

Future Pathways for Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)

Policy Brief - Executive Summary



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What is ACE?

Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) refers to Article 6 of the UNFCCC and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement. It provides a legal basis to foster climate education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information, and international collaboration on these topics. The eight-year Doha Work Program on ACE concludes in 2020 and the upcoming COP26 will provide the possibility to reflect and to create a new framework. This report reflects on the effectiveness of ACE in the past eight years and explores novel approaches for future action.

Competing Narratives: Democratization and Neoliberalism

ACE and its objectives are situated in a wider frame of global climate governance, characterized by two distinct narratives: the democratization and the neoliberal narrative. Regarding ACE, the former 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. The latter promotes ACE to empower citizens to become climate-conscious consumers and responsible actors in their own community. These two sides of ACE often remain implicit in debates about ACE, thereby generating ambiguity around its objectives and implementation.

Four Challenges and Three Strategies

Rooted in these different understandings of ACE we highlight 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 favoring education over participation, and a siloed approach. These four challenges both stem from and lead to the overarching problem: a lack of prioritization of ACE on the international and national climate agenda. Prioritization of ACE can be strengthened through three strategies, namely a clarification of objectives, a concretization of targets, and a crosscutting approach. These strategies function as an instrument to help steer ACE into three distinct governance roles:

- first, ACE can function as a *monitor*, with as primary objective specifying goals, targets, and indicators (e.g. the SDGs);
- second, ACE can fulfill the role of *accelerator*, focusing on actively mobilizing the widest possible audience including civil society, NGOs, the private sector, and academia (e.g. the Marrakesh Partnership);
- third, as a *networker*, ACE can emphasize the crosscutting nature of ACE and connections with relevant agencies, departments, and organizations (e.g. the Gender Action Plan).

Moving Forward

ACE needs to redefine its role in international climate governance. Continuing business as usual would be a missed opportunity that the international community cannot afford, as climate change becomes ever more urgent. We argue for the development of a 'roadmap' towards COP26 in which an appropriate new ACE role can be discussed and defined. Practically, this roadmap should consist of a series of online events in which ACE challenges are openly discussed and the future fabric of a new instrument to govern ACE is developed.