(Grant Agreement 101094014)

Deliverable D4.1 – *Information sites engagement plan*

WP4 – Learning and testing in Living Labs: Optimizing blueprint generator to deliver conservation results and socio-economic benefits

Version 1.0 | June 2023

HORIZON-MISS-2021-OCEAN-02-01- Blueprint demonstration for co-created effective, efficient and resilient networks of MPAs

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Grant Agreement number	101094014
Project Acronym	BLUE4ALL
Project title	Blueprint demonstration for co-created effective, efficient and resilient networks of MPAs
Deliverable Title	Information sites engagement plan - A strategic document to guide and inform intelligence gathering from information sites and living labs, setting the scene and establishing rules of engagement with information providers
Abstract	This deliverable provides the information on stakeholder engagement methods and engagement plan required to support the co-creation of tools and solutions in WP2, WP3 and testing in living lab in WP4, as well as a definition of roles and level of involvement on engagement processes in information sites and living labs.
WP number	4
Deliverable number	4.1
Deliverable version	1
Document status	Final
Lead Beneficiary Partner	WWF Adria
responsible	SDU – University of Southern Denmark WWF
Contributing partners	Adria, Syke, UTARTU
Deliverable Due Date	30/06/2023
Actual Delivery Date	30/06/2023
Nature of the Deliverable	R – Report
Dissemination Level	PU - Public
Approved by	Ivana Stojanovic (SUB), Maëlla Sicard (OFB)
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KeyWords	Stakeholder engagement, stakeholder involvement, facilitation tools

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Please cite this deliverable as:

Petersen, H.C., Quintana, C.O., Dvorski, K., Varjopuro, R., Gonzalez F.R.B., Schoubroeck, S.V. Approved Stojanovic, I., Sicard, M. (2023) Information sites engagement plan. Deliverable – D4.1 under the WP4 of the Blue4All project (GA n° 101094014).

Document History

Date	Ver.	Contributers	Comment
06.06.23	0.1	Cintia O. Quintana, H. Cecilie Petersen (SDU)	Development of initial framework and draft.
12.06.23	0.2	Kora Dvorski (WWF Adria), Riku Varjopuro (SYKE), Franscisco R. B. Gonzalez (UTARTU), Sophie Van Schoubroeck (Uni. Antwerpen)	Feedback from contributors/partners, including WP leads.
19.06.23	0.3	Cintia O. Quintana, H. Cecilie Petersen (SDU)	Corrections in line with comments from partners, further development of chapters, and new order of chapters.
26.06.23	0.4	Maëlla Sicard (OFB), Ivana Stojanovic (SUB)	Internal review by partners.
28.06.23	0.5	Kora Dvorski (WWF Adria)	Review by work package lead.
29.06.23	1.0	Cintia O. Quintana, H. Cecilie Petersen (SDU)	Final version, with corrections in line with internal reviewers' comments.

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Glossary

Baseline Assessment is investigation of existing management practices, processes, tools, needs and challenges within project Information Sites (IS) and Living labs (LL) of Blue4All.

Blueprint Platform is a guide to effective, efficient, and resilient (networks of) Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), generically applicable to MPAs at the pan-European level and beyond.

Co-creation in the context of Blue4All is a collaborative process where project partners and multiple stakeholders together create the design and implementation of tools for MPAs and Other Effective Area- Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) tailored for the specific LLs.

Contact points are organisations or persons within the consortium, who are responsible for the direct interaction with the IS or LL. List of contact points available in project Sharepoint: Blue4All Contacts - link (sheet Test site leads).

Fisheries restricted area (FRA) is the area with legally defined specific fisheries regulation. FRA is not necessarily an MPA.

Information sites (IS) are sites that offer a representative view on the challenges and tools of the wide diversity of MPAs and networks of MPAs in Europe. They will be mainly engaged in the Baseline Assessment process.

Living labs (LL) are sites with which Blue4All will involve in a co-creation process with the end goal of producing a Blueprint Platform for effective, efficient and resilient MPAs. These sites have a clear defined geographical scope, are recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

Other effective area-based conservation measure (OECM) is a geographically defined area, other than a Protected Area, which is managed in a way that achieves positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of the habitat, biodiversity, and ecosystem.

Stakeholder Engagement Groups (SEGs) include representatives of all key stakeholder groups present in each LL, who will take part in project co-creation process. Following the stakeholder analysis, they will include relevant representatives of the national and/or local authorities (~MPA managers), national and/or local representatives of the civil sector, local community leaders and representatives of stakeholders, and if possible, other key sectoral and interest groups (e.g., scientists).

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1. Executive Summary

This deliverable has the primary goal on providing tools, examples and best practices on bottom-up engagement processes required for the co-creation activities planned between Blue4All partners and various stakeholders from the information sites on steps required for the restoration and expansion of MPAs/OECMs and networks of MPAs. Co-creation is a key part for the development of science-based socio-economic (WP2), ecological and environmental (WP3) tools and solutions while it also serves as basis for coordinating and collecting information by living labs (WP4). The latter has the aim to test and apply WP2 and WP3 tools and solutions in living-labs for forming effective management of MPAs/OECMs and networks as well as to deliver effective conservation recommendations to coastal communities. Here, we present a portfolio of stakeholder engagement tools and an engagement plan to be applied by WP2, WP3 and WP4.

2. Introduction

This deliverable has the aim to present a range of stakeholder engagement tools to collect data required to achieve Blue4All goals related to the design and management of MPAs/OECMs networks across European seas at a total of 25 sites. Furthermore, guidance needed for planning and conducting the engagement is presented including the needed steps for the preparation, collection of information and transfer of information among WPs 2, 3 and 4. All forms of interaction with stakeholders should follow the ethics and GDPR procedures stated in deliverable D7.1. In the next sections, the importance of stakeholder inclusion, stakeholder engagement plan and a definition of roles of Blue4All partners (contact points, task leaders, and work package leaders) are discussed.

The engagement tools and plans are presented in different levels, related to the status of the MPA. In Blue4All, we have separated the sites in two levels: 1) Information Sites (IS), represented by all sites (including Living Labs) which provide baseline information, and 2) Living Labs (LL) where the developed tools will be tested and validated (see section below).

The plan is based on results of structured interviews with WP2 and WP3 leaders (Figure 2; Annex I) and dialogue with WP4 leaders.

2.1. The inclusion of stakeholders

In Blue4All we have the goal of including stakeholders in the key steps of MPAs/OECMs processes, such as designation, monitoring, management, among others. Including stakeholders in development of solutions and decision making, especially for MPAs and OECMs, secures not only inclusion and knowledge gathering, but also creates ownership that may result in an easier and better implementation process (Di Franco et al., 2020).

The present stakeholder engagement plan serves as a roadmap to effectively engage stakeholders, ensuring their meaningful participation, promoting transparency, and enabling informed decision-making, ultimately leading to more successful project outcomes. It also ensures that the voices and perspectives of diverse stakeholders are included and promotes inclusiveness by involving stakeholders who are affected by or have an interest in MPAs, MPAs networks, and OECMs, allowing them to contribute to the development of solutions and strategies.

We expect that when stakeholders feel involved and valued, they are more likely to support and actively participate in Blue4All engagement activities such as workshops, interviews, or any other.

Stakeholders should be involved in a holistic and well-prepared way, to secure a good integration of input, prevent work constrains and to avoid conflicts. A stakeholder engagement plan ensures clarity, efficiency, inclusiveness, effective communication, risk management, and opportunities for learning and improvement.

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In Blue4All, we aim at establishing a realistic timeline to allow planning for efficient allocation of resources, by preventing ineffective or unnecessary engagement activities. Furthermore, the Blue4All engagement plan provide tools for early identification and management of potential risks and issues related to stakeholder engagement.

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3. Guidelines for stakeholder engagement

In this section, guidelines for interaction with stakeholders during Blue4All are provided.

3.1. Getting started working with stakeholders

In Blue4All, we should use a participatory approach that allows stakeholders to take an active role in decision- making and provide opportunities for them to contribute to the co-creation of solutions. The active participation will allow an empowerment of the stakeholders that can lead to more effective and sustainable solutions, as they are tailored to fulfil the specific needs and concerns of the community. Additionally, by involving them in the creation of tools for the design and management of MPAs/OECMs, Blue4All facilitates the implementation process by fostering a sense of ownership among stakeholders.

3.1.1. Methods for co-creation

There are many definitions of co-creation, and therefore it is important to establish a common understanding of the term by all partners. In the frame of Blue4All, co-creation is understood as a collaborative process that involves multiple project partners and stakeholders in the design and implementation of tools for design and management of MPAs/OECMs tailored for the specific LL's.

In Blue4All it aims to be implemented in close collaboration with the end-users from the start, creating a better understanding of their needs, and to be able to develop a framework of common understanding, and set goals of the project and collaboration together. In co-creation, stakeholders partake from an actionable knowledge perspective, not just producing knowledge, but participate actively in planning of actions and creation of solutions. In Blue4All there is not only a focus on the solutions as the tools, but the co-creation process as part of the result.

For the WP2 and WP3, co-creation may however not be approached in the same way. Where environmental and ecological tools (WP3) require much technical information which sets high requirements to stakeholders knowledge level, development of social governance and economic tools (WP2) may need information that is more familiar to a broader range of stakeholders. It might therefore be more assessable to stakeholders, which may be more actively involved in the actual co-creation of social governance and economic tools (WP2). For the environmental and ecological tools (WP3), co-creation may be framed in a more structured way where Blue4All consult the needs and current gaps of the IS and LL, and provide technical tools, and then return to test, refine, expand, and validate the tools together with the stakeholders.

3.1.3 Levels of engagement

The interaction with stakeholders, can both be one-way or two-way, and the choosing between these methods, depend both on the aims of the interaction, as well as to the effort and resources available. At the basal level are pull communications and push communications which represent one-way engagement, where stakeholders are informed but not included, and relevant to stakeholders of low influence (see Table 1). By informing stakeholders you provide them with a knowledge base that for example can improve their decision- making (see Table 2). Pull communication and/or push communication will be used in WP6, using a website and newsletter to inform interested stakeholders are of relevance to the Blue4All IS or LL.

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Table 1. Levels of communication according to influence and interest. Table developed on basis of Morphy, 2017.

Pull communication	Push communication	Consultation	Participation/Involvement	Partnership/collaboration
Low influence Low interest	Low influence High interest	High influence Medium? interest	High influence High/low interest/capacity	High influence High interest

Communications with both IS and LL will be two-way, however this can be applied on different levels. Stakeholders can be engaged through consultation, where they are asked for opinion, but do not take responsibility and do not necessarily have an influence outside of their consultation role, which is appropriate for high influence/low interest stakeholders. The stakeholders support the project but are not expected to deliver an impact. In participation or involvement, stakeholders are a part of the team, can take part in the work meetings, but do not have the full responsibility for decision-making. This level of involvement reflects a high influence but may reflect high interest in the product/tool but low interest in the research, or low capacity. Finally, in partnership or collaboration, the highest level of stakeholder engagement, here joint learning, decision-making and actions are developed, and responsibility and accountability is shared between all partners. Partnership is appropriate for key stakeholders with high influence and high interest. See Tables 1 and 2.

Table 2. Summary of potential goals and benefits at different levels of engagement. Figure adapted on basis of Bjørkan et al. 2023 and Durham et al. 2014.

	Inform	**Consult**	**Involve/participate**	**Collaborate/partnership**
Engagement goal	Help stakeholders to better understand problems and solutions.	Obtain baseline knowledge, and/or feedback on analyses, solutions, and decisions. Gain trust.	Ensure that concerns of stakeholders and input is fully understood and incorporated.	Partner with stakeholders, in development and decisions.
Benefit to society	Improved decision making and knowledge-based policies.	Improved influence on the development and access to data and solutions.	High quality and useful tools tailored for the specific case.	Direct influence on research and development. Empowerment and shared responsibility.

In Blue4All, we should engage with the IS and LL on two different levels:

Communication with IS will be within the consultation category. Here Blue4All include stakeholders early in the process and set the baseline of needs and practices in MPA process on basis of their input. Thus, they play a significant influence on the development of the tools. However, IS stakeholders may have a low to medium interest in our end product, the tools/solutions. They will not be further involved in the research but kept informed after the baseline study. In Blue4All, we should reach out to the site managers of the IS to obtain knowledge of their experiences with existing tools and shortcomings in current setup and keep them informed about progress in development of tools, and feedback on final tools analyses. This involvement aims for building trust, improved the knowledge base of both IS partners and Blue4All partners, and ensure that IS partners influence on the development of solutions. LL should be involved in the development from the start to the final validation of the tools, and thus be in the category of collaborator or partnership. The LL have a high influence on the development of the tools carried out in Blue4All, and are expected to have a high interest.

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The LL collaborates with Blue4All in the development of the tools with strong influence on the final shaping of the tools, why representatives of LL partner in the Blue4All project. They will be impacted by the final results, and it is thus important that they participate from a very early stage in the developmental process, and that communication is maintained throughout the whole project. Stakeholders of the LL will be updated throughout project duration to empower LL partners to share responsibility throughout the developmental phase.

3.2. Identifying and mapping stakeholders

Relevant stakeholder groups that will be included in the co-creation process in the LL include MPA managers, local communities, fishermen, businesses, NGOs, government agencies, and academia. An identification of stakeholder groups is essential for understanding the setup of the site and ensure the right collection of information needed for the WP2, WP3 and WP4.

There are several stakeholders of relevance for the management of MPA and the implementation of conservation and restoration measures, for both socio-economic and governance point of view, and related ecological and environment. A broad representation of local stakeholders is important since many of them often rely on marine resources for their livelihoods, they may all have unique local knowledge and/or data on the environment and practices related to the use and management of the resources in the areas, they may be directly impacted by management measures, some may have high influence on local decision-making and policy, others may be directly responsible for the design and regulation.

After creating a list of relevant stakeholders for each LL, a mapping of the stakeholders which considers their individual influence, interest, and importance as well as levels of engagement and expectations of the stakeholder can be used for better understanding the stakeholders and individually target the ones relevant for Blue4All according to their needs. Table 3 can be used as basis for such mapping of stakeholders.

Table 3. This table can be used by contact points to map the relevant stakeholders of the MPA, to be able to better understand and customise interaction with each stakeholder. The table can be expanded with additional categories if relevant for local setup.

Stakeholder	Contact (and position)	Role/interest	Level of engagement	Importance	Influence	Expectation

3.3. Risks

3.3.1. Inclusiveness

Effective communication is critical to fulfil stakeholder expectations and success of co-creation. Clear communication channels must be established and maintained to ensure that stakeholders are involved and engaged throughout the process. To do so communication must remain constantly open to feedback and adjustments as needed. Building relationships and establishing trust fosters a collaborative environment where stakeholders feel empowered to contribute.

Different stakeholder groups may have context-specific cultural norms, values, or ways of communication, which can lead to miscommunication. Such differences are important to be recognised to promote an inclusive and respectful environment, and to mitigate risks. Stakeholder engagement efforts and expectations may unintentionally overlook or underrepresent certain groups due to language barriers, socioeconomic disparities, or historical marginalisation. This can result in incomplete or biased decision-making processes.

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Efforts should be made to ensure the inclusion and meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholder groups. This problem can be addressed by thoroughly considering ways of communication (in regard to both language, use of wording and platform of material), accessibility at physical meetings, and being aware if unconscious biases. The planning of a stakeholder group should actively accommodate equal representation of gender, age groups and ethnicity.

3.3.2. Conflicting stakeholder groups

One may experience different levels of trust or scepticism towards the engagement process, depending on experiences or power imbalances. Building trust and credibility requires transparent and consistent communication, demonstrating commitment to inclusive decision-making, and delivering on promises made. Stakeholder groups from different backgrounds may have varying levels of openness or resistance to change. Some groups may embrace new ideas and approaches, while others may be more cautious or reluctant. Understanding the concerns and motivations of each group can help address resistance and promote buy-in.

There are several risks when engaging with stakeholder groups of different backgrounds since they may have conflicting interests, priorities, or perspectives. This may lead to disagreements or challenges in finding common aims and methodologies. When planning engagement, we should be aware of power dynamics, some groups may have more access to resources, influence, or decision-making power than others. Furthermore, we should be aware of potential disparities and strive for equitable and unbiased engagement processes to avoid further marginalisation or exclusion.

3.3.3. Mitigation and mapping of risks

In Blue4All, we mitigate any biases towards power of individual groups by performing stakeholder mapping and identification of levels of involvement. Furthermore, we assure that facilitation tools are reviewed by experts in the consortium before interaction with stakeholders. By being aware of the risks, actively promoting open dialogue, and maintaining a respectful engagement process, it is possible to navigate the challenges and create an environment that encourages meaningful participation and collaboration among stakeholders with different backgrounds.

To better understand your stakeholders and assess possible risks, stakeholders can be mapped according to different categories of risks and relations. Based on the example of a mapping in Table 4, more/other categories can be added to mitigate potential risks of the local site. This will be carried out in Interaction 2. See 5.2.2.

Table 4. Example of table for use of mapping stakeholders according to relations, expectations and risks.

Stakeholder	Existing relationship	Relationship with other stakeholders	Knowledge level	Means of communication	Willingness to engage	Stakeholder expectation	Capacity	Cultural /socio-economic background	Influence on MPA

3.3.4. Stakeholder fatigue

Stakeholder fatigue can occur when stakeholders become disengaged or lose interest due to repeated engagement efforts or lack of acknowledgement. Here we provide a list of aspects to be taken into consideration to avoid stakeholder fatigue in the context of Blue4All:

- Plan engagement activities strategically to ensure that stakeholders have enough time to review, consider, and provide feedback. Avoid overloading stakeholders with too many engagements

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extensive activities in a short period of time. This is the backbone of this stakeholder engagement plan.

- Clearly communicate the purpose of engagement activities to stakeholders. Explain why their input is important, how it will be used, and how it will contribute to the project. It is essential that this communication should be coordinated through WP4 tasks.
- Use a variety of engagement methods to avoid repetition and to keep stakeholders engaged, including online engagement tools. See 4.2. Methodology of interacting with stakeholders and 5.3. Details of engagement.
- Provide incentives to stakeholders to encourage their continued engagement. This can be done by showing IS and LL recognition. In Blue4All this will be done by providing access to new opportunities, such as invitations to selected meetings and workshops during the project (funding is allocated for this), early access tools and knowledge, and invite IS and LL to give presentations showcasing their good examples and experiences.
- Be responsive to stakeholder feedback and demonstrate how their input has been incorporated into specific outputs of the project. This can help stakeholders feel valued and to encourage them to continue collaborating with the project.

3.4. Evaluation

Lastly, a key part of stakeholder engagement is also to evaluate the process and results, to effectively gather feedback and identifying areas for improvement. Allocate time at the end of each engagement event to gather feedback from participants. Use surveys or polls to collect their thoughts on the effectiveness of communication, content of information, and facilitation of the meeting between research partners (e.g. contact points and facilitator at webinars) and the stakeholders of the IS and LL. Use this feedback to improve future engagement events.

In Blue4All we will conduct a survey at the end of the project for IS and LL, with questions related to Blue4Alls interaction with them, to evaluate their experience.

We will also measure interaction with stakeholders by number of attendees at webinars and subscribers to the newsletter.

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4. Principles for interacting with stakeholders

4.1 Ensuring stakeholder engagement

To ensure engagement of stakeholders throughout the process, it is important to include them from the early stages. By doing so, it allows for stakeholders to provide input and feedback on the scope and objectives and may result in a higher ownership in the project.

Stakeholders should be kept informed throughout the project. Establishing clear communication channels, and providing regular updates on progress and outcomes, should be a priority. Additionally, the project leads should be accountable to stakeholders by addressing their concerns and feedback. This ensures transparency and accountability, especially in regard to the decision-making process.

There are several ways of ensuring that stakeholders are best kept informed throughout the process.

Engagement methods should be tailored to cultural and language setup where the different stakeholder groups feel comfortable, including these needs can help ensure that stakeholders feel respected and valued throughout the process. When planning stakeholder engagement inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders, not just with different interests, but also different gender, ethnicity, age, and social status should be included.

4.2. Methodology for interaction with stakeholders

There are many ways of interacting with stakeholders. Provided here is a short overview of general methods, to guide and inspire the interactions with stakeholders will be used in Blue4All.

4.2.1. Surveys and questionnaires

Surveys ad questionnaires can be used to gather insight into specific setups and stakeholder perspectives and opinions on MPAs management and conservation. They can provide quantitative data that can be used to inform decision-making and evaluate the effectiveness of management strategies.

There are several things to consider when developing a questionnaire:

- Clearly define the objective of the questionnaire. What specific information or insights do you want to gather?
- Determine who your target audience is. Consider their characteristics, background, knowledge level, and any specific requirements that may influence the questionnaire design.
- Ensure that the questionnaire is provided in a local language of the target audience.
- Organize the questionnaire in a logical and easy-to-follow structure. Begin with an introduction that explains the purpose of the questionnaire, followed by sections or themes that address different aspects of your objective. Use clear headings, subheadings, and numbering for ease of navigation.
- Avoid unnecessary complexity and keep the questionnaire concise. Focus on the essential questions that directly relate to your objective. Long and overly detailed questionnaires can lead to respondent fatigue and lower response rates.
- Ensure that the language used in the questionnaire is clear, simple, and easily understandable by your target audience. Avoid jargon, technical terms, or ambiguous wording that may confuse respondents.
- Select question types that suit the information you want to gather. Common question types include multiple-choice, rating scales, open-ended, and scales. Use a mix of question types to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.
- Sequence the questions in a logical order, with simple and easy-to-answer questions at the beginning. Start with more general questions and progressively move towards more specific or sensitive topics. This helps engage respondents and builds rapport.

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- Ensure that your questions are neutral and unbiased. Avoid leading questions that steer respondents towards a particular answer. Use neutral language and be mindful of any potential bias in the wording or framing of questions.
- Include clear instructions and guidance for each question, especially for complex or unfamiliar concepts. Specify the desired format, unit of measurement, or any specific instructions for responses.
- Estimate the completion time for the questionnaire and ensure it is reasonable. Long questionnaires may deter respondents, so aim for a reasonable completion time to maximize response rates.
- Consider including an optional section at the end of the questionnaire for respondents to provide additional comments or feedback. This can offer valuable qualitative insights beyond the structured questions.
- Assure respondents about the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Clearly state how the data will be used, stored, and reported, and ensure compliance with applicable data protection and privacy regulations.
- Before deploying the questionnaire, conduct a pilot test with a small sample of respondents. This helps identify any issues, ambiguities, or gaps in the questionnaire design. Revise and refine the questionnaire based on the feedback received. After revising the questionnaire, conduct another pilot test to confirm its effectiveness and clarity. Make final adjustments as needed.

4.2.2. Guided interviews

Guided interviews can be used in relation to surveys to deepen the understanding of certain issues. Here we present what should be considered when conducting guided interviews:

- Clearly define the purpose of the guided interview. What specific information or insights are you seeking to gather? This will help you structure your interview and focus on the relevant topics.
- Develop an interview guide that includes a list of key topics, questions, and prompts to guide the conversation. The guide should be flexible enough to allow for natural flow and exploration while ensuring you cover the essential areas of interest.
- Begin the interview by with a friendly introduction, explain the purpose of the interview, and assure them that their input is valued and will be kept confidential.
- Ask open-ended questions that encourage interviewees to provide detailed and thoughtful responses. These questions typically begin with "how," "what," or "why" and allow for more expansive answers.
- Avoid leading or biased questions that could influence their responses.
- Practice active listening throughout the interview. Give the interviewee your full attention, maintain eye contact, and nod or provide verbal cues to show that you are engaged and interested in what they have to say. Encourage them to express their thoughts fully. Allow for moments of silence and pauses during the interview. Avoid rushing or filling in the gaps with unnecessary comments or prompts. Be adaptable and sensitive to the interviewee's communication style and comfort level. Adjust your approach to match their pace, language, and preferred way of expressing themselves. This helps create a more comfortable and productive environment.
- Use follow-up questions to delve deeper into specific topics, seek clarification, or explore different perspectives. These questions can help uncover underlying motivations, experiences, or insights that may not surface initially.
- Take concise notes during the interview to capture key points, quotes, and observations. Avoid extensive verbatim transcription, as it may distract you from active listening. Instead, focus on recording essential information that will assist in analysing the data later.
- Conclude the interview by expressing gratitude for their time and contribution. Offer an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions or provide additional comments. Assure them that their insights will be taken into consideration and inform the decision-making process.

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- Inform the interviewee of your handling of interview data, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity as agreed with the interviewees. Store and manage the data securely, following appropriate data protection and privacy protocols.
- Analyse the collected data from the guided interviews by identifying common themes, patterns, and insights. Use the findings to inform decision-making, report writing, or further research as appropriate.

4.2.3. Multi-stakeholder workshops

Multi-stakeholder workshops and meetings bring together stakeholders from different sectors and backgrounds of the Living Labs to discuss issues related to MPA management and conservation. They can be used to gather input, share information, and build consensus on management strategies. A method that can be used for such meetings is participatory mapping. Where stakeholders are involved in the creation of maps that reflect their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives. This can be a useful tool for identifying resources, challenges, and opportunities within MPAs, and for involving stakeholders in the development of management plans.

4.2.4. Online workshops

Online tools can be effective for reaching a larger and more diverse group of stakeholders and as an effective tool to engage stakeholders who may not be able to attend in-person meetings. Conducting an online workshop requires careful planning and execution to ensure effective engagement, following could be considered:

- Provide participants with clear instructions and materials in advance, including the agenda, any pre- reading materials, and technical guidelines for joining the online workshop. This allows participants to come prepared and familiarize themselves with the workshop's objectives.
- Select a user-friendly online platform for hosting the workshop. Create a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences.
- Apart from presentations consider interactive features like breakout rooms to facilitate discussions in smaller groups, interactive polls, Q&A sessions, virtual whiteboards, or collaborative document editing tools to encourage active participation.
- Use visuals, infographics, videos, or slides to enhance understanding and engagement. Break down content into digestible sections to maintain participants' attention.
- Designate a facilitator or moderator responsible for guiding the workshop and ensuring smooth flow. Have technical support available throughout the workshop to address any connectivity issues or technical difficulties participants may encounter. Provide a dedicated point of contact or a help desk to assist participants with troubleshooting.
- Set a realistic timeline for each agenda item and enforce time management to keep the workshop on track. Allow sufficient time for discussion and activities. Schedule regular breaks to give participants time to rest and process information. Consider use of short activities, or icebreakers to re-energize participants and maintain their focus.
- If appropriate and with participant consent, consider recording the workshop for future reference or for participants who couldn't attend. Take notes during the workshop to capture key insights, decisions, and action points.
- Adapt your approach and technical setup based to the audience, and context of your workshop to promote inclusion.

4.2.5. Online tools - general

Online engagement tools include two-way communication, such as webinars and online workshops, as presented in previous section, but may also be used in one-way information, for example newsletters. Newsletters can be used for sharing updates on the development of the project, provide educational content or resources to subscribers, promote events, and highlight success stories from case studies. A newsletter

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engages by maintaining communication with the stakeholders and may encourage to further voluntary participation in surveys or feedback requests.

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5. Engagement of partners and stakeholders in the frame of Blue4All

5.1. Definition of sites

The overarching aim of Blue4All is to promote the effective, efficient, and resilient design and management of MPAs/OECMs networks contributing to the EU Mission "Restore our Oceans and Waters by 2030" and to the conservation and restoration of marine ecosystems based on the challenges and successful examples identified in key steps of the processes of implementation. These steps comprise designation (i.e., delineation, eventual enlargement, identification of conservation objectives and status assessment), management (i.e., identification and implementation of conservation and/or restoration measures, including adaptation to climate change and enforcement) and monitoring (i.e., environmental, and ecological status monitoring and auditing).

Here IS are defined as sites that offer a representative view on the challenges identified and the tools implemented in a wide diversity of MPAs/OECMs (Figure 1) while LL will test and validate new science-based socioeconomics, ecological and environmental tools. In the context of Blue4All, 12 IS and 13 LL will be considered covering a large geographic scope in Europe and beyond (see next section). To highlight, all LL are also considered IS, since they integrate MPAs and OECMs with various levels of development of the aforementioned steps, their experiences will serve as an important source of information for the tailoring of tools developed in WP2 and WP3. For clarity, in this deliverable, we use both terms IS and LL to indicate how and when stakeholders from the different sites should be involved for providing information and testing tools (see timeline in section 5.2.2.2.).

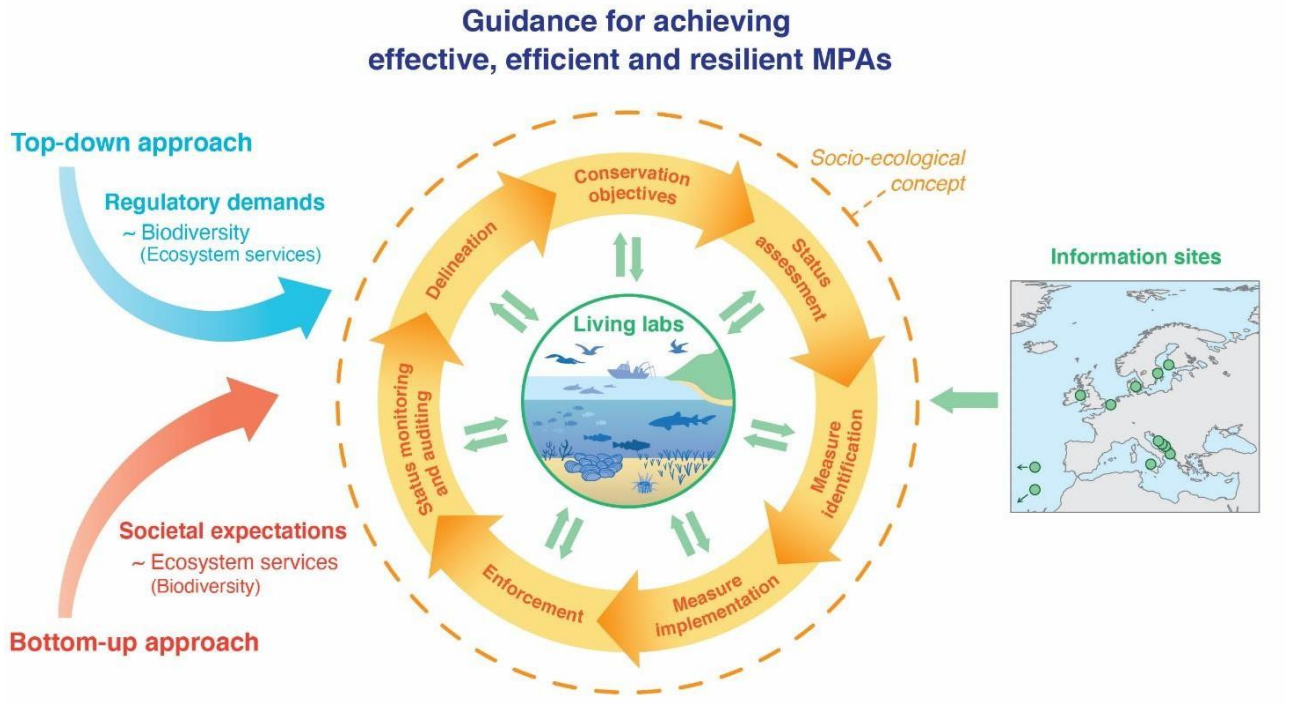

Figure 1. Blue4All concept of involvement of sites.

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5.1.1. Geographic scope of information sites

Blue4All includes 25 MPAs and MPA networks (12 IS and 13 LL) ranging from relatively small, individual coastal MPAs to large (> 10.000 km²), networks of MPAs including offshore and deep-sea habitat. Blue4All sites are located in the Baltic Sea, Mediterranean Sea and the North-East Atlantic (Table 1, Figure 1) with an additional information site in Brazilian waters, which should help identifying international good practice. Throughout Blue4All, IS and LL should provide direct insight in MPA processes, their challenges and solutions.

Table 5. Blue4All information sites and living labs.

BLUE4ALL information sites

Information Site - Name (Country)	Regional Sea	Individual MPA/Network	Area (km²)	MPA type	Habitats :
Telascica MPA (HR)	Mediterranean	Individual MPA	45	national	Coastal
Lastovo Islands MPA (HR)	Mediterranean	Individual MPA	196	national	Coastal
Jabuka Pit FRA (HR-I)	Mediterranean	Individual FRA	2700	FRA	Offshore /Deep Sea
Area Naturale Marina Protetta Capo Gallo - Isola delle Femmine (I)	Mediterranean	Individual MPA	22	NATURA200	Coastal
South Adriatic Ionian Strait EBSA (AL-HR-I-MNE)	Mediterranean	Network	~30000	EBSA	Offshore
Bothnian Sea National Park (FIN)	Baltic	Individual MPA	913	national	Coastal
Gyldensteen coastal lagoon (DK)	N-E Atlantic	Individual MPA	2	NATURA2000 + RAMSAR	Coastal
Dundalk Bay (IRL)	N-E Atlantic	Individual MPA	52	OSPAR	Coastal
Vlakte van de Raan (NL)	N-E Atlantic	Individual MPA	190	NATURA2000	Coastal
Marine park of the Azores (PT)	N-E Atlantic	MPA Network	34245	NATURA2000 + national	Offshore /Deep Sea
Parque Nacional Marinho de Fernando de Noronha (BR)	S-W Atlantic	Individual MPA	109	national	Coastal

BLUE4ALL Living Labs

Living Labs - Name (Country)	Regional Sea	Individual MPA/Network	Area (km²)	MPA type	Habitats :
Platamuni, Katič and Stari Ulcinj (MNE)	Mediterranean	MPA Network	80	national	Coastal
Capo Carbonara (I)	Mediterranean	Individual MPA	143	NATURA2000 + national	Coastal/ Deep Sea
Torre Guaceto (I)	Mediterranean	Individual MPA	22	NATURA2000 + national	Coastal
AMP (to be established) Otranto Leuca (I)	Mediterranean	Individual MPA	TBD	NATURA2000	Coastal
Väinameri MPA (EST)	Baltic	Individual MPA	1727	NATURA2000 + national	Coastal
Väike väin MPA (EST)	Baltic	Individual MPA	168	NATURA2000 + national	Coastal
Finland National MPA network (FIN)	Baltic	MPA Network	TBD	national	Coastal/ Offshore

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Baltic Sea MPA network (DK-S-FIN-(RUS)-EST-LV-LT-PL-D)	Baltic	MPA Network	416860	NATURA2000 + national	Coastal/ Offshore
Irish MPA network expansion (IRL)	N-E Atlantic	MPA Network	10420	national	Coastal/ Offshore
Danish Wadden Sea (DK)	N-E Atlantic	Individual MPA	1466	national	Coastal
Vlaamse Banken (BE)	N-E Atlantic	Individual MPA	1099	NATURA2000	Coastal
SBZ 1-3 (BE)	N-E Atlantic	Individual MPA	283	NATURA2000	Coastal
Baie De Seine (FR)	N-E Atlantic	Individual MPA	9237	NATURA2000 + national	Coastal/ Offshore

5.2. Engagement plan and role of Blue4All partners

5.2.1. The role of the contact points

All interactions with IS and LL, unless otherwise specified, should be conducted via the contact point. Contact points are organisations or persons within the consortium, who are responsible for the direct interaction with the IS or LL. This is to account for the local cultural and language setup of the IS and LL, and thereby ensuring an open and effective communication with the local stakeholders. Here, we propose specific engagement tools depending on the steps required for interactions with stakeholders and collection of information. The contact point of each IS and LL is responsible to perform the steps proposed in the section below and to adjust the engagement tools according to their context. The contact point is also responsible on maintaining a communication flow between the IS or LL and the WP4 task leaders responsible for the specific loop/intervention (baseline, testing and validation of tools).

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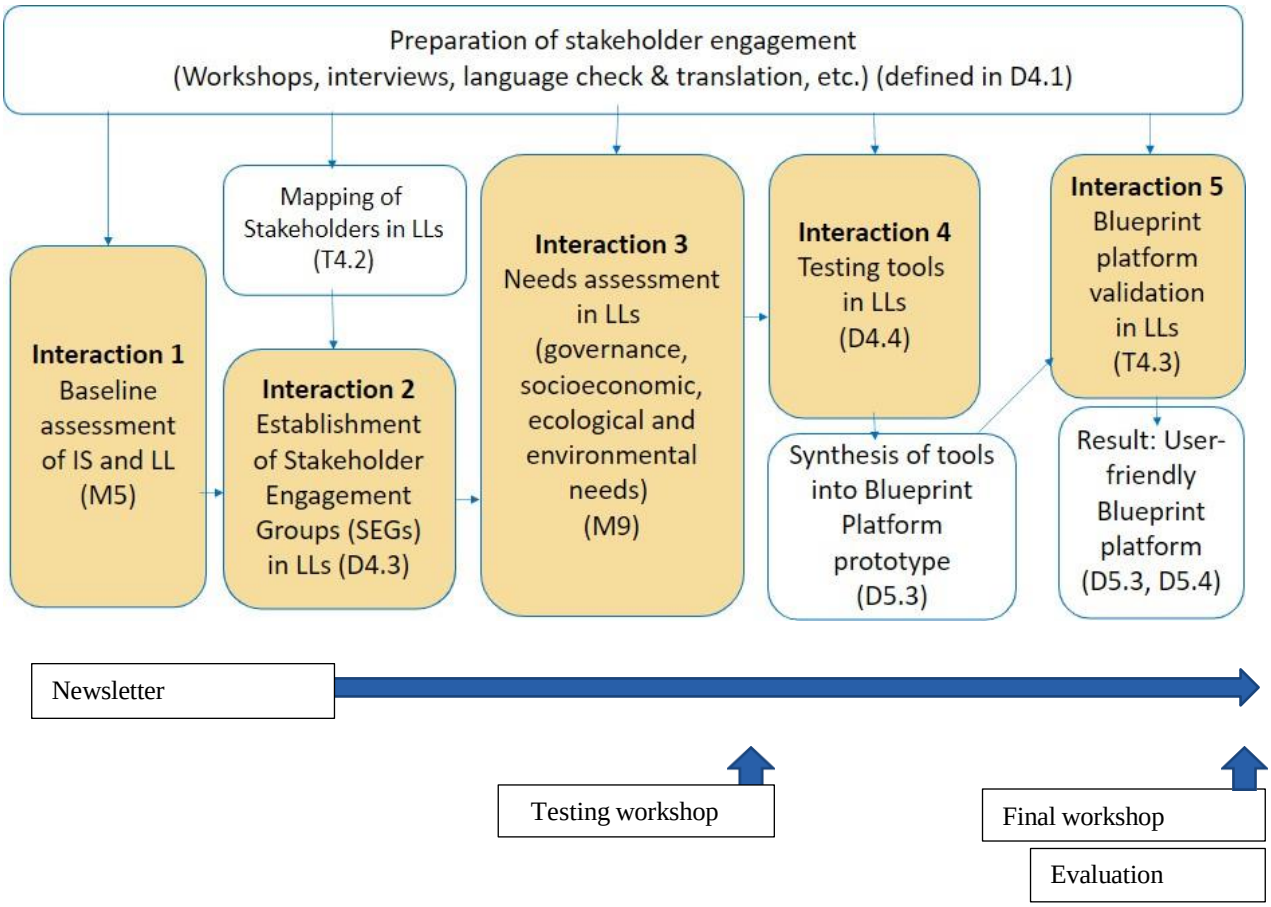
5.2.2. Steps of engagement and Information flow

Five main steps of interaction with Blue4All's IS and/or LL and the overall project concept is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Steps of engagement in Blue4All and information flow.



1) **Stakeholder engagement** is planned in five main steps: **Interaction 1** – Baseline assessment of both IS and LL, **Interaction 2** – Establishment of Stakeholder Engagement Groups (SEGs) in LL, **Interaction 3** – Needs assessment in LL, **Interaction 4** – Testing tools in LL and **Interaction 5** –Blueprint Platform validation in LL. Internal workflows are proposed to assure that all partners are informed of their involvement and to coordinate communication with the stakeholders (see "information and feedback" step in 5.2.1.1 and Figure 3).
2) **Preparation of stakeholder engagement** requires dedicated time for translation to stakeholders' local languages (if needed) and a language check to facilitate understanding and assure proper data collection (see section 5.2.2). We suggest communication experts in the consortium to assist with this step. Contact points of IS and LL are responsible to accomplish this step.
3) **Interaction 1** - Baseline assessment of both IS and LL where site managers are consulted. In this phase, best practice examples, knowledge gaps and expectations are assessed. T4.1 leaders are responsible for this task. The results of the baseline Interaction 1 are Information packages (one per each IS and LL). The information packages should be available for internal communication within the project.

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4) **Bi-monthly newsletter** distributed to inform IS, LL and other partners on the process. Making all information available in Blue4All website (this is carried out by WP6 lead SUB in close collaboration with WP4 lead WWF Adria).
5) **Mapping of the stakeholders** in LLs will be done to cover all relevant stakeholder groups in the process of co-creation. Level of involvement of each stakeholder group and risks (see section 3) will be taken into account. Mapping of stakeholders is a prerequisite for establishing stakeholder engagement groups (SEGs) (WWF Adria, in collaboration with contact points).
6) **Interaction 2** – Establishment of stakeholder engagement groups (SEGs) which consist of representatives of all relevant stakeholders groups within each LL. Coordinated by WP4, contact points of each LL are responsible for establishment of SEGs in their LL.
7) **Interaction 3 –** Assessment of governance, socioeconomic, ecological and environmental needs within LL. This time, SEGs are contacted and needs assessment is done in collaboration with them. Based on the Protocols for need assessment provided by WP2 and WP3. WP4 coordinates contact points of each LL that are responsible for need assessment within SEGs of each LL.
8) **Testing workshop**/webinar is suggested to prepare LL of the tools before testing (see 5.3.1.2). This is an opportunity to also keep IS informed about the developed tools. This task should be prepared in collaboration of WP2, 3, 4 and 6.
9) **Interaction 4** – Testing tools in LL. This is a key step in Blue4All, where socio-economic and environmental tools are tested and discussed with LL. Coordinated by WP4, contact points of each LL are responsible for this task, which is conducted in close contact with WP2 and 3 leads.
10) **Interaction 5** – Testing Blueprint Platform in LL. After tools have been picked and synthesised in the Blueprint Platform prototype, LLs are contacted again to test the Blueprint Platform directly. This is a prerequisite for creating a user-friendly Blueprint Platform which is the main result of the project. Coordinated by WP4, contact points of each LL are responsible for this task, in close collaboration with WP5 leads.
11) **Final workshop** - the final version of the Blueprint Platform will be presented in the workshop where all involved stakeholders from IS and LL can be invited.

5.2.2.1. Internal workflow

For each interaction with IS and/or LL (see Figure 2) an internal loop of communication will be carried out. The internal workflow consists of six steps (see Figure 3):

1) The task leads in WP2 and WP3 prepare information, materials and questions for IS and/or LL assessment.
2) WP2 and WP3 leads collect material from task leads (step 1) and send it to WP4.
3) WP4 task lead concatenates and quality check interaction material from WP2 and WP3 and sends to WP6.
4) WP6 reviews material and reformulate in line to ease language and make material approachable for a broad range of stakeholders with different knowledge and communication levels (see section 5.2.1).
5) WP4 task lead is responsible for incorporation of input from WP6 in collaboration with WP2 and WP3. WP4 sends interaction material to contact points.
6) Contact points from IS and/or LL adjusts the material to language and cultural setting if necessary, and conduct engagement. Contact points sends gathered information to WP4.

After the interaction will follow a "information and feedback" loop. In this step WP4 will contact WP2 and WP3 task leads, and review the information gathered from the IS/LL, allowing for possible additional interactions if more or specification of information is needed (illustrated by a circle of arrows in Figure 3). This is coordinated between the WP2 and WP3 and the contact points by the WP4-task lead responsible for the interaction.

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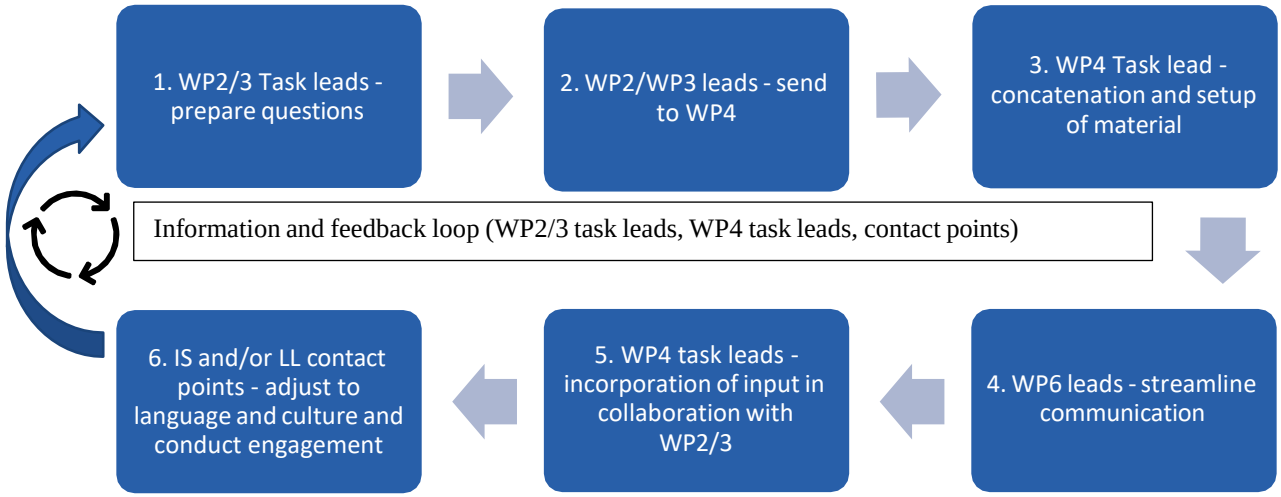
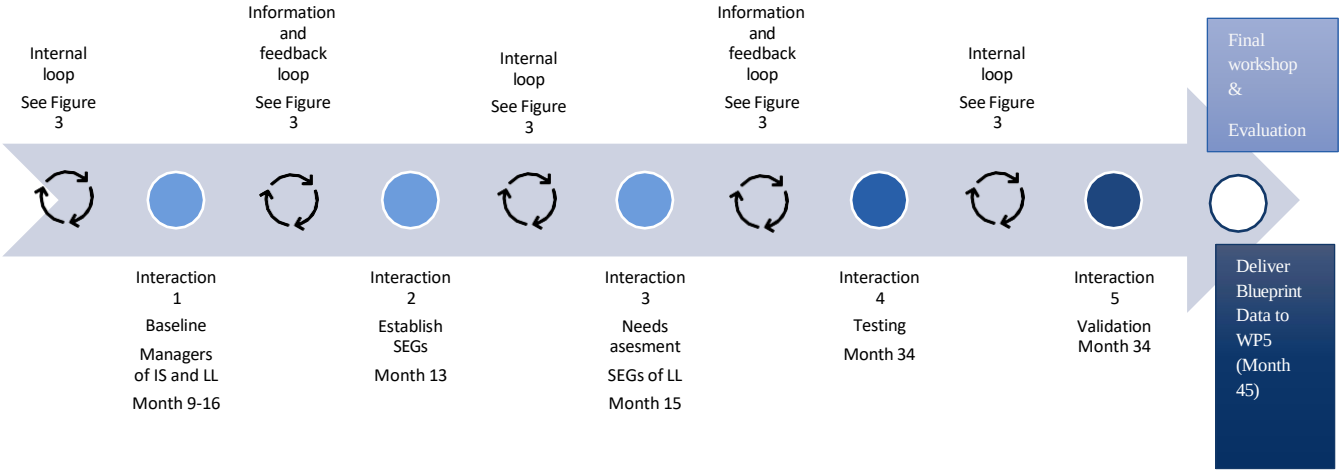
Figure 3. Internal loop of preparation and information handling, after the engagement in IS and LL information will be delivered to the relevant task leaders who will evaluate if extra interaction with the IS/LL is needed to elaborate on information given during the initial interaction.



5.2.2.2. Timeline

Presented in Figure 4 is a timeline of all defined interactions with IS and LL, as well as internal preparation and feedback loops. Six milestones and two deliverables, apart from this D4.1 stakeholder engagement plan, is essential for the interactions with stakeholders.

Figure 4. Timeline for the interaction with IS and LL and internal loops, months indicate end of interaction.



Baseline assessment in IS & LL:

- (M3 & M4) - Questionnaires (initial draft) ready in month 7 – adaptations of questionnaires will be an ongoing process (WP2 and WP3).
  (M5) **Interaction 1** Baseline Assessment: first interactions with the IS and LL conducted in month 9 – Baseline assessment would be an ongoing process month 9 - 16, information packages from all IS & LL to be collected and delivered to WP2 and WP3 latest by month 16 (T4.1 leads, IS & LL contact points).

Testing tools in LL:

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- (D4.2) - Living lab testing package ready in month 9 (WP4).
- (T4.2) Stakeholder analysis conducted in month 10 – 12 (WP4, LL contact points).
- (M7) A protocol for collecting information on needs from the LLs and to give instructions on validating and co-creating economic, social and governance tools in month 11 (WP2).
- (M8) Compile and integrate information gathered from project IS and LL for providing essential and easy-to-use ecological and environmental knowledge for MPA processes in month 11 (WP3).
- Baseline Assessment information packages integrated in month 11 (WP2, WP3).
- Needs Assessment Protocol for LL developed in month 11 (WP2, WP3).
- (D4.3) **Interaction 2** Stakeholder Engagement Groups established in month 13 (WP4, LL contact points).
- (T4.2, M9) **Interaction 3** Needs Assessment conducted in month 13 – 15 (WP4, LL contact points), information packages delivered to WP2 and WP3.
- (M10, M11) Tools ready for testing in LL, month 20 (WP2 soc-gov. tools, WP3 eco-env. tools).
- (T4.2): **Interaction 4** Testing of tools in month 20 – 34 (WP4, LL contact points).
- D4.4: Tool validation reports (experiences and recommendations on tool functionality) from LL delivered to WP2, WP3 in month 34 (WP4 leads).

Blueprint platform validation in LL:

- D5.2 Panorama booklet with series of solution case studies for MPAs ready for testing in LL in month 36 (WP5).
- T5.3 **Interaction 5** Blueprint Platform testing conducted in LL in month 37 – 45 (WP4 leads, LL contact points).
- M12: Prototype BLUE4ALL Blueprint Platform developed in month 40 (WP5) – ready or fine-tuning
- D5.3 User-friendly interactive web-based Blueprint platform developed in month 45 (WP5).

5.3. Details of engagement

5.3.1. Methodology for interaction with stakeholders

In Blue4All, we will use various methods to interact with stakeholders according to different steps on engagement process required to achieve Blue4All goals. Here, we provide a short description of methods in line to the engagement structure presented in section 5.2.1.

5.3.1.1. Interaction 1: Baseline questionnaire

We recommend as **interaction 1** an initial survey or questionnaire that should be used in addition to the information gathered in WP1 to form a baseline of existing knowledge, needs and expectations from both IS and LL. To accommodate avoidance of stakeholder fatigue this survey will include question related to both WP2 and 3, thus on the stakeholders knowledge of MPA setup as well as perspectives and specific information of the MPA management and conservation, ecosystem services (ESS) and monitoring.

The expected outcome of this survey is to understand the management and monitoring setup of the IS and LL, create a knowledge base, and understand their needs and in gaps in the existing tools.

For this survey it is important to be aware of the length, and thus concisely of the questions, since it will include a broad range of information gathering. Depending on final length, it could be considered to send out two different questionnaires to stakeholders of the specific IS/LL, one with focus on questions for WP2 and one for WP3. In case of stakeholder only relevant for one of the WP's it is also recommended to only ask them to reply to the specific survey.

The survey will be sent out by the contact points for the IS and LL, after adjustment to local cultural setup and language.

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A template for initial contact with IS and LL is provided in Annex III. The template can be modified by contact points according to the cultural and language setup of each site, if needed.

Depending on the answers to the questions, the survey can be followed up by a reassessment with made more specific questions during depth interviews or additional field studied during the "information and feedback loop" (see Figure 3).

5.3.1.2. Interaction 2: Establishment of SEGs

Memorandum of Understanding will be developed with SEGs in each LL. To be defined later in D4.2 Living labs testing package.

5.3.1.3. Interaction 3: Needs assessment in LLs

Baseline questionnaire or guided interview. To be defined later in D4.2 Living labs testing package.

5.3.1.4. Webinars as preparation before testing tools

Before testing the socio-economic/governance and environmental tools in the LL in connection to interaction 2 an introduction to their use will be provided by WP2 and WP3 leaders.

This will be carried out in two webinars, one for the tools provided by WP2 and one for the tool from WP3. The attendees will be the relevant stakeholders from the Living Labs working with the subject relevant to the WP. The webinar will be facilitated by WP4, where the Task leads responsible for the tools will present the tools, followed up by a Q&A session.

5.3.1.5. Interaction 4: Guided interview after testing of tools in LL

Following the presentation and test of the tools in the LL we will use a guided interview to qualitative gather detailed information and insights on the gaps in the tools provided, from the individual LLs. This will allow for open discussions and provide opportunities for the stakeholders to share their perspectives, experiences, and ideas in a more comprehensive manner. Guided interviews are a valuable method for collecting qualitative data, that can complement the quantitative data collected through the initial surveys, as it provides detailed accounts that contribute to a deeper understanding of experiences and needs of the Living Labs.

The expected outcome of the guided interview is to understand the gaps in the tools provided, to better tailor them for the need of the Living labs.

The guided interviews will be carried out by the contact points for the Living Labs, to account for the cultural, personal and language setup.

The expected outcome of this survey is to understand the management setup of the Information Sites and Living labs, create a knowledge base, ad understand their needs and in gaps in the existing tools.

5.3.1.6. Interaction 5: Validation survey

The validation interaction could take form as both a survey and/or a workshop. This will be decided upon in Living labs testing package D4.2. A general guide to the principals of above stakeholder engagement tools is provided in Chapter 4, which can guide the partners in choosing the final validation interaction tool.

5.3.1.7. Evaluation

To evaluate the experience of the interaction with Blue4All, a short web based survey will be send out at the end of the project to IS and LL. The survey will be designed so that IS and LL only answer questions related to their interaction with the project.

5.4. Communication plan

By developing a communication plan, that outlines how stakeholders will be kept informed about the project, will ensure that this engagement is integrated in the project. The communication plan should include a timely

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and clear messaging strategy that is tailored to the specific needs and concerns of each stakeholder group, and ideally include regular updates on progress and outcomes.

A communication- and dissemination plan is provided in D6.1 from work package 6.

5.5. Ethics

A detailed strategy for addressing ethics and project guidelines for handling personal data in line with GDPR rules is provided in deliverable D7.1. Informed consent procedure form provided in Annex II.

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6. References

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Annex I. Methods

The methods and steps of engagement presented in this deliverable consist of a combination of tools available in the literature and structured interviews performed with WPs 2 and 3 leaders (Table 1). Work package leaders were responsible to collect input for the questions from the task leaders in their respective WP before the interview.

Table 1: Questions used for interviews with WP2 and WP3 leaders to obtain input on the expected engagement plan.

Questionnaire answered by WP2 and WP3 leaders
What is co-creation to you?
What do you expect the Stakeholder Engagement Plan to provide?
Do you already have any specific methods in mind that you want to use for your engagement with the Information Sites (IS) and Living Labs (LL)? Or, do you want a manual from WP4?
Do you expect to contact IS or LL differently, if so, how?
What aspects do you think would affect your interaction with the IS/LL? (e.g., state of the site)
How any times do you expect to contact the IS and LL?
If you plan to contact them several times: do you want different things from them each time you contact them? Please, describe what information you expect from the IS and LL at the different interventions.
What information do you expect to gather?
What will your end-product be?
When do you want the information from the IS and LL, do you already have a timeline?
Have you already had coordinating meetings between your WP and WP2/3 (or others)?
Do you expect to inform the IS and LL along the process, if so, what will you share and how?
Who, in your opinion, is best suited for facilitating the contact with the IS and LL and conducting the surveys?

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Annex II. Informed consent form

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9. Annex A Document of Informed Consent

PROJECT TITLE BLUE4ALL

START DATA OF THE PROJECT 01-01-2023

END DATE OF THE PROJECT 31-12-2026

PROJECT WEBSITE www.BLUE4ALL.eu (under construction)

You have been invited to participate in research under the BLUE4ALL project in the form of a survey, workshop or an interview. Before participation, please read the information below carefully. If statements in the document are unclear to you, do not hesitate to ask the contact researcher for clarification.

1. Project summary

BLUE4ALL will align top-down regulatory demands about European (networks of) MPAs with bottom-up societal expectations as a guarantee for achieving effective, efficient and resilient MPAs and networks of MPAs which meet EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 objectives. By mobilizing stakeholders from BLUE4ALL's 25 information sites and Living Labs, i.e. locations across the Mediterranean Sea, the Baltic Sea and the North-East Atlantic regions where (networks of) MPAs have been established and from which lessons learned can be drawn about success and failure relative to how challenges were tackled, we will co- create robust and replicable social, governance, ecological and environmental tools to meet conservation and/or restoration objectives in socially sustainable and acceptable ways. These science- based tools will be tested in Living Labs, i.e. locations where (networks of) MPAs are in the process of establishment and where these tools can be fed into the ongoing MPA process. The operationalized and tested frameworks will ultimately be generalized into a Blueprint Platform for the co-creation of effective, efficient and resilient (networks of) MPAs. This scheme will separate generically encountered challenges and applied solutions from MPA (network) specific challenges and solutions and develop guidance in a user-friendly manner to end-users (i.e. MPA (network) managers and authorities). This guidance will take the shape of an interactive web-based Blueprint Platform directing the end-users to those challenges and solutions most applicable to their site(s). User-friendliness and applicability will be maximized by cross-checking the Blueprint Platform development with the actors and stakeholders of the Living Labs throughout the whole process of its development. Knowledge transfer and interaction with stakeholders and society-at-large at local to regional scales will lead to the development of a platform for MPA networking to interact with communities of practice boosting the BLUE4ALL legacy to its ultimate goal to restore our oceans and waters.

2. Purpose of data collection

You have been invited to participate in an interview, survey or workshop. Resulting data will be specifically used to

……
……

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3. Benefit of participation

Participation is on an entirely voluntary basis and you may not directly benefit. However, you will make a substantial contribution to the BLUE4ALL project aims.

4. Risks of participation

There are no risks foreseen in participation

5. Compliance with ethical and legal regulations

We comply with EU and national ethical and legal regulations, including the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation 2016/680) framework of the EU.

6. Privacy and data protection

Data resulted from surveys and interviews will be recorded and stored on secure servers. This data will not include any personal identification, so that data cannot be traced back to you as the source of the data. Data might be processed and analysed for publication in reports, scientific journals and other forms of project outputs, only in anonymized form. None of the data will be transferred to third parties. Retention time of the original research data is the same as the project duration, although the anonymized resultant data may be stored for longer periods of time to be used in future research.

7. Withdrawal of participation

At any point you may withdraw from participation by stopping the interview, survey or workshop.

8. Researcher contact

In case of any issues or questions you can contact:

Name: …… and contact: ……

9. Consent statement

By signing this form, I state that I have read all information on this document of informed consent, I understand the information provided, and I agree with the terms and conditions provided on the informed consent document.

……..	……	……
Research Participant	Signature	Date
……..	……	……...
Researcher	Signature	Date

Annex III. Template letter of invitation for stakeholder engagement

Dear [**Stakeholder name**],

We are reaching out to invite you to engage in our project, Blue4All. Blue4All aims to develop tools to improve the design and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to support protection and restoration of marine habitats and biodiversity.

The end product will be a user-friendly and publicly available Blueprint Platform with tools for effective, efficient, and resilient MPAs and networks of MPAs encompassing the entire MPA process, including designation, management, and monitoring.

To achieve this, we would like to ask for your valuable input. Your expertise and perspective as a stakeholder will help us better understand the challenges and opportunities in marine conservation and restoration efforts in your specific area. Your responses will provide us with valuable data and insights that, you will contribute to the development of these tools and strategies. By engaging with us, you will have the opportunity to contribute and include your needs to the development of a user-friendly Blueprint Platform.

The survey should take approximately [**estimated time**] to complete, and your responses will be anonymous. Your involvement is highly appreciated, and we assure you that your responses will be handled with the utmost confidentiality and used solely for research purposes. In exchange, you will have the chance to interact with our researchers, fulfil your questions and needs, and get access to our results communicated via newsletters and webinars.

Thank you in advance for your time and contribution. Your input will help shape the future of marine conservation and restoration efforts.

If you have any questions or require further information about the project or survey, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. We value your engagement and look forward to your participation.

If you wish, we invite you to follow the progress of the project by signing up to our email list [**here**]. Kind

regards,

On behalf of Blue4All,

[Name] [Title/Position] [Organization]

The Blue4All project is funded by HORIZON Europe contributing to the EU Mission Restoring our Oceans and Waters. You can read more about the project here.

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