

# Stakeholder Involvement in the Development of the Maritime Spatial Plans for the Black Sea

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**ABSTRACT.** We discuss a possible strategy for the involvement of the relevant stakeholders and authorities in the development of the national maritime spatial plans for the Romanian Black Sea, in the context of the MARSPLAN-BS project. We cover various aspects concerning stakeholder engagement, starting from how the stakeholders can be identified and how their needs and interests can be found. We present stakeholder maps, to analyze their needs and influence, tailored stakeholder strategies, to stimulate their engagement, various types of public consultations, to obtain feedback on key maritime planning issues. We exemplify our approach with various consultation actions that recently took place as part of the MARSPLAN-BS and MARSEA projects. We end our discussions with recommendations regarding the means of public participation in the process of drafting the maritime spatial plan for the Romanian Black Sea.

**KEYWORDS.** marine policy; maritime spatial plans; public participation; stakeholder; Black Sea.

## I. INTRODUCTION

During the last decade maritime spatial planning (MSP) has become one of the most widely endorsed tools for integrated management of coastal and marine environments [1]. With a strong political endorsement from the European Parliament and Council, following the Directive 2008/56/EC establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy, in 2008, and Directive 2014/89/ regarding the framework for maritime spatial planning, in 2014, numerous MSP initiatives developed across Europe, involving most EU member states. Basic information on such initiatives can be found from the websites of DG MARE and the European MSP Platform [2], a service for the member states, to share relevant knowledge and experiences on maritime spatial planning.

With the adoption of Directive 2014/89/EU, all coastal EU Member States are required to prepare cross-sectoral maritime spatial plans by 2021. In this context, the MARSPLAN BS project (2015-2017) was proposed by a transnational Romanian-Bulgarian consortium and funded by EASME/EMFF to support the implementation of the directive in the Black Sea basin. In an independent, smaller scale effort, the MARSEA project (2015-2017), was financed by national authorities to engage stakeholders and propose MSP scenarios for Romania. Both projects faced the challenge to address the issue of public participation in decision-making, following the express requirement stated in Articles 6 and 9 of Directive 2014/89/EU regarding the involvement of stakeholders in the planning: “Member States shall establish means of public participation by informing all interested parties and by consulting the relevant stakeholders and authorities, and the public concerned, at an early stage in the development of maritime spatial plans, in accordance with relevant provisions established in Union legislation.” The MSP Directive acknowledges in Preamble (21) that “In order to

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promote sustainable development in an effective manner, it is essential that stakeholders, authorities and the public be consulted at an appropriate stage in the preparation of maritime spatial plans under this Directive, in accordance with relevant Union legislation. A good example of public consultation provisions can be found in Article 2(2) of Directive 2003/35/EC” (providing for public participation in respect of the drawing up of certain plans and programs relating to the environment). Although the MSP Directive specifically demands for public participation in decision-making, the information provided within the regulation and in the legislation to which reference is made, remains vague and opens way for creative solutions that are tailored to the needs and specificities of each member state.

The literature on stakeholder involvement in decision-making has accumulated during the last decade. A few examples are the studies referring to marine protected areas in the US [3,4] and the Middle East [5], to fisheries management in Mexico [6] and in Denmark [7,8], to marine developments in UK [9,10], Ireland [11] and Italy [12]. Cross country comparisons have also been published, most addressing case studies from North America and Europe [13,14,15,16,17].

In this context, we start from the classic approach of R.E. Freeman [18] (and its more recent revisions [19,20]), which defines stakeholders as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives”. We particularly use the concept of stakeholder maps to differentiate stakeholders based on their needs and interests as well as their power to influence decision-making. Inspired by the work of Mitchell et al. [21], we distinguish between different groups or categories of stakeholders according to criteria such as legitimacy, power and urgency. Furthermore, we follow the recommendations of the International Association for Public Participation [22] to design a stakeholder engagement plan and set of actions.

We thus discuss a possible strategy for the involvement of the relevant stakeholders and authorities in the development of the national maritime spatial plans for the Black Sea. We start from the identification of stakeholders and of their needs and interests, we continue with stakeholder maps, to analyze their needs and influence, and we design tailored stakeholder strategies, to stimulate their engagement through various types of public consultations. The examples relevant to MSP are drawn from our recent experience with stakeholder consultations as part of the MARSPLAN-BS and MARSEA projects. In the end, we outline a few recommendations regarding the public consultations required in the process of drafting the maritime spatial plan for the Black Sea.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The steps we will follow in our approach to address public participation in MSP decision-making are sketched in Fig. 1. Inspired by the work of Schwalbe [23], in the context of project communication management in the field of information technology, and of Bourne and Weaver [24], which refer to constructions projects, our analysis is tailored to the specifics of maritime spatial planning and keeps into account the peculiarities of the Black Sea basin and the Romanian context.

The sequence of activities consists of: *i*) identify stakeholders and their needs and interests, *ii*) analyse stakeholder needs and influence, *iii*) establish tailored stakeholder engagement strategies, *iv*) implement the strategy and involve stakeholders in consultations, and *v*) evaluate stakeholder engagement. In the following, we will discuss every phase in the sequence, analysing the activities and deliverables associated with these steps. For instance, a result of the first phase is the stakeholder register, whereas the stakeholder matrix/map originates from the second stage. The engagement plan and the engagement calendar come out of the third step and, based on the stakeholder evaluations, revised engagement plans are obtained.

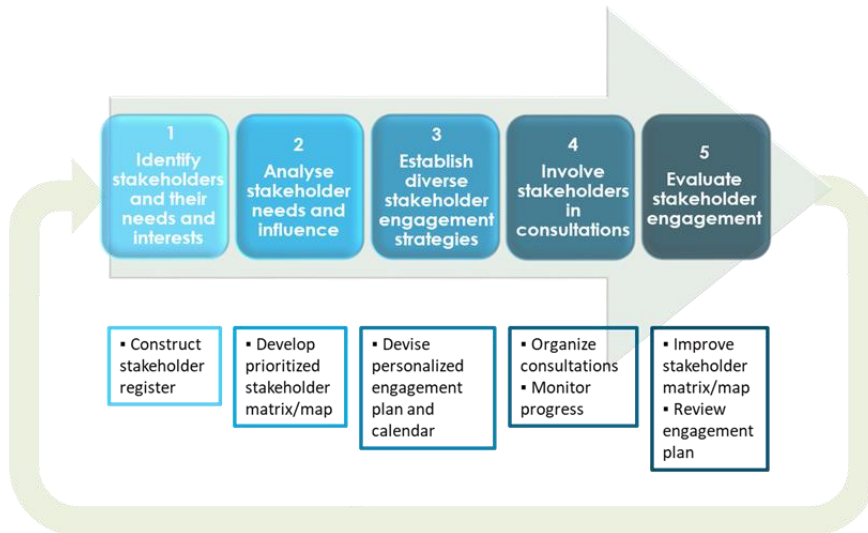


Fig. 1. Sequence of activities for stakeholder participation in MSP decision-making.

#### A. *Identify stakeholders, their needs and interests*

It is advisable to identify stakeholders in a systematic way, in order to be as inclusive as possible. Two possible approaches to systematically identifying stakeholders are: ‘ex-ante’ and ‘ad-hoc’ [25].

In the ex-ante approach, stakeholders are identified in advance, based on generic categories [26]. For example, it may be helpful to consider specific roles or functions of different actors or particular groups of relevance [27]. In the ‘ad-hoc’ approach, the identification of stakeholders is an iterative process, in which one starts from the obvious stakeholders and then enlarges the list based on the input of the ones already listed. This type of avalanche (or ‘snowball sampling’) method is used until no new stakeholders are identified [28,29].

Starting from Freeman’s maps to identify stakeholders [18] we arrive at the following generic list of types of entities who can affect or are affected by the implementation of a MSP:

- business stakeholders – as direct beneficiaries (firms, business associations, investors, suppliers, competitors);
- worker unions;
- government – as policy makers/regulators and as beneficiary of taxes, fees, and jobs;
- authorities and implementing agencies;
- environmental groups;
- commercial courts of justice;
- experts/consultants/policy researchers;
- concerned citizen groups and NGOs
- media and the general public

To move from generics to specifics, we need to take into account the suggestions made in the Directive 2014/89/EU itself, in Article 8 (2), where ‘possible activities and uses and interests’ are exemplified:

- aquaculture areas;
- fishing areas;

- installations and infrastructures for the exploration, exploitation and extraction of oil, of gas and other energy resources, of minerals and aggregates, and for the production of energy from renewable sources;
- maritime transport routes and traffic flows;
- military training areas;
- nature and species conservation sites and protected areas;
- raw material extraction areas;
- scientific research;
- submarine cable and pipeline routes;
- tourism;
- underwater cultural heritage.

To make the list of stakeholders comprehensive [25] we brainstormed with the partners in the MARSPLAN-BS consortium, consulted with colleagues as well as authorities, utilized government statistics and data, initiated self-selection by encouraging individuals with an interest to come forward, used ‘snowball sampling’ techniques, where existing stakeholder identifies new ones, consulting with forums.

The main output of this process is a stakeholder register, shown as a template in Table 1, adapted from [23,27,29]. The registry contains not just the usual contact information for each stakeholder, but also data regarding their anticipated interests and needs, as well as the estimated power to influence decision-making on MSP issues. Moreover, the registry has assigned a person from the project team responsible to keep contact with the stakeholder, any issues identified and the action taken for their resolution.

Table 1

TEMPLATE OF STAKEHOLDER REGISTRY								
Stakeholder	Category	Contact person	Position	Needs /Interests	Influence /Power	Person responsible	Issues identified	Action for resolution

We note that by Law no. 88 of 2017 for the approval of the Government Ordinance no. 18 of 2016 on Maritime Spatial Planning, according to Article 13 (1), in Romania the MSP Committee consists of representatives of various ministries and agencies. The list of 15 ministries and 2 agencies is supplemented by Government Decision no. 406 of 2017 with 7 authorities, research institutes and national companies: 1-Ministry of Regional Development, Public Administration and European Funds, 2-Ministry of Economy, 3-Ministry for Business Environment, Commerce and Entrepreneurship, 4-Ministry of Transport, 5-Ministry of the Environment, 6-Ministry of Waters and Forests, 7-Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 8-Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9-Ministry of Internal Affairs, 10-Ministry of National Defense, 11-Ministry of Culture and National Identity, 12-Ministry of Energy, 13-Ministry of Communications and Information Society, 14-Ministry of Research and Innovation, 15-Ministry of Tourism, 16-National Agency for Mineral Resources, 17-‘Danube Delta’ Reserve, 18-Romanian Naval Authority, 19-National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture, 20-National Agency for Environmental Protection, 21-‘Grigore Antipa’ National Institute for Marine Research and Development, 22-Danube Delta National Institute for Research and Development, 23-Romanian Waters National Administration – through Dorbogea-Litoral Water Administration, 24-Maritime Ports Administration National Company, 25-Offshore Petroleum Operations Regulatory Authority. Obviously, all these ministries, agencies, authorities, research institutes and national companies are stakeholders that start the stakeholder registry in Table 1. Moreover, the Government Decision no. 406 of

2017 specifies the names and positions of the full and alternate members of the MSP Committee.

The list continues with local and regional stakeholders for Constanța and Tulcea counties, municipalities and city councils, Environmental Protection Agencies, Departments of Public Health, branches of the National Meteorological Administration, of the National Institute for Statistics, law enforcement institutions (Coast Guard, Border Police, Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, Environmental Guard) etc.

The stakeholder registry continues with the business representatives, firms, business associations, chambers of commerce, and clusters involved in maritime transport (Romanian Maritime Cluster, INOMAR), in the exploration, exploitation, extraction and transportation of oil, gas and/or other mineral resources (OMV-Petrom, Exxon-Mobil), in underwater communication cables (RADIOCOM S.A.) and pipelines (Transgaz, Rompetrol, Black Sea Oil and Gas – Carlyle Group), in cruise (Ultramarine Travel, Carpatia Travel) and coastal tourism (Mamaia S.A.), in fishery ('Delfinul' Fishermen Association) and aquaculture (Romanian Association for Innovation in Aquaculture and Fishery), in shipbuilding (Constanța and Mangalia shipyards), oil etc.

Next are the environmental groups, interested in nature and species conservation as well as in preservation of protected areas (MARENOSTRUM) and the underwater cultural heritage groups. The registry carries on with universities (Ovidius University of Constanța, Constanța Maritime University, and Naval Academy), research institutes (URBAN-INCERC), expert groups and think tanks (Romanian Association for Sustainable Development). Finally, the list ends with concerned citizen groups and NGOs, the media and the general public.

In concluding this section, we stress once again that the simple enlisting of the stakeholders in the registry is not sufficient. Along with the usual contact information, the registry should contain continuously updated data regarding their interests, as well as their power to influence decision-making on MSP issues. It is key that a person from the project team is assigned as responsible to keep contact with the stakeholder, update the registry, identify problems and propose/take action to solve those problems. This way, the registry enables not just an easy ordering and grouping of stakeholders but, most importantly, the tracking of their contribution and their reasons to get or stay involved.

### ***B. Analyse stakeholders needs and influence***

The stakeholder identification process detailed above generates a comprehensive list of relevant stakeholders and stakeholder organizations, along with an indication of the reasons for engagement. The second stage is to assess and analyze stakeholders in order to prioritize them in relation to the necessity of engagement, as they do not need to be involved to the same degree, or at the same time [25].

One way to differentiate and prioritize stakeholders is based on the scheme of Mitchell et al. [21], which starts by asking what attributes do the stakeholders poses. The three key attributes suggested are power (meaning the ability of stakeholder to influence a decision), legitimacy (the right of the stakeholder to influence the decision) and urgency (the degree to which the stakeholder requires immediate action). A stakeholder may have one, two or all three of these attributes and, also, that each attribute may be dynamic, changing over time. The attributes are socially constructed, based on perceptions, not an 'objective' reality. The stakeholder may or not be 'conscious' of possessing the attribute or, if conscious of possession, may not choose to willful exercise that attribute [21].

Starting from the assumption that the importance or salience of the stakeholders is positively correlated with the number of attributes that are perceived to be present, Mitchell et al. [21] proposed three classes, shown in Figure 2: low salience is reserved to stakeholders with only one attribute, moderately salient for those with two whereas the combination of all three leads

to highly salient stakeholders. In the first class the stakeholders are called ‘latent’, in the second ‘expectant’ and in the third ‘definitive’ [21]. The degree of attention the stakeholders require increases with their salience.

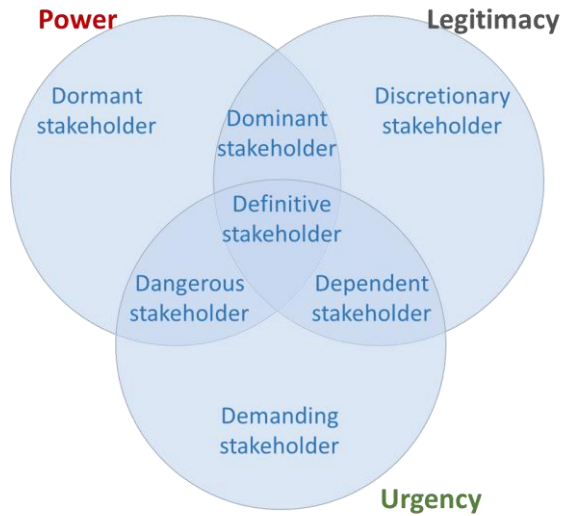


Fig. 2. Stakeholder typology, according to Mitchell et al. [21]. Stakeholders are analyzed depending on the number and types of attributes present.

An alternative approach to categorize stakeholders, probably, more often used in the recent years is based on their relative levels of interest and influence [23,25,30]. Figure 3 plots a stakeholder matrix/map, showing the influence the decision making process against the interest of the stakeholder in the subject. Depending on their position on the map, the stakeholders will receive a different degree of attention and will be involved differently in

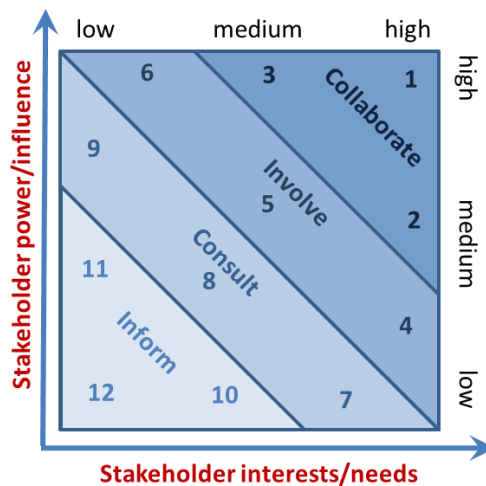


Fig. 3. MSP stakeholder influence/interests matrix/map. Each number is associated with a stakeholder, examples being provided in the text.

the consultation process. In the map proposed here, the engagement starts at the lower level of 'inform' and increases to 'consult', 'involve' and 'collaborate'. Other approaches [22] include an additional level, 'empower' which, we think, is less applicable to the MSP decision making and public consultation process [31].

While the low and high levels of attention and engagement are more easily understood, differentiating between the middle levels is more challenging. Mapping the highly influential stakeholders with little interest in the MSP topic or the ones at the opposite limit, with high interest but low power to influence can be made in either the 'consult' or the 'involve' levels, depending on the intensity of their impact and needs.

We can now populate the stakeholder matrix/map starting from the information included in the registry, as shown in Figure 3. To illustrate our approach, the Ministry of Regional development, Public Administration and European Funds has position 1 on the stakeholder map, as it has both highest authority and highest responsibility in drafting and implementing the MSP in Romania. An example for position 2, with medium power to influence decision making but high interests, as it oversees the marine protected areas in the Vama Veche region is the Grigore Antipa Institute for Marine Research and Development. At the opposite side, position 3 on the map may be illustrated by the Romanian Naval Authority, which has a high power to regulate but moderate responsibilities and direct interests in the subject. All three institutions mentioned require highest attention and engagement in the decision making and consultation process. Moving further, positions 4 and 7 may be illustrated by the associations of businesses active in the fishery and aquaculture sector, and the environmental NGOs, respectively, with high interests but lower power to influence. It is difficult to differentiate between the two, the separation coming from the key statement in the first article of the MSP law, which emphasizes the sustainable economic development of the maritime space, the sustainable growth of maritime economies, or marine areas and sustainable use of marine resources. Similarly, positions 5 and 8 are attributed to stakeholders such as the chambers of commerce, multinational corporations and local business association, respectively. At the other extreme, positions 6 and 9 may be ascribed to municipalities and regional authorities or agencies, such as the health department. Individual business, the media or institutions with lower impact (for instance the National Institute for Statistics) and the general public are typical stakeholders for positions 10, 11, and 12, respectively, on the map.

The stakeholder influence/interest matrix/map allows for differentiating and prioritizing stakeholders. As shown above, influence, dependency and willingness to engage are good general starting points, however, other criteria might also be considered. Also, additional stakeholders and issues may emerge at any time, so the matrix and prioritizations can be continually updated.

### ***C. Establish stakeholder engagement strategies***

Once the stakeholder influence/interest matrix/map is finalized, we can proceed to the next phase and design a strategy for engaging the stakeholders. The strategy needs to be tailored to the stakeholder and, to reach that goal, the first step is to specify the actions that could be taken for each class of stakeholders. Examples of stakeholder consultations actions include (for more examples see Ref. [22,30,32]): a) e-mail newsletters; b) online discussion forums; c) information seminars; d) invited written responses from stakeholders (e.g. via reply slips in reports); e) surveys; f) public meetings; g) focus groups; h) interviews; i) one-to-one meetings; j) small and medium enterprise panels; k) workshops; l) deliberative polling; m) consensus building forum; n) advisory committee meetings etc.

Table 2 provides examples of stakeholder consultation actions that are differentiated, depending on the stakeholder ‘score’. The score, associates a number of stars with each stakeholder class, to distinguish the interested parties based on the level of attention they need and the corresponding level of engagement. The highest level implies full collaboration, which requires an active role in decision making for those stakeholders. At the opposite limit, the lowest level of engagement entails only providing objective information to assist in understanding the problem and the possible solutions. The distinction between the middle levels is more subtle, in one case the goal being to obtain feedback on various proposed solutions, in the other to get suggestions for alternative possible solutions.

Table 2 states the different goals for the various classes and, correspondingly, the key actions that vary for different classes of stakeholders. For instance, if for the high-level

Table 2

EXAMPLES OF STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS FOR EACH CLASS/LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT				
Stakeholder score	*	**	***	****
Level of engagement	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Goals	Provide stakeholders objective information to assist in understanding problem and alternative solutions	Obtain from stakeholders feedback on analysis, alternatives and decisions	Obtain from stakeholders suggestions for alternative solutions	Give stakeholders a more active role in decision making
Examples of actions	Fact sheets Web sites E-mail newsletters	Surveys Public meetings Focus groups	Workshops Deliberative polling	Advisory committees Consensus building

stakeholders the defining action is that they will be part of advisory committees and consensus building actions, at the opposite end of the spectrum, the low-level stakeholders will only be informed by means of e-mail newsletters. In Table 2, for higher-level stakeholders only the distinctive actions are shown. In these cases, it should be understood that all other actions are also present. For instance, at the 2\* level, the stakeholders will be consulted but also informed, the surveys, and focus groups coming on top of the e-mail newsletters.

After differentiating the types of actions, depending on the class of stakeholder, we can go further and design a tailored stakeholder engagement plan. Table 3 illustrates the template of such an engagement plan, for a few hypothetical MSP stakeholders. It can be seen that stakeholder A, being high level, will be asked to participate in most (if not all) actions. In contrast, at the other limit, stakeholder D will only receive e-mail newsletters. A tailored engagement plan will differentiate also between stakeholders of the same class, as it can be seen comparing cases B1 and B2. Some stakeholders may be involved in public meetings and other in focus groups, some in workshops and one-to-one meetings, other in deliberative polling.



Table 3

TEMPLATE FOR A STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN						
Stakeholder score	Class	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Performance indicator
A	****	E-mail newsletters	Survey Public meetings Focus groups	Workshops	Advisory committees Consensus building	Problem solving for consensus building
B1	***	E-mail newsletters	Survey Public meetings	Workshops One-to one meetings		Feedback quality
B2	***	E-mail newsletters	Survey Focus groups	Deliberative polling		Feedback quality Participation, Feedback quality
C	**	E-mail newsletters	Survey			
D1	*	E-mail newsletters				
D2	*	Website				

Table 3 has, in the last column, space for setting performance indicators, anticipating the next phases of the process in which the action plan is implemented and evaluated. Examples of performance indicators may include the simple act of participation, as some stakeholders may simply not attend the meetings or not respond to surveys. Indicators that are more informative may be the quality of the feedback, the timeliness of the response, involvement in negotiations, and problem solving for consensus building etc.

The second document that should be prepared during this phase of the consultation process is the engagement calendar. The sequence of steps of the consultation process is not arbitrary, as the entire procedure has an inherent logic that should be followed. A simplified diagram of a stakeholder consultation cycle is shown in Figure 4.

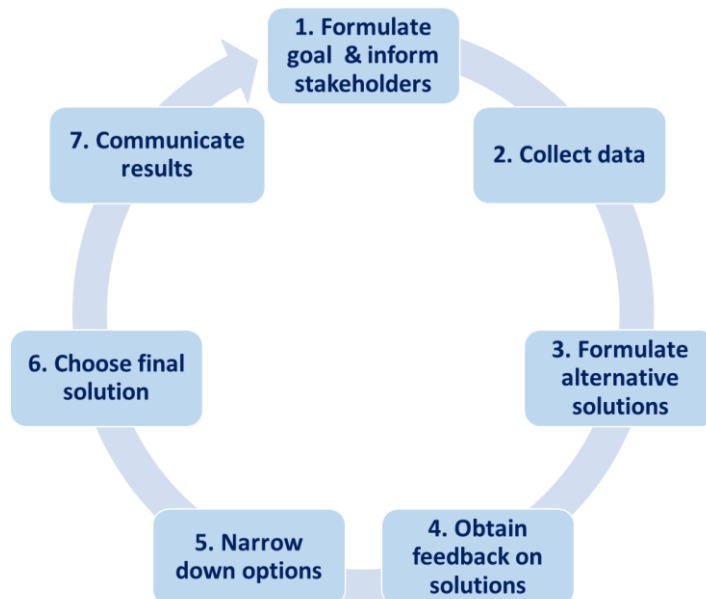


Fig. 4. Simplified diagram of a stakeholder consultation cycle. Stakeholders are engaged at all of these stages, through different types of consultations, as discussed in the text.

For instance, the public participation may be initiated with some public meetings, with the main role to inform the communities of stakeholders. In order to gather information that is more useful various surveys, interviews and focus groups may represent very valuable tools during step 2. Once the information is obtained workshops may provide the means to clearly formulate the problems and collectively search for various alternative solutions. At this point, if needed, another round of surveys may provide feedback on the alternative solutions and allow to narrow the many options down to only the most valuable resolutions. Deliberative polling or consensus building workshops may finalize the decision-making process in step 6 and information seminars or conferences will disseminate the solution reached.

Starting from the precise goals and specifics of the consultation process the stakeholder engagement calendar will cover the entire sequence of steps required and establish the roles of each actor. Table 4 illustrates a template of a generic calendar that can be personalized to specific MSP consultations. The calendar will state not just the date and location of the consultation but also the form of consultation, ranging from websites and e-mail newsletters to workshops and consensus building forums etc. The goal has to be precise, measurable, attainable and relevant to the entire process. The calendar will also comprise the stakeholders invited to participate and their roles, the expected outcome of the particular event and the person responsible to organize it [32].

Table 4

TEMPLATE FOR A STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT CALENDAR

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Date	Location	Form of consultation	Goal	Stakeholders engaged	Expected deliverables	Person responsible

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#### ***D. Involve stakeholders in consultations***

Conducting effective consultations is not a trivial task, particularly during public meetings with stakeholders that have conflicting views and/or interests. We believe that critical to ensuring the success of the consultation are some of the following practices [32,33]. First, to encourage participation and involvement, it may be important to secure the support of key leaders with the authority to attract, inspire and persuade stakeholders. Second, appoint very carefully the moderators, to guarantee that everyone is treated with respect, in an atmosphere that stimulates a polite debate of ideas. Third, make sure that the meetings are planned with sufficient time for discussions such that all opinions can be expressed. Forth, provide some instructions or even training to help stakeholders translate their personal experiences and perspectives into constructive recommendations, as opposed to advocating for personal agendas. If that is not possible, encourage the moderator to clarify interventions by paraphrasing (restating the main points in simpler words) and to keep a balance of opposing views. Fifth, pay attention to logistics that make possible for the stakeholders to fully participate and eliminate barriers to involvement, including location, time, language (avoid using acronyms and jargon), food etc.

The planning of stakeholder events should include a process to identify, assess and address risks [34], which translates to anticipating potential negative outcomes and focusing on areas for positive relationship building. Examples of potential engagement risks are lack of participation, poor involvement, low quality feedback, uninformed or even disruptive stakeholders, conflicts between attending parties.

During public consultations, stakeholders with opposite views or interests may experience some level of conflict. Conflict is part of everyday interactions, arising when actors cannot agree upon a certain issue [25,35]. Conflicts can be open (known publicly), hidden (known only by certain people), latent (waiting for a reason to become manifest) [35]. Conflicts can also be well defined or fuzzy [25].

The first step to reducing a conflict is to lower possible hostility by viewing it as a problem that needs to be solved [35]. If conflict resolution is not possible because of entrenched positions, the method of engagement may have to be changed or adjusted. For instance, bilateral engagement may be more productive than a public debate [36]. In any case, conflict resolution starts with a clear understanding of the cause of conflict, which may require a separation of opinions from facts and a balancing of emotions and reason. Once the cause is well understood, one can determine which third party could mediate the resolution. The facilitator should be neutral and credible to all parties, able to explore various types of agreements that could be tolerated by the conflicting stakeholders [36].

After finalizing the event, record keeping is an important task that has to be completed. The information that needs to be recorded refers to participants, proceedings, issues discussed and concerns that were voiced, outputs and outcomes as well as any commitments made during the engagement, which would need to be followed up [25,36]. The records kept will facilitate both sending feedback to stakeholders after the event and performing an evaluation of the stakeholder engagement and of the degree to which the event reached its objectives.

#### ***E. Evaluate stakeholder engagement***

Assessing the effectiveness of the engagement undertaken and learning from the experience for the future is very important [25,37] and, therefore, some form of monitoring and evaluation is a necessary important part of the engagement process and should be considered from the beginning, in the planning stages [38]. The goal of monitoring and evaluating the stakeholder consultation process is to provide support in accomplishing the results anticipated and improving performance [34].

Aside from evaluating the overall effectiveness of the consultation process, the review may address the involvement of each participating stakeholder. For that purpose, the stakeholder registry can be supplemented with an engagement monitor, such as that illustrated in Table 5. In columns 3 to 7 of Table 5 the current and desired states are represented with C and D, respectively, the possible states being unaware, resistant, neutral, supportive and leading [39]. The engagement level in column 8 is estimated as low (L), medium (M) or high (H). The stakeholder score in column 2 indicates the level of attention required whereas the reparatory actions in the last column suggests the intensity of the action needed to reach the desired state.

Table 4

ILLUSTRATION OF A STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT MONITOR								
SH.	SH. score	Current and desired state					Eng. level	Repar. action
		Resistant	Unaware	Neutral	Supportive	Leading		
...	****				C	D	H	!!
...	****	C		D			H	!!!
...	***		C			D	L	!!
...	***		C		D		M	!!
...	**		C	C	D		L	!
...	**	C		D			L	!
...	*	C		D			M	!
...	*		C	D			L	!

An alternative approach to visualize and estimate the effort needed to implement reparatory actions is based on a different type of stakeholder map, representing the level of involvement against the level of awareness/support, as shown in Figure 5. For each stakeholder we can draw arrows from the present state to the desired state, the length of the arrow suggesting the intensity of the reparatory action required.

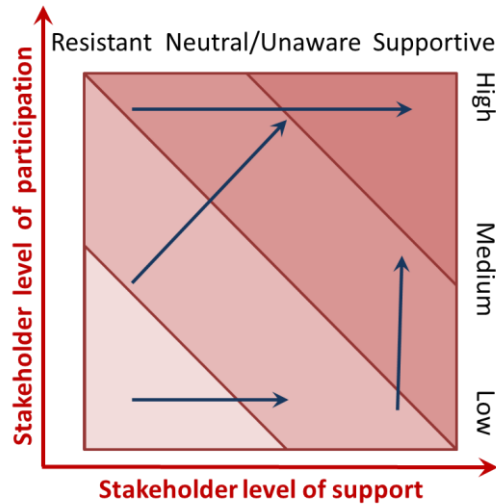


Fig. 5. Generic stakeholder participation vs. support map. The origin of each arrow shows the present state, whereas the tip of the arrow indicates the desired state. The length of the arrow is meant to correlate with the effort required to reach the desired state.

Based on the evaluation the stakeholder engagement plan can be updated and amended, in order to reach the goals of the consultation process. The arrow represented in Figure 1 closes the feedback loop, insuring the improvement and control of the entire process.

Using the tools presented in this section the stakeholder consultation process can implemented and even optimized. The next section will illustrate how these tools were used in MSP consultations held under the two different projects, MASPLAN-BS and MARSEA.

### III. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS FOR MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING

#### A. Stakeholder consultations under MARSPLAN-BS

The National Institute for Marine Research and Development „Grigore Antipa” MARSPLAN-BS team, together with the Ovidius University of Constanţa team, organized on November 16, 2016, a stakeholder meeting, hosted by the Eforie City Hall in Eforie Sud, Constanţa county, Romania. The goal of the meeting was three-fold: i) to inform the stakeholder about the MSP legislation at EU level and its implementation in Romania, ii) to disseminate the results of the MARSPLAN-BS project and, iii) to obtain feedback from the stakeholders on the Eforie area MSP Study case. The event was attended by 29 participants from NIMRD “G. Antipa” and Ovidius University from Constanta, Danube Delta Institute from Tulcea, representing the MARSPLAN-BS consortium, and from Romanian Naval Authority, Constanţa Port Administration, Constanţa Coast Guard, Dobrogea Emergency Inspectorate, Maritime Hydrographic Directorate, Eforie City Hall, INOMAR (tourism cluster), fishery associations, Sustainable Development Group Constanţa (an NGO).

The event began with presentations of the MSP agenda and the MARSPLAN-BS project and continued with two parallel workshops, one on ‘Socio-economic development and spatial

planning’, and the other on ‘Marine Environment, Nature Protection and Biodiversity’. During the parallel workshops, the stakeholders were invited to give feedback on the activities taking place or envisaged for the near future in the coastal and marine area subject to maritime spatial planning. More specifically, the stakeholders were asked to mark on the map the various activities that take place or are projected to occur in the future (see Figure 6).

The main concern voiced during the meeting referred to the land-sea interaction, emphasizing the effects of coastal erosion in the Eforie area. The possible conflicts revealed during the discussions were between tourism activities, fishing and the environment (unauthorized coastal development, jet-skies and marine entertainment), between fishing and the environment (as the anchor zones are not always respected), between touristic port developments and the environment. Towards the end of the workshops, the discussions exceeded the map of the Eforie area, signaling other potential conflicts, such as the oil pipeline and the military exercise zones near Midia.

The evaluation of the consultation event indicated that, although overall the goals had been accomplished, the participation was still relatively modest, the awareness of the MSP agenda relatively poor and the involvement of the stakeholders very unequal. The feedback provided for the consultation exercise was positive, as it emphasized the discussions in favor of lecture-type presentations, allowing all opinions to be heard and taken into account.



Fig. 6. Illustration of the discussions during the workshops held in Eforie, on November 16, 2016 (left), and Mangalia, on December 18, 2017 (middle and right). Stakeholders were encouraged to mark the activities on the maps and examine possible conflicts and synergies.

On December 18, 2017 a second stakeholder event was organized by NIMRD ‘G. Antipa’ and Ovidius University, with participation from other members of the MARSPLAN-BS confortium coming from Danube Delta and URBAN-INCERC research institutes. The event was attended by representatives of the Romanian Naval Authority, Constanța Port Administration, Constanța Coast Guard, Dobrogea Emergency Inspectorate, National Agency for Environmental Protection, Maritime Hydrographic Directorate, Water Administration Dobrogea – Litoral, Delfinul Fishermen’s association, Public Health Directorate, the local branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development etc.

The meeting in Mangalia had the same goals as that held in Eforie, and followed a similar scenario. The possible conflicts discussed overlapped to some extent with those that emerge from the previous consultation, particularly in terms of potential disputes between tourism activities, fishing and the environment, fishing and the environment, between touristic port developments and the environment. However, the perspectives of future oil and gas drilling and extraction, as well as transport to the shore in the Tuzla region raises concerns for many stakeholders interested in fishing and tourism in the region. Moreover, the terminals for liquefied gas and bitumen may conflict both with the environment and with other economic activities in the port, as well as with navy training and docking areas.

The review of the stakeholder engagement revealed similar conclusions regarding modest participation, poor awareness and diverse involvement. The feedback provided for the consultation exercise was positive, as it emphasized the discussions in favor of lecture-type presentations, allowing all opinions to be heard and taken into account.

### ***B. Stakeholder consultations under MARSEA***

The lessons learned from MSP over the last decade revealed the importance of applying multidisciplinary approaches to expand and deepen the involvement of stakeholders from economic and political decision-making spheres, as well as considering social and cultural dimensions. The perception of maritime subjects and issues are different between groups of people and depends on the information available to either party. The communication of scientific results is thus crucial to increase literacy and allow informed decision-making. Since 2015, several public participation actions such as workshops, focus-groups and meetings with stakeholders were performed in Constanta, hosted by Faculty of Natural Sciences and Agricultural Sciences, Ovidius University of Constanta. Each workshop lasted about three hours. A power-point presentation explaining the study objectives was given at the beginning of first workshop and one presenting the current uses maps was given at the beginning of the second workshop. Data were collected using questions constructed to address the research objectives.

A broad range of organisations was included: National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Constanta Municipality, Danube Delta Federation of Fish Producers, Mare Nostrum NGO, ROMFISH National Association of Fishery Producers, National Institute for Marine Research and Development “Grigore Antipa“ Constanta, National Company Maritime Ports Administration S.A. Constanta, Junior Group, RO-PESCADOR Association, Ovidius University of Constanta, Institute of Nanotechnologies and Alternative Energy Sources, S.C. Eurolevel S.R.L., Green Urban NGO, Environmental Protection Agency Constanta, County Council Constanta - Urbanism and Territorial Planning, Civic Group Green Barricade, USONIA SRL, Dan Memet Design Office, Romanian Water Administration Dobrogea-Littoral, Maritime Hydrographic Directorate Constanta (Fig. 7).

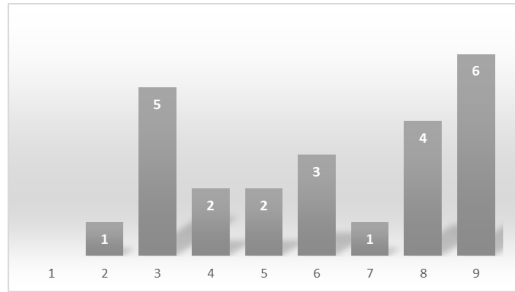


Fig. 7. Illustration of the discussions during the workshops held in Constanta, on June 17, 2016 (left), on May 10, 2017 (middle) and on 8 November 2017 (right). Stakeholders were encouraged to actively participate to the activities and complete questionnaires about their activity, possible investments or development projects, conflicts and synergies.

Through this analysis, we found out a clear gap in perception between the current, the ideal and the foreseen situation regarding the MSP implementation in Romania (Fig. 8). Furthermore, although most of the stakeholders wish to participate in this process, they do find themselves in a position where they have little influence on the decision-making process. However, some local stakeholders depicted this situation having only a top-down approach, corruption or little local knowledge input and public participation. Lack of funding was also mentioned, followed by the problem of dependency and lack of autonomy of county governments in relation to national government, which limited their ability to make and implement decisions to respond to timely and efficiently. During the discussions with Romanian authorities challenges of assessing the needs of interconnected ecosystems (including relevant EU and international legislation) were identified. The analysis shows that policies related to MSP are currently not well synchronized. Efforts need to be made to strengthen the relationships between these and provide the resources and support necessary for MSP process implementation.

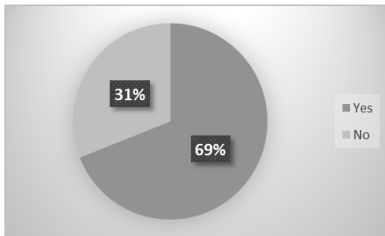
Which is the main function of your organization/association/company?

1. Legislative
2. Policy making
3. Economic/commercial
4. Applied research
5. Basic research
6. Innovation and technology development
7. Monitoring and surveillance
8. Environmental and cultural protection
9. Other:



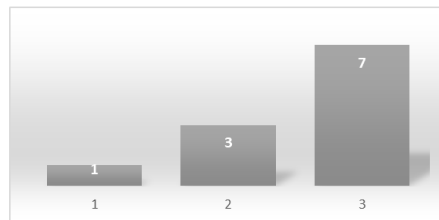
A.

Do you have any specific investment/development projects for the next 5-10 years?



If Yes, do the investment/development projects provide a direct or indirect use of marine resources?

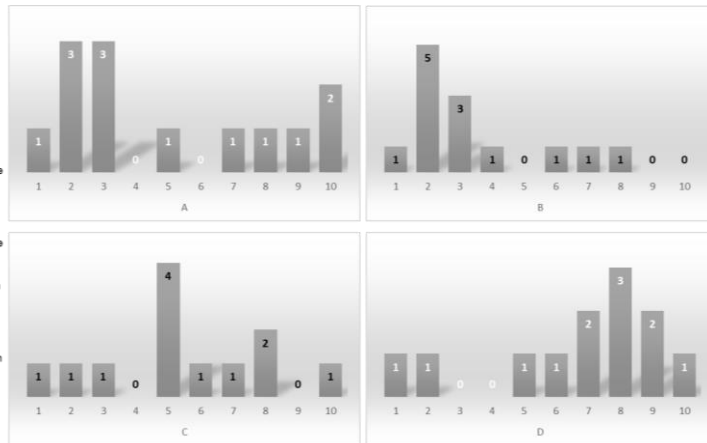
1. Indirect; 2. Direct; 3. Both of them.



B.

Which are the main conflicts you have encountered in the development of your activities?  
(1 =less important to 10= very important)

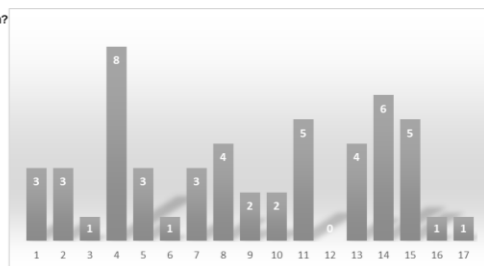
- A. Conflicts with other sectors for the utilization of the same marine area
- B. Conflicts with other sectors for the utilization of the same marine resource
- C. Specific conflicts with other marine and maritime sectors (economic)
- D. Negative effects from environmental pressures deriving from other coastal/terrestrial activities



C.

With which sectors have you established a fruitful cooperation?

1. Maritime traffic and transport
2. Renewable energy
3. Oil & Gas energy
4. Environment and nature conservation
5. Maritime and cultural heritage
6. Mineral extraction and dredging
7. Recreational fishing
8. Commercial fishing
9. Aquaculture
10. Marine and coastal constructions
11. Coastal defence
12. Marine surveillance
13. Military
14. Tourism, recreation (including boating and cruise tourism)
15. Spatial planning and regional development
16. Marine research
17. Other:



D.

Fig. 8. Graphs illustrating the answers collected from questionnaires about main function of the activity (A), possible investments/development projects (B), conflicts (C) and synergies (D).

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

We discussed the sequence of steps for effective public consultations, providing details of the documents that ought to be developed at each step. We covered systematic stakeholder identification procedures, leading to the register, we discussed interest/influence maps, engagement plans and the calendar for the entire consultation cycle, planning of the actual events and involvement evaluation at the end.

We provided examples consultation actions that recently took place as part of the MARSPLAN-BS and MARSEA projects. The two MARSPLAN-BS consultations mentioned here were held in Eforie and Mangalia, in 2016 and 2017, respectively. The other three stakeholder events were organized at Ovidius University of Constanţa, within the MARSEA project.

The consultations revealed that the small business stakeholders and the local business associations are not aware of the initiatives to regulate the use of the maritime space and have a relatively poor understanding of European and national maritime planning legislation. They seem not to anticipate the risks associated with a lack of interest and involvement. At the opposite end, the multinational corporations seem to only monitor the process without an active involvement at this early stage.

It becomes clear from the feedback received from the stakeholders that the authorities should be more active in informing the interested parties and the general public on national trends in MSP. Moreover, authorities should act more coherently, with more consultations between regulating and licensing agencies. As so far, licenses for coastal and offshore activities have been given by different agencies, with relatively poor communication between them, conflicts have already appeared even before the implementation of Directive 2014/89/EU.

Regarding the consultation actions performed under the two projects mentioned, it should be recognized that the expertise in managing stakeholder activities has been gradually built in the consortium. During the process and particularly towards the final stages of the two projects the stakeholder engagement documents have been developed, starting with the registry and the interest/influence maps and ending with the final evaluation. It is now much clearer how to design a tailored stakeholder engagement plan, conceive an appropriate consultation cycle, schedule progressively the events and prepare the proper calendar. We have learned in the process about the important role of the moderator in involving stakeholders during public consultation proceedings as well as about the key role of an independent facilitator in the process of conflict resolution and reaching a synergic consensus.

Acting independently but with similar goals the teams of the MARSPLAN-BS and MARSEA projects have succeeded in setting the stage for consultation processes that will follow, until 2021, during the development of the maritime spatial plan for the Black Sea.

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