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THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTRICITY SECTOR

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Abstract

Purpose – to analyse the importance of communication of public sector institutions to participation of citizens in the electricity sector

Design/methodology/approach – the research was carried out applying the following general scientific research methods: comparative analysis, induction, deduction, analysis of scientific literature and case study analysis.

In the first place, the theoretical analysis of scientific literature was carried out in order to reveal the concept of citizens' participation in the governance of electricity sector in Lithuania and to identify the importance of communication of public sector institutions for citizen's involvement. In the second part, a case study was performed to assess how public sector institutions in Lithuania communicate with citizens and to discuss possible results of such communication.

Finding – according to authors (Verhoest et al., 2005; Pedersen & Johannsen, 2018; Pandey & Granett (2006); Devine-Wright, 2007, Goulden et al., 2014, Van Vliet, 2012; et al.), participation of citizen in the electricity sector can be described from different perspectives, but most importantly, they can participate as customers, as producers and as stakeholders at the same time. To encourage this participation, it is important to ensure meaningful communication between public sector institutions and the citizens. Therefore, to ensure meaningful communication for citizen participation in the electricity sector needs to take into account existing public communication models and the unique environmental characteristics of the public and energy sectors.

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The case study analysis reveals that there is poor or "inefficient communication" in Lithuania in the electricity sector. It has a negative impact on citizens' participation and satisfaction with public sector institutions, so changes are needed to create communication that could encourage citizen participation.

Research limitations/implications – the case study is based on an analysis of selected cases and may not reflect the overall picture of electricity sector, so further empirical researches are needed.

Practical implications – data from this study reveals several practical applications worthy of future study: it would be valuable to further examine how citizens' (participating in electricity sector) sees main gaps of communication, how communication meets the objectives of the institutions working in this field and other issues.

Originality/Value – the active participation of citizens in the energy sector is one of the strategic directions of the European Union and Lithuania. It helps to create an energy-efficient culture, together with technological solutions and innovation initiatives. For this reason, public sector institutions establish in rules, norms and regulations, which must be communicated to citizens. Meaningful communication forms new user skills, competencies, and it is also instrument to strengtheing citizens' trust in public institutions.

Keywords: citizen participation, public governance, governance of electricity sector, communication.

Research type: case study.

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