

Stakeholder Engagement Programs in Hera Group

Solid infrastructures for a long-term sustainable strategy

Photo by Silvia Camporesi: construction phase of the biomethane plant of Sant'Agata Bolognese

Stakeholder Engagement Programs (1/4)

We believe it is essential to maintain an **open dialogue with all our stakeholders**. Our approach is based on corporate social responsibility and sustainable development and it focuses on our stakeholders' legitimate expectations. **Responding to their requests, balancing them and incorporating them into our corporate strategies**, allows us to generate tangible value in the local area.

We have defined a **stakeholder map**. For each category we have identified:

- The **composition** and the **objectives**
- The **priorities**
- **Listening, dialogue** and **consultation activities** during the year

The **engagement and dialogue programs** for local stakeholders, applied in all the territories in which Hera operates, are:

- **Hera LABs**: local multi-stakeholder boards that Hera provides to the local areas in which it delivers its services to open a structured channel for listening to and discussing with local communities
- **Area Managers** to facilitate relations with the reference areas
- **regular surveys** to understand perception of the Group and projects on local stakeholders
- **whistleblowing portal**
- the **Ethics and Sustainability Committee reporting channel**

With reference to the involvement of local communities near Hera plants, **impact assessments are carried out** and channels of dialogue and discussion are set up, with the **patronage and support of the Municipalities that coordinate the various interest groups** such as committees, associations, purpose-driven cooperatives, **to discuss the interventions and activities to be carried out in order to listen to requests and perform actions together**, insofar as possible and in line with the construction needs. Other non-verbal communications are expressed on the panels around the construction sites, which describe the works in progress and indicate the stakeholders and other entities that support and/or are involved in the works. **Regular updates on projects are provided and feedbacks from local stakeholders are collected.**

The channels of dialogue and discussion with communities should be set up during authorisation and/or construction of the works and/or management of the plant by the Municipality in which it is located. In general, this **involves public meetings, technical round tables, reporting of activities within open board committees.**

Stakeholder Engagement Programs (2/4)

The **web portal dedicated to consumer associations** has been active since 2011: a section of the Group's institutional website **entirely reserved for the representatives of the main associations active in the reference territories** and who represent a key interlocutor for the company in relations with the end customer. Thanks to this interface channel with Hera, consumer associations can manage reports and policies, preventing disputes and reducing response and resolution times. In 2024, the web portal recorded 3,939 visitors (-16% compared with 2023) and a total of 11,224 page views (-24% compared with 2023). In addition to the portal, the contacts and operators of the associations also have access to the normal email and telephoned details which, together with the online section, provide a specific communication channel dedicated to consumer associations. In 2024, 617 cases were managed through the dedicated channel (612 in 2023), 100% of which were resolved with a positive outcome; the average time to resolve a case was 3.9 working days.

In addition, with the aim of cultivating positive relationships and **encouraging open dialogue**, in 2024 Hera also organised **regular meetings dedicated to the provincial and local representatives of the associations of the local areas served in Emilia-Romagna**, which have been held online since 2020. Overall, in 2024, two meetings were held involving a total of 29 representatives of the main associations operating in the local area. During the meetings, topics of interest to the associations were addressed, including the progress of the gradual residential protection service, the progress of the water leak fund, the protection system (progress of ARERA conciliations and expansion to the waste sector) and, finally, the progress of the channel dedicated to consumer associations and the discussion of the restyling of the web portal scheduled for 2025. Throughout the year, the dialogue with associations was as open and active, also thanks to the organisation of four other meetings (some of which saw the participation of national and regional representatives of the main associations), always held online, in particular in response to requests for information and clarifications that were received on topics related to district heating and communication channels.

The Central Communication and External Relations Department is responsible for managing the engagement of consumer associations.

The **Rifiutologo** is a **tool for communicating with residents and customers**, which offers information and services in the municipalities where Hera manages environmental services and is available online free of charge both on the Hera website and as a mobile app on smartphones and tablets.

In 2024, over six million log-ins and more than 500 thousand active users were recorded. One of the main features is the waste search feature, which allows users to check where to put their waste, check waste collection calendars, set notifications to remind them when to take out the waste, check information on the nearest ecological station and information on points of interest such as, for example, specific sorted waste collections, mobile collection points, material distribution points. It is also possible to download illustrative materials.

Stakeholder Engagement Programs (3/4)

The environmental reporting function allows people to report problems such as abandoned waste or damaged bins via georeferenced photographs; in 2024, there were around 214 thousand such reports. The barcode scanning function allows people to identify packaging materials and how to dispose of them using the barcode of the products; throughout the year, around 250 thousand requests were made by scanning a barcode. To date, approximately 1 million 800 thousand barcodes on products sold in Italy have been recorded. The app also allows people to book free home collection of bulky waste (and, in municipalities where the service is available, garden waste can also be collected); in 2024, more than 55 thousand collection bookings were requested via the app. “Rifiutologo” is also available with Alexa skill, a voice assistant that can be used to ask for information about collection.

The Central Environmental Services and Fleets Department is responsible for this engagement activity

Another tool for involving the Group’s customers is **MyHera**, the mobile app for managing supply quickly and easily. In this app, it is possible to pay bills and check historical bills, submit readings, monitor consumption, view the map of the nearest ecological stations and Hera branches, as well as supply points. In the application, it is possible to **get help with contracts and payments**, learn about new commercial offers, arrange a bulky waste collection service, **make environmental reports and notify the emergency service** in the event of faults in the water network. In 2024, a new version of the app was completed (which will be released in 2025), with a revised organisation of content and the browsing layout, in order to facilitate access to the various features and to get it ready for an everincreasing number of integrations with other company tools.

Hera Comm is responsible for this engagement activity.

Consumers and end users also have two other channels of communication with the Hera Group:

- the Ethics and Sustainability Committee, which should be contacted about any violations of the Code of Ethics;
- the whistleblowing channel, directed to the Supervisory Body, for suspected violations of the Model for the prevention of corruption or Italian Law 231 fraud or other alleged crimes or offences of another nature, including in relation to gender equality (e.g. Harassment).

Customer service is also available to customers and residents served by the Hera Group, through a call centre with a toll-free number, and the technical call centre service, open 24/7 with 15 toll-free numbers to provide an emergency service, in addition to numerous branches located throughout the country.

Hera LABs

Hera relations with local Municipalities

Among the main processes of involvement of local communities are the HeraLABs, overseen by the Central Strategy, Regulation and Local Government Directorate, i.e. the multi-stakeholder councils that the Hera Group has activated since 2013 in the territories in which it operates.

The primary objective of these participatory processes is to provide the territories in which Hera provides its services with a structured channel for listening and dialogue.

From 2013, the year the initiative was launched, to the end of 2024, HeraLABs have held 127 meetings, involving 160 opinion leaders and local stakeholders. Participation in the LABs is free, but Hera provides an attendance fee of 200 euro per participant per meeting and allocates the funds to local sustainability projects.

Up to the end of 2024, 134,200 euro have been donated to 26 public and non-profit entities.

The initiatives are divided into eight areas for potential cooperation, focusing on energy efficiency, production and distribution of renewable energy. The main actions include supporting small and medium-sized companies with the adoption of energy efficiency measures, the strengthening of the electricity grid and the promotion of photovoltaic selfconsumption for companies, both on-site and off-site, to stabilise energy costs and reduce environmental impact.

Integrated projects are also being developed, such as Energy parks, which combine renewable production and storage systems, and Renewable Energy Communities, applied to both condominiums and production areas, through cooperative models that encourage participation and shared management. These initiatives aim to strengthen the links between companies, residents and the local area, promoting a more sustainable and resilient energy system.

In order to consolidate the strong links in the area in which it operates, the Group has introduced the post of Area Manager, appointed to facilitate relations with the reference areas.

The Central Strategy, Regulation and Local Authorities Department of Hera, through the Area Managers, continuously manages relations with the Municipalities in the Emilia-Romagna area. The Area Managers represent the interface of the Local Authorities with respect to all the Group's activities: they oversee the institutional relationship, with particular reference to public administrators, facilitate operational relations between the competent technostructures, and support the activities of HeraLAB.

The aim of the organisational design is to simplify the relationship between the Municipalities and the structured organisation of Hera, through a special dialogue and an overall view of the points of attention and the sensitivities of local areas with respect to businesses. Relations with local authorities therefore include direct and accessible contact in order to respond to requests for regulated and market public services.

In 2024, the Area Managers focused on getting to know the new mayors following the June elections, ensuring continuous dialogue between the company and the local area. The work of supporting and assisting HeraLAB also continued, promoting the necessary coordination between relations with local authorities and those with other local stakeholders.

Finally, in 2024, approximately four thousand relationships were maintained with local stakeholders. Most of these concerned environmental services (33%) and the integrated water service (33%), followed by the market area (13%), other network services (11%) and general corporate issues (10%).

In Friuli-Venezia-Giulia and Veneto, the relationship with the member Municipalities and other local authorities served by the Group is managed through the Local Authority Relations structure of AcegasApsAmga. During 2024, the Area Managers of AcegasApsAmga ensured they were continuously present in the local areas served, developing over 600 contact opportunities with more than 220 Municipalities and consolidating themselves as an essential link for corporate businesses in the dialogue with local authorities. The topics covered mainly concerned energy services (32%), gas distribution (16%), public lighting (15%), the water cycle (13%) and the environmental service (7%).

