



Danube Floodplain

*Reducing the flood risk through floodplain restoration
along the Danube River and tributaries*

Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Contents

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY	3
1. Why do we need a communications and stakeholder engagement strategy?	3
2. Overview of the Danube Floodplain Project.....	3
Communication context.....	5
3. Roles and responsibilities	5
Communications lead and responsibilities	5
Workflow.....	6
4. Goals and objectives	7
Goals and Objectives of the Danube Floodplain project	8
Communication objectives	8
5. Target Audiences	9
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	14
1. Why engage stakeholders.....	14
Outlining the objective for engaging stakeholders.....	14
THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY	15
1. PREPARATION PHASE.....	15
Step 1: Mapping stakeholders	16
Step 2: Prioritizing stakeholders	16
Step 3: Planning the engagement.....	17
Drafting specific objectives for stakeholder engagement	17
Topics	17
Developing internal skills/building capacity for stakeholder engagement..	18
Identifying the best engagement methods.....	19
2. CONSULTATION PHASE	20
STEP 4: Putting the plan in action	20
Designing the consultation process	20
Communication	21
Facilitation.....	21
Plan for action	21
Messages	21
3. EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK PHASE.....	22
Step 5: Reporting back and giving assurance to the participants.....	22
Annexes	23

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

1. Why do we need a communications and stakeholder engagement strategy?

Successful communication is the only way towards the implementation of the Danube Floodplain project. Reaching out and connecting with our stakeholders is of key importance in this project. The Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy is created for facilitating this dialogue. It is developed by WWF Hungary's and GWP CEE's collaboration.

The Danube Floodplain Communications and Stakeholder Strategy guides the project internal communications as well as external communications, the process of stakeholder involvement and dissemination efforts in order to increase the impact of the project. The benefits and results should be clearly visible to external stakeholders, such as national, regional and local actors.

The main purpose of this document – a strategic tool that is vital for the implementation and the success of the initiative – is to facilitate the implementation of the project activities and to make key stakeholders aware of the project's achievements. Moreover, this document provides the framework for all communications, maps out the roles of the partners in the communication process, describes the methods and means of communication to be used in the project, and outlines targeted groups.

The strategy is to be considered a “dynamic document”, which is flexible and responsive to changing needs and challenges and the specific messages, communication channels and tools need to be periodically revisited based on the outcomes and milestones of the project and in light of arising needs and conditions. The communications within this project is extraordinarily vital, as the project success itself depends on proper stakeholder engagement and creating attention around the issues that the project is dealing with.

2. Overview of the Danube Floodplain Project

In most parts of the Danube River Basin, historical and recent straightening of river beds (cut of retention areas, technical flood control) affected the river floodplains as they are no longer subject to natural flooding regimes. After the 2000s an increased flood risk was registered due to concentrated runoff peaks (less retention capacity) and faster water routing (straightened and decreased roughness of river beds). The increased precipitation regime in 2002, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2015, led to severe floods in the Danube Basin. Torrential rains caused flash and fluvial floods in Romania, Bulgaria and Germany.

In the Danube Basin the floodplains areas are reduced by 68% compared to the historical floodplain areas due to increased demand for land, river regulation or dam constructions. The situation heightened flood risk, loss of habitats and ecosystems services, decreased biodiversity and retention capacity for nutrients. The Danube countries were forced to review their options in flood risk management and include green infrastructures besides traditional measures in planning for a sustainable flood risk management on the national level but even more so at the Danube Basin level. In its 3rd Meeting on 4 May 2012, the Steering Group of the Priority Area 5 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region pre-examined the project idea

"Danube Floodplain" submitted by the Ministry of Waters and Forests, Romania concluded that the project contributes to the achievement of the targets and goals of the EUSDR.

In compliance with the FD and WFD, both the 1st DRBMP from 2009 (updated in 2015) and the 1st DFRMP put forward ambitious targets for floodplain restoration, recognizing the multiple benefits for flood risk management, nutrient retention, water quality, biodiversity and the ecosystem and set out appropriate environment and flood risk management objectives covering the Danube basin. Opportunities towards gaining synergies and key issues requiring coordination are clearly foreseen for the programmes of measures within the plans. Floodplain restoration and creation of new retention and detention capacities, in particular based on natural water retention, are likely to provide the most significant direct contribution to both FD and WFD objectives but also to conservation objectives (BHD). By addressing the need to develop an action policy framework (DRB Floodplain Management Strategic Guidance and the Roadmap) in relation with floodplain restoration in the DRB the project will offer tools and guidance to achieve long term solutions through floodplain restoration and conservation decreasing the flood risk (discharge peaks) of the Danube River and selected tributaries. The project will solve the challenge of translating the actions into restoration projects, to involve and have the support of stakeholders (who are scared of losing fishery, land and income) and to balance investments in flood risk management with other public infrastructural investments.

The main objective of the project is to improve transnational water management and flood risk prevention while maximizing benefits for biodiversity conservation.

The expected change is improved knowledge and engagement among the countries located within Danube River Basin, related to integrative water management through restoration of floodplains, combination of classical and green infrastructure, natural retention measures, involving all related stakeholders.

The main activities of the project are:

- updating the floodplain areas inventory and their ranking using the Floodplain Evaluation Matrix-FEM
- assessing, by using the pre-selected pilot areas, of the efficiency of floodplain projects in the Danube District and
- developing tools for increasing the knowledge and cooperation of experts, practitioners, decision makers and stakeholders on floodplain restoration.

The Project will develop tools:

- 1) The Danube basin wide floodplain restoration and preservation manual addressed mainly to practitioners
- 2) A DRB Sustainable Floodplain management Strategic Guidance summarizing the key findings of the manual targeting a wider audience
- 3) A DRB Roadmap comprising agreed next steps towards realizing floodplain projects.

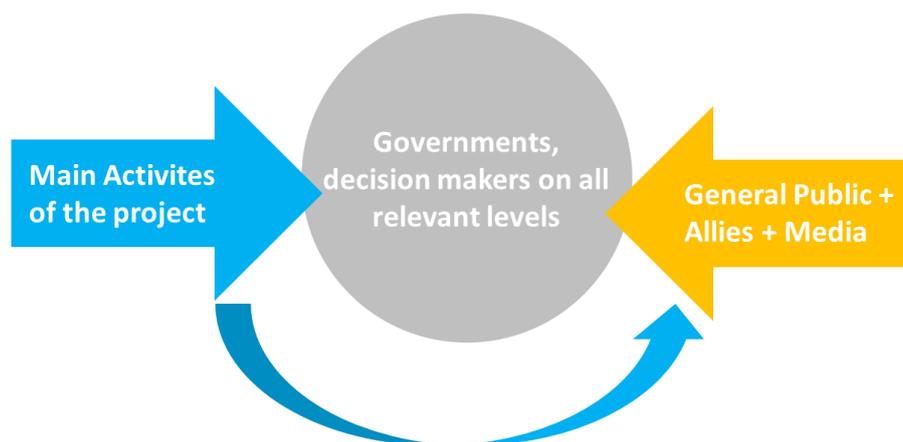
The ICPDR which is the major platform for cooperation in flood risk management and river basin management in the DRB, through its experts will be supportive to this project in helping to achieve its goals and also in transferring the outputs.

The innovative character is given by the application of FEM by all Partner Countries and by developing a general evaluation tool for possible later assessment of floodplain restoration projects.

Communication context

In order to reach the project's main goal, it is important to see clearly the issues we will face through the project. The problems caused by straightening river beds and dramatically reducing floodplain areas, the threats of floods of recent years, and the attitude towards rivers due to this: people see rivers as a basic element of our countries where water just comes and goes in its bed. Moreover, citizens and decision makers think of it as a source of danger because of floods. So it is among our main tasks to reach out to general public and change their attitude towards rivers and floodplains: make them understand that flood is not an enemy but an opportunity.

Public support is also essential to the success of the project! By the main activities of the project we have to justify the importance of the new methods in flood risk management, so the general public will feel the need to put a pressure on governments to make the necessary changes.



3. Roles and responsibilities

Communications lead and responsibilities

The project communications team is led by WP2 – WWF Hungary, supported by GWP CEE. The team is responsible for the following main activities:

2.1 Preparation of communication and stakeholder engagement strategy

Define Communications and Stakeholder Strategy for the project:

- target groups for: a) general Danube basin level; b) each country
- key messages per stakeholders/target groups
- workflow for communication materials production (approval process, etc.) and dissemination training with PPs on stakeholder engagement

2.2 Project communication, awareness raising & stakeholders engagement at Danube basin level

- project sub-website
- stakeholder engagement guidelines and Danube level stakeholder analysis
- press releases at Danube basin level (min 2)
- project poster (required by DTP)
- Different printed/digital materials templates
- animation video (max 5 min)
- Report on public consultation and participation in the agreed planning phases
- Promotional materials

2.3 Project communication and awareness raising at country level

- Printed/digital materials based on the templates (local language/specific info)
- Project launch press release at country level;
- social media and newsletters: each partner can disseminate through existing channels
- brief internal stakeholder analysis guidance doc
- Press trips to two pilot sites and connected news

2.4 Communication and dissemination of project results at national and Danube basin level

- Closing event (European level conference or workshop) and connected news
- End project press release with overall country result (national level)
- strengthen participation in events – outside the project – at Danube basin/EU/country
- strengthen participation in events within the countries, to give presentations on project results

Workflow

All partners' contribution to communications related task is necessary for the process of successful communication. To reach this success: we formed the Communication Working Group, which includes one person from each partner to support communications at all levels.

- Communication group calls in every quarter
- Communication Protocol (internal)
- National level distribution has to be coordinated with a collaboration in countries with multiple PPs
- a calendar to support a clear and visible track of events (regional, national or local levels) and encourage communication around them



4. Goals and objectives

Communication needs to be goal-driven. We communicate to achieve something or to make a change in something. While communication objectives differ from management objectives, a project’s communication strategy should be built on the same grounds as the project strategy itself. The project’s overall communication objectives clearly indicate the benefits that project communications will bring to the project.

The key communication objectives for Danube Floodplain can be divided into two tiers, each with its own communication priorities:

- Internal communications: to keep all project partners informed, at all times, about the current status and developments of the project implementation and possible changes; and to support the implementation process of the project; to encourage national level promotion and support partners to benefit of opportunities arising related to the project.
- External communications: to engage target audiences and stakeholder groups in project activities; to support stakeholder involvement and to engage a communication platform between the main target groups and interested or indirect stakeholders; to communicate the benefits, the outputs and the impact of the Danube Floodplain project to the target audiences;

and to communicate the benefits of EU funding for this specific project to a broader audience, while showing transparency

There is a difference between project objectives and communication objectives as well as between internal and external communications objectives. A successful communication throughout the project will require a solid understanding of the difference between communication among the partners and communications which is targeted to groups and stakeholders outside the partner organisations. The external communications will be more dominant within the workplan.

The project needs to communicate its main goal and objectives to the pinpointed audiences. To achieve this, the project team has developed a series of external communication tools and methods, which will assist in disseminating the messages of the project and make achieved outputs and results known, thus contributing to and completing the general implementation of the project.

All partners should carry out their part of the project in a sustainable way. In terms of communication, this means that they should try using electronic communication and documentation as much as possible and they should embrace sustainable forms of printing (e.g. double-sided; recycled paper). Travel footprint, unless strictly necessary, should be kept in check by relying on online video chat and voice call services (e.g. Skype, web-phone and videoconferencing).

The Communication activities should be undertaken in both English and local languages when relevant for the target groups; joint efforts should promote linguistically accessible communication activities for all target groups.

Goals and Objectives of the Danube Floodplain project

The main goal:

Improve transnational and integrated Danube flood risk management and river basin management through floodplain preservation and restoration leading to reduced flood risk.

Specific objectives:

- Improved knowledge on floodplain restoration and preservation
- Agreement of further actions on floodplain restoration, preservation
- Improved stakeholder cooperation in floodplain management in Danube River Basin

Communication objectives

- 1. Identify and involve all key stakeholders:** taking into account their needs, constraints, interactions and processes necessary for the realization of restoration projects.

Involvement includes all **3 levels of implication:**

- Communication: awareness raising
- Consultation: ask feedback from important stakeholders

- Active involvement: key stakeholders are involved in decision making in order to define feasibility of planned measures

2. Project activities are supported by communication and dissemination activities

Specific objectives:

- Support project partners and provide guidance in the communications activities regarding key project outputs and activities.
- Implement local communication efforts to key target audiences regarding project activities.
- Implement specialized dissemination efforts to key target audiences at Danube basin and local level for key project outputs.

3. Awareness raising in general public

Specific objectives:

- Raise awareness of the public about the importance and role of floodplains for flood risk management
- Increase public sensitivity in order to build support for floodplain conservation and restoration measures' implementation

5. Target Audiences

1. Stakeholders

The most important groups of stakeholders identified at Danube basin level are:

- National governments
- Danube Basin Commissions and platforms (for example SAVA, EUSDR)
- Associations of large, industrial farmers
- Associations of small scale farmers
- Fisheries and anglers
- Nature conservation and environmental protection institutes, agencies
- NGOs and CSOs
- Research institutions
- Waterworks
- Forestry
- HPP and navigation
- Dredging industry
- Tourism

Danube basin level analysis - Blueprint table

Target audience (Target audiences do not include those organisations who are part of the partnership.)	Desired response	Channels
Associations of large, industrial farmers	<p>THINK: Integrative water management through restoration of floodplains can help me to adapt to climate change, and in long term I can profit more from the greener landuse.</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: There is a pressure to accept the benefits of integrative water management, and we need to change our ways to remain competitive.</p> <hr/> <p>DO: Consider to cooperate with the project, participate in the meetings and discussions and be more open in enabling nature based solutions/floodplain restorations and connected potential land use change for flood risk mitigation.</p>	Media; Direct meetings
Associations of small scale farmers	<p>THINK: Integrative water management through restoration of floodplains can help me to adapt to climate change, and in long term I can profit more from the greener landuse.</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: There is a pressure to accept the benefits of integrative water management, and we need to change our ways to remain competitive and adaptive to climate change.</p> <hr/> <p>DO: Consider to cooperate with the project, participate in the meetings and discussions and be more open in enabling nature based solutions/floodplain restorations and connected potential land use change for flood risk mitigation.</p>	Media; Direct meetings
Danube Basin Commissions and platforms (for ex. SAVA, EUADR)	<p>THINK: This project gives an opportunity to highlight the benefits of integrative water management and contributes to implementation of WFD and Flood Directive.</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: There is a spotlight on integrative water management that gives an opportunity to provide more support to achieve our targets.</p>	Face to face meetings; conferencies

	<p>DO: Provide feedback to key discussions and documents during the project and after project-end embed results into their relevant actions plans and implementation process.</p>	
National governments	<p>THINK: Flood risk mitigation through restoration of floodplains is a win-win solution to implement WFD and FD in an integrative way.</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: There is a need to change – in order to be forerunners for a sustainable future while implementing our objectives in a cost-effective way.</p> <hr/> <p>DO: Consider to look into new methods and be open to suggestions instead of business as usual, provide feedback to key discussions and documents during the project and after project-end embed results into their relevant actions plans and implementation process.</p>	Media; Websites; Meetings
Nature conservation and environmental protection institutes, agencies	<p>THINK: Integrative water management through restoration of floodplains can help us all to adapt to climate change, and to stop biodiversity degradation and where possible to improve it.</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: This project is a good pilot to show how new methods can be beneficial for biodiversity improvement via win-win solutions.</p> <hr/> <p>DO: Support the project and cooperate, provide feedback to key discussions and documents during the project, act as advocates for the change.</p>	Direct meetings
NGOs and Civil Society Organisations	<p>THINK: Integrative water management through restoration of floodplains can help us all to adapt to climate change, and to stop biodiversity degradation and where possible to improve it.</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: This project is a good pilot to show how new methods can be beneficial for biodiversity improvement via win-win solutions.</p> <hr/> <p>DO: Support the project and cooperate, provide feedback to key discussions and documents during the project, act as advocates for the change.</p>	Direct meetings
Forestry	<p>THINK: Integrative water management through restoration of floodplains can be beneficial for riparian forests, it is worth looking into the method</p>	Media; International meetings

	<p>FEEL: The new approach in water management can support forest health</p> <hr/> <p>DO: Listen to the project benefits, give inputs when necessary, be open and stand by the new ways of water management</p>	
Navigation sector	<p>THINK: Integrative water management through restoration of floodplains is a new method and we need to further investigate it</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: There is a public pressure to consider new ways of water management to satisfy the needs of water users and nature in a more sustainable and integrative way</p> <hr/> <p>DO: Be open to discover new approach in water management, give inputs during the project when necessary</p>	Media; International meetings
Hydropower Plant Operators	<p>THINK: Integrative water management through restoration of floodplains is a new method and we need to further investigate it</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: There is a public pressure to consider new ways of water management to satisfy the needs of water users and nature in a more sustainable and integrative way</p> <hr/> <p>DO: Be open to discover new approach in water management, give inputs during the project when necessary</p>	Media; International meetings
Dredging companies	<p>THINK: Integrative water management through restoration of floodplains is a new method and we need to further investigate it</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: There is a public pressure to consider new ways of water management to satisfy the needs of water users and nature in a more sustainable and integrative way</p> <hr/> <p>DO: Be open to discover new approach in water management, give inputs during the project when necessary</p>	Media; International meetings
Fisheries and anglers	<p>THINK: Integrative water management through restoration of floodplains can be beneficial for water quality and quantity, will restore spawning, feeding and nursery areas for several fish populations</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: Fish population are important for fishing and angling, thus all measures that can help to improve conditions for fish is welcome</p>	Direct meetings; International meetings

	<p>DO: Be an advocate for the new methods, integrative win-win solutions.</p>	
Tourism	<p>THINK: Rivers and floodplains are important for tourism and improving their status and conserving the values of nature is beneficial for the sector</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: A healthy river and floodplain with smaller flood risk is a reputational asset for the tourism sector</p> <hr/> <p>DO: Be an advocate for the new methods, integrative win-win solutions</p>	Direct meetings
Research institutions	<p>THINK: Integrative water management through restoration of floodplains can be beneficial for climate change adaptation, stopping biodiversity loss, and improving water quality and quantity.</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: New methods can answer several questions to solve new challenges of the modern society and connected resource management and science has a role in this task.</p> <hr/> <p>DO: Support the project and new methods with scientific data and information.</p>	Direct meetings; Conferencies
Waterworks	<p>THINK: Integrative water management through restoration of floodplains will have positive impact on water quality and quantity, thus can be beneficial for the sector.</p> <hr/> <p>FEEL: Looking into new methods is our duty as there is a growing expectation from citizens</p> <hr/> <p>DO: Be open and listen to new ideas and methods, give inputs to the project when necessary</p>	Media; Direct meetings

2. General Public

Target audience	Desired response	Channels
GENERAL PUBLIC	THINK: Danube and its floodplains are a diverse, complex set of values, human well-being and society depends on its ecosystem services. There are new methods in flood risk management that help to preserve the values and protects us from floods too.	digital communication tools
	FEEL: There is a need of change in the management of Danube flood risks.	
	DO: I support initiatives that support new methods in flood risk management, so our environment will be more livable. I reconnect to the values of Danube and its floodplains. My future too depends on whether we change regular methods in flood risk management.	media

This was a classic table of target audiences and messages. Stakeholder engagement requires a more levelled analysis and more tools, so that in addition to classic dissemination and one-way communication around an issue, there is a need to look into stakeholder engagement processes and opportunities in details.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

1. Why engage stakeholders

Outlining the objective for engaging stakeholders

As we all share the Danube region, the consequences of many of our actions directly or indirectly impact others, too. Therefore, there is a need for an acknowledgement that those who are impacted by the project's activities have the right to be heard.

The main objective for engaging stakeholders in Danube Floodplain project **is to achieve a shared understanding of the project results and implementation at both national and basin level, as well as an improved implementation process, improved feedback and data collection.**

Based on the input from all project partners, the following detailed objectives of engaging stakeholders in Danube Floodplain project were identified:

- To raise interest for the project at national and regional levels;

- To involve different groups of stakeholders into the process of floodplain restoration and preservation to properly select and evaluate potential floodplain areas in the pre-selected pilot sites;
- To promote the "win-win" measures (measures to achieve the objectives of both EU Floods Directive and EU Water Framework Directive) at national level;
- To promote the floodplain restoration measures as a mean for flood risk reduction to the broader stakeholder groups at national level and to increase awareness on the issue;
- To ensure wider involvement in the development of the final project documents;
- To improve the stakeholder cooperation in future floodplain management at national and river basin level;
- To support the final project results/outcomes;
- To provide ongoing information about the project;
- To raise interest about the topic of flood risk;
- To raise interest about the topic of floodplain restoration and show the benefits of floodplains for both humans and habitats;
- To raise interest (and promote possible application) about new methods developed for the analyses implemented under the project (scientific aspect);
- To collect input from stakeholders on not known past and ongoing projects, methods, data availability, experts consulting;
- To collect and develop possible ideas for follow-up projects.

THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Stakeholder Engagement Strategy aims at producing a practical stakeholder engagement guide for all partners in Danube Floodplain project. It will provide practical guidance, advice and information points for the partners interested in how to make stakeholder engagement more effective and beneficial for the project. It will help project partners in the interaction and communication with stakeholders, specifically the one that wish to adopt a more strategic approach to their engagement activities.

The overarching objective of the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy is to present a synchronized stakeholder engagement process at project level. To achieve that, the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy includes collected information from each partner on the national stakeholder engagement processes. Project Partners can seek further guidance and support from GWP CEE and WP2 leaders, if needed, throughout the whole project.

1. PREPARATION PHASE

The aim of this stage is to identify the reasons for stakeholder engagement and the key stakeholder groups and issues that are relevant for the project. This will ensure that stakeholder engagement informs and becomes an integral part of the project.

Step 1: Mapping stakeholders

The purpose of this activity is to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are identified. There are number of different dimensions, which should be considered when identifying stakeholders, like responsibility, influence, proximity, dependency, representation, etc. As a first step, a list of stakeholders was prepared by the partners from each country and discussed at the stakeholder engagement training to ensure all relevant key stakeholders are included.

A Danube basin stakeholder database was created/is being created with the input of all countries. The database may evolve as the stakeholder process goes on and project partners learn more about their stakeholders and their interests.

Document created: **National stakeholder mapping (Annex 1)**

Step 2: Prioritizing stakeholders

A stakeholder matrix template was created to help project partners prioritize the stakeholder that were identified. It is a tool that illustrates the range of stakeholders and the level of priority and effort that should be invested in engaging them. The Stakeholder Matrix provides also guidance on the approaches for each group of stakeholders.

Prioritizing stakeholders	
<p>Low power, highly interested SHs (Keep Informed): adequately inform these people and talk to them to ensure that no major issues are arising. People in this category can often be very helpful with the detail of your project.</p>	<p>High power, highly interested SHs (Manage Closely): you must fully engage these people and make the greatest efforts to satisfy them.</p>
<p>Low power, less interested SHs (Monitor): again, monitor these people, but don't bore them with excessive communication.</p>	<p>High power, less interested SHs (Keep Satisfied): put enough work in with these people to keep them satisfied, but not so much that they become bored with your message. The intention should be to convince the SH to get interest and move them to the above box (High power, highly interested) during the project implementation.</p>

Both the matrix (filled in with stakeholders) and stakeholder database (at both national and basin-wide level) are living documents. During the project implementation project partners are advised to revise the position of stakeholders in the matrix and update their database of stakeholders at national level.

Document created: **National stakeholder matrix document** (*matrix was created to be used for partners only; in Annex you can find partners plans for engaging different groups of stakeholder*)

Step 3: Planning the engagement

The approaches, actions and tools that are outlined in this step should help project partners develop a plan for action for engagement based on clear understanding of the stakeholders, the objectives and the methods that would be employed to reach effective engagement. The project partners were provided with a template to create their own National Stakeholder Action Plan, which in a structured way guides them through the main steps of stakeholder engagement process and helps them identify specific information they need to collect, messages to be communicated, expected results and outputs.

Drafting specific objectives for stakeholder engagement

To be effective, the stakeholder engagement should be relevant and aligned with the project objectives. Setting strategic engagement objectives is an essential step towards developing a comprehensive approach

Document created: **National Stakeholder Engagement Action Plan (Annex 2)**

to SH engagement and to evaluating success. The specific objectives vary for the different Work Packages and pilot sites, therefore in their National Stakeholder Engagement Action Plan the project partners have identified the specific objectives relevant for their role in the project.

Topics

Based on the collected input from project partners, the following topics to be communicated with the stakeholders (first at the National Kick-off events) were identified:

Topic to be discussed with stakeholders	Where the stakeholders' feedback will be used
WP3 - Floodplain evaluation (SWE)	
Mapping of floodplains along the Danube River	Act. 3.1.
Data for prioritization of floodplains	Act. 3.2
Evaluation of floodplains	Act. 3.3
WP4 - Flood prevention pilots (TUM)	
Restoration scenarios: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What could be effective measures for floodplain restoration? • How would they affect flood risk? Do you have experience on the effect of restoration measures on flooding? • How would they improve the ecological state? 	Act. 4.1

Hydraulic modelling: Do you have experience in hydraulic modelling activities of floodplain restoration or in investigating large-scale model chains?	Act. 4.1
Ecosystem Services (ESS): What are benefits of floodplain restoration?	Act. 4.2
Extension of CBA with ESS: Where do you see a link between ecosystem services, floodplain restoration and cost benefit analysis?	Act. 4.2 and 4.3
Costs of flood protection measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are restraints of floodplain restoration? • How much could the implementation of floodplain restoration cost in your country? • What are costs of technical flood protection measures in your country? 	Act. 4.3
Possible solutions: Define a win-win-situation regarding floods and floodplain restoration	WP4 and WP5
WP5 - Danube Floodplain Guide (RO Waters)	
Waiting for input from RO Waters-	-
General	
How the stakeholders could contribute to the project	All WPs
In which way the stakeholders want to be involved and stay informed	All WPs
Overview of the Danube Floodplain project – focus on presentation of the main planned outputs rather than the whole structure of the project (activities, deliverables, etc.)	All WPs All WPs
Capitalization – try to identify similar past or on-going projects in your country, present them and discuss possible interactions with them	
Stakeholders' needs and challenges regarding the data and services	All WPs

Developing internal skills/building capacity for stakeholder engagement

One of the first steps towards creating a stakeholder engagement strategy is assessing the current situation. It means to assess the internal organizational ability to address the issue, collecting information about what others are doing in regard to the issue and build internal capacity.

Partners were guided through the preparation phase process, and already at the beginning of the project, they successfully managed to:

- Identify and create a national stakeholder list
- Brainstorm, consult with other national partners and prioritize the stakeholders
- Identify key topics/issues to be discussed in the process of stakeholder engagement at national level
- Identify events at national level they plan to organize
- Identify what kinds of communication materials they will need for the engagement process

TIP

It is essential to internally strengthen the organizational skills to respond to issues that may rise during the project implementation, therefore the partners are advised to secure that the people involved in the project to have enough knowledge on the issues.

Identifying the best engagement methods

It is important to emphasize that there are different levels of engagement, and the approach towards stakeholders should be tailored accordingly.

Low level engagement such as informing and monitoring are adequate for addressing minor issues and usually do not lead to big changes, however they do contribute to the relationship with the stakeholders. In the long run, the effective engagement of stakeholders is always a combination of approaches at different levels.

High level engagement such as active interaction and consultation means working more closely with stakeholders and thus bringing more significant changes.

Therefore, the level and the approaches of engagement depend on the strategic engagement objectives that each project partner has identified. Below is a summary table of the most common stakeholder engagement methods, which can help partners make the right choices when planning the stakeholder engagement process at national level.

Stakeholder engagement methods

Stakeholder engagement method	Comments
Invitation Letters and Information emails	They are useful in early stages to provide information regarding the process and instructions on how to respond or participate.
Questionnaires and Surveys	They are used to identify stakeholder issues and assess communities. Surveys are able to reach a large number of people, they are convenient, economic and thus a good starting point. They help obtain an objective overview of a group of stakeholders to a particular issue or potential impact. The information gathered from a survey is easy to

	analyze, they are widely known and acceptable. Important: Surveys need to be well structured to ensure that the questions are not leading and will provide relevant data.
Exhibitions	They are efficient way of presenting basic information and options to the public, especially local communities. This technique can ensure reaching a large number of stakeholders, if well advertised and it allows face to face feedback of information.
Forums and Focus Groups	They provide basic information to the general public and allow large numbers of people to be involved. A useful technique to identify stakeholders' views on a specific issue and present an opportunity to form relationships with the stakeholders.
Public and "Town Hall" Meetings	They present information and seek feedback from the stakeholders. This technique allows to reach large audiences in particular communities quickly and demonstrates willingness to be open.
Structured Interviews	They are essential if needed to identify issues specific to each stakeholder. The advantage is that they provide opportunities for stakeholders to speak confidentially and build relationships with individual stakeholders.
Workshops	Workshops are structured group discussions designed to solve issues and identify ways forward. This is a very helpful method to form relationships with and between high level stakeholders and experts. They allow issues to be verified, tested and solutions developed.
Round Table Discussions	These are facilitated debates between groups with different views with the aim of reaching consensus.
Community Advisory groups	This method allows to bring together a representative group of all types of stakeholders, who can meet regularly to provide advice.
All kinds of media	Media engages large numbers of the population and helps reach those who may be more difficult to involve. Media can be used throughout process.

2. CONSULTATION PHASE

STEP 4: Putting the plan in action

When the consultation takes place, it should be after an extensive period of preparation, as outlined in the previous stages, and should exhibit the following characteristics.

Designing the consultation process

The consultation should be:

- Representative: it is important that those involved in consultation process are as representative as practicable of the full range of stakeholders affected by Danube Floodplain project.
- Responsive: by providing information, analysis and proposals that respond directly to stakeholder expectations and interests already identified through the preparation phase.
- Context focused: by making available information and analysis that is contextualised so that stakeholders are able to gain detailed and complete picture of the project objectives and impacts.
- Realistic: each side should demonstrate that they can be moderate and realistic, and project partners should ensure that the expectations are realistically set from the beginning.

Communication

After identifying the stakeholders, issues, objectives, methods, the next step is to develop a communication strategy to target the stakeholders using networks, relevant media, and mailing lists of personal meetings. You have to ensure that the information gets to the stakeholders in time so that they can respond and react accordingly.

Facilitation

Engaging a facilitator can ensure the decision making and problem solving runs smoothly. It is often very efficient to have a facilitator who does not have a stake in the outcome of the consultation, as this helps build more trust.

Plan for action

Create a clear plan for action and share with other relevant project partners. The plan should include: preparation, invitation, logistics, venue, timing, equipment, participant reimbursement, agenda, clear roles on the day, facilitation, feedback to the participants, communication to the public.

Messages

Based on the collected input from all project partners, the following messages were identified:

- „A stream of cooperation” would be the general message for the entire project, highlighting the importance of cooperation among the stakeholders.
- Working together to improve water management and flood risk prevention while maximizing benefits for aquatic ecosystems. Efficient flood risk management at the Danube can be done only at international level and only with including floodplains.
- The project has a great value in awareness raising about the benefits of floodplain restoration for people, biodiversity, water quality and ecosystems

3. EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK PHASE

No matter how successful the event was or the engagement process overall, it is easy to lose the momentum if a well-planned follow-up after the event is not ensured. Equally important is to have a good evaluation of the process so that it can be identified what went well, which aspects needed more focus, what should be done differently next time.

Step 5: Reporting back and giving assurance to the participants

In order to demonstrate that the stakeholders' input is valued and has weight in the participatory process, it is of a great importance to report back to the stakeholders on the results. There are numerous ways to report back: follow-up telephone briefings, one-to-one meetings, letters of thanks summarizing the main results and next steps, preparing and disseminating a short report. A report can be a powerful tool for assuring the stakeholders of the quality of the response to their concerns and expectations.

General tips for communication

- 1) **Invitation** to an event
 - invitations 4-6 weeks before the event
 - reminders 1-2 weeks and again 2 days before the event
- 2) **Article**
 - articles about the project/the need for its outcomes to be published by specific (relevant) media/on your respective websites
- 3) **Press release before and after the event**
 - pre-event press release – general information about the project, expectations
 - post-event press release - general information on the event, main conclusions and results (consider connecting with big international water related events like World Water Day on 22 March)
- 4) **Photo and video coverage**
 - try to collect as much photo and video material as possible to document the event and write about it; Communications team will also prepare a collage of videos/photos from all national events to support promotion of the project
- 5) **Social media**
 - post information before/during/after the seminar on your social media accounts and inform the Communications team about the dates of your events and your plans
- 6) **Follow up communication**
 - contact your participants after the event again with an outline on how results will be used, what is expected from the participants after the event and where event materials, e.g. presentations/photos, will be accessible
- 7) **Strict following of branding/visibility requirements of the INTERREG DTP**

Annexes

Annex 1: National Stakeholder Analysis

- 1.1. Stakeholder mapping file
- 1.2. National Stakeholder engagement Action plan

Annex 2: Stakeholder engagement toolkit

- 2.1: Template for stakeholder mapping (excel)
- 2.2. Template for National stakeholder engagement action plan
- 2.3. Guidance document for the National Kick-off events
- 2.4. Report template for National Kick-off events

Annex 3: Press release writing manual

Annex 4: Media contact list building manual