



Regions to Boost
National Maritime
Spatial Planning



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REGINA-MSP

Boosting the role of Regions in Maritime Spatial Planning - A roadmap for the emergence of a cross-regional Community of Practice

Lessons learned from the REGINA-MSP project



The REGINA-MSP project and context of the leaflet

The REGINA-MSP project is a two-year project (2023-2024) that aims to greater integrate the regional and sub-regional needs, perspectives and stakeholders in the development and implementation of national Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP). A specific task of REGINA-MSP (task T4.3) was dedicated to the topic of Communities of Practice (CoP) as a way to enhance knowledge sharing among regional authorities and experts to improve the integration of regional and local views and stakeholders in MSP. This leaflet (or communication brief) is a deliverable of the REGINA-MSP project for this specific task T4.3 on CoP. Other associated productions include a second leaflet focusing on poorly heard stakeholders in MSP, as well as a video, available on the project website (<https://www.regina-msp.eu>).

Boosting the role of regions in maritime spatial planning through a Community of Practice

What is a CoP and why are CoPs relevant in MSP?

“A Community of Practice (CoP) is a meeting place where professionals share analyses, inform and advise each other and develop new practices [...]. A CoP goes further than communities of interest and informal networks because it has a collective task.” (Andringa and Reyn, 2014)

The definition of a CoP used in this document is framed into the general definition provided by Andringa and Reyn (2014). This document proposes a detailed composition and functioning of a cross-regional CoP on MSP that can take better account of regional and local concerns.

The emergence of CoPs in MSP is essential to channel the collective effort towards common goals. Not all land-based spatial planning approaches, styles and tools can be automatically “transplanted” into MSP or marine contexts. In particular, the transboundary nature of the sea calls for the application of the ecosystem-based approach. Fewer geospatial data are available for the marine space compared to land areas. In addition, new uses are emerging at sea, increasing pressures on social-ecological systems and creating potential conflicts among users.

In such a diverse and dynamic system, the sharing of knowledge and solutions among planners, decision-makers, marine users and other stakeholders is highly relevant to achieve an integrated and climate-smart MSP. In particular, **the role of Regions in MSP** is recognized as key for improving MSP (e.g., through locally adapted strategies and the participation of regional and local stakeholders in MSP). In this perspective, CoPs in MSP can be a powerful tool for bringing together experts and professionals who are familiar with the transboundary nature of the sea, the complexities of marine governance and are willing to share their knowledge and experience on maritime affairs and MSP.

“Engaging Regions in a MSP CoP is highly relevant to strengthen their role in national MSP”

The added value for Regions in getting involved in a cross-regional MSP CoP include:

- Facilitate interaction with other Regions across Europe and beyond, to share knowledge, good practices and experiences regarding their involvement in MSP, both at the national level and across Europe;
- Improve capacity and expertise on MSP and other marine policies (not only EU ones, but also international ones);
- Contribute to improving participatory democracy and inclusiveness in MSP at the regional scale;
- Develop and upgrade skills and capacity for a more meaningful role of Regions in the national MSP process and in maritime policy-making;
- Increase the Regions’ voice in nationally driven MSP consultations and debates, or other major maritime affairs.

REGINA-MSP supporting the emergence of a cross-regional Community of Practice

Three international workshops (in Greece, Spain and France) were organised in order to showcase how CoPs may facilitate the involvement of Regions in the MSP debates and processes, and discuss the way of improving the engagement of regional and local stakeholders in MSP. The target audience included coastal regional and local authorities and, when possible, local less heard and poorly represented stakeholders in MSP.



1

18-20 October 2023 - Workshop in Thessaloniki, Central Macedonia (Greece)

The need for cross-regional CoPs in MSP



2

6-8 February 2024 - Workshop in Vigo, Galicia (Spain)

Simulation of a cross-regional MSP CoP



3

19-21 March 2024 - Workshop in Nantes, Pays de la Loire (France)

Drafting a roadmap for a cross-regional CoP

Objectives of the REGINA-MSP international workshops for the emergence of a Community of Practice

General objectives of the workshops:

- Initiate and improve collaboration among regions for mutual learning.
- Share experiences on the role and competencies of Regions in MSP across different countries.
- Improve participatory democracy in MSP, especially by identifying poorly represented stakeholders in MSP debates and consultations, thus ensuring transparency and equal level of representation and contribution.



Specific objectives for the emergence of a Community of Practice:

- Acknowledge the role of CoPs in boosting the participation of regions in national MSP
- Learn how to set up a CoP focused on regional MSP challenges and matters
- Draft a Roadmap for the emergence of a cross-regional MSP CoP engaging regional authorities across EU countries, to facilitate experience and knowledge sharing and the discussion around common challenges.
- Facilitate synergies with other existing CoPs related to MSP[1].



[1] As for example the MED-MSP CoP (for the Mediterranean), or the eMSP CoP (for the Baltic Sea and the North Sea).

A Roadmap for the emergence of a cross-regional MSP CoP involving regions at the EU level and beyond

Key elements arising from the REGINA-MSP international workshops

Setting the ground for a cross-regional MSP CoP requires the implementation of a stepwise approach:

Preliminary Step

Ensuring the availability of **means and resources** needed for the CoP's kick-off, medium and long-term operation (notably through dedicated funding mechanisms)

Step 1

Drafting the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the CoP: setting its scope, principles, SMART[1] objectives, criteria for selecting CoP's members (including transparency, openness, flexibility), and a common understanding of the topics to be addressed. The ToR shall also define whether the CoP is based on a formal or informal structure and whether participants have a representative role or not

Step 2

Designing the CoP's governance and organisation, including the roles (e.g. core team, extended group of experts, secretariat, etc.), and operational mechanisms which can later be illustrated graphically in an organisational chart. A critical role to be assigned is the one of facilitators (e.g. a secretariat), to organise and steer the CoP's operational work

Step 3

Drafting the Action Plan or Roadmap, describing the CoP's activities, timetable and milestones, and the CoP's meetings and events

Step 4

Building a communication platform for regular online meetings, sharing of documents and other useful materials (e.g. papers, news and general information, etc) and for communicating results (through policy briefs for example)

Step 5

Kick-off (plenary) meeting to validate the ToR and the Action Plan, decide on the specific topics to be addressed by the CoP, and explore the possibility of synergies with other MSP CoPs (at the EU and the sea-basin levels)

Who should be involved in a cross-regional MSP CoP?



The need to involve national decision-makers and/or politicians at some stages of the CoP is highly important. Finding ways to involve “weak” and poorly heard stakeholders is another challenge, which can only be addressed at the localised scale of operation of the CoP.

What type of MSP CoP suits coastal regions?

According to the results of the three international REGINA-MSP workshops, coastal Regions are interested in participating in cross-regional MSP CoPs, that operate both at international and national levels.

- The more international and multi-level the membership of the MSP CoP, the more beneficial for Regions, in terms of knowledge and experience sharing (including innovative solutions from other countries) and of reaching and interacting with MSP decision-making centres.
- The more localised the membership of the MSP CoP, the easier the communication and the stronger the engagement of the members, including local stakeholders. Moreover, the stronger the voice towards central-government decision-making centres, regarding local marine issues.

MSP CoP topics that interest coastal regions

Following the work performed during the three international workshops of REGINA-MSP, the topics identified as important by the Regions are:

- How national MSP can be better adapted to the regional and local levels, especially with regard to addressing environmental protection, integrated coastal management and nature-based solutions;
- How sectoral planning can be integrated into (place-based) MSP;
- How poorly heard stakeholders can be involved in a more meaningful way in MSP;
- The marine sectors interest highlighted by Regions included aquaculture, fisheries, offshore renewable energy and coastal and marine tourism.

Working modalities for the cross-regional MSP CoP

Involving regions at the EU level and beyond

The following working modalities were selected during the international workshops of REGINA-MSP for their suitability for the CoPs objectives:

- Working groups, preferably of mixed composition (in terms of nationality, sectors, etc), to take into account different points of view;
- Online sharing platforms, for regular online meetings, circulating documents or Q&A;
- In-presence workshops (e.g. once per year) to share experiences through in-depth discussions and strengthen networking;
- Plenary meetings would be held less frequently (e.g. twice a year) and would aim to evaluate the achievements of set objectives, discuss challenges, identify new topics to be discussed and support adaptive management;
- Training courses and field visits covering MSP topics and arising from the operation of the CoP. This would also help to address the issue of critical knowledge and capacity building for MSP.



Photos of working sessions during the workshops on Communities of Practice as part of REGINA-MSP

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Disclaimer

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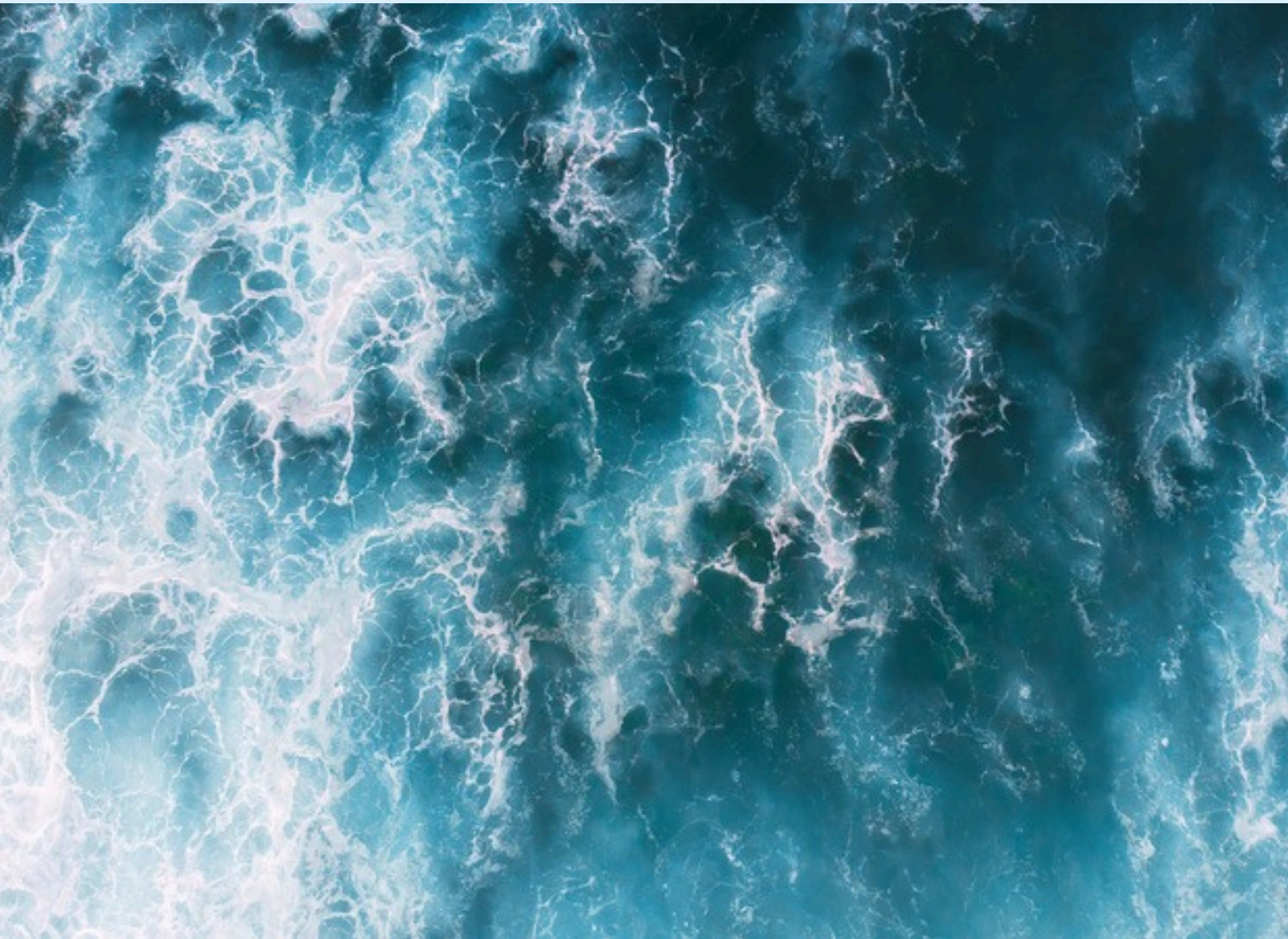
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Achieving inclusiveness of regional stakeholders in Maritime Spatial Planning

Lessons learned from the REGINA-MSP project



The REGINA-MSP project and context of the leaflet

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The need for a more inclusive Maritime Spatial Planning at the regional level

The need for **participatory democracy** in MSP stems from the fact that all political decisions affect the way in which spaces are planned and used. According to the European Charter on participatory democracy in Spatial Planning Processes (2015), involving the public helps to make decisions that balance different needs and concerns and reduce conflicts. Indeed, according to the Council of Europe, it is important to **greater involve citizens and civil society actors** in local, regional, or national decision-making processes on issues that affect their daily life.

MSP is mainly a nationally driven process in most EU countries. The complexity of marine governance and the **necessity for a more inclusive MSP at all scales** (from local to national and beyond), to achieve sustainable management of the maritime space, have been highlighted in recent literature (Jentoft, 2017; Morf et al., 2019). In this respect, Regions (NUTS 2) - and especially regional authorities - need to strengthen their role in national MSP debates and consultations to make their views more visible and empower them to plan and implement maritime actions.

In relation to these aspects, the REGINA-MSP project:

- **Carried out a questionnaire survey** (Deliverable 2.1., available at <https://www.regina-msp.eu/>) to understand the differences between EU country in terms of marine governance and the how regions are involved in the MSP process. The survey gathered 36 replies from 12 EU countries.
- **Organised three international workshops** (in Thessaloniki, Vigo, and Nantes) to explore the level of regional stakeholder involvement in MSP and provide solutions for Regions to boost their role in national MSP (also through emphasising the importance of being part of a Community of Practice). These workshops are further described below.

The three international workshops at a glance

REGINA-MSP organised three international workshops with a twofold purpose:

- objective (1): explore ways of boosting the role of regions in national MSP (also emphasising the emergence of a Community of Practice), and
- objective (2): identify and involve regional stakeholders - and especially the poorly represented ones - in MSP debates and consultations. The present document focuses on this second aspect.



1

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2



3

20-21 March 2024 - Workshop in Nantes, Pays de la Loire (France)

Drafting a roadmap for a cross-regional Community of Practice

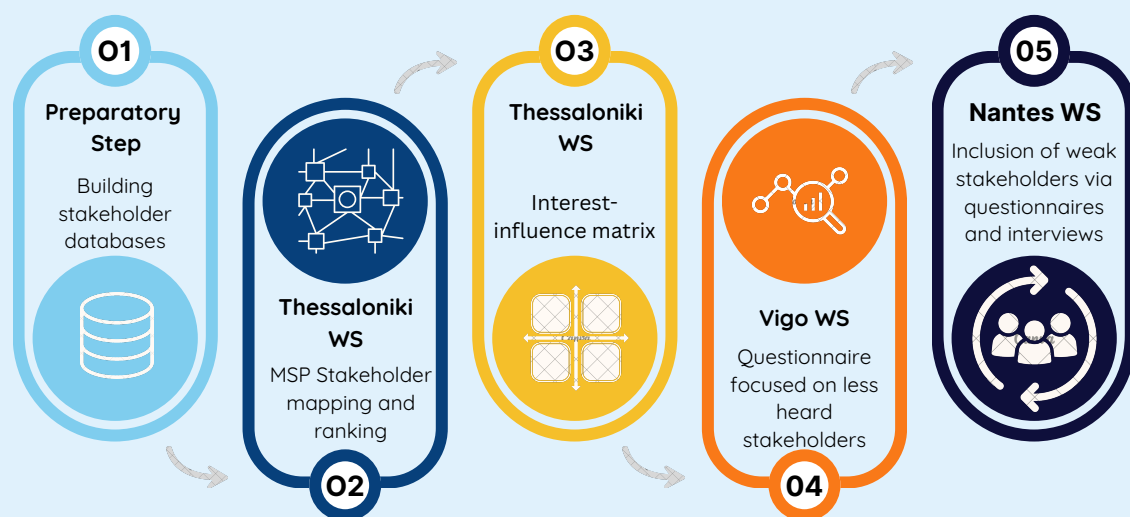


The three workshops brought together **116 participants in total**, including REGINA-MSP partners (43%), representatives of the regional authorities from the 8 Regions participating in the REGINA-MSP project (i.e., Central Macedonia, County of Mayo, Crete, Galicia, Murcia, Provence-Alpes-Côte-d’Azur, Sardinia and Pays de la Loire, the hosting Region) (27%), representatives from the coastal municipalities of each hosting Region (15%), representatives of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (5.5%), and other representatives (e.g., the Central government operating at the local level) (9.5%).

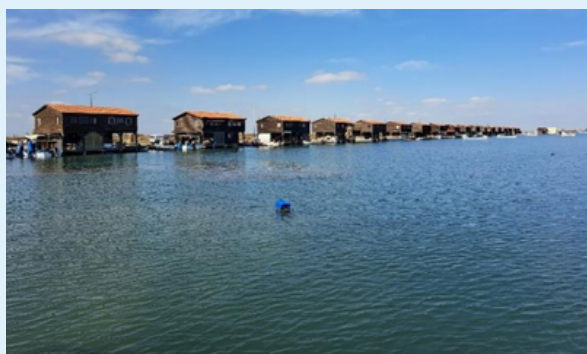
The methodology behind the REGINA-MSP international workshops to identify poorly heard stakeholders and ways to boost their role in MSP

With respect to the objective (2) described in the previous section, the following tasks were performed during the international workshops:

- **1st international workshop (Thessaloniki, Greece):** the workshop introduced methods, tools, and processes for the identification of regional stakeholders to the REGINA-MSP participating regions. The tools and techniques used during the workshop included building stakeholder databases, stakeholder mapping and ranking, the interest-influence matrix, participatory mapping etc.
- **2nd international workshop (Vigo, Spain):** a questionnaire was distributed, to identify the “weak” and least heard regional stakeholders, understand the reasons for their weakness, and identify bottlenecks and barriers limiting their engagement in MSP.
- **3rd international workshop (Nantes, France):** the emphasis was placed on poorly heard stakeholders and the interaction with them (via interviews, questionnaires, etc.), focusing on small-scale fishers from various EU regions.



Steps and tools used for stakeholder identification in REGINA-MSP



Photos of field visits proposed to the participants of the REGINA-MSP workshops. On the left, the view of fishermen huts in Thermaikos Gulf (Thessaloniki, Greece). On the right, discussion with a professional small-scale fisher in the offshore wind farm area of Saint-Nazaire, France.



Photos of working sessions during the REGINA-MSP workshops.

Building an MSP stakeholder database from a regional perspective

Following combined work delivered throughout the project (see for example Deliverables 3.3. and 4.3. at <https://www.regina-msp.eu/>), the key categories of stakeholders identified as central for inclusive MSP debates and consultations at the regional level and to build a stakeholder database include:

- 1 Public Sector: Regional and local authorities, central government institutions/offices operating at the regional level
- 2 Research and educational institutions operating in the regions (e.g. Universities, research centres, technology and innovation centres)
- 3 Port Authorities
- 4 Private sectors, representing all relevant maritime uses (e.g. Associations, Federations, professionals, companies)
- 5 Non-governmental organisations and societies, environmental associations and foundations,
- 6 Informal groups of citizens
- 7 The general public

Identifying the “weak players”, or poorly heard stakeholders

Throughout the three international REGINA-MSP workshops, emphasis was placed on introducing methods, tools, and processes for the identification of the poorly represented and least heard MSP stakeholders at the regional level. For this purpose, the following tasks were performed:

- **Stakeholder mapping:** this task used the previously built “**stakeholder database**” (that identified all relevant regional MSP stakeholders) to rank them, based on their degree of representation and level of involvement in MSP. In other words, taking into consideration whether they were “hard to reach” or “typically engaged” and what was the degree of their representativeness in the MSP process.
- **Interest-influence matrix**** : to identify different levels of stakeholder interest and influence in MSP, enabling the identification of priority groups or individuals in MSP.



Photos of working sessions during REGINA-MSP workshop. On the left, at the Thessaloniki workshop. On the right, a diver presents a participatory science project to map seabed biodiversity in the offshore wind farm of Saint-Nazaire, France.

***Stakeholder Database:** it consists of a document that contains all stakeholder information across different pre-established categories. In this case, it is a comprehensive, organized collection of information about authorities, groups, and organizations involved in or affected by MSP. The database can facilitate effective communication, engagement, and management by tracking stakeholders’ interests, influence, and contact details, and also support inclusive and informed decision-making.

****Interest-influence matrix:** it can be used to categorize a list of stakeholders depending on their power and interest in the project. Some may have the power to either block or advance the project. Some may be very interested, others may not be. Four categories emerge:

- High power – High interest: these stakeholders are likely to be decision-makers and have the biggest impact.
- High power – Low Interest: stakeholders who may not be interested in the outcome, but have power. They should be dealt with caution because they could use their power in a negative way.
- Low power – High interest: stakeholders that need to be adequately informed, can often be very helpful. **The “weak” stakeholders are part of this category.**
- Low power – low interest: stakeholders have little to zero interest in participating in the project (C40 CITIES, 2019)

Challenges limiting inclusiveness of regional stakeholders in national MSP

The work carried out at the three international REGINA-MSP workshops allowed to identify the following challenges, which could limit inclusiveness and efficiency, and prevent regional perspectives, priorities, and needs from being adequately addressed in national MSP:

- **Regions** - and more specifically regional authorities - are poorly or partially involved in national MSP, with a few exceptions where well-established MSP consultations occur (e.g., in Ireland, Spain, and Italy). As a result, regional and local governments express their interest in strengthening their participation in national MSP (also by participating in Communities of Practice).
- **Fishermen**, despite being traditional marine users, are considered the least heard stakeholders in the MSP processes, both in terms of their low level of involvement and degree of representation. In addition, they are under pressure and suffer significant losses due to the constant increase in the number of marine uses competing for the same maritime space.
- **The general public** was also identified as a sometimes-missing part in the MSP process, although it was widely acknowledged that local communities and citizens could provide valuable resources for a better understanding of the local marine areas (citizen science), but also for bringing local expectations and needs into the maritime spatial plans.

Improving the involvement of the least heard and poorly represented stakeholders

There is a need to ensure that MSP stakeholders get involved in a meaningful way in all stages of the MSP process. According to the findings of the international REGINA-MSP workshops, the weaknesses and bottlenecks for the least heard and poorly represented stakeholders relate to:

- **Communication and access to information:** the engagement of poorly represented stakeholders is challenging also due to limited access to information and language barriers. This exacerbates the inherent difficulty of participation, as navigating bureaucratic processes and understanding technical details can be overwhelming.
- **Capacity:** There is a notable lack of MSP expertise and ocean literacy among many stakeholders and especially “weak” ones.
- **Resources:** Many stakeholders sometimes lack the financial and human resources to engage in participatory procedures, compounded by insufficient access to the necessary technology and tools.

These three levers, i.e. access to relevant information, capacity-building and resources, should therefore be exploited to enable better integration of the poorly heard stakeholders in MSP.

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In addition to the 2 leaflets on Communities of practice and Stakeholder engagement in MSP, the deliverable D4.3 is composed of a video as a communication production of REGINA-MSP on the topic of communities of practices, available at:

<https://vimeo.com/yannickderennes/download/935900796/acfb380058>