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Promoting Effective Governance  
of the Channel Ecosystem  
Promouvoir une gouvernance efficace  
de l'écosystème de la Manche



# Participative and consultative communication on Channel governance and marine ecosystems.

## ABSTRACT

Participative and consultative communication, which involves the audience in an activity or social process, has been undertaken to a lower extent than informative communication but it is still an important component of the 10 Interreg IVA projects reviewed. The engagement of various audiences is one of the key requirements for projects funded by Interreg. The review of projects illustrates that there is a great diversity of ways to foster engagement. These range from survey based consultation to knowledge sharing and knowledge co-development, but also by promoting citizen and participative science. In the report, they are presented according to the typology of audiences: Policy Makers and Government; Industry/Science/Sectoral/NGOs; Community/General Public; and Schools.

## KEY WORDS

COMMUNICATION  
CONSULTATIVE  
ENGAGEMENT  
GENERAL PUBLIC  
PARTICIPATIVE  
POLICY MAKERS  
SCHOOLS  
STAKEHOLDERS

## DESCRIPTION OF KEY FINDINGS

Communication and stakeholder/policy maker involvement are at the heart of all Interreg IV projects and deliverables. Participatory mechanisms for facilitating engagement include traditional tools, for example, surveys, workshops and events, but also other more innovative ways such as citizen science events, regional forums and scenario building exercises. Projects have utilised a broad range of approaches to communicate key messages and project findings, to engage audiences ranging from school groups to key policy makers, NGOs and industry representatives. This report provides an overview of the approaches used within the various Interreg projects. It also provides examples of best practice and lessons learnt in the form of case studies from selected projects.

Participative and consultative communication is defined in this context as the involvement of audiences within an activity or process. By encouraging participation within an aspect of the process, participants are stimulated to contribute to its development and have a stake in the outcome of the process; enabling communication to be more effective. It is worth highlighting that in many cases, project teams sought the participation of fewer participants in order to allow

more meaningful involvement by participants. This also increased the quality of the communication, i.e. whilst reaching fewer people, those engaged gained a higher understanding of the issues raised.

Many projects utilised participative engagement to develop informative communication tools or to deliver their outputs directly. This method is known to increase uptake of information and ensure that these tools are as effective and as user-friendly as possible. In a few cases, participation was also developed as an in-built mechanism to deliver the project. Surveys such as opinion polls or more targeted evaluation work, were conducted to gather information. Although these are one way communication exercises, they are a primary tool used within large consultation processes. Meetings such as workshops or conferences have been organised so as to allow a range of audiences to have a voice in the various projects. This two-way communication can be slightly more restrictive in terms of numbers of participants who can effectively engage with the process. More sophisticated techniques, such as participatory foresight and scenario building, have also been implemented. They are often time-consuming to run because that they require a series of face-to-face exchanges with the same audience and often engage with a range of different audiences when multiple stakeholder groups are concerned. However, they provide rich opportunities for engagement that eventually support and contribute to the policy making process.

The same typology of audiences used to discuss informative communication is used here to present the findings in different contexts. The table below illustrates the interaction with key groups participating in projects in the PEGASEAS cluster.

Project	Sector			
	Policy makers and government	Industry/ Science/ sectoral/ NGO	Community/ general public	Schools
Marinexus		●	●	●
VALMER	●	●	●	
SETARMS	●	●	●	
CRESH	●	●		
PANACHE	●	●	●	●
CHARM2&3	●	●	●	
LICCo	●	●		
OFELIA				
MERIFIC	●	●		
CAMIS	●	●		

Table: Interactions between PEGASEAS cluster projects and audience types

### Policy makers and government

Participative engagement with policy makers and government provided a key focus for a number of Interreg projects. Workshops, focus groups and working groups were used within the CAMIS, CRESH, Marinexus, VALMER and LiCCo projects, amongst others. These communication efforts demonstrated the importance of two-way discussions and the need for audiences, such as policy makers, to meet face to face with scientists and information providers; in order to better understand the evolving evidence base. The CAMIS project, for example, used the participative process in order to share information and discuss common issues faced by different sectors and their challenges for the future, including the development of a number of policy tools. Marinexus has also engaged policy makers in participatory actions so as to promote marine biodiversity topics within the policy agenda.

A cross-border tool box was developed for the management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within the framework of PANACHE project. As a result of the shared data base and the support of national bodies (Natural England, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, French MPA Agency), MPAs managers will be able to access up to dated information on the status and responsibility of their MPAs (for each species and habitat), and effective measures for monitoring and valuation of the marine ecosystems. This will also give managers the opportunity to enter new data and lessons learnt on the management of MPAs in a friendly way. Effective use and dissemination of work by MPA managers will contribute to the improvement of regional coherence of management plans and result in more focused priorities for MPAs.

The VALMER project has brought together scientists, stakeholders, Local Authority policy makers and managers in order to undertake Ecosystem Service Assessments, supporting marine conservation and planning efforts. This has been achieved through the co-development of a knowledge sharing platform and will be further developed through participatory scenario building exercises to develop visions and to support management strategy evaluation. The project is working with policy makers to identify and signpost opportunities for the direct use of ecosystem services assessment outputs.

A frequently reported difficulty in engaging with policy-makers and government is the rapidly changing political and governance climate, including changes in elected representatives and technical staff which impacts on their engagement. To engage with an externally funded project, managers must be confident that the project is more likely to help them in their work than to create new problems. Researchers are sometimes perceived as threat to their authority in the public arena. Inviting policy makers and managers to commit to the participatory process of a project from the early stage of its development is probably a good way to reduce this risk. Time is also a limiting factor for policy makers and other organisations. While they may like to be involved in a project, they may have to choose between that and other priorities, leaving them with little or no time to become involved.

### **Industry / Science / Sectoral / NGO**

This group is defined as anyone using the marine environment in a professional capacity, involved in studying and/or protecting marine resources and the marine environment. Like policy makers and Government, using participation is more effective than mere one-way information provision, as it ensures that experience and expertise based knowledge is taken on board within the project. It also increases the potential for the project to lead to direct operational changes, for example by changing behaviours, by changing management rules or policy focus, or in promoting new areas for research or monitoring.

The CRESH project interacted with fisherman during a series of meetings. Part of the meetings involved presenting information to industry participants while other parts were more participative. Stakeholder engagement highlighted the major concerns of fishermen but also increased the number of interconnections with industry and allowed dialogue to continue. The CHARM project did the same, but instead engaged with a broader range of interests groups. This project has provided an opportunity for potentially conflicting groups to engage in a positive dialogue. SETARMS engaged port authorities and the dredging industry with the management of sediment dredging and the potential impacts it may have on the environment. Marinexus and other projects engaged with the ferry and maritime transport industry in order to support science and collect data on invasive species, for example. CAMIS engaged with a wide audience from marine industry, NGOs and policy makers through a series of forums that have been furthered by PEGASEAS. These forums could eventually be adopted by local authorities across the Channel, becoming a permanent Channel Forum.



Such engagement is also useful for the scientific community to better share knowledge and experience. The VALMER project has invited seagrass researchers from France to contribute to the on-going evaluation of Gulf of Morbihan. Local managers have been engaged in this process, allowing for a better understanding of science and policy issues by both parties. Other examples from VALMER include (1) the valuation of recreational benefits derived from landscapes and biodiversity in Poole Harbour, (2) the ecosystem services based assessments conducted for the Normand-Breton Gulf site and (3) the evaluation of management strategies for kelp exploitation in the Natural Marine Park of Iroise Sea. In many instances, the projects have been the first to foster communication across disciplines, particularly between natural sciences and social sciences. The projects have provided a suitable context for interactions between policy makers and stakeholders, enabling environmental governance to be discussed from an applied science perspective.

### Community/general public

The projects often targeted and linked their participative engagement efforts to existing public events; in order to achieve access to this key group. In many cases participation and engagement with the projects has been enabled by citizen science activities, for example in the case of PANACHE and Marinexus. During these events, citizens were informed about specific topics relating to the marine environment and, through related activities, were asked to record their findings. For example, participants recorded sightings of marine megafauna seen while snorkelling or diving, which contributed directly to their awareness and understanding. The quality and level of understanding provided by this type of engagement is high, however numbers are often lower than traditional communication efforts, for example, through stands/posters and lectures. When these methods are combined at public exhibitions, a particularly high impact has been recorded. Within the VALMER project, sea users such as recreational divers and anglers have also been engaged within the projects' case study sites, helping to input data records, providing a personal understanding of site ecosystems and helping to validate mapping efforts.



*The Marinexus bus, an exhibition vehicle equipped with a mobile laboratory for educational events. (© Maud Millet / les Petits Débrouillards Grand Ouest)*

The Marinexus project also involved 24 hour 'Bioblitz' events which provided survey events for the public and local schools. Three Bioblitz events were conducted at locations in South Devon and Cornwall. The Marinexus Bus (a mobile laboratory) attended these events. The aim was to engage the public in marine and terrestrial species, by asking them to record species information in a 24 hour period within a specific sampling area. These events were supported by scientists,

amateur naturalists and a range of stakeholders. All attendees worked together in order to map species and learn about the conservation of wildlife. Bioblitzes are excellent local awareness raising and community events. The feedback is incredibly positive and numbers engaged are good. They are however time consuming and involve the goodwill of many partners working together.

Regular survey activities involving groups of interested volunteers have also been undertaken by the Marinexus and PANACHE teams (e.g. the Shoresearch or Biolit). This method engages the public over a longer timeframe and eventually brings about strong support for the work being undertaken and an interest in the results.

Public surveys have also been conducted in VALMER in order to evaluate public willingness to support public effort to preserve or restore ecosystem services in different environments. PEGASEAS will also conduct a public survey in order

to gather citizen views about priorities for the environmental governance of the coasts and sea in the Channel Area.

Other communication tools are also considered including the “serious game” software to be created by the PANACHE project. Organizing “science cafés” or public debates about scientific controversies, for example about climate change or biodiversity conservation, is also a way to reach the public beyond those who commonly participate in workshop because of their position as stakeholders.

### Schools

As with public participation, engagement with schools requires significant time commitment by project staff; however the level of engagement experienced is often stronger and extremely rewarding. The use of this method was limited in projects, however key examples are reflected in the Marinexus project. These include the marine Bioblitz in England, and attendance at interactive shows and fairs of the ‘Marinexus Bus’ in France (a travelling laboratory for children to participate by using microscopes and materials to investigate marine life). Involving school students in citizen science projects and recording the distribution of, for example, non-native species, proved to be an extremely valuable communication tool and generated data that could be directly utilised by research scientists. Providing opportunities for youth to learn about science with concrete experience, a form of outreach named “science mediation” in France, is a powerful way to raise interest in such initiatives. The youth forum run by PANACHE is another example of how to interactively engage the young public in marine science.

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## CONCLUSIONS/WORK LEADS

- Interreg projects have all developed a participatory component in their actions so to ensure some level of engagement from their targeted audiences.
- Consultative and participatory communication is generally acknowledged as a useful way to increase the impact of the project. Engagement is considered to be a key element for better ownership of project outputs thus enhancing their impact on people and policies.
- The most common form of engagement is done by face to face interviews and workshops where findings are presented and outputs discussed. Though the number of people involved is limited, this is often considered as the most effective way to engage in a two-ways communication process within the time and resources limitations of projects.
- Some of the projects have placed participation at the core of their action either to advance public and policy debate on controversial issues; to foster scientific knowledge integration; to gather knowledge from people’s experience; or to raise awareness about issues such as threats to the environment and biodiversity conservation.
- Many different techniques have been used including innovative tools such as engaging the schools and communities in participatory and citizen science initiatives through events or networks; participatory assessment of policy issues; and foresight and scenario work. These should be encouraged so to allow for refinement by more testing and to increase dissemination and ownership.

- Vision development, based on participative foresight, is of significant importance to the future governance of the Channel. This could be further taken up under the format of Channel Forums initiated by CAMIS but also at a more local scale or on a sectoral or issue basis.
- Information and communication technology offers many opportunities for innovative ways of creating interactions during the course of the project but also beyond the life of the projects.
- Few Interreg IV projects have used large survey methodologies to gather views and opinions from the public, but it is also a way to raise interest for their products. This is probably explained by the resources required, for an impact that is very difficult to assess.
- Participation by policy-makers or stakeholders can become difficult if perceived as a risk to the formal policy process or a threat to particular interests. It can also easily be spoiled by specific interests. Participation should be carefully designed and managed so as to avoid these risks. Key representatives of targeted audiences should be engaged at the earliest possible stage of designing participatory processes.