approach.



Key strength: Participation by a wide range of stakeholders & flexibility.



Key challenge: Broad scope complicates monitoring progress.

ACE as Networker

This approach emphasizes the crosscutting nature of ACE. As such, the primary objective of ACE is to foster connections with relevant agencies, departments, and individuals that can forward ACE objectives in their work. In other words, the primary focus becomes the mainstreaming of ACE in places outside of the traditional ACE environment. This includes ministries of education and UNFCCC negotiations in general. In doing so ACE should work much closer together with other bodies that try to do the same including UNESCO, the SDGs, and in the UNFCCC the Indigenous Peoples Platform and the Gender Action Plan.



Key strategies: (3) Crosscutting approach.



Key strength: Coordination between actors involved with ACE, leveraging existing structures.



Key challenge: Difficult to ensure action materializes on the ground.

A summary of the challenges, strategies, roles, and future pathways can be found below (see Figure 2).

Conclusion

ACE is founded within the Convention and the Paris Agreement, yet implementation has been weak. Implementation has been guided by the Doha Work Program for the past eight years. The Program terminates at the end of 2020, proving a window of opportunity to develop new mechanisms to guide ACE implementation that could be adopted at COP26 in 2021.

Two narratives dominate the debate around the purpose of ACE; the democratization narrative highlights the importance of public engagement in environmental decision making to ensure sound, legitimate and fair outcomes, while the neoliberal narrative highlights the importance of education and public awareness to create climate conscious consumers and get 'all hands on deck'⁴ in the transition to sustainable societies. Beyond the confusion generated by the two implicit narratives, ACE implementation is also hampered by a lack of funding, lack of targets and monitoring, unequal implementation of the six pillars, and a siloed approach.

Steering ACE towards a specific role (i.e. ACE as a monitor, accelerator, or networker) can provide a first step towards clarifying the objectives of ACE and identifying the core strategies to ameliorate the aforementioned challenges. Each of the roles hold their own strengths and weaknesses. The monitoring role could be particularly powerful in ensuring effective implementation and progress tracking but might be politically difficult to achieve and may reduce flexibility and adaptability. The accelerator role on the other hand allows for a very flexible approach where actors can implement ACE in their local context without restraint from top-down guidelines. Yet, this approach complicates tracking collective progress and a focus on best practice voluntary action might cast a shadow over difficulties faced by marginalized groups. The networker role leverages the power of existing networks, this is a

potentially powerful approach if ACE principles reach influential platforms and institutions. At the same time, it is difficult in this approach to guarantee and measure what actually changed on the ground.

So far, ACE has not fulfilled its mandate as outlined in Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement: to ensure the implementation of the six pillars at the national level. Continuing business as usual would be a missed opportunity that the international community cannot afford as climate change becomes ever more urgent. Moreover, the rise of social media and concurrent spread of disinformation and polarization of viewpoints underline the importance of the ACE principles to tackle climate change. At the same time the global climate governance landscape has changed, and ACE needs to redefine its role accordingly. We identified three roles that are all promising means of moving forward. We argue for the development of a 'roadmap' leading up to COP26, consisting of a series of online events in which the future fabric of a new instrument to govern ACE can be developed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

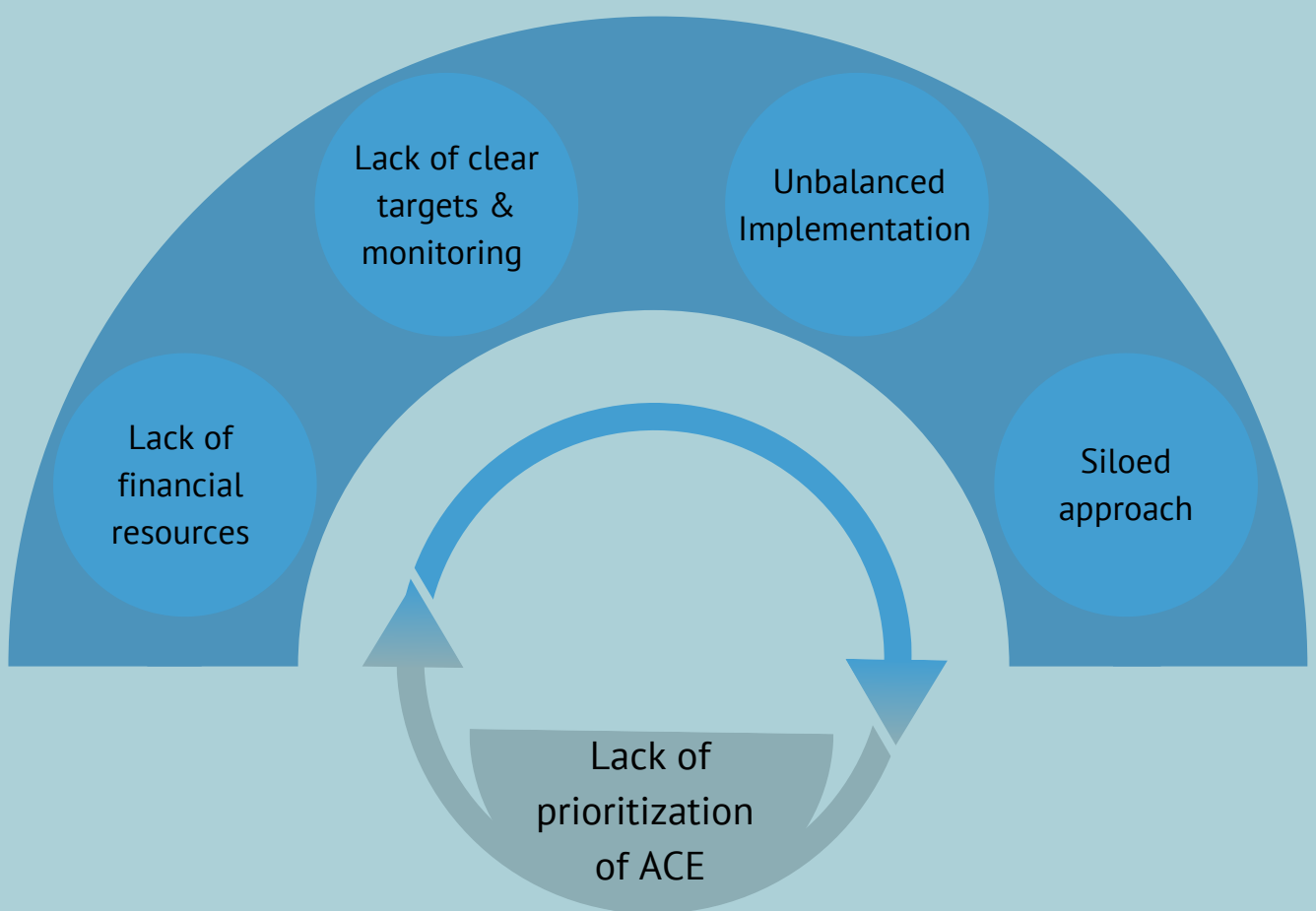
In order to direct future efforts relating to ACE to effectively contribute to the ultimate objective of the UNFCCC, the following actions could be taken:

- ☼ Design a 'roadmap', consisting of a series of online events, that aims to develop a shared vision on the role of ACE for the next decade, and translate this into a draft text that feeds into the SB52 and COP26. This effort could build on the Burgenland Declaration⁴ which underlines the importance of ACE;
- ☼ Acknowledge and openly discuss challenges related to the implementation of ACE in a host of events, cumulating in a shared declaration that underlines the key challenges related to ACE implementation;
- ☼ Develop a vision on the governance role of ACE for the next decade guided by the perspectives of diverse stakeholders. Three key governance roles that can guide the discussion include:
 - ACE as a monitor to ensure effective implementation and tracking of progress
 - ACE as an accelerator to ensure a flexible, bottom-up approach
 - ACE as a networker to ensure collaboration between different, existing, platforms and organizations (such as the Marrakech Partnership)

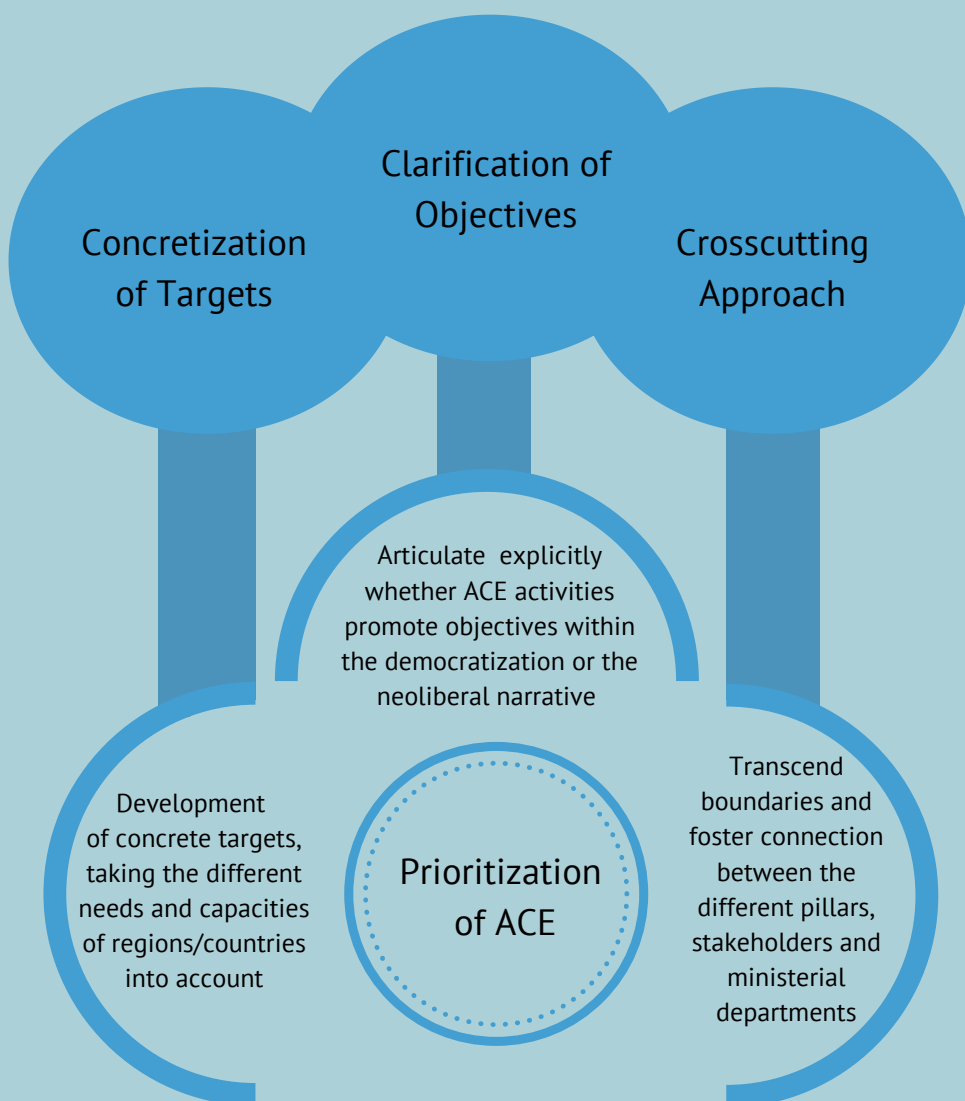
⁴ The Burgenland declaration was initiated in Austria and calls attention to the importance of ACE in achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

<https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Burgenland%20Declaration.pdf>

Key Challenges ACE



Potential Strategies



Future Roles & Pathways ACE



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Annex I. Current ACE Structure & Possibilities for Improvement

	Challenges	Possible Solutions	Means
Pillar structure	Siloed approach	Cross-sectoral collaboration and policy convergence	Situating ACE in the 2030 SDG agenda and framing climate change as a multi-sectoral issue. Different actors should come together (e.g. ministers from different departments, actors from related international frameworks (SDGs, GCF, GEF), actors from the private sector) to implement ACE. Involving more parties could among other things help in organising funding.
	Unequal vision of focus on all pillars, with most emphasis on education ⁵	Inter-ministerial coordination, especially among environmental and education ministries	Including organizations such as Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform and the Gender Action Plan could be beneficial in safeguarding a focus on a rights-based approach to ACE. This approach could promote focus on the pillars of public participation and access to information.
	Lack of clear indicators resulting in difficulties to work to common objectives	Clear indicators and common objectives	Discussing common objectives at yearly dialogues, while simultaneously promoting a differentiated approach within ACE to promote specific indicators
Yearly dialogues	Lack of discussions on concrete actions and challenges	Identification of challenges and concrete action plan that highlights priority areas	Invite other actors such as policy makers. ⁵ By including non-party stakeholders information exchange, coordination and recommendations on actions to be taken can be improved
	Unclear overall progress ACE and whether practices exchanged have been launched as a result of ACE	Monitoring the practices related to ACE	Implementing a clear an periodic monitoring review system within the new work program including metrics an indicators. (Could be done in collaboration with existing frameworks such as the NDCs)
	Participation skewed towards global North	Equal participation of Parties	Consider basic obstacles that inhibit global South from participating, such as time differences
National Focal Points	Many Parties do have not yet assigned an NFP	All Parties assigned an NFP	Firstly, trainings could contribute to increase capacity and resources. These trainings could include learning how to write funding proposals. Furthermore, by assigning youth focal points, not only the limited capacity of NFPs is addressed but youth engagement will also be enhanced
	NFPs often lack time, capacity and resources	Increased time, capacity and resources for NFPs	Firstly, trainings could contribute to increase capacity and resources. These trainings could include learning how to write funding proposals. Furthermore, by assigning youth focal points, not only the limited capacity of NFPs is addressed but youth engagement will also be enhanced
	Unclear responsibilities for ACE implementation	Clearer mandate for NFPs	NFPs should be assigned for a longer term and have crosscutting mandates. ⁶
	Website of secretariat on NFPs is outdated, underscoring the fact that this system is not working to its full potential	Website that is up to date on all current NFPs	Add to the website when details of ACE focal points were last updated. Secretariat should ask ACE National Focal Points every two years to update details.

Table 3. Current ACE Structure & Possibilities for Improvement

⁵ This already happened in the last dialogue for Latin America.

⁶ A good example is Sudan. This country established an ACE national working group comprised of academia, ministries, youth and NGOs.

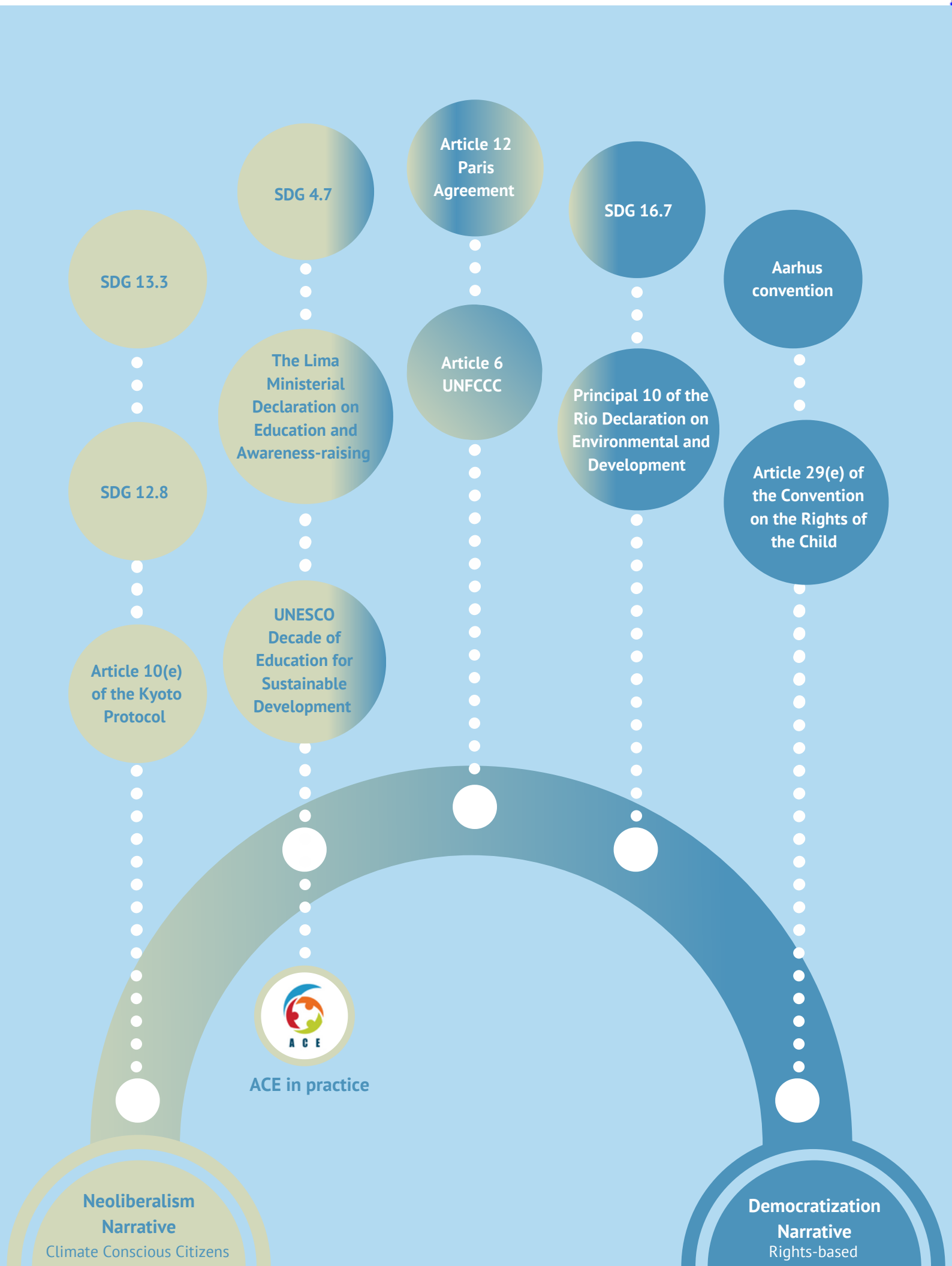


Figure 3. Narratives, International Legal Frameworks and ACE in Practice

Table 4. Legal Texts Figure 3

Legal text	Year	Orientation
Article 29(e) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child	1989	Right to environmental education
Article 6 UNFCCC	1992	Mix rights-based, climate conscious individuals based.
Principal 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environmental and Development	1992	Rights-based.
Article 10(e) of the Kyoto Protocol	1998	Climate conscious individuals based. (Public participation completely omitted)
Aarhus convention	1998	Rights-based. Focus on procedural rights, such as participation in decision making, of citizens.
UNESCO Decade of Education for Sustainable Development	2005	Mix rights-based, climate conscious individuals based.
The Lima Ministerial Declaration on Education and Awareness-raising	2014	Emphasis on climate conscious individuals but also rights based.
SDG 4.7	2015	Mix rights-based, climate conscious individuals based.
SDG 12.8	ibid	climate conscious individuals based
SDG 13.3	ibid	climate conscious individuals based
SDG 16.7	ibid	Rights-based but not specified to environmental matters
Article 12 Paris Agreement	2015	Mix rights-based, climate conscious individuals based.

Annex III. Consulted Experts

Name	Institution	Position	Interview date	Country
Baro, Roger	Ministry of Environment, Green Economy, and Climate Change	Programme director and ACE National Focal Point	15/10/2020	Burkina Faso
Duyk, Sebastian	Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL)	Attorney	10/12/2020	Switzerland
Graf, Marie Claire	Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC &	Focal Point	09/25/2020	Switzerland
Ho, Susie	Monash University	Associate Dean Faculty of Science	09/10/2020	Australia
Katbeh-Bader, Nedal	Ministry of Environmental Affairs / Environment Quality Authority	Minister's Advisor for Climate Change and ACE National Focal Point	09/24/2020	Palestine
McCaffrey, Mark	Climate Education, Communication and Outreach Stakeholders Community (ECOS)	Founder	09/30/2020	United States
Mingrone, Francesca	Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL)	Attorney	10/12/2020	Switzerland
Puusepp, Liisa	Ministry of Environment and Tallinn University	Research fellow and ACE National Focal Point	09/10/2020	Estonia
Thew, Harriet	Leeds University	Researcher	16/10/2020	United Kingdom
Tuenter, Bas	YOUNGO	ACE WG Coordinator	30/09/2020	The Netherlands
Wals, Arjen	Wageningen University & Research	Professor of Transformative Learning for Socio-Ecological Sustainability	07/10/2020	The Netherlands
Wögerbauer, Talieh	Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism	National Focal Point for ACE	16/10/2020	Austria
Zepeda Lizama, Camila	Secretariat of Foreign Relations	Director General and ACE National Focal Point	01/10/2020	Mexico

Annex IV. Glossary

ACE: Action for Climate Empowerment

ACCR: Academy for Climate Change Research

AGN: African Group of Negotiators

CIEL: Centre for International Environmental Law

COP: Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC

COP26: 26th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC

ECOS: The Education, Communication, and Outreach Stakeholder Community

GCF: Green Climate Fund

GEF: Global Environment Facility

NAMA: National Appropriate Mitigation Action

NAP: National Adaptation Plan

NDC: Nationally Determined Contribution

NFP: National Focal Point

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

SB52: 52nd Session of the Subsidiary bodies of the UNFCCC

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

UNECE: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNHCHR / OHCHR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

YOUNGO: Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC

Annex V. Methodology

Literature Review

This policy brief draws on academic and grey literature, including policy documents by different organizations. In specific, country submissions to the UNFCCC for the review of ACE progress and implementation have been reviewed. These submissions state current challenges, needs, ideas, and progress related to ACE implementation. Reviewing these documents has enabled the identification and synthesis of several overarching challenges, needs and proposals for improvement. Furthermore, the country submissions, together with academic literature, have provided a solid grounding for the identification of the narratives around ACE: democratization and neoliberalism.

Interview Analysis

For this policy brief, 13 experts and practitioners from different fields and sectors were consulted through semi-structured interviews. Interviews were transcribed and collected data analyzed through the inductive thematic analysis. This analysis has resulted in the identification of key challenges to the implementation of ACE, out of which different pathways forward have been distilled. A full list of interviewed experts can be found in Annex III.

Stakeholder Analysis

The future of ACE implementation on an international, national and regional scale depends on a large number of actors. The following stakeholders have been recognized: The Parties to the UNFCCC, National Focal Points, policy-makers, NGOs, civil society organizations, academics, and private actors. Although this list includes many actors, ACE implementation affects a wide range of stakeholders, as climate change is a crosscutting issue that, in fact, affects all members and actors present within the international society. Therefore, this list is non-exhaustive and different actors can still be added. The analysis of stakeholders has served as input for the selection of interviewees, and helped identify current perspectives, concerns, expectations and needs of different stakeholders. Analyzing the perspectives of a diverse set of stakeholders, together with input from the interviews, has shaped strategies, future roles, and possible pathways for ACE.

Annex VI. Theoretical Framework

This policy brief draws on the theoretical framework of discursive institutionalism. This theory emphasizes the existence of different discourses (referred to as narratives throughout this policy brief) that, if gaining enough support, can become institutionalized. Discourses refer to shared ways of understanding the world, which are expressed through language, practices and policies. Policies are not understood as neutral tools, but rather as a product of dominant discourses. Moreover, institutions are not viewed as external static structures that merely follow rules, but rather as dynamic structures, internal to its agents. These actors are both constrained in their activities by the institutional rules and ideas they internalized, while at the same time, they also construct and reconstruct these very rules and ideas (Schmidt, 2010).

This theoretical framework enables a focus on ACE institutions as dynamic structures that can both constrain and facilitate change. Taking a discursive institutionalist perspective, this research looks beyond the agent-structure divide and views institutions as a structure continuously constructed and reconstructed by intentional agents. Each of these agents influences the ideas communicated within the institution and towards the public. How the objectives of ACE will be implemented in practice, depends on whether these agents are able to get around the challenges of existing institutional structures with its entrenched norms, interests and path dependencies. Key questions that have guided research for this policy brief are: which ACE discourses exist? Which of those are dominant and have become institutionalized? Which actors are empowered or disempowered by which discourses? What risks and opportunities are associated with the dominant discourses? How can dominant discourses be steered to promote rather than constraining ACE implementation and collaboration?

By applying this theoretical framework, current ACE efforts have been investigated. These efforts seem to reflect two narratives: democratization and neoliberalism. This policy brief focuses on the role of these narratives in enabling or constraining ACE implementation and collaboration.