A handbook
on the Public Participation Process in the Mediterranean

A tool for achieving Sustainable Development

Roniotes A., Malotidi V., Virtanen H. & Vlachogianni Th.

Textbook version of the MedPartnership e-learning module
(www.envirolearning.net/themedpartnership)

Public Participation

MedPartnership

Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem

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MIO-ECSDE

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Table of Contents

Introduction to the MedPartnership's Learning Tools

This document has been developed to complement the e-learning course on the Public Participation Process in the Mediterranean region that has been developed under the MedPartnership project. The e-learning course can be found at *www.envirolearning.net/themedpartnership*.

The MedPartnership, or the Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem, is a collective effort of leading environmental institutions and organisations together with countries sharing the Mediterranean Sea to address the main environmental challenges that Mediterranean marine and coastal ecosystems face. The project focuses on improving environmental conditions of pollution and biodiversity hotspots, reducing land-based pollution, enhancing the protection of critical habitats and species, and the promoting the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources.

The MedPartnership is led by the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP) and is financially supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other donors, including the European Commission and all participating countries. The project's duration is from 2009 to 2015.

Early in the implementation of the project it was agreed that the legacy of the MedPartnership should include educational tools that would support the continued implementation of the objectives and principles underpinning the project itself and also support the replication and sustainability of the numerous project deliverables. It was eventually decided that two e-learning modules would be delivered, one dedicated to Public Participation and one on the Ecosystems Approach (EcAp).

The specific aim of this effort is to provide learning tools that are:

- A meaningful and friendly learning experience
- Easy to understand (i.e. not too theoretical) but with the necessary information for further learning provided
- Focused on the practical application of concepts and processes
- Useful to many different stakeholders working on environmental and other issues in the Mediterranean region (and beyond)

General objectives of this Public Participation handbook:

✓ To provide an opportunity for learning the basic concepts related to Public Participation

✓ To promote understanding of the main aims, drivers, benefits and challenges of Public Participation

✓ To introduce the learners to the main international and regional - Mediterranean and European - policy frameworks of Public Participation

✓ To raise awareness on the ways that Public Participation serves Sustainable Development

✓ To present an overview of the evolution of the Public Participation processes in the Mediterranean region

✓ To provide an insight on the specificities regarding Public Participation processes in the Mediterranean context

✓ To familiarise the learners with the different levels and methods of Public Participation and their degree of impact

✓ To promote understanding of the significance and methodology of Situation Assessment and Stakeholder Analysis

✓ To increase awareness on the ways and tools for successful access to information and effective communication of a Public Participation process

✓ To provide sufficient capacity for the learner to plan and implement a Public Participation process

✓ To familiarize the learners with the monitoring and evaluation methodologies for Public Participation processes

✓ To present characteristic case studies of Public Participation from the Mediterranean region

Learners who complete this MedPartnership learning tool will be able to:

- Have a solid grasp of the main drivers, aims, benefits and challenges of Public Participation in the Mediterranean context
- Understand the meaning of relevant terms
- Have a good understanding of the different levels, processes and tools for effective Public Participation
- Plan, execute, monitor and assess a Public Participation process
- Conduct a Stakeholder Analysis
- Support the process with corresponding communication needs

Part 1. Public Participation: Concept, Key Elements and Frameworks of Implementation in the Mediterranean

Chapter 1 | Public Participation and Sustainable Development

In this chapter the learner will:

- Understand the basic concept of Public Participation
- Learn why Public Participation should be practiced
- Analyze the main benefits and challenges of applying Public Participation processes in environmental and sustainable development issues
- Understand the link between Public Participation and Sustainable Development

What is Public Participation?

Anyone affected by a decision has the right to be involved in the decision-making process. This is the basic premise of Public Participation.

> *Public participation is the process by which public concerns, needs and values are incorporated into governmental and corporate decision making. It is two-way communication and interaction, with the overall goal of better decisions supported by the public.*

Creighton, 2005

There is quite a bit of literature on Public Participation and you are invited to look into older and newer references (see further reading in Chapter 10). Our aim here is not to delve into existing bibliography, but rather to provide distilled information and focus on the links with environment and sustainable development issues in the Mediterranean setting.

Public participation allows stakeholders to influence decisions that affect their lives. It is the process by which an organisation/body consults with interested or affected individuals, organisations, and government entities before making a decision. Public participation is two-way communication and collaborative problem solving with the goal of achieving better and more acceptable decisions.

It is understood rather broadly, as an organised opportunity for citizens, non-governmental organisations and the public in

general, to actively express their opinion on general policy goals or on specific programmes or projects and to discuss them with representatives of the government or the promoters of projects. The process also includes the possibility of appealing against governmental decisions.

Core Values

Core Values of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) for the Practice of Public Participation

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

(IAP2, 2007)

Why practice Public Participation?
Key benefits and outcomes

Public participation allows for the engagement of citizens in policy making, more transparent and creative decision making and the increase of public awareness on environmental issues. This ultimately supports a sustainable development.

Why practice public participation?

It is a citizen right

It increases the likelihood of enhanced efficiency

Long term commitment for Sustainable Development

The link between Sustainable Development and Public Participation
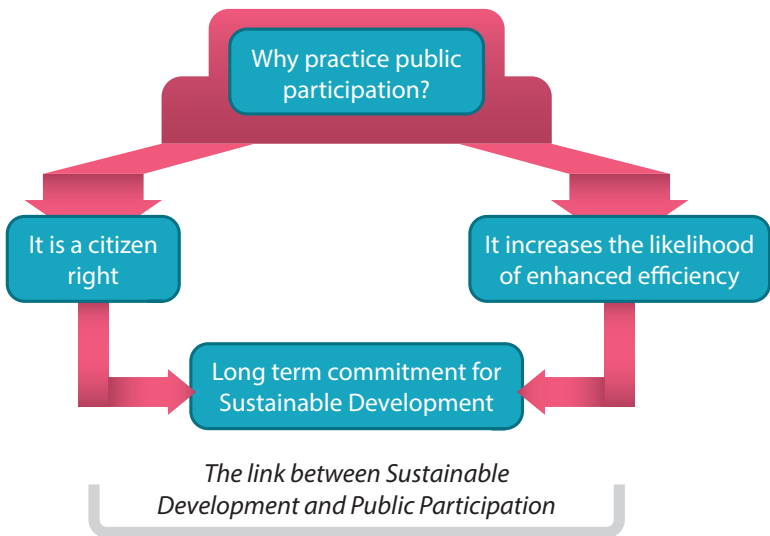
To those bodies running the process, the benefits and outcomes are more tangible. By involving the public, authorities and decision-makers can make use of the knowledge, experience and initiatives of different stakeholders, resulting in better plans and measures. Involving the public will potentially lead to fewer misunderstandings, increased trust and therefore less litigation and delays. This results in more effective implementation of the decision, project, plan, policy, etc. A successful public participation process will at its best enhance cooperation among parties involved and provide the potential to build consensus and avoid conflict. Moreover, providing the public with an opportunity to express their concerns and have those concerns addressed, offers stakeholders a sense of ownership of the process. So even if stakeholders disagree with the final decision, it is likely that they are more willing to accept the outcome, having been part of the process that they consider to be legitimate.

The participation of the largest possible number of parties involved in the participatory process is usually considered as a guarantee for the 'democratic spirit' and 'openness' of the process and for the stability and viability of whatever eventual agreements might be reached. Although a '**dialogue**' is usually a lengthy procedure and does not necessarily lead to 'equal' participation and partnership agreements, it is the best available backbone of a continuum, which may ultimately lead to partnership and even the institutionalisation of agreements. Such institutionalised agreements may lead to rules, introduction of legislation, management plans, etc., and they may vary from case to case depending on the culture, the governing system and the specific needs and opportunities provided in each case.

Forms of PP	Forms of Processes	Outcomes
Consultation	Identifying values and view points	Decisions quality improved (appropriate solutions)
	Compiling knowledge and data	Social acceptance (commitment)
	Identifying unsustainable practices	Easier & long term implementation (enhancing efficiency)
	Raising awareness	
Active Involvement	Establishing a shared vision	
	Participation in the implementation and monitoring of the shared vision	

Examples of processes and outcomes for two common Public Participation forms (Consultation and Involvement).

Yet another major outcome of public participation, if conducted successfully, is the development of capacity in managing challenging social problems. This capacity includes improved relationships between decision-makers and the public, and among the stakeholders themselves. Public participation educates stakeholders' collaborative ways to approach each other, manage difficult decisions and even resolve disputes. Along the process, stakeholders also learn about each other's views and interests, hence they start to appreciate different positions among themselves (Environmental Protection Agency, 2014).

Major Challenges

Public participation takes time, money and skilled staff (capacity). Allocating funds and securing commitment to public participation can seem secondary but in fact is very important. Finding individuals skilled in public participation and familiar with the specific context might prove challenging.

Public participation is also a context-driven process. Full understanding of the political, cultural and institutional context at local, national, regional and global level is needed. Language difficulties or even illiteracy may impair communication. 'Translating' technical text to layman's terms can be demanding. Moreover, not all stakeholders have access to various media (internet, television, newspapers).

Challenges

Challenges in planning and implementing public participation may include lack of clear goals and understanding of the process, inadequate planning, and lack of feedback on issues raised by citizens. This might be caused by inadequate human resources, budgetary constraints or poor institutional arrangements such as weak governance. Political dynamics where political parties always fight for influence might play a role as well (Public Service Commission, 2008).

Failure

Failure to involve the public appropriately might lead to public resistance to the process, add costs and delays to the process and result in a poor outcome despite the considerable investments made. It has been proven over the years that nobody wants this. The public, particularly in its more organised forms (e.g. associations, NGOs) has frequently been deemed as threatening. However, well informed NGOs can prove to be the best ally in a smooth decision-making process.

Who is the Public?

A number of constituents are identified as public. Usually, as public are considered: the population in general; the elected forms of popular representation such as local, district or town councils, neighbourhood committees and People's Assemblies (existing in some countries); NGOs and other forms of popular associations and in some cases public figures such as prestigious individuals.

The Population	Elected Popular Fora	NGOs	Other Popular Associations	Public Figures

The public

The Population	As individuals the public is a primary resource for implementing sustainable development through their daily decisions and consumption choices (e.g. in energy and transport use), through direct participation in actions (usually local) such as clean- ups and tree planting and through voting, especially in referenda.
	To effectively participate in a dialogue on a given issue the population must begin by determining and articulating its position, interest and priorities. Often these will be expressed by its representatives. The latter could be traditional leaders such as tribal chiefs, spontaneous leaders or personalities acceptable by the population and other parties, an NGO, such as a community development or environment association maintaining effective relations with the population, or a formally elected body (such as an ad hoc committee or a local council). However, when genuine representation scenaria are lacking or when without internal organisation, the population may eventually be "reduced" to a passive recipient of information.
Elected Popular Fora	These include local, district, town, prefectural and other popular councils, which are elected and frequently manage, to a certain extent, local affairs and exist in many countries. In most cases these councils are empowered to approve, reject or even amend projects and actions submitted by the central government or the regional authority.

NGOs	In the Mediterranean these include many types of public interest groups, in their majority aiming at the protection of the environment, and to a lesser extent, for the assistance of local communities in establishing development schemes, or in defending the interest of consumers, or major groups of the population, such as women, youth, etc.
	NGOs play several important roles, often more than one role even in the same project. Such roles may range from mobilisation of the wide public, raising public awareness and consciousness in favour or against a policy or project at national or local level, to proposing solutions or amendments and mediating between a part of the population and the government or offering direct support to the authorities by organising joint campaigns on issues of mutual interest (e.g. water). NGOs in many cases also provide support in securing private or international funds, managing projects or offering organisational backing and advice through working parties and expert committees.
	At the Mediterranean level international NGOs and networks and MIO-ECSDE in particular have played a major lobbying, educational and political role participating actively in the formulation of policies and in diffusing the messages and policies to a large number of national and local NGO members (in most cases in a much more rapid and efficient process than central authorities informing the subregional or local ones). This enhances the ability of local groups to participate in an increasingly efficient way, although sometimes it creates frustration to the uninformed authorities at local level.
Other Popular Associations	Such associations include trade unions and cooperatives which might play an important role in local or regional issues. However until now their involvement in environmental or sustainable development issues is rather limited.
Public Figures	Public figures are personalities with ability to influence public opinion or other parties due to the prominent place they occupy in society. Such figures usually play an important role in a number of issues related to land-based activities because their standing qualifies them to express the public interest with some authority. In most cases these figures act in close co-operation or on behalf of NGOs.

Other Partners

Other partners for public dialogue, participation and partnerships

The State	including: central government, regional or prefectural administration, district authorities.
The City or Town (local) Authorities	
The Private Sector	including: 1. The chambers of commerce and industry 2. The private investment sector, important to project financing, though rarely participates in public dialogues in the Mediterranean countries 3. Producers, such as farmers and fishermen, usually represented through their local unions and cooperatives.
Syndicates	such as the labour unions, etc., rarely active until now on these issues in the Mediterranean countries.
The Private Consultative Sector	which in many cases has shown ability to bring together other parties in order to obtain consensus for the success of the project to which its work is related.
Financing Organisations (particularly international)	Since projects which are not self-financed by beneficiaries are only implemented if they have acceptable environmental and economical prospects, these organisations play an increasingly important role in stimulating public dialogue.
Universities and Research Institutes	These institutions have high ability to influence other parties due to their usually good reputation and the high respect the public and the authorities show to their politically 'neutral' work that often covers analytical work or recommendations in natural, social and economic issues.
Intergovernmental and other International Institutions	Several such institutions and agencies, particularly of the UN and the EU 'families', play an effective role in stimulating and participating in dialogue and partnerships or providing finance and technical assistance to projects which involve the public.
Political Parties	In most Mediterranean countries political parties play, in a non-systematic way, a rather limited role in stimulating public debate on environment and development issues or in effective promotion of multisectoral participation in public dialogues. In some countries the role of the ruling party is often confused with that of the State.
Religious Groups and Churches	Traditionally, religious groups participated rarely in public dialogues on issues related to environmental problems ,although many of them are becoming increasingly active recently and are keen to participate in a dialogue on sustainable development issues, related to moral and ethical values.

Linking Public Participation Processes with Sustainable Development

The central role of the public in achieving sustainable development has been widely recognized (e.g. in the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992). Information is often seen as one of the keys to successful Public Participation. It is promoted as being a complementary approach to Education (in our case Environmental Education, EE, and Education for Sustainable Development, ESD) and both are significant mechanisms which assist the growth of awareness on Environment and Sustainable Development, empower the public in participating in environmental decision making and provide the basis of rational and appropriate choices by the public.

What is Sustainable Development?

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Our Common Future, The Brundtland Commission report, 1987

The ultimate goal of public awareness, sharing of information and Education for Sustainable Development is to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities of individuals and groups to behave and act for the protection of the natural and cultural environment. The best way to obtain this is by respecting institutionalised and voluntarily agreed rules generated through understanding, dialogue, participation and partnership -the latter being the most advanced form of participation.
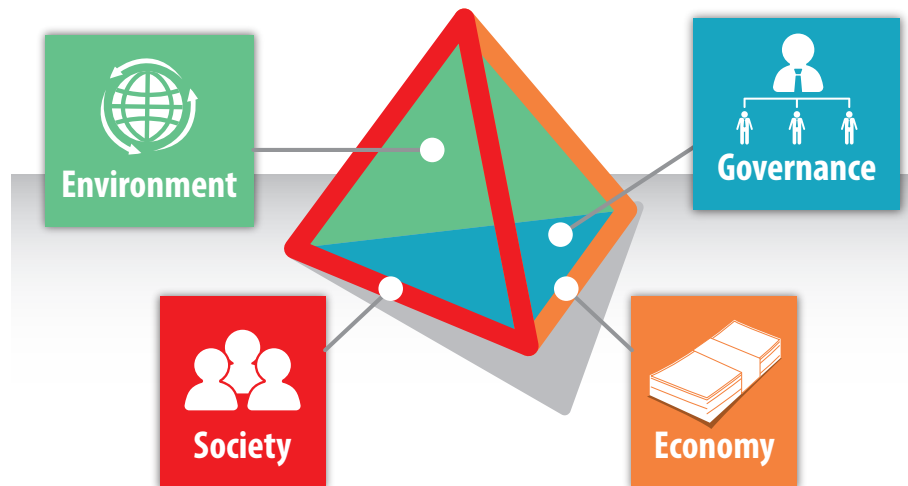
Key principles of Sustainable Development.

The close interdependence and the inseparable development of information, awareness, education (particularly ESD) and participation can be expressed as being four facets of the same cluster and can be schematically depicted as a pyramid, the four sides of which are information, awareness, education and participation (see below). Each one can be the basis for the other three. This furthermore explains how the pyramid can be "built" on different foundations depending on the given different approaches that are followed. In most cases the approach followed is the one that is based on raising awareness.
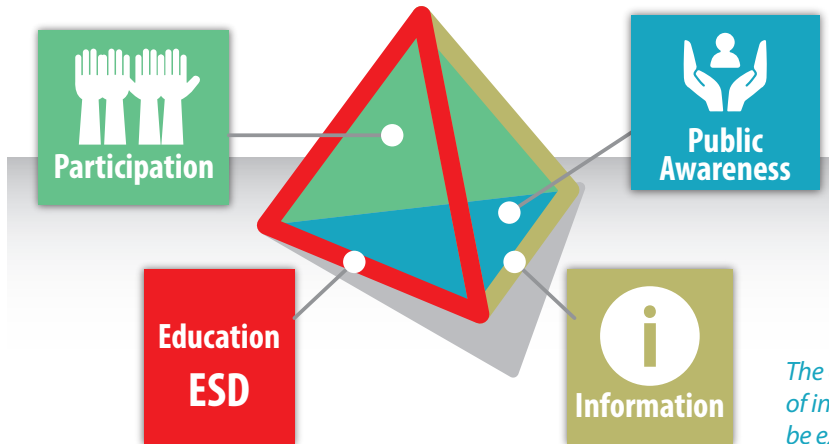
Participation

Public Awareness

Education ESD

Information

The close interdependence and the inseparable development of information, awareness, education and participation can be expressed as being four facets of the same cluster.

Furthermore, the development of specific policies for each of these aspects automatically overlap and merge. For example, the policies for promoting Education for Sustainable Development require the flow of passive and active information about pressures, new developments, institutions and solutions, the wider awareness of society, formal, non-formal and informal education of students inside and outside the class and active participation of the school in society.

The Prerequisites for Effective Participatory Processes

The main prerequisites for effective Participatory processes to be in place are:
- Access to the information on environmental and relevant developmental issues
- Participation in consultation, decision-making and monitoring of implementation of agreements
- Full access to justice
- Access to support funds and credit.

The four main prerequisites for effective Participatory processes.
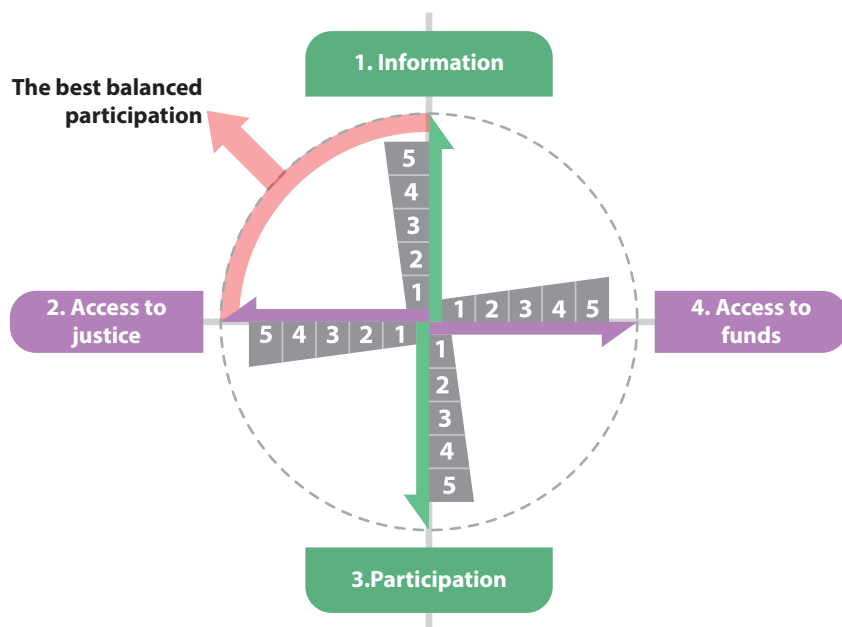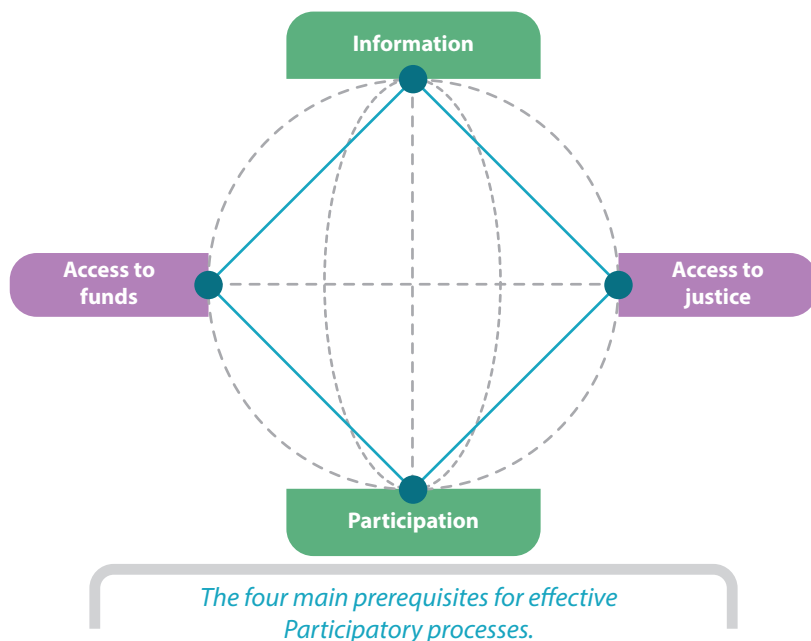
A two dimensional representation of the participatory process: the idea is a "growing" circle

For a thriving Participation, progress should be made in all four pillars. A genuine form of public participation is achieved once one listens and acts based on the public's informed opinions and actively involves the public in monitoring the implementation of agreements with full access to justice, support funds and credit.

If the level of progress of each pillar is graded, e.g. from 0 to 5, one could propose a graphical representation of the situation e.g. in a country or on a specific issue. The larger and more regular the circle, the more advanced the participatory process is. The smaller and more irregular the shape is, the more "distorted" the prevailing participatory conditions.

In the Mediterranean (see also Chapter 3), focus has been primarily directed towards the provision of information and appropriate education (including training) followed by safeguarding the right of access to environmental information, participation and justice. But problems have been acknowledged in relation to the institutionalisation of those rights. Institutionalisation of the right to access to funds is the least developed worldwide. Implementation of the three first prerequisites or pillars for Public Participation, in various modes and degrees, is underway in many Mediterranean countries.

Two types of Public Participation in the Mediterranean

Participatory actions in the Mediterranean could be classified in two very broad general categories, which in most cases cannot be viewed as separate:

01.
Actions related to Specific Problems usually Local, Subregional or National

02.
Actions Related to the Introduction of New Ideas, Principles and Issues of Global, or at least International/ Transboundary character

1. Actions related to Specific Problems usually Local, Subregional or National

In the majority of the cases known in the Mediterranean, these actions are connected to proposed or implemented **programmes, projects** or **policies**. In this category one could classify a very large number of "reactions" (starting from provision of simple information to very "aggressive" demonstrations or political action such as a "boycott") against what are frequently considered by the public (local inhabitants, environmental or professional groups, etc.) as inappropriate development projects threatening the environment or the viability and sustainability of local ecological or socio-economic systems (e.g. construction of a road, factory, dam, introduction of new species, agricultural subsidies, etc.). In the same category one could also classify a large number of initiatives aiming at the "restoration" (cleanups, etc.) of sites or promotion of education-awareness based on experiences to be avoided.

2. Actions Related to the Introduction of New Ideas, Principles and Issues of Global, or at least International/ Transboundary character

In this category a variety of actions could be included, most of which are of a rather "proactive" and informative character (such as "capacity building") or of institutional nature elaborating on concepts. This category may include campaigns, conferences, public hearings, etc. and, in general, efforts to organise public participation at international, national, regional or local level with principal goals the formulation of an "informed" opinion by the wider public and the influencing of political priorities and decisions at regional-Mediterranean level (e.g. global warming-energy taxes, sustainability plans, green accounting, etc.). By their nature most of these actions are the direct or indirect result of the better organised -through NGOs- parts of the Mediterranean society who have already formed various types of communication.

Public Participation and NGOs

The wider civil society sector and NGOs play an important role in stimulating environmental protection and sustainable development in the Mediterranean area. This includes their active participation at local, national, transboundary and regional level in all aspects of Governance and relevant phases of environmental awareness raising, policy formulation, planning, management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of environmental initiatives.

In order to ensure a meaningful, coordinated and effective participation of civil society, there is a need to enhance their knowledge, abilities and capacities to act effectively and in a constructive way throughout public participation processes.

> **Civil Society:** In 1992, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or Earth Summit, Governments agreed on the following definition of Major Groups: farmers, women, the scientific and technological community, children and youth, indigenous peoples and their communities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, non-governmental organizations as well as local authorities.
>
> **NGOs:** the term refers to civil society organisations (CSOs) in a wider sense, including community based organisations (CBOs). It further applies to local, national, regional (e.g. Mediterranean) or international organisations that are non-profit and have a non binding affiliation to any government, political party or religious group.

Key questions to consider:

✓ **Why is Public Participation needed?**

✓ **In which cases is Public Participation useful?**

✓ **What sort of obstacles are there in conducting Public Participation?**

✓ **What are the main pillars of Public Participation?**

✓ **How does Public Participation serve Sustainable Development?**

✓ **What are the prerequisites for effective Public Participation?**

✓ **What sort of role do NGOs play in Public Participation?**

Chapter 2 | Legal and institutional frameworks affecting Public Participation in the Mediterranean

In this chapter the learner will:	- Learn the main international and regional enabling frameworks of Public Participation
	- Become familiar with institutional policy and legislation tools that call for implementation of Public Participation in the Mediterranean
	- Be introduced to the status of national legal provisions for Public Participation in the Mediterranean

The requirement for Public Participation in environmental decision making was first initiated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, and was further strengthened at the Aarhus Convention in 1998. Ever since, Public Participation has been a key issue in global environmental governance.

Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro brought together government officials from 178 countries and between 20,000 and 30,000 individuals from governments, NGOs, and the media to discuss solutions for global problems such as poverty and the growing gap between industrialised and developing countries. The central focus was the question of how to relieve the global environmental system through the introduction to sustainable development. One of the results of the Earth Summit was the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development - a set of 27 legally non-binding principles designed to commit governments to ensure environmental protection and sustainable development. One of those was Principle 10 that sets the **three main elements of public participation: access to justice, information and public participation.**

Principle 10.

Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.

The Aarhus Convention

As a follow-up of the Principle 10, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) *Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters* was adopted in 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus, hence the name Aarhus Convention. The convention entered into force in 2001. Aarhus Convention has 47 Parties, out of which 46 countries in Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, and the European Union (ratified on 17.2.2005).

The rights guaranteed for the public by the Aarhus Convention are the following (Justice and Environment, 2011):

- The public should be informed early in an adequate, timely and effective manner, amongst others, of the proposed activity, the opportunities for the public to participate and the time and venue of any envisaged public hearing
- The public should be informed early in an adequate, timely and effective manner, amongst others, of the proposed activity, the opportunities for the public to participate and the time and venue of any envisaged public hearing
- Public participation should be early when all options are open and effective public participation can take place access should be given to the public free of charge and as soon as it becomes available, to all information relevant to the decision-making and the description of the potential environmental impacts of the planned activity
- The public should be allowed to submit, in writing or, as appropriate, at a public hearing or inquiry with the applicant, any comments, information, analyses or opinions that it considers relevant to the proposed activity.

The subject of the Convention goes right into the relationship between people and governments. The convention is not only an environmental agreement, but also a Convention about government accountability, responsiveness and transparency.

EU Public Participation provisions

In the EU *the implementation of the Aarhus Convention* has included amendments to existing legislation, including the Directive on Access to Environmental Information (1990) and Public Participation elements in Directives such as the Environmental Impact Assessment; the Strategic Environmental Assessment; and the Water Framework Directive. The following steps have also been taken:

- Adoption of Directive 2003/4 on public access to information

- Adoption of Directive 2003/35 on Public Participation
- Adoption of Regulation 1367/2006 applying the Convention to EU institutions and bodies
- Adoption of Decision 2005/370/EC on ratification of the Convention and deposit of its instrument of ratification (EU became a Party to the Convention on 17 February 2005).

The long awaited Directive on Access to Justice, has not come to pass yet (2015). The EC's 2003 proposal was withdrawn. It is urgent that it is replaced with a new proposal. Excepting the latter, the Aarhus-related Directives should have been transposed into the national legislation and implemented in the EU Member States.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a procedure that ensures that the environmental implications of decisions are taken into account before the decisions are made. As a decision-making process, EIA provides a means for decision makers to better integrate environmental, social, and economic concerns. It provides the opportunity for all stakeholders in a proposed action, including the public, to participate in the identification of issues of concern, practical alternatives, and to identify opportunities to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts.

It can be undertaken for individual policies and projects affecting the environment (a dam, motorway, airport or factory). For public plans or programmes Strategic Environmental Assessments are applied.

The newly amended EU Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2014/52/EU) entered into force on 15 May 2014 to simplify the rules for assessing the potential effects of projects on the environment. It is in line with the drive for smarter regulation, so it reduces the administrative burden. It also improves the level of environmental protection, with a view to making business decisions on public and private investments more sound, more predictable and sustainable in the longer term. The new approach pays greater attention to threats and challenges that have emerged since the original rules came into force some 25 years ago. This means more attention to areas like resource efficiency, climate change and disaster prevention, which are now better reflected in the assessment process. The main amendments are as follows:

- Member States now have a mandate to simplify their different environmental assessment procedures
- Timeframes are introduced for the different stages of environmental assessments: screening decisions should be taken within 90 days (although extensions are possible) and public consultations should last at least 30 days. Members States also need to ensure that final decisions are taken within a "reasonable period of time"

- The screening procedure, determining whether an EIA is required, is simplified. Decisions must be duly motivated in the light of the updated screening criteria
- EIA reports are to be made more understandable for the public, especially as regards assessments of the current state of the environment and alternatives to the proposal in question
- The quality and the content of the reports will be improved. Competent authorities will also need to prove their objectivity to avoid conflicts of interest
- The grounds for development consent decisions must be clear and more transparent for the public. Member States may also set timeframes for the validity of any reasoned conclusions or opinions issued as part of the EIA procedure
- If projects do entail significant adverse effects on the environment, developers will be obliged to do the necessary to avoid, prevent or reduce such effects. These projects will need to be monitored using procedures determined by the Member States. Existing monitoring arrangements may be used to avoid duplication of monitoring and unnecessary costs.

More information on the evolution of the EU Environment Impact Assessment Directive at *http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/review.htm*.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The importance of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is widely recognized. It is a systematic evidence-based, decision support process/instrument, aiming to ensure that environmental and other sustainability aspects are effectively considered in public policy, plan and programme making. It ensures that significant environmental effects arising from policies, plans and programmes are identified, assessed, mitigated, communicated to decision-makers, monitored and that opportunities for public involvement are provided. It has become an important instrument to help achieve sustainable development in public planning and policy making. Particular benefits of SEA include:

- Support for a sustainable development
- Improvement of the evidence base for strategic decisions
- Facilitation of consultation with stakeholders
- Streamlining other processes such as Environmental Impact Assessments of individual development projects.

SEA is a generic tool which can be used in a variety of situations. It came to pass after the weaknesses of EIAs became apparent, which is why e.g. in 2003, the Espoo Convention was supplemented by a Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The *European SEA Directive 2001/42/EC* required that all member states of the European Union should have ratified the Directive into their own country's law by 2004. It can be summarized as follows: an environmental report is prepared in which the likely significant effects on the environment and the reasonable alternatives of the proposed plan or programme are identified. The public and the environmental authorities are informed and consulted on the draft plan or programme and the environmental report prepared. As regards plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment in another Member State, the Member State in whose territory the plan or programme is being prepared must consult the other Member State(s). On this issue the SEA Directive follows the general approach taken by the SEA Protocol to the UN ECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context.

The environmental report and the results of the consultations are taken into account before adoption. Once the plan or programme is adopted, the environmental authorities and the public are informed and relevant information is made available to them. In order to identify unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage, significant environmental effects of the plan or programme are to be monitored.

The EU SEA and EIA procedures are very similar, but there are some **differences**:

- The SEA requires the **environmental authorities** to be consulted at the screening stage
- **Scoping** (i.e. the stage of the SEA process that determines the content and extent of the matters to be covered in the SEA report to be submitted to a competent authority) is obligatory under the SEA
- The SEA requires an assessment of reasonable **alternatives** (under the EIA the developer chooses the alternatives to be studied)
- Under the SEA Member States must **monitor** the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans/programmes in order to identify unforeseen adverse effects and undertake appropriate remedial action
- The SEA obliges Member States to ensure that environmental reports are of a sufficient **quality**.

Public Participation provisions in the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) went into effect in 2000 placing public participation at the centre stage of water management. Under the Directive, implementing agencies should provide information on river basin management planning to the public, consult citizens and stakeholders during planning and actively involve interested parties in the planning process. The core Public Participation provision of the WFD is Article 14, which is referred to as the article on "Public Information and Consul-

tation". Three levels of participation are mentioned in this article – information, consultation and active involvement. The WFD calls for public participation in water management and specifically in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM): "the success of the Directive relies on close cooperation and coherent action at community, Member State and local level as well as on information, consultation and involvement of the public, including users" (European Union, 2000/60/EC).

According to experiences in the implementation of the WDF so far the form that Public Participation takes is not only specific to the relevant country, but also regional characteristics have to be given the same consideration as the experiences obtained within countries. In this respect, participation policy has to account for these regional differences and needs to be adapted to suit the cultures and circumstances of each individual region. (Kranz et al., 2006.)

A summary presentation of the provisions for public participation in an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) framework are schematically presented below:
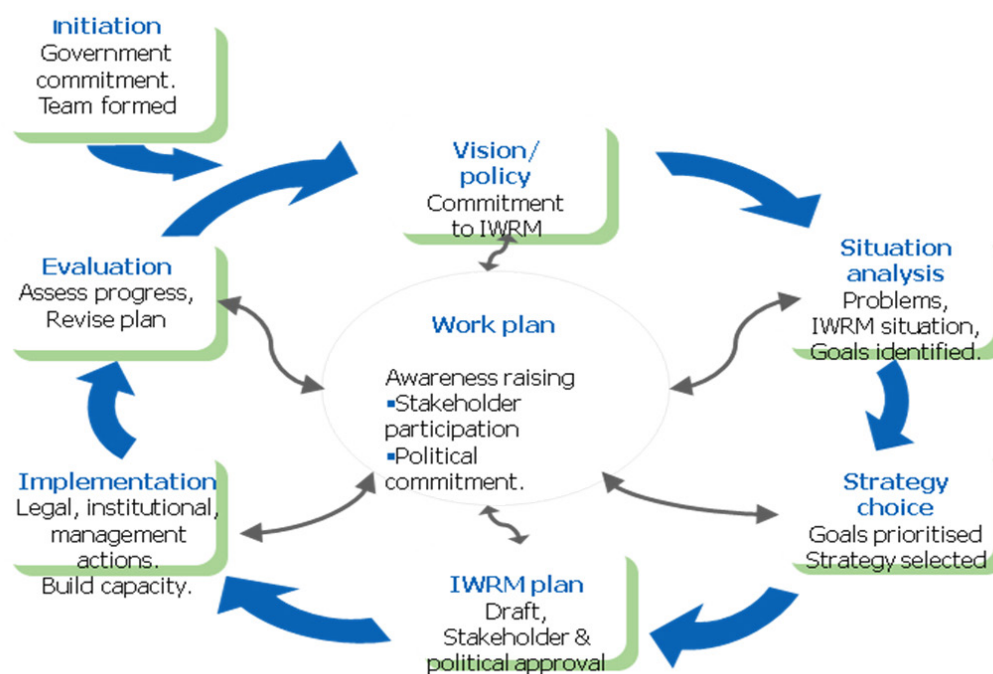
EU Floods Directive

The *EU Floods Directive*, in place since November 2007, aims at reducing and managing the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity in the EU. The Directive requires Member States to identify the relevant river basins and associated coastal areas at risk of flooding, draw up flood risk maps, and finally establish flood risk management plans focused on prevention, protection and preparedness by 2015. The Directive applies to inland and coastal waters across the EU and is to be carried out in coordination and synchronisation with the Water Framework Directive (WFD) implementation, in six year cycles (European Commission, 2014).

The EU Floods Directive emphasizes the rights of the public to access flood management related information (preliminary flood risk assessment, the flood hazard maps, the flood risk maps and the flood risk management plans) and to have a say in the planning process itself. Member States are to encourage active involvement of interested parties in the production, review and updating of the flood risk management plans. Accordingly, all assessments, maps and plans prepared should be available to the public. Member States are also encouraged to make public the correlation between the Directive and the national transposition measures.

Public Participation Provisions in the ICZM Protocol of the Barcelona Convention

A Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) was signed in Madrid, on 21 January 2008, at the Conference of the Plenipotentiaries on the Integrated Coastal Zone Management. The signing of the Protocol came after a six-year process of consultation, negotiation and refinement on the Protocol layout and dedicated work of all the Contracting Parties. The ICZM Protocol (*http://www.pap-thecoastcentre.org/pdfs/Protocol_publikacija_May09.pdf*) is the seventh Protocol in the framework of the Barcelona Convention and represents a crucial milestone in the history of MAP. It complements the existing set of Protocols of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Dumping Protocol, Prevention and Emergency Protocol, LBS Protocol, SPA and Biodiversity Protocol, Offshore Protocol, Hazardous Wastes Protocol). The Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management will allow the Mediterranean countries to better manage and protect their coastal zones, as well as to deal with the emerging coastal environmental challenges.

In the 2012-2019 Action Plan for the implementation of ICZM, it is mentioned that *Article 14 of the Protocol calls for Parties to ensure the appropriate involvement of the various stakeholders in the phases of the formulation and implementation of coastal and marine strategies, plans and programmes or projects, as well as the issuing of the various authorizations. It also calls for the right of stakeholders to challenge "...decisions, acts or omissions, subject to the participation provisions established by the Parties with respect*

to plans, programmes or projects concerning the coastal zone." The effective implementation of the Protocol will require a wide societal engagement involving civil society and individual citizens in the coastal zone, as well as governmental institutions. Good communication, open and transparent access to information and decision making processes will be key to this engagement. Continued awareness-raising of ICZM issues at the public level will therefore be required.

Public participation in an ICZM framework aims to involve the actual users, or the public, in the decision making process concerning the coastal zone in order to get mutual approval and responsibility on the economical, social and environmental development of the coastal society.

The coastal zone has many different users. Local inhabitants, tourists, fishermen and industry are just a few examples of those involved in the use of the coastal zone and its resources. All have to somehow be involved in the management related to the coastal zone. Where governmental bodies develop the policy for the (re-) distribution of coastal resources, support from society should make it possible to carry out this policy. Successful public participation in coastal zone decision making should therefore lead to a transparent distribution of coastal resources resulting in a sustainable use of the coastal zone.

Public Participation in the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)

The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, or the MSSD The aim of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development is to provide a strategic policy framework, built upon a broad consultation process, for securing a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region. The rationale behind the Strategy is the need to harmonise the interactions between socio economic and environmental goals, to adapt international commitments to regional conditions, to guide national sustainable development strategies and to stimulate regional cooperation between stakeholders in the achievement of sustainable development. The Strategy is underpinned by the conviction that investment in the environment is the best way to secure long-term, sustainable job creation and socio-economic development, and an essential vehicle for the achievement of social and economic objectives.

The Strategy was developed as a result of a consultation process that mobilized Mediterranean stakeholders, including Governments and civil society through the participation of non-governmental organizations and key experts. The first Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development was adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in 2005 at their 14th meeting in Portoroz, Slovenia

In light of the outcomes of Rio+20, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention requested, at their 18th Ordinary Meeting held in Istanbul, Turkey, in December 2013, that a review of the Strategy be launched (Decision IG.21/11), with a view to submitting a revised strategy for consideration and adoption by the Contracting Parties at their 19th meeting, to be held in February 2016 in Greece.

The new draft MSSD puts considerable emphasis on improving governance in support of sustainable development addressing the need to advance public trusteeship concepts in the existing instruments for better and more equitable governance and more effective and efficient public participation

When it comes to climate change and the transition to a green and blue economy, it is mentioned that public participation needs to be fostered. It is expected to be a long and demanding process guided both by top-down policy prescription as well as bottom-up public participation. This approach will give the ecological transition the political and social legitimacy needed to ensure the wide-scale mobilization of efforts required.

At a regional level, accession to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters27 (Aarhus Convention) is encouraged. A target associated with this strategic direction is that by 2025, two-thirds of Mediterranean countries will have acceded to the Aarhus Convention.

Increased public participation is to be achieved through support for national and local governments and institutions by means of improved legal frameworks and human and financial resources, and is to include skills related to partnership- building, negotiation and conflict resolution.

Public Participation provisions in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive aims to protect more effectively the marine environment across Europe. The Marine Directive was adopted in 2008, and it came into force the same year. The Commission also produced in 2010 a set of detailed criteria and indicators to help Member States implement the Marine Directive (European Commission, 2014).

Public participation plays a key role in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The MSFD (Art. 19 (1)) stipulates that the public are provided with 'early and effective opportunities to participate' in the implementation of the directive. In support of this, Article 19(2) requires Member States to publish and make available to the public for comment, summary draft documents for all key stages of MSFD implementation, including the Programmes of Measures.

Preamble 36 of the Directive states that 'To ensure the active involvement of the general public in the establishment, implementation and updating of marine strategies, provision should be made for proper public information on the different elements of marine strategies, or their related updates, as well as, upon request, relevant information used for the development of the marine strategies in accordance with Community legislation on public access to environmental information.'

'Stakeholder involvement' is also specifically cited as one of only eight selected indicative measures which are set out in Annex VI and which must be taken into consideration in the drawing up of the Programme of Measures.

Active public participation is also an integral element of the adaptive management approach which is to be applied throughout the implementation of the Directive. Such participation is vital as it facilitates the process of active learning amongst decision-makers and stakeholders and contributes to more successful, enduring and sustainable solutions and outcomes through early identification of public concerns; improved accountability and transparency in decision-making; a wider acknowledgement of the legitimacy of decisions taken and increased public support for, and engagement in, the outcomes and management decisions made.

Three main forms of public participation are included in the Directive:

1. Active involvement in all aspects of the implementation of the Directive and at all scales (sub marine region scale and national level), especially – but not limited to – the planning process
2. Consultation in three steps of the planning process
3. Access to background information.

The Member States have to encourage active involvement and ensure consultation and access to background information. Consultation means that the public can react to plans and proposals developed by the authorities. Active involvement means that stakeholders actively participate in the planning process by discussing issues and contributing to their solution. Essential to active involvement is the potential for participants to influence the process.

Rio+20

Twenty years after the Earth Summit, in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), also known as RIO+20 or the Earth Summit 2012, the 193 Member States of the United Nations approved the outcome document *The Future We Want*. In paragraph 43 it is stated: "We underscore that broad participation and access to information and judicial and administrative proceedings are essential to the promotion of sustainable development." Moreover, in the sub-paragraph 88(h) Member

States will "Ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders drawing on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and exploring new mechanisms to promote transparency and effective engagement of civil society."

In the document, the Heads of State also acknowledged that democracy, good governance and the rule of law at the national and international levels, as well as a favourable context, are essential for sustainable development, including sustained, inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger.

Public Participation Provisions in National legal frameworks in the Mediterranean

All of the frameworks described above have played a role, in varying degrees, for the development of national policy and legal provisions for applying Public Participation in the Mediterranean countries. The region has a unique geopolitical position in the crossroads of three continents, with countries of different religions, cultures and political systems. Different degrees of democratic and participatory traditions are to be found around the Mediterranean, and several countries have still unsettled disputes between or even among themselves.

EU Mediterranean countries and Mediterranean countries that are signatories to the Aarhus Convention benefit from the direct implementation of a common process and tool (both for implementation and for monitoring progress).

The rest of the Mediterranean countries have to varying extent 'translated' the global principles into their national policies and formal and informal participatory processes. However, as mentioned earlier, the most effective promotion of Public Participation in the Mediterranean would be for all countries to accede to the Aarhus Convention, particularly since more than half of the countries in the region have already done so.

Against the historical background of the Mediterranean region, some **general obstacles impairing public participation in Mediterranean countries** can be mentioned:

1. Lack of or inadequate national institutional frameworks providing for public participation.
2. Inadequate administrative infrastructures coupled with limited resources to cope technically with the needs.
3. Lack of coordination among the various administrative sectors and public agencies.
4. Fragmentation of NGO and civil society initiatives and weak structures. This applies at all levels but it is prominent at national level, where most of the environmentally critical decisions are made.
5. Reluctance by the authorities to provide information to the public even when this is technically and legally feasible due to lack of acceptance of civil groups and NGOs as legitimate partners.

It is beyond the scope of this module to go deeper into the legislation of each Mediterranean country, but it should be noted that to the knowledge of the authors, there is still little information on systematic studies or assessments describing the evolution of information, awareness raising and public participation in the Mediterranean area.

Key questions to consider:

✓ **Why are legal frameworks needed to ensure Public Participation?**

✓ **Has the Aarhus Convention been signed by all Mediterranean countries?**

✓ **Are the EU Directives linked with the Aarhus Convention legally binding for all Mediterranean countries?**

✓ **Are the Public Participation provisions of the ICZM Protocol of the Barcelona Convention binding for all Mediterranean countries?**

✓ **What are some general obstacles impairing public participation in Mediterranean countries?**

Chapter 3 | The Evolution of Public Participation in the Mediterranean

- Gain a general understanding of the situation of Public Participation in the Mediterranean
- Comprehend some of the root problems in the region
- Understand how Public Participation theoretically develops in a Mediterranean society

A 2002 schematic assessment of the evolution of Public Participation in the Mediterranean is included in Scoullos et al. (2002; 2012). It remains valid still today as it represents in a general way the mode of progress in the evolution of participatory processes in the countries of the region and the phase in which most of them are.

The bulk of the Mediterranean countries

→ time
→ democratization
→ education
→ raise of public awareness
→ welfare

Schematic representation of the situation of public participation in the Mediterrannean
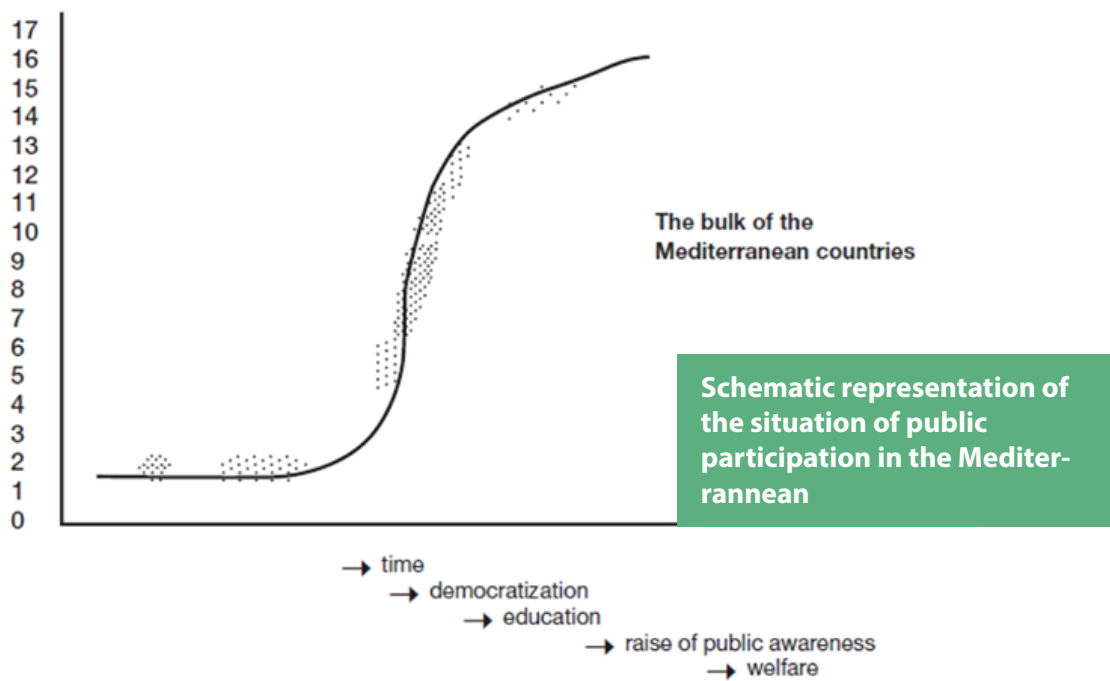
0. No participatory practices at all.

1. Passive provision of unsystematic, arbitrarily selected information on environmental issues passed by the authorities to the public. Passive, uncoordinated environmental education projects developed ad hoc.

2. Acceptance of need for information flow on environmental issues by the authorities.

3. Participation of stakeholders to information campaigns on conservation and restoration issues.

4. "Active" information: responding to requests by the public. Various means for access to selected information held by the authorities on environment and development issues.

5. Financial support to joint information campaigns and selected stakeholders projects. Introduction of environmental education projects in selected schools or groups. Systematic large scale awareness campaigns.

6. Consultations and ad hoc dialogue between citizens groups, stakeholders, local authorities and the State without secured follow-up. Environmental education in curricula and/or coordinated networks and programmes.

7. Facilitation and advocacy by the authorities for access of independent civil groups and stakeholders to international funds for projects or their operation, with no strings attached.

8. Facilitation mechanisms for participation of the public in the assessment of EIAs, SEAs, etc.

9. Active participation of the public through transparent mechanisms in drafting "sustainability charters"/Local Agenda 21, etc.

10. Full access of the public to the environmental and development information base of the State.

11. Participation of groups in the monitoring of implementation and management of sustainability plans.

12. Institutionalisation of 7.

13. Financing of projects and plans for "independent assessments" (counter-assessments) or counter-EIAs for controversial projects.

14. Institutionalisation of 10.

15. Access of public groups to justice including cases of liability and compensations for environmental damages.

16. Access of public groups to supporting funds and credit for operation and projects by national and international sources with no strings attached.

17. Full partnership in a balanced governance with full support to NGOs, local authorities and the public for a participation on equal footing.

The concept of partnership is different from that of participation, although it can be considered as the zenith of participatory practices and as resulting from increases in participation. While partnership assumes participation, the reverse is not necessary. For the establishment of partnership, substantial mutual trust and respect need to exist. The level of necessary trust and respect

may differ in each country, or case, according to the prevailing socio-economic conditions and the political culture and the attributes of the specific issue in question. Some balancing of the power of the various interested parties is also fundamental to successful partnership.

The concepts of **partnership** and **participation**
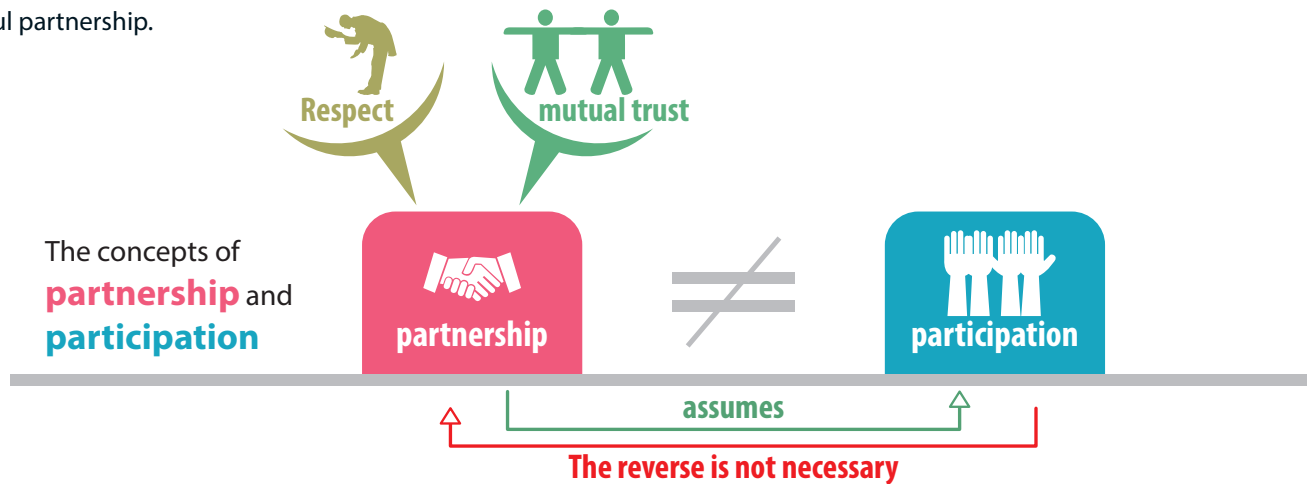
The compressed egg shape in the figure below, compared to the 'optimum' situation represented by the full circle (see below) gives an idea of the distortions due to the lack of institutionalisation of the participatory processes and the little funding provided. The root problems have been mentioned under **General obstacles impairing public participation in Mediterranean countries** in the previous chapter. See more on the pillars in Chapter 1 and **robustness** of Public Participation (Chapter 4).
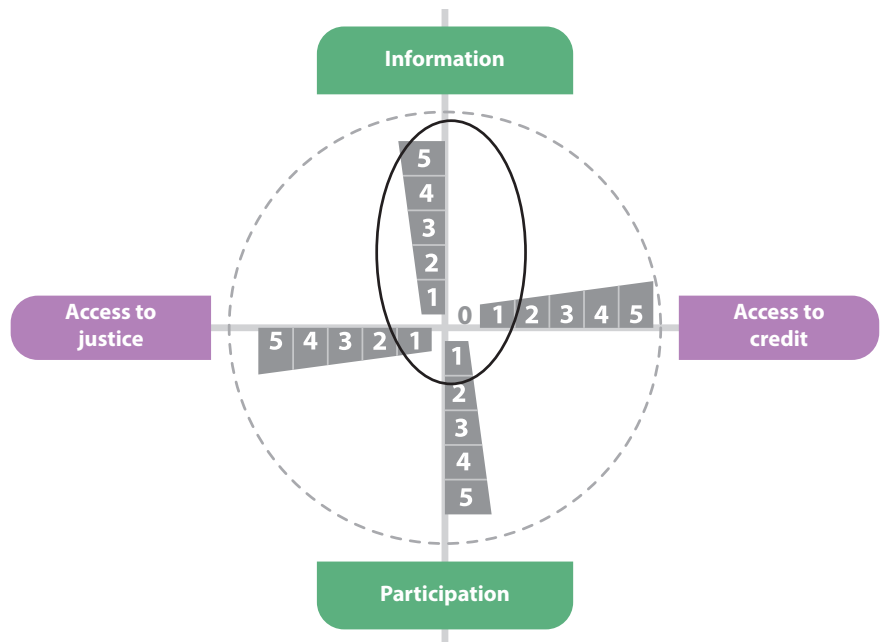
Key questions to consider:

✓ **What role do the authorities and governance in the Mediterranean play in the evolution of Public Participation?**

✓ **In relation to the main pillars of Public Participation, what are (and have been) the main barriers hindering Public Participation in the Mediterranean? Why?**

Chapter 4 | An Overview of Public Participation Forms, Levels and how to keep it Alive

In this chapter the learner will:

- Learn the different levels of Public Participation and their degree of impact
- Gain understanding of which level of Public Participation to use for specific needs and what the corresponding processes are
- Analyse the elements of a robust Participatory process

Public participation is a very context-driven process, and needs and requirements of each process vary. There is no blueprint to follow. Every case is unique, with specific needs, goals, stakes, interests, stakeholders, history, setting, etc.

Every case is **UNIQUE**　with **SPECIFIC**　needs, goals, stakes, interests, stakeholders, history, setting, etc.

Therefore, it is important to have a clear understanding of the general framework that will support the uniqueness of each case, i.e. the levels of public participation, the various necessary steps and processes to follow in order to reach the desired outcomes. An overview is provided here, while in Part 2 specificities, options, adaptations and tools are explored further.

Levels and Impact of Public Participation

The level of participation that defines what exactly the public's role will be in a participatory process has been well described by the International Association for Public Participation in their so called **IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum**.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Increasing Level of Public Impact →

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example techniques	▪ Fact sheets ▪ Web sites ▪ Open houses	▪ Public comment ▪ Focus groups ▪ Surveys ▪ Public meetings	▪ Workshops ▪ Deliberative polling	▪ Citizen advisory committees ▪ Consensus-building ▪ Participatory decision-making	▪ Citizen juries ▪ Ballots ▪ Delegated decision

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Informing the public is the minimum in any public participation process, and plainly speaking, it's not even real participation. But it is the first baby step to take, especially when you have no prior experience of the process. Informing is a one-way flow of information (passive), serving the purpose of 'access to information', one of the main prerequisites of public participation.

When decision-makers want to consult the public, they actively seek "public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions". **Consulting the public** may provide the public a chance to comment on documents or proposed decisions. Feedback may be collected with the help of interviews, surveys and questionnaires, to determine public views on the issue in question. So consulting with the public is a two-way flow of communication, offering the authorities a way to ask the public's opinions and values.

When **involving the public** you "work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered". It goes a step deeper than consulting. It is not until stakeholders are actively involved that they truly begin to develop ownership over decisions, and are more likely to support the final decision.

Collaboration with the public, on the other hand, means "to partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution". At this level, policy-makers and the public are on equal level, working together for common goals. Finally, by **empowering the public** you "place final decision-making in the hands of the public".

05 empowering the public

04 collaborating with the public

03 involving the public

02 consulting the public

01 informing the public
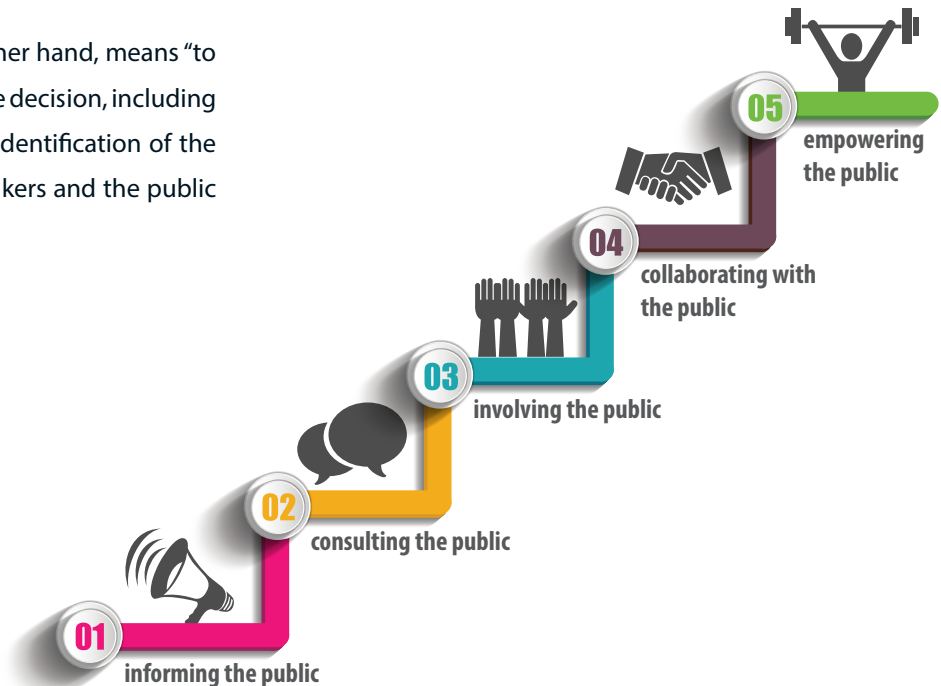
Representativity in Public Participation

As a practical matter, it is almost impossible to have all the stakeholders involved in a decision-making process. The most common way to overcome this obstacle is by relying on representatives to ensure that the different views and values held by the various groups are accounted for in the process. Using a representative group can make the process more efficient. However, there are two critical considerations. First, great care is to be exercised to ensure that the stakeholders chosen to be involved in these processes are actually appropriate representatives of the groups or interests that they purport to be. Marginalized groups (for example, women or indigenous peoples) often do not have their interests represented by the institutions that represent the larger community.

Second, it is important that the stakeholder definition accounts for the full range of interests when defining the groups that should be represented in the process.

Environmental Law Institute, 2007

Public participation does not guarantee that everyone will be happy with a decision. Different groups of people will always have different priorities and concerns.

Institutionalising Robust Public Participation Processes

How could well executed public participation processes that led to good results and created an atmosphere of openness and dialogue be maintained? Here are some recommendations for keeping public participation processes alive.

Securing financial and human resources

Training of officials involved in Public Participation

Guidelines and policies on Public Participation

Independent Public Participation processes

Clear goals linked with daily interests

Securing financial and human resources

Governmental departments and agencies conducting public participation should ensure that public participation processes and procedures are established and have the necessary financial and human resources to support critical citizen engagement.

Training of officials involved in Public Participation

Officials involved in public participation should be adequately trained to engage with citizens. The departments need to ensure that officials acquire the necessary skills, especially in the areas such as conflict management, negotiations and understanding community dynamics.

Guidelines and policies on Public Participation

Departments should develop guidelines or policies on public participation to inform and manage critical engagement with citizens. These guidelines and policies on public participation should clearly articulate the objectives of public participation and the process to be followed during engagement with citizens. During the development of such guidelines and policies, departments should ensure that the views and inputs of stakeholders are solicited. (PCS, 2008.)

Independent Public Participation processes

Public involvement processes should be as independent of the government of the day as possible. A more independent public service is better positioned to assist public involvement with information and advice.

Clear goals linked with daily interests

With all of the above in place, linking goals to clear outcome objectives, which could be monitored along the way, would empower stakeholders to regularly revise their positions. Moreover, a more straightforward linking between policies, plans, etc. and the public's daily interests should improve the dialogue among technicians, decision-makers and the public within the processes and beyond. (Aparicio, 2007.)

Key questions to consider:

✓ **Why is it necessary to have different levels of Public Participation?**

✓ **What are the benefits of consulting and involving the public in the decision-making process compared to informing the public?**

✓ **Above are some recommendations for institutionalising Public Participation. Can you think of any more?**

Part 2. Public Participation put into Practise

Chapter 5 | Designing and Planning a Public Participation Process

- Learn how to methodically design and plan a successful Public Participation process with case-specific objectives

- Be introduced to tools and techniques commonly used in Public Participation processes

The following steps are useful in guiding the design and planning for any public participation process. Remember no two cases are identical and adaptations to the specificities of each case are almost always necessary. It is assumed that the reader is the one in charge of implementing a Participatory process, hence the frequent use of 'you' (second person narrative).

Description of the case

Establishing Objectives for a Public Participation Process

Selecting the form and tools of Participation to match objectives

01. **02.** **03.** **04.** **05.** **06.**

Situation assessment

Linking Public Participation and the decision process

The Public Participation Plan
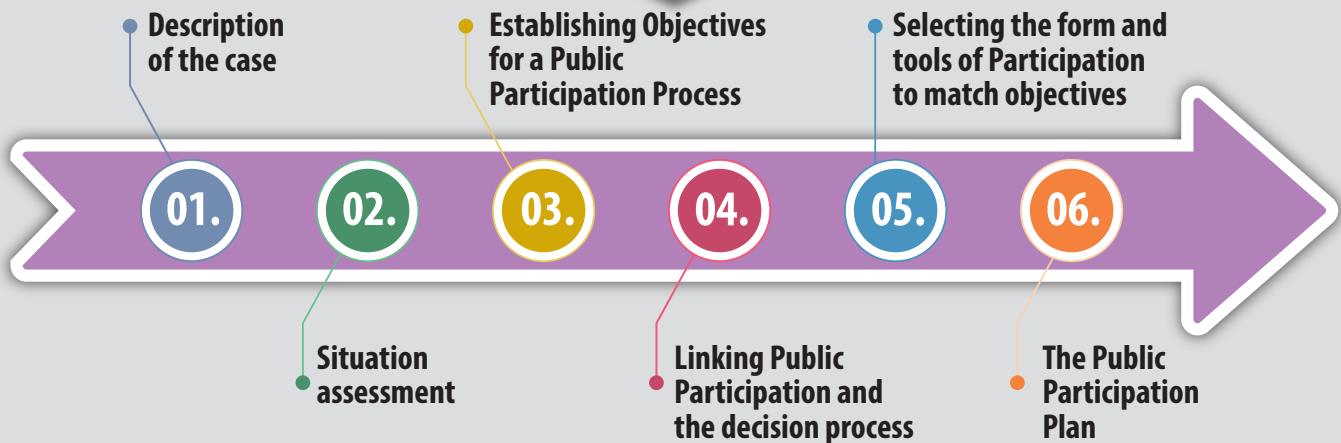
Description of the Case

First of all, you need to have a good description of your case (be it focused on a project, a process, a specific policy or programme) and targets for which you are planning the Public Participation process. Why are you doing this? What are the desired results? What is needed to reach the desired results? What are the expected challenges? It is important to be clear and concise.

This description sets the basis and the framework for your specific case, and you will need to refer to it again and again. It may also have to be amended and adapted to developments along the way. The desired results stated here will be later rewritten to clear objectives (See 'Establishing Objectives for a Public Participation Process' later in this chapter).

Due attention must be given to the clear presentation of the challenge(s) or the problem(s) for which Public Participation is a part of the response. This underpins a good understanding of the real challenges and problems that need to be solved, rather than risk having identified wrong ones. Don't forget all legal and cultural requirements and make sure you meet them.

Situation Assessment

To really understand the needs and conditions of your case you need to conduct a situation assessment. Such an assessment consists of gathering information that will help determine the Public Participation process to be followed and the specific techniques and tools that are feasible given the circumstances. The more thorough the assessment, the more detailed the guidelines for the process to be launched. But the level of detail will be determined by the resources that are available to you.

The main purpose of a situation assessment is to identify the conditions (degree of a common understanding of the decision to be made, the issues to be addressed, and the role of the public in the process) necessary for a successful public participation process that reflects the needs and interests of both the decision-makers and stakeholders.

More specifically, the situation assessment should:
- Clarify the problem or opportunity to be addressed and the decision to be made
- Define the approach taken by the body in charge of the public participation process (in this case you)
- Identify key stakeholders and their concerns
- Reveal the specific opportunities where public input can help to shape the decision to be taken
- Reveal information gaps or misunderstandings early in the process
- Identify issues or constraints that may affect public participation

You can conduct the assessment in two phases – the first one is **internal** and the second is an e**xternal assessment**. (US Environmental Protection Agency, 2014)

Phase 1: Internal Assessment

During Phase 1, you build the foundations for the process within your organisation/team.

Identify final authority and others participating in the decision (internal key stakeholders)

Clarify who has the final decision authority on the matter at hand in your organisation. Make sure you have the support and commitment of whoever has the mandate to allocate resources, e.g. needed funds or staff (colleagues) to commit working time. Who else will participate in the decision-making and may have an impact? It is worth identifying any underlying conflicts of interests or hidden agendas within your organisation. Mapping this out early will help in your preparedness to deal with relevant obstacles that may arise. Furthermore, the team conducting the Public Participation process must have clearly identified roles and responsibilities. A competent Public Participation manager should be appointed and held accountable for tracking progress and completing each activity. He or she further delegates responsibilities if needed. Make sure everybody knows everybody's roles and responsibilities and what's expected from them.

Agree on the decision to be made

Now that those who will be involved in the process from your organisation have been identified, make sure that everybody agrees on the decision to be made and the targets to be met.

Identify constraints on the decision

There might be constraints e.g. related to timing or regulatory conditions that not only affect the process but actually determine it. These have to be detected early on because they may have a profound impact on the process.

Expected level of participation

How much can the public actually contribute to the decision in question? The answer to this question determines the level of participation that you expect. This is linked to the level of concern of the public which in turn relate to: direct or indirect implications on the public, degree of complexity of the issue at hand (too theoretical/technical/scientific?) and corresponding level of public awareness, degree of enabling environment for citizens to voice their opinion, etc.

Consider the following questions:

- What type of input are we seeking from the public?

- How much room is there for the public to influence the decision?

In cases where there is little or no room for the public to impact a decision, or consultations are not possible to take place, then the level of public participation is limited to the minimum, i.e. passive provision of information. Running an information and awareness campaign should be feasible in almost all cases.

Keep in mind that later on you might want to change the level – you might find out that the public interest is higher (or lower) than anticipated, or that your Public Participation process objectives require a different approach.

Identify and commit needed resources

Identify the individuals, resources, organisations, service providers and contractors whose input you will need to conduct the various stages of the Public Participation process. Identify any training and development that is necessary for the team to succeed. Get these in place early, if possible, so that all team members are well trained and knowledgeable.

Phase 2: External Assessment

After the internal assessment you should have a good grasp of what is expected and possible inside your own organisation. It is therefore time to assess external things. This could actually run in parallel to the internal assessment as some points are co-dependent. Rough assessments of some aspects were probably what triggered the option of public participation in the first place.

Before conducting the external assessment it's advised to have a thorough look at what information is out there, and if there are any gaps. To create a comprehensive and detailed picture you might need to gather more data and gain extra knowledge of the situation at hand before moving on to the external assessment.

Level of public interest

It is important to assess the level of public concern or interest on the matter at hand. Keep in mind that if there is a lot at stake, stakeholders will get involved anyway. So indicative questions that need to be addressed could be:

> There is no single public but a range of stakeholders holding versatile views, opinions and values. Public Participation as a process will bring together all the views and opinions from a wide array of stakeholders, and all this input has to be processed and balanced to reflect back decisions so that the public understands how its concerns were considered.
>
> *Environmental Law Institute, 2007*

- How significant are the potential impacts to the public?

- How much do the major stakeholders care about this issue, project, policy, programme?

- What degree of involvement does the public appear to desire?

- What is the anticipated level of concern, controversy, conflict, or opportunity on this or related issues?

- What is the potential for public impact on the potential decision?

- How significant are the possible benefits of involving the public?

- How serious are the potential ramifications of NOT involving the public?

- What is the possibility that the Media will be interested?

- What is the probable level of difficulty in e.g. advancing a project or solving a problem?

- What level of involvement is expected from your superiors? (e.g. if you are in a Ministry or Local Authority, what will be the involvement of your Minister or Mayor?).

To do this methodically, you can rate each of the questions on a scale Very low - Low - Moderate – High – Very high and based on this result, choose the level of participation. Try to balance your Public Participation process with this result. If for example you get many Very low answers, why arrange a major process for a minor issue (according to the public), or vice versa? (Albemarle County, 2014.)

Identify external key stakeholders

If not already done, the identification of key stakeholders is the next necessary step. Important persons, groups, organisations, interests that are linked with the issue and that most probably are already active in one way or another have to be identified at this stage. They can be individuals, NGOs, professional groups, entrepreneurs, varying levels of public authority, formal and informal networks, etc. (see also Chapter 1 - Other Partners).

Depending on your personal prior experience (or that of your organisation) the place to start could be an advanced list of stakeholders, or, if starting from scratch, the internet, reports, media sources, etc. Interviews with people who have prior experience in the area can prove very useful as could brainstorming with colleagues. The target is to have a good idea what the various main interests, concerns, stakes, and possible conflicting opinions and interests are.

You have to make a clear and informed decision at this point if a full Stakeholder Analysis (see Chapter 6) is needed or not for the specific issue at hand.

Clearly identify who the "ultimate decision makers" are with regard to the issue or process. As far as the stakeholders are involved, this contributes to the transparency of the process which minimises unforeseen or last minute constraints.

Establishing Objectives for a Public Participation Process

The situation assessment should have provided a good picture of what you have to deal with. It is time to **re-visit** your Public Participation objectives as laid out in your initial case description. They should be realistic and as measurable as possible.

Objectives are feasible and measurable targets of what should be done. Well thought and defined objectives will help to:

- Set manageable expectations for the public participation process
- Select appropriate and meaningful public participation levels, tools, etc.
- Identify information provision or exchange requirements
- Maintain a focus both for the design and implementation phases
- Boost transparency and accountability throughout the process
- Establish indicators to be used to measure and evaluate success

To develop clear, achievable objectives, start by answering questions, such as:

- What do you want to achieve as a result of this process?
- Why is Public Participation important in this process?

(Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2014.)

Public Participation objectives should state the **appropriate role of the public in the process, how their input will be used, and what input you need to gather from them.** In other words, here you finalise **the level of Public Participation** (see IAP Spectrum of Public Participation in Chapter 4). Your objectives should reflect how the public might provide additional information or knowledge for the process itself. For example, if what you want to achieve is to learn from community knowledge, a specific objective may be to obtain knowledge from local farmers regarding environmentally sensitive areas or uses of natural resources.

> **Each public participation objective should be "S.M.A.R.T.", meaning:**
>
> **Specific:** state what will be done, the outcome expected and those involved
>
> **Measurable:** define outcomes that can be measured and documented
>
> **Achievable:** set expectations that are realistic
>
> **Relevant:** the outcomes of meeting the objective will support the overall public participation goal and level
>
> **Timebound:** set an expectation for when the objective will be achieved

Making promises that cannot be kept will undermine public confidence in the Public Participation process. Be realistic and do not promise more than you are actually able and willing to commit and deliver.

Linking Public Participation and the decision process

Meaningful participation requires that Public Participation activities are integrated within the stages of the decision-making process. Ideally, key stakeholders, both internal and external, must have the same understanding and expectations regarding the decision process, as well as how and when public input will be obtained. A timeline or some sort of a visual representation is helpful.

So firstly, the decision process should be clearly mapped out and secondly, the public participation process should be linked to the decision-making process. To do this, the following key considerations should be taken into account:

- What are the key steps and timing of the process?
- At which points will public input be obtained?
- How will the public be kept informed throughout the process?
- How will decision criteria be established?
- How will alternatives be developed?
- Who will make the final decision?
- How will it be communicated?

Now, remind yourself of the targets and goals of the whole process, and read again the objectives you set for the public participation process. The task at hand is to connect these objectives with the decision-making process.

> " *In my experience, a hostile public will insist on large public meetings: they want everybody to hear their anger, and they want the power that comes with numbers. You'll need to design any such meeting as a venting session (and you may need more than one of them). Don't try to do any sort of problem solving or try to break the audience into smaller discussion groups until people have had their opportunity to vent.*
> *If the public is apathetic, you may need to design a public information programme to stimulate their interest or at least permit an informed choice not to participate.*" "

Creighton, 2005

Selecting the form and tools of Participation to match objectives

A wide variety of tools can be utilized by Public Participation practitioners. The main categories of such tools are:

- Tools to **start a Public Participation process**
- Tools to **inform the public**
- Tools to **obtain and generate input from the public**
- Tools to **manage conflicts and build consensus.**

In the table below, you will find some that may be useful. Needless to say, there are more if you're willing to explore.

Category	Tool / Method	Description	Best suited for
Tools to start a Public Participation process			
	SWOT Analysis	The SWOT Analysis is a traditional strategic planning tool to identify and analyse Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of any matter, business or organisation. Threads and weaknesses refer to an organisation itself, whereas opportunities and threats refer to the outside world. SWOT is often used with PESTLE Analysis.	To analyse the baseline.
	PESTLE Analysis	PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental) is a tool to consider all PESTLE factors and incorporate them in a strategic plan. PESTLE and SWOT analyses are often used together: a SWOT analysis is conducted of every PESTLE factor.	To analyse the baseline and convert the results into tasks and plans.

Category	Tool / Method	Description	Best suited for
	Snowball sampling	A few potential respondents are contacted and asked whether they know of anybody with the characteristics that you are looking for in your research.	To identify people with particular knowledge or skills that are needed as part of a committee and/or consultative process.
	Expert panel	Expert panels allow a variety of informed viewpoints to be heard from which to decide on courses of action in relation to an issue or proposal.	For highly specialised input and opinion.
	Field trip	A trip to a specific location to see the real conditions on-the-ground. Can be used to gain information on possible stakeholders. A field trip can include agency staff, or be targeted to the general public.	Exploring the location and possible stakeholders, especially if there's limited knowledge on the conditions.
Tools to inform the public			
	Briefing	Short presentation provided directly to small established community groups at their existing meetings or locations to provide an overview or update on a project. The presentation may be delivered by the sponsor agency's representative and can be followed by discussions, and serve as a forum for feedback.	Reaching out to established groups.

Category	Tool / Method	Description	Best suited for
	Printed information	Printed material is an easy and effective way to inform stakeholders about an issue or project at hand. You can print fact sheets, bulletins, summary reports, leaflets or flyers and distribute them at meetings or via mail, or let the public pick them up in cafeterias etc.	Projects with manageable numbers of stakeholders. Consider if literacy is an issue.
	Telephone contacts	Telephone calls are effective but need considerable manpower to make or receive calls.	Suitable for all projects.
	Web site	A Web site is a flexible and easy way to store and share considerable amount of information. It is low cost and the information is easily accessible at all times to stakeholders.	Suitable for all projects where access to the internet is not an issue. Literacy issue can be overcome with videos and audio.
	Email	Email bulletins are easy to set up and can reach a large amount of stakeholders, given that you got them to sign up in the first place.	Suitable for all projects where access to the internet is not an issue. Literacy issue can be overcome with videos and audio.
	Social Media	With social media it is easy to be present and interact with stakeholders on a daily basis. However, it needs resources as somebody has to feed news and responses to comments and inquiries constantly.	Suitable for all projects where access to the internet is not an issue. Literacy issue can be overcome with videos and audio.

Category	Tool / Method	Description	Best suited for
	Information kiosk	Information stations in high traffic areas such as shopping malls. Information can be delivered via a multimedia presentation to attract people of all age groups that prefer visual to written form.	For local projects.
	Hotline	A hotline can work in two ways: either a staff member is taking calls and answering questions or providing additional assistance on the matter, or there is a pre-recorded message. It is also possible to record stakeholder comments and questions and call back within a reasonable timeframe.	Especially for larger and more complex projects where internet is an issue.
	Open house	An event in which the public is invited to pop in at any time during an announced period, including staffed booths or stations on specific topics.	Suitable for all projects.
	Exhibits and displays	Visual exhibits or displays in public or other popular places are a good way of communicating information, ideally accompanied by someone who can answer questions.	For local projects.

Category	Tool / Method	Description	Best suited for
	Press and Media	Press releases should be disseminated to a wide range of media outlets on a timely manner. Openness and transparency towards the media help building constructive relationships, thus possibly securing fair and frequent coverage.	For large projects with considerable public interest. Press and media use and relations should be included in the communication strategy.
Tools to obtain and generate public input			
	Public hearing	Formal meeting where stakeholders present official statements and positions that are recorded into a formal record for an agency.	Presenting information to and receiving comments or feedback from the public.
	Public meeting	A large gathering where the participants stay throughout the meeting and make comments to the entire audience. They are less formal than public hearings. Public meeting can also be used as a blanket term to describe different types of meetings that are public in character.	Presenting information to and receiving comments or feedback from the public.
	Round-table discussion	A meeting to facilitate discussion and exchange views. A round-table meeting has a limited number of participants.	Nurturing open discussion and identifying areas of common ground.

Category	Tool / Method	Description	Best suited for
	Focus group	Small discussion group (less than 15 participants) led by a facilitator who composes in-depth stakeholder input on specific matters. Focus groups should deliver detailed knowledge of the issues that concern a specific community. Therefore not one but several focus groups take place.	Exploring attitudes and opinions in depth.
	Workshop	Small stakeholder gathering, typically fewer than 25 people, designed to complete a specific task in a short time period.	For all projects.
	Interview	An interaction that is conducted face-to-face or on the telephone. It can be done one-on-one or in a small group.	Learning about individual perspectives on issues.
	Charrette	An intense, multi-day and multi-disciplinary workshop to develop a design or vision of things such as parks and buildings. A team of design experts meets with community groups, developers, and neighbours over a period lasting from one day to a couple of weeks, gathering information on the issues that face the community, and then translates this input into a form that could be implemented.	Generating large plans.

Category	Tool / Method	Description	Best suited for
	Surveys, questionnaires and polls	Form-based tools that require stakeholders to fill in a form, either as hard copy or online. The input gained can be quantitative (making the survey results amenable to statistical analysis) or qualitative (open-ended questions with participants responding in their own words).	For all projects.
	Computer (or cell phone application) assisted processes	Computer assisted processes assist in gathering and displaying real time input at large forums. One example is keypad polling, where individuals enter their responses to questions on numerical keypads, and the results are immediately displayed on large screens. Lately, cell phone or tablet applications are also used.	Receiving real-time quantitative feedback to ideas or proposals.
	Referendum	A process where an issue is put to popular vote. The results may or may not be considered binding. A referendum should have yes / no options only.	For all projects.

Category	Tool / Method	Description	Best suited for
Tools to manage conflicts and build consensus			
	Citizen jury	A small group of randomly selected citizens, gathered in such a way as to represent a microcosm of their community, who meet over several days to deliberate on a policy question. They are briefed in detail on the issue, and given several possible alternatives, after which they discuss the matter amongst themselves and make a judgment as to the most attractive alternative for the community.	Decisions that can be organised into clear options.
	Advisory board	Small group of people (normally less than 25) representing various interests, often working to identify areas of common ground or consensus recommendations.	Long-term and complex processes

Category	Tool / Method	Description	Best suited for
	Consensus conference	A consensus conference is a type of public meeting that allows stakeholders to be involved in assessing an issue and working together to find common ground and deliver consensus-based input. The conference is a dialogue between experts and citizens and is open to the public and the media. Formal consensus conferences are generally two to four days and include the following steps: 1. Panelists hear experts' responses to questions 2. After hearing these responses, panelists ask follow-up questions 3. The audience is given an opportunity to ask questions 4. The panel deliberates and prepares a position statement to achieve consensus on the issue 5. Panelists present outcomes 6. Planning committee prepares a report of the outcomes and distributes to panelists, media, and decision-making bodies The citizen panel plays the leading role by formulating questions to be taken up at the conference and participating in the selection of experts to answer them.	Smaller, less controversial decisions or identifying shared values.

Category	Tool / Method	Description	Best suited for
	Conflict Resolution Process	Conflict Resolution Process is a process that empowers people to build mutually beneficial relationships and to resolve conflict effectively. Its eight essential steps are: 1. Create an effective atmosphere (honesty and openness, neutral facilities, etc.) 2. Clarify perceptions (you can't solve a problem unless you know what it is about) 3. Focus on individual and shared needs (often needs are common) 4. Build shared positive power ("power with", instead of "power over") 5. Look to the future, then learn from the past (don't dwell in the past) 6. Generate options (focus an options that seem most workable) 7. Develop "doables" (specific actions that have a chance of being successful) 8. Make mutual benefit agreements (Instead of demands, focus on developing agreements and find shared goals and needs) Be creative - for instance, you can brainstorm options, doables, and agreements. While resolving disputes, remember to think "we," rather than "I versus you". Also, keep people and problems separate.	For managing conflict situations.

Table 5.1. *Specific tools and methods for public participation processes (adapted from: Pegaso project (2014), US Environmental Protection Agency (2014), Creighton (2005) and Weeks (1992).*

It goes without saying that the typology here is not strict – e.g. open house is a great opportunity not only to inform but collect comments and feedback too, and round-table discussions are excellent places to share information with a limited group of stakeholders.

The Public Participation Plan (PPP)

It might prove wise to compile all the information, objectives, resources, roles, timetables, etc. in a Public Participation Plan (PPP). You may find templates on the internet which you can enrich, or you can make your own on the basis of what has been provided here.

Key questions to consider:

✓ **Why is it advisable to conduct a situation assessment? What are the key benefits of it?**

✓ **What aspects should be considered when deciding the level of a Public Participation process?**

✓ **How do you choose the most suitable tools for your public participation process?**

Chapter 6 | Knowing your stakeholders—who should be involved?

In this chapter the learner will:	- Understand who and why should be involved in a Public Participation process
	- Learn how to conduct a Stakeholder Analysis

Deciding who should be involved in a Public Participation process is very important and deserves a chapter of its own.

Generally speaking, anybody who has an interest in or is affected by an issue at hand is a stakeholder. Stakeholders can be individuals, NGOs, professional groups, entrepreneurs, varying levels of public authority, formal and informal networks, etc. (see also Chapter 1 - Other Partners). For instance, in coastal water management beach-goers can be a stakeholder group, and so can recreational divers. Stakeholders don't have to be formally organised.

The public can be defined as groups of individuals who don't necessarily have a defined interest like stakeholders. It is more difficult (and costly) to involve the public. Regardless of the extent of the public's involvement in your process, the public interest in and collective influence over environmental matters can be significant and should not be neglected. The public may not always articulate its interest, but in most cases the interest is there anyway, so reaching out to the public is essential.

formal and informal networks, etc.
individuals
varying levels of public authority
NGO's
entrepreneurs
professional groups

"The public" does not necessarily have to have a defined interest like 'stakeholders' do. But public interest and collective influence can be significant.
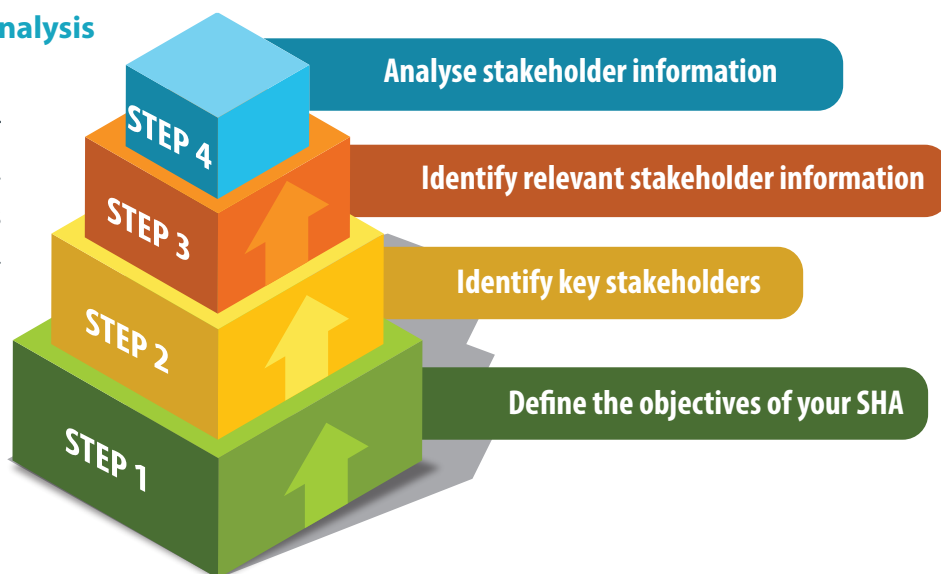
Identifying stakeholders and their interests

So who are your stakeholders and what are their interests? The method used to answer this is called **Stakeholder Analysis (SHA)**. SHA is actually a set of tools helping you not only to identify but to characterize stakeholders for the purposes of your process. It will help you to understand the behaviours, intentions and interests of different groups and individuals. It also provides the context for assessing the influence and resources that stakeholders can bring to the process.

At every step in your process some level of analysis is needed to identify important stakeholders for that particular step. Moreover, stakeholders often change over the course of the project. As the process becomes more well-defined and progresses, new stakeholder groups can emerge. New institutions and organisations can be founded. Representatives of NGOs, officials and institutions can change within the span of the project, and these new players should be integrated into the process and account for any differences in interest or influence that these changes represent. So SHA should be seen as a living, iterative process that expands throughout the whole lifespan of the Public Participation process.

How to conduct a Stakeholder Analysis

There is no one tool that will result in a perfect list of all relevant stakeholder groups. SHA is more like an approach. Main steps in SHA can be considered as the following (Environmental Law Institute, 2007):

STEP 4 — Analyse stakeholder information

STEP 3 — Identify relevant stakeholder information

STEP 2 — Identify key stakeholders

STEP 1 — Define the objectives of your SHA

STEP 1. Define the objectives of your SHA

STEP 2. Identify key stakeholders

STEP 3. Identify relevant stakeholder information

STEP 4. Analyse stakeholder information

STEP 1. Define the Objectives of the SHA

First of all, you have to define the purpose and objectives of the analysis. Why do you need this analysis? Why do you need these stakeholders involved? What do you want from them? Clearly, the purpose of the analysis is much aligned with the overall process itself and helps in its consolidation.

STEP 2. Identify and Categorise Key Stakeholders

Next, you want to compile a list with everyone affected by the process and issue at hand or anyone who could affect the process and issue at hand. This task you can approach from different angles. An easy start is to gather and review all existing information on the internet, reports, media sources, etc. Interviews with people who have prior experience in the area can prove very useful

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Tips for interacting with stakeholders when planning and developing Marine Protected Areas

Invest time – Building relationships with stakeholders will be time consuming, especially when starting the process. In the long run however, the time invested will be well worth it.

Build a foundation – Only a foundation based on trust, transparency and early identification of mutual interests and resources can serve as a starting point for a fruitful participation process.

Verify perceptions – When working with stakeholders and communities, verify their perceptions of the status of the resources with independent observations to ensure accuracy of information, and vice versa.

Stakeholders as MPA representatives – Stakeholders can make excellent spokespeople for the MPA as they can serve as vital links between the broader community and MPA management.

Ensure continuous engagement – Stakeholder engagement is an on-going process and stakeholders should be encouraged to continue their engagement in the MPA through participation in management activities such as enforcement and monitoring.

Walton et al., 2013

as could brainstorming with colleagues. You can also start listing stakeholders considering the following **categories**, to which stakeholders often fall into:

- General public
- Interest groups
  - Professional groups e.g. using the land or natural resources in question, such as fishermen, hotel owners, divers, etc.
  - Groups dependent on e.g. a resource, such as water utilities and water user associations
- Political actors
  - Local, sub-national, national, regional and international government officials and institutions
- Public sector agencies
  - Water and sanitation authorities, …
- Commercial, private or non-profit organisations
  - Foundations, NGOs, associations, chambers of commerce, etc.
- Other civil society members (see Chapter 1)
- International actors
  - Possible donors and implementing and executing agencies

Examples of helpful questions for a public participation process that deals with decisions to be taken about natural resources management, are:

- Who uses or benefits from the use of the resources? Who wishes to or should benefit but can't? Who would be affected by a change in the status, regime or output of management of the resources? **(USE)**
- Who will receive economic benefit or loss as a result of the process decision? **(ECONOMICS)**
- Who makes decisions that affect the use and status of the resources? Who has rights and responsibilities over the use of the resources? **(MANDATE)**
- Who lives near the resources in question? **(PROXIMITY)**
- Who might have strong beliefs about how the resources should be managed? **(VALUES OR PHILOSOPHY)**

Do not forget the 'voiceless' for whom special efforts may have to be made.

STEP 3. Identify Relevant Stakeholder Information

Once you have a comprehensive list of stakeholders, it is time to identify the various interests and priorities of those stakeholders and analyse how those interests and priorities relate to the process and issue at hand. An indicative grouping is:

- **Basic stakeholder characteristics**, e.g. social, cultural, religious, etc.
- **Stakeholder priorities**, e.g. concerns on livelihood security rather than conserving nature
- **Relations among stakeholders**, e.g. conflicts or alliances
- **Relative importance of stakeholder groups themselves**, e.g. who has decision-making powers related to the process, and who does not
- **Stakeholder influence**, e.g. Ministry that controls the budget issues, or personal connections to politicians, or community status
- **Stakeholder resources**, e.g. financial resources, local or indigenous knowledge, expertise, etc.
- **Knowledge levels and kinds of knowledge**, e.g. strong feelings due to not understanding the complexity of an issue

All this information you can gather from different sources including the internet, newspapers, reports and publications, but also through interviews, questionnaires and focus groups.

Maintaining a Stakeholder Database

It is helpful to keep an ongoing record of all stakeholders that are identified and involved in the process by creating a stakeholder database. This is especially important when consultants are used or staff changes are likely or it is foreseeable that the process will take a long time.

The database should be made available to all but regular updating should be the responsibility of one person or team to avoid having multiple data sets with different information. The database can be tailored to include all information that you think is necessary and relevant, but at a minimum it should include:

- Basic information for each contact: name, title, organisation, addresses, email address, telephone and fax numbers
- The categories to which each stakeholder is allocated
- A record of all contacts made with the stakeholder. Provide information on meetings attended, correspondence, and other less formal contact.

Based on Environmental Law Institute, 2007

STEP 4. Analyse Stakeholder Information

Now you have a list of your key stakeholders, and sufficient information about them (perhaps even their main concerns). You can deduce a lot of useful elements: which stakeholders have the most influence on your public participation process; key stakeholder voices that must be engaged for a credible process; which stakeholders are in danger of being left out of the process, unless you take appropriate measures to avoid it. You will most likely be able to identify capacity building needs at this stage.

Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews with stakeholders are face-to-face conversations. The primary purpose of these interviews is to obtain process-relevant information and stakeholder reactions and suggestions. As mentioned before, stakeholders are likely to have knowledge, wisdom, and insight that can help in a decision process. Stakeholder interviews provide an overview of the interviewees' opinions about a specific topic that may reveal hidden concerns or ideas. However, stakeholder interviews can be costly and time consuming.

When carrying out stakeholder interviews, you may consider asking questions such as:
- How do you view the current situation?
    - What issues are involved in the decision?
    - How important are these issues to you?
    - What are your main interests in this issue or decision?
    - What information and sources of information are available to you now?
    - What other information would be helpful to you?
- Who's affected?
    - Who else should I be speaking to?
    - Whose support is crucial to the implementation of the decision?
    - What are the important relationships/partnerships among stakeholders?
    - What type of influence do you have?
- How would you like to be involved?
    - What role would you or the community like to play or in decision-making?

- What are the best forums for your involvement?
- How would you like to receive information?
- What are the sources of information you use and trust?
- Do you feel that the enabling environment for your participation in the process is in place?

• What's next?

- What could be done to help make this a (more) meaningful process for you (and/or those you represent)?

Who should conduct a Stakeholder Analysis?

SHA can be conducted by almost anyone capable in the team running the public participation process, but ideally it should be done as a team. This way, you can include collective extensive knowledge on specificities (culture, politics, traditions) and prior experience with public participation. A team covers a wide variety of perspectives, maximising the points of view and aspects to be considered.

Making sure Nothing goes Wrong

Failure to identify and involve key stakeholders and address their interests can result in problems with the public participation process, the final decisions to be taken and with the issue at hand (project, programme, policy, etc.). You must be alert and flexible along the whole time-line in adapting to omissions, unforeseen developments and new emerging issues and actors. Public Participation processes have this element of flexibility built in, but the person/team/body in charge of running the process has to make sure to put it to practice.

Key questions to consider:

✓ **Why is it important to identify and involve the key stakeholders early on in the process?**

✓ **Why is it useful to identify and analyse relevant stakeholder information?**

✓ **What might happen if you leave important stakeholders out of the process?**

Chapter 7 | Communication and Access to Information

In this chapter the learner will:	- Understand what is meant by 'Information' and 'Access to information' in the Public Participation context
	- Learn the basics of what and how to communicate for a successful Public Participation process
	- Become familiar with the basic skills and tools for effective communication

One could say that communication is the key for successful public participation. After all, what is public participation if not information flowing in the right directions and people communicating and eventually agreeing on a common goal?

Access to timely, relevant and accurate information ensures equal opportunity to all stakeholders to understand the issue at hand, as well as decide whether a response is needed, or an action. Enhanced **access to information** can motivate ambivalent stakeholders to commit time and take action. It adds transparency and gives stakeholders the feeling that nothing is happening 'behind closed doors'.

Effective **communication and dissemination**, on the other hand, guarantee clear messages delivered and ensure that information flows in the proper directions. Well thought, targeted information reaches and influences a much broader audience compared to information that the public or the stakeholders have to seek out themselves.

Making Information Accessible

In this handbook, by information we mean not only information held by public authorities, but any kind of relevant and important information related to the process, project, etc.
At every stage of the process, what information should be shared and how, needs to be carefully planned.

Let's assume that you are running a public participation process about a specific project that will affect natural resources in an area. In developing your strategy for collecting, generating, and disseminating information, you could consider the following major categories (Environmental Law Institute, 2007) also described in more detail below:

- **Project-related** information
- Information related to relevant **natural resources governance**

- General information about the **status of the relevant and related resources**
- **Cultural and historical** information
- **Information on factors that could affect** the relevant or related resources
- **Stakeholder-held** information.

Project-related information

This type of information can include the motivation and reasons why the project or process is being undertaken, and its major goals, as well as overall information about the project, such as timing, coordinating agency, partners, budget, etc.
Project documents, even in their draft stage, should be made public, as they contain crucial information about the process itself. Sharing project documents enhances the feeling of involvement among stakeholders and gives equal opportunity to everybody to contribute input.

Information related to relevant natural resources governance

Stakeholders need to know about any legislative and regulatory frameworks, institutions or decision-making processes as well as financial and other resource constraints that affect the management of natural resources. In many cases, especially in trans-boundary cases, this information is complex and must be tailored to the various levels of the different stakeholders.

General information about the status of the relevant and related resources

In order to understand the need for the decision or project, stakeholders must have baseline information regarding the ecolog-

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Neutral Facilitation

For many projects, a neutral facilitator can help make the overall process work as well as facilitate specific meetings and events. Facilitation includes the full range of management and support required to help a group to accomplish its objectives. Someone who has strong knowledge and skills regarding group dynamics and processes is often most appropriate to serve as a facilitator. An effective facilitator might also require strong knowledge and skills regarding the particular topic that the group is addressing.

Facilitation fills an important and impartial role to ensure all voices are heard and understood, and that the discussion stays on topic to the specific project.

Environmental Protection Agency, 2014

ical status of the natural resources in question. This can include sources and amounts of pollution affecting the resource and issues related to biodiversity and human health, among others.

Cultural and historical information

Understanding the historical and cultural context from which the current situation and conditions have emerged, should be beneficial to all participants in the process, including decision makers. This information may relate to religious practices of stakeholders, or gender related issues, or any other information explaining existing practices.

Information on factors that could affect the relevant or related resources

Any other on-going or proposed activity that may affect the resource in question is relevant information and the public needs to know about it. These activities can be construction developments or even restoration projects counterbalancing any ecological damages that have occurred. Lessons learned from other similar cases (in the Mediterranean or the world) could also be included here.

Stakeholder-held information

Stakeholders hold important information that could be very useful not only to the final decision-makers but to other stakeholders as well (and to the person/group/body in charge of running the Participation process). Local environmental conditions, as well as cultural, political, and other factors that may affect the management of natural resources are indeed important pieces of information for all project parties.

Several NGOs in the Mediterranean have acquired considerable expertise and information. Oftentimes they already have a 'synthesis' or layperson's version of the issue at hand to offer to the process.

> *Any natural or legal person should have affordable, effective and timely access to environmental information held by public authorities upon request, without having to prove a legal or other interest.*

United Nations Environment Programme, 2010

Managing Information

The data you'll be handling throughout the process is probably quite large so reliable systems for collecting, organising, updating, retrieving and disseminating information must be in place. Equally important are procedures for monitoring, record-keeping and reporting. Ensure that you accurately record, file and acknowledge in writing all stakeholder comments, answers and questions. This includes comments made in public meetings, workshops, individual consultations, focus group discussions, telephone or other verbal inputs, as well as written submissions received by mail, email or other means. Make every effort to respond to any requests and if possible, make the information available to other stakeholders so that everyone involved in a process has equal access to the information. Also, verify the accuracy of the stakeholder comments received. You can do this by giving the public an opportunity to review the documentation of comments received to ensure their accuracy. Alternatively, verify your record of comments at events with stakeholders.

A good practise is to launch an information repository. This is a specific location where all relevant information is collected and made accessible to the public. This can be a virtual repository on a website, but one shouldn't rely too much on the internet – not everybody is computer literate or has access. Therefore repositories can be placed at e.g. a project's office (preferably with specific hours when project staff is there answering questions), or in a library, or any other public place that is neutral and easily accessible to everybody.

Planning Stakeholder Communications

In every successful public participation process the person or team in charge should be able to listen and pay due attention; deliver clear messages and create meaningful relationships based on openness, transparency and trust. Information should be provided on a timely manner and free of charge, and the language should be the one of the receiver, where ever possible.

However, skills are needed, too. The basic communication skills required for any successful Public Participation process include:

- **Presenting information in an easy and understandable way**. The ability to present informa-

tion to large and various audiences in a comfortable and understandable way in simple language and concise messages. The ability to create effective audio-visual tools that enhances the audience's understanding.

- **'Translating' complex information into layman's terms**. The ability to combine words and graphics to make difficult and complex issues understandable to any audience without undermining them.

- **Interpersonal skills**. The ability to relate to people in face-to-face situations, make them feel comfortable and secure, and exhibit good public relations skills at all times.

- **Active listening**. The ability to focus on the speaker and provide them with the time and safety needed to be heard and understood.

Use of examples and analogies are encouraged, whereas jargon and difficult acronyms are not.

With the skills hopefully in place, the following steps can help in planning your communications:

1. Use the results of your stakeholder analysis

If you have conducted a stakeholder analysis and developed a stakeholder database (see Chapter 6) you have what you need as a basis for tailoring your communications towards each category or group. This is the target audience for your information dissemination.

2. Think of what you want from each stakeholder

You have already done this to some extent when you were planning your public participation process. Now is the time to take your more extended or enriched list/database of stakeholders and match it further to their identified expected inputs. Specify at what stages of the Public Participation process (time and place) you need to communicate your messages in order to gain the inputs from the stakeholders.

3. Link Public Participation actions to specific communication tools

Identify how you will communicate with your stakeholder groups or categories at the various stages of the process. Think through the following questions:

a. What is their level of understanding and literacy?
b. What access to media and technology do they have?
c. When does the information need to be disseminated?

d. How much time do I have between receiving information, treating and appropriately sharing it?

e. What language(s) would be appropriate?

f. What media would be best to use?

Tailoring communications according to the needs and capacities of stakeholder categories is essential and sometimes you may need some creativity, especially if resources are limited. Using radio or local TV in rural areas to reach stakeholders of low literacy, or going to coffee/teahouses to get opinions (from men mostly, though) are just a couple of examples. Text messaging important milestones of the process or news is a good way to be sure of reaching almost everybody. A hotline to serve both as a source for information and to receive comments can be set up. Traditional print materials such as newsletters, flyers, and posters can be used to publicize information and participation opportunities (they can be displayed at gathering locations such as worship places, schools, local libraries, supermarkets, and other public areas, depending on whom you want to reach out to). Bulletin boards and information kiosks are also effective locations to promote participation opportunities. And we must not forget digital media and tools such as project webpage, email bulletins and social media to provide on-going communication and possibilities for dialogue for certain computer-literate groups. For a list of tools see Chapter 5.

However, bear in mind that no technique can replace real face-to-face interaction. So if feasible, try to communicate directly with stakeholders on a regular basis. You will receive information and feedback that you wouldn't receive otherwise and create an atmosphere of openness. Receiving 'informal' feedback throughout the process will help you tailor your messages along the way and tune the process if needed.

Relations with the media

Modern media can play a significant role in public participation processes. Newspapers, magazines, TV, radio and social media all provide your target stakeholders and the public with news, opinions and facts. They cover large areas and disseminate information rapidly. If you successfully partner with the news media, you can effectively disseminate your information with little or no cost. However, all media can also turn against you especially on controversial issues, or sometimes just ignore your messages.

Today, one can divide the media into two sections:

1. News media – sending news releases or being 'visible' through TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, etc.

2. Social media – Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, blogs, Instagram, etc.

When targeting the news media first start with compiling a media list – identify any relevant media outlet and list them carefully. Include the names, street addresses, telephone and fax numbers and email addresses of individual contacts for each media. This is where your press releases or articles will be sent, or invitations, posters and other promotional materials. Alternatively, you can use a PR agency that does all this for you.

When suitable, using social media can be a powerful means. It is free, easy and can potentially reach as many people as news media, or many more. Nevertheless, these tools require constant attention not only to update with new content, but to remove old content and to monitor inputs and discussions as they progress. Social media is more about 'listening'. It is also a platform for people to vent their frustrations. Patience and diplomacy is required and you must acknowledge all comments and feedback, even if they're aggressive or hostile.

Whatever media you're targeting, you have to be prepared. How will you respond when the media calls? Or when somebody has an angry outburst on your process or project's Facebook page? You have to be ready for tough questions. So be sure to have carefully worked out positions and descriptions in advance and the necessary evidence to support your statements.

Newsletter
Publishing visually attractive newsletters online and in hard copies is an effective way to keep your stakeholders informed. Clear and objective messages and inclusion of a variety of inputs will make it even more popular. Beware, if a newsletter is perceived as a means for the promotion of a specific point of view, it will by shunned and rendered useless.

How to write a press release

Press releases are short announcements issued to the news media and other targeted publications for the purpose of letting the public know of interesting decision-making and Public Participation developments. Your press release is basically your ticket to publicity - one that can get the coverage you need in publications or on TV and radio stations.

There are certain standard elements that one puts in a press release, which are referred to further down, but first and foremost you need to answer a few questions (EU Neighbourhood Info Centre, 2013):

- Do you really need a press release? Is what you want to say interesting, relevant and timely?
- Do journalists in your country or region use press releases?
- Who is your target for a press release? Journalists are your tool to reach your real target audiences. So define your ultimate target audience: this will help you decide what is relevant enough to include in your press release.
- How will you make sure a journalist will pick up your press release and use it? Will you call the person? Or will you use a PR agency?
- What format should your press release be: electronic or print or both?

Journalists do like to "copy-paste" and it is to your benefit as your messages go out in the way you want them. However, for them to do so it needs to be written in a journalistic way.

When developing your communications, frame your message to your key audience and provide background information including: who, what, when, where and why. Make sure your press release is targeted to the publication or broadcast you're sending it to. Don't assume that people always understand the point or importance of your work.
Here are some pointers:

- **Start with a genuine headline** that is brief, clear and to the point. The title of your press release must attract the reader, make them want to find out more.

- **An introduction** shouldn't be long. Don't waste your space for titles, long names, places, jargon and names of committees that only you and your colleagues understand or are interested in. The whole intro should not be longer than two brief paragraphs. With a good intro, not only do you generate interest, but you also manage to tell your basic story (not everybody will read further down!).

    ⇨ An intro should reply to **the "five Ws" and "H" (how) through questions**
    - Who was involved (your project, other partners, officials)
    - What happened: your story, what you want to say
    - Where: the place where your story developed or is affecting
    - When: the time it took place, the period in which your action is unfolding
    - Why: the reason it took place, what are you trying to achieve/tackle
    - How did it evolve, occur, what did you do?

- **The press release body** should be compact. Avoid using long sentences and paragraphs. Deal with actual facts –– events, products, services, people, impacts, targets, goals, plans, projects. Try to provide maximum use of interesting facts.

- **In the end tie it together**. Have a couple of paragraphs as background information with more details. In an accompanying document (background note) you can give the facts and figures that are too technical. Add useful links from where one can find out more, something of particular importance for an electronic press release.

Limit your press release to one or two pages at most and always remember to give a contact name and phone number at the end in case a journalist wants to follow up!

How to organise a press conference

A press conference is your voluntary presentation of information to the media to get your story on the TV, radio or in the press. To hold a press conference means that you have to contact the media by invitation, pick a time and a place (often at a cost), make a presentation and respond to reporters' questions, have information packages for the reporters that come, etc.

The following steps will help you organise a successful press conference:

- **Have a good reason for holding your press conference**. It is not enough that the news you are going to reveal has not been covered by the media yet. There should be significant impact linked with the reason for the press conference.
- **Decide what message you want to deliver through the media**. After you are absolutely clear about your message, carefully consider the location of the press conference – it should be a place that supports your message but at the same time is convenient and has the facilities you need. It could be indoors or outdoors. Be ready to provide technical and other assistance for the reporters (microphones, Wi-Fi connection, enough light, raincoats, boots, etc.).
- **Set the date and time of the press conference**, taking into account reporters' working hours and deadlines. Make sure, to the extent possible, that there are no competing news events already scheduled around the same time of your press conference.
- **Invite the media**. You should have a media list already, so send a press conference invitation to appropriate local media outlets at least a week before the press conference. You can follow up with a phone call two days before the press conference to make sure everyone received the invitation. You may want to call them again the day before to remind them about the event.
- **Invite your guests**. Make phone calls or send invitations to guests you want to have at the press conference, such as other members of your group, partners, allies, and friendly politicians.
- **Prepare your spokespersons to deliver your message**. Generally, it's good to have just one or two speakers during a press conference so people don't lose focus or get confused with potentially mixed messages. The statements should be brief and clear and usually no longer than ten minutes (see also the Communications skills presented earlier).
- **Prepare your speaker with 30 second answers for potential interviews with the radio or TV**. Often reporters want to interview the spokesperson so let the press know that the speaker is available after the press conference. He/she must be well prepared!
- **Choose a facilitator** for the press conference. You need a person to control the process and keep discussions on track.
- **Prepare background materials** - reporters and guests may want to have a copy of written statements or a press release. Also, this is an opportunity to have packets of factsheets, charts or graphs.
- **Use banners or other visual aids** at the press conference if you want to make a stronger impression on media representatives.

If you're short of resources, another simple media tool is to invite the media to project workshops and events. In such a case, make sure to invite them to one of your more newsworthy and appealing events.

Key questions to consider:

✓ **What factors need to be taken into account when deciding over communications to stakeholders?**

✓ **Why are effective communications and information flow essential in a Public Participation process?**

✓ **How can good relations with the media enhance your Public Participation process?**

Chapter 8 | Monitoring and Evaluating Public Participation

In this chapter the learner will:

- Learn the basics on how to monitor and evaluate Public Participation processes and outcomes
- Perceive the benefits of monitoring and evaluation of Public Participation process

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a critical part of any process or project management scheme. Monitoring and evaluation processes serve as a corrective function during the endeavour's life span, enabling timely adjustments and helping getting input for future work.

When planning the monitoring and evaluation of public participation you have to be clear about what exactly you are evaluating. Monitoring and evaluating the public participation process itself is one thing, while assessing the impacts of the final outcomes of the process is another. This distinction should be made when you decide how to measure progress and success, or when you decide which indicators to use. It is simple enough to evaluate how the participation process has been conducted but it is usually far more challenging to measure actual improvements in e.g. ecosystem quality.

Working in collaboration with your stakeholders for the monitoring and evaluation of a Public Participation process is a further way of partnering with them and creating a truly transparent process. Additionally, it builds a shared understanding and ownership of the constraints that hinder the process.

Monitoring provides the data that form the basis for evaluation of a process, programme or project.

Distinguishing between Monitoring and Evaluating

Monitoring includes the collection of information before, during and after a project or process. It is the regular and systematic observation and recording of activities taking place. In other words, to monitor is to check on how activities are progressing.

Monitoring provides the data that form the basis for **evaluation**. In other words, in order to evaluate, one has to monitor progress. **Evaluation** is the systematic and independent assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or process. It should be a part of the design for any Public Participation activity.

Monitoring Guidelines

To monitor progress, you need to establish a clear picture and information base of the situation at the beginning (baseline). You are basically answering the question *Where are we now?* Information gathered during the public participation process answers to *How are we proceeding?* Towards the end you will have to compare the information recorded during implementation against the baseline picture from the beginning. Hopefully, this will give a clear picture of how things have progressed.

How can you collect this data? Getting baseline, ongoing and/or data after the completion of the process, can be achieved through:

- Desk research (e.g. reviewing all relevant documentation)
- Observation (e.g. attending meetings; following online developments such as blogs, forums, debates, etc.)
- Interviews (e.g. with stakeholders, decision makers, experts)
- Questionnaires (e.g. online or by telephone)
- Group work (e.g. group reflections on progress)
- Online (e.g. feedback on progress through various online tools or discussion groups).

You will need to work out when you should collect the data. This could be, for example:

- At the beginning of the process (for sure)
- At the end of each public event (if more than one)
- After other major milestones of the process (passing of a relevant law; press statement of the final decision maker)
- At the end of the public participation process (after the final decision is made)
- Even later - depending on the long term objectives of the endeavour

Apart from the general information and literature at hand, in a public participation exercise you will generally want to get data at least from:

- The stakeholders
- The policy/decision-makers who are being influenced by the process
- Whoever commissioned the process
- Whoever designed and implemented the process (in this case you!)
- The facilitator(s) of the public participation process

All this information, when analysed, allows you, during the course of the process, to adjust objectives, public participation levels and tools you were planning on using, and also revise your expected outcomes. Effective monitoring requires the collection and analysis of reliable data and the selection of proper indicators (see below). This collected information will also be useful in:
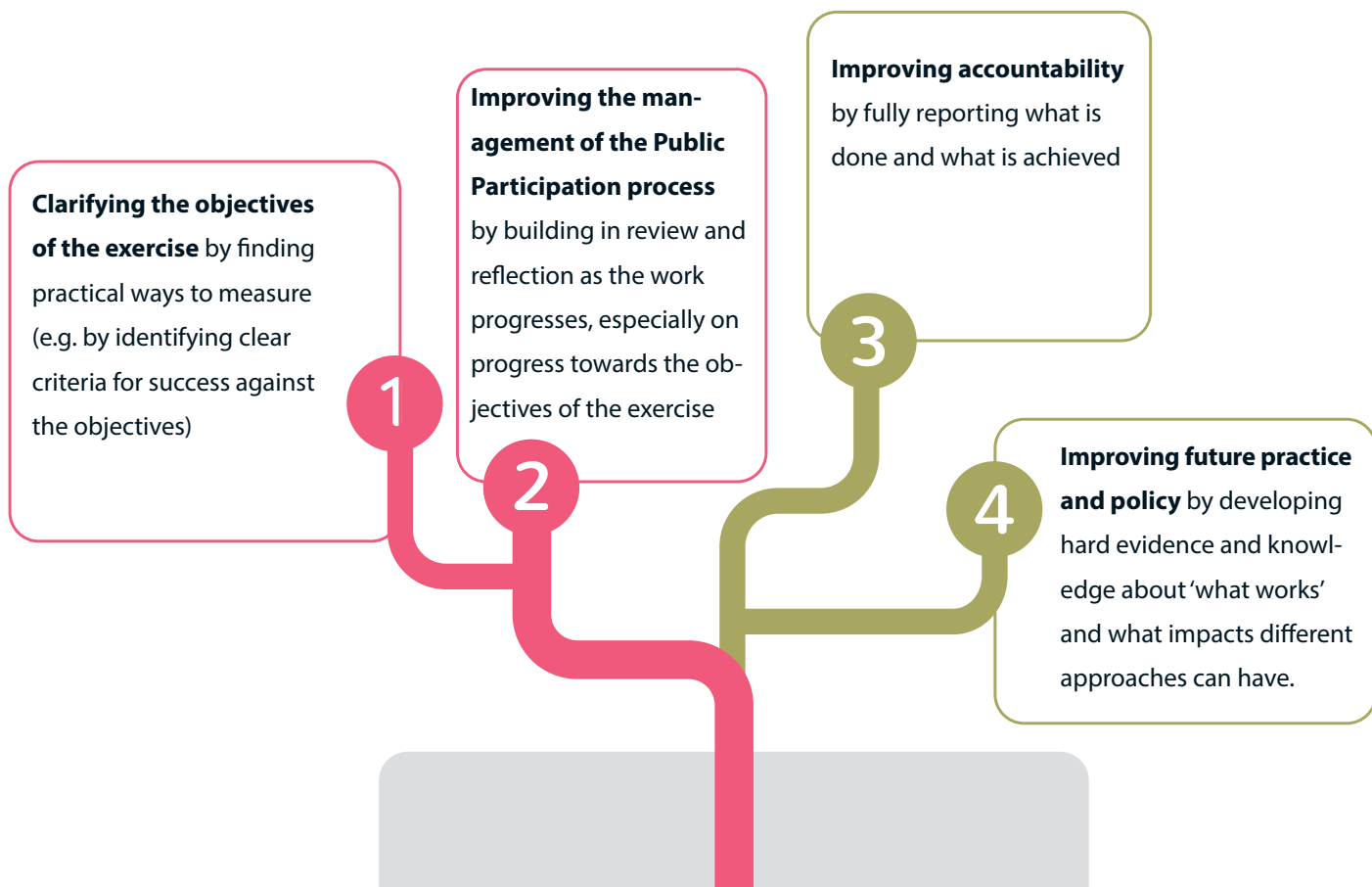
- Determining whether the inputs in the project are well utilized
- Identifying problems that come up and finding solutions
- Ensuring all planned activities are carried out properly by the right people and in time
- Ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently
- Determining whether the initial planning was the most appropriate or not.

Monitoring is a continuous process that should be developed, implemented and refined throughout the life-span of the public participation process.

How to evaluate the Public Participation Process and its Results

Evaluation can help you in running a Public Participation process in four main ways:

1. **Clarifying the objectives of the exercise** by finding practical ways to measure (e.g. by identifying clear criteria for success against the objectives)
2. **Improving the management of the Public Participation process** by building in review and reflection as the work progresses, especially on progress towards the objectives of the exercise
3. **Improving accountability** by fully reporting what is done and what is achieved
4. **Improving future practice and policy** by developing hard evidence and knowledge about 'what works' and what impacts different approaches can have.

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Improving accountability by fully reporting what is done and what is achieved

Improving future practice and policy by developing hard evidence and knowledge about 'what works' and what impacts different approaches can have.

1
2
3
4

Evaluation doesn't have to be a heavy process – at simplest only by assessing what went well and what did not will help in future exercises. At its most basic, some key questions that can be asked are:

- Has the initiative succeeded? (e.g. met targets, met objectives, resulted in other achievements)
- Has the process worked? (e.g. what happened, what worked well and less well, and lessons for future participatory activities)
- What impact has the process had? (e.g. on stakeholders, on the ones who commissioned the Public Participation process, on the quality of policy, etc.).

Evaluation provides a deeper examination of what happened and why, e.g. were the objectives we set ourselves the right ones?

Below you can find further example questions to use when evaluating your Public Participation process and its outcomes (adapted from MacKenzie et al., 2009):

Evaluating the process

- Were the right people involved in the process? Did they represent the issues and concerns in relation to the issue at hand?
- Was there consensus about the purpose of the participation? Was there clarity amongst participants/stakeholders about their role?
- Was there sufficient opportunity to present ideas and raise questions?
- Was the process responsive to issues and concerns raised by participants/stakeholders?
- What controversies arose during the process? Were they foreseen? How were these resolved?
- Was agreement reached? If not, what were some of the barriers to reaching agreement?
- Was the information presented accessible, digestible and sufficient?
- Was the process informed by the best available knowledge? From a range of sources?
- Were the time and resources allocated to the public participation process adequate? Could the resources allocated have been used more efficiently?
- Was the staff conducting the process skilled and ready for the challenge?

Evaluating the outcomes

- Has the process achieved what it set out to achieve? Has it had an impact e.g. on the community?
- Are there any unintended outcomes that have also been achieved?
- Did the process add value to the final outcomes? What would have been achieved without public participation?
- How do people who have not been directly involved perceive what was achieved? Do they think the process was useful? Would they like to be involved in future activities?
- Was there early involvement of the participants/stakeholders?
- What role did participants/stakeholders play in agenda-setting, establishing rules, selecting experts, etc.?
- Was there a clear understanding of the extent to which participation would contribute to the final decision (e.g. a plan, factory, dam, policy submission, etc.)?
- What responsibility do the participants/stakeholders have for the decision?
- Did participants/stakeholders feel that the process was conducted in an unbiased way?

- Was it clear to participants/stakeholders how their input informed the process?
- Have the legislative and policy requirements for Public Participation (if they exist) been met?
- Did behavioural change occur among participants/stakeholders?
- Is there change in the way stakeholders are relating to each other?
- Have new organisations or agreements been formed amongst participants/stakeholders or in the community?
- Have new initiatives been developed or new resources allocated as a consequence of the Public Participation process?

Evaluation questions should be limited and closely linked to the objectives of the public participation. This will keep the task of collecting the information and reviewing changes over time manageable.

It is obvious that you should plan for evaluation already at the early stage of a public participation process, as what you monitor and how will give you the data to answer the evaluation questions (see under Monitoring Guidelines: desk research, questionnaires, interviews, facilitator observations etc.).

Communicate the results and lessons effectively, bearing in mind the context at the time of publication.

Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation

It is difficult to measure results via direct observations. So indicators are necessary. Indicators are readily identifiable and verify that progress is being made (or not!) towards achieving goals. Traditionally, quantitative indicators have been emphasised in M&E. However, it is also possible to use qualitative indicators. Such indicators are particularly useful in assessing the effectiveness of public participation processes. The use of both quantitative and qualitative indicators can provide a more nuanced and complete picture of the status of progress. Indicators help to demonstrate results, but also provide the information necessary to evaluate project success and make appropriate changes in project management.

Careful in interpreting proxy indicators!
Low participation rates at public meetings for a water reuse program in California, USA, were misinterpreted by programme administrators as acceptance or low community interest in the reuse plans. As the program progressed a strong movement against reuse emerged unexpectedly and the program had to be restructured to identify acceptable reuse options. The use of proxy indicators also presents dangers of misrepresentation because active participation tends to be highly correlated to level of education and dominant status in society.
Carr et al., 2012

In general, indicators should be chosen to carefully capture key changes, combining what is substantively valid with what is possible to monitor. There should be a clear linkage between the indicator and the relevant objective. Indicators should be as specific as possible to enable uniformity in collection of the relevant data, and timely. They should ideally be developed with input from relevant stakeholders, as they represent a consensus of what information is relevant to reaching goals and objectives, and this is often a value-laden decision.

More readily available, often quantitative, data can be used as proxy indicators for participant satisfaction and attitudes toward the process. Proxy indicators include participation rates, sustained stakeholder involvement and longevity of processes, programmes or projects. Proxy indicators are descriptive rather than explanatory, in other words, they describe how the process looks but cannot assess why it looks the way it does. Evaluators then need to interpret the surrogates in terms of the factors of interest.

Examples of Indicators

To ease your work in setting indicators to measure the progress of your public participation process and its results, some examples of indicators are presented here for you to choose from and be inspired (Environment Law Institute 2007):

Examples of Quantitative Indicators of Participation:

- Number of stakeholders, including formal and informal institutions, participating in the process
- Numbers of stakeholder workshops/meetings and attendance levels of various stakeholder groups
- Number of institutions (formal and informal) created for stakeholder representation in the process
- Number of community members involved
- Number of women, indigenous groups, or other traditionally under-represented stakeholders represented at meetings, workshops, or in stakeholder institutions
- Increase in legal or regulatory provisions (at the national or regional level) for participation
- Number of comments submitted/received throughout the process (grouped into categories e.g. supportive, against, informative, etc.)
- Number of comments incorporated into process decisions/documents
- Number of information products created and disseminated to stakeholders
- Was a common vision agreed? (0 or 1)

- Was an action plan agreed? (0 or 1)
- Number of press conferences and their measurable impacts
- Number of radio/newspaper articles/newsletters of relevance
- Number of hits on process website
- Numbers of people downloading documents
- Existence of information databases or other physical access points for stakeholders

Examples of Qualitative Indicators of Participation:

- Quality and timeliness of information available to stakeholders (e.g. in the case of a project with social and environment impacts: goals, structure, costs, activities, impacts, outcomes, sustainability issues, etc.)
- Level of concern of different stakeholders on the environmental/development issue at hand
- Level of interest of different stakeholders to be involved in the public participation and final decision-making process
- Effectiveness of stakeholder institutions in representing stakeholder values and participating in the Public Participation and final decision-making process
- Capacity of other stakeholder groups to contribute meaningfully to the process and the issue at hand
- Reflection of stakeholder inputs and values in the process
- Degree of equity in the participation of the stakeholder groups (in cases where there was differentiation in the beginning of the process)
- Evolution of comments received (comparing earlier comments of a specific stakeholder with those at the end of the process e.g. if they were disinterested or against at the beginning what were they like afterwards and particularly at the end)
- Quality of stakeholder interactions
- Evolution of the potential of conflict among stakeholders
- Degree of consensus met by all stakeholders and comparison to initial expectation

Key questions to consider:

✓ **Why is monitoring and evaluation necessary in Public Participation processes?**

✓ **What are the main things to be kept in mind when developing indicators for Public Participation?**

✓ **Who, in your opinion, should conduct the evaluation process?**

An NGO assessment of the national consultations conducted for the MSFD

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) required Member States to conduct a public consultation on their Initial Assessment, the description of Good Environmental Status and associated Targets and Indicators by 15 July 2012. Between the 20th of September and the 31st October of 2012, the European Seas Environmental Cooperation (ESEC) conducted an online survey to take stock of NGO experiences with the national public consultations. In addition, the aim was to get an initial impression of the quality of the Member State reports.

The survey yielded 31 responses, of which 30 from NGOs from 16 countries and one response from an international NGO. Below are the main findings:

Participation: eight out of the 31 respondents did not participate in the public consultation, either because the process had not started yet or was delayed (Italy, Malta, Ireland, Bulgaria), or because the NGO lacked human resources and time (Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Romania).

Timing of the public consultation: 59% of respondents indicated that their country involved stakeholders at the end of the reporting process, while 26% stated that stakeholders were involved from the start of the process. A Dutch NGO reported that the Dutch consultation took place during the entire process.

Length of the consultation period: more than half (59%) of the NGOs considered the time given for the consultation was sufficient. 30% felt it was insufficient, while the rest pointed out that while time was sufficient, this was offset by the complexity of the reports.

Promotion: 52% of respondents felt that the public consultation was well publicized among the public and NGOs. 37% did not agree with this. In the opinion of the Dutch respondent the process was well known to NGOs and other stakeholders but not the general public.

Accessibility of the reports: 56% felt the reports were written in a manner accessible to the general public, while 33% disagreed. Some pointed out that the reports were accessible to stakeholders but not the general public or that they were too complex.

Read more at: *http://www.seas-at-risk.org/1mages/ESEC%20questionnaire%20results_1.pdf*

Chapter 9 | In Closing

It is widely acknowledged that Public Participation is an integral element of good governance and decision-making. Decisions related to the use and management of natural resources affect people's everyday lives in a very profound way, in every corner of our world. Public Participation allows for more transparent, legitimate and creative decision-making for the stakeholders involved and the public in general. By involving the public, decision-makers can make use of knowledge and experience of different stakeholders, resulting in better plans and measures and helping to build consensus and avoid conflict. In the long term, Public Participation enhances sustainable development and improves democracy.

On the other hand, public participation doesn't come for free – it takes time, money and skilled staff. Additionally, it can be a complex process with big challenges relating to the political and cultural context of every specific case. By planning the Public Participation process carefully and getting to know the situation and stakeholders well enough will help you to not waste your valuable resources but rather harvest to the fullest the benefits of the process.

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