(Grant Agreement 101094014)

Deliverable D4.2 – *Living lab testing package*

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

Version 1.0 | 29 September 2023

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

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Document History

Deliverable Title	Living lab testing package
Brief Description	The primary goal of this deliverable is to provide a preliminary plan of interactions that guides the process of tool co-creation and validation in the Living labs. We present the main interactions with the Living labs and interactions within the project that prepare for reaching out to Living labs. The planned interactions with the Living labs within T4.2 include Stakeholder analysis, Stakeholder Engagement Groups (SEGs), Needs Assessment and Tool Testing and Validation. Our results – sets of validated and co-created socio-economic, governmental, ecological and environmental tools will be incorporated in the Blueprint platform, which will then be tested and validated with the Living labs stakeholders for its user-friendliness, as a part of T4.3.
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Date	Ver.	Contributors	Comment
4 Aug 2023	0.1	Kora Dvorski (WWF Adria)	Development of initial framework and draft.
8 Sept 2023	0.2	Maëlla Sicard (OFB) Hilde Toonen (WU) Kaisa Raatikainen (SYKE) Haidi Cecilie Petersen (SDU) Lois Watt (HELCOM) Francesco de Franco (Torre Guaceto) Riku Varjopuro (SYKE) Francisco R. Barboza (UTARTU) Tin-Yu Lai (SYKE) Agnes Putnik (Keskkonnaamet) Guillaume Marchessaux (UNIPA)	Contributions with comments into the initial draft
13 Sept 2023	0.3	Kora Dvorski (WWF Adria)	Integration of partners' comments into the second draft
22 Sept 2023	0.4	Maëlla Sicard (OFB) Fien de Raedemaecker (VLIZ)	Internal Blue4All review
26 Sept 2023	0.5	Kora Dvorski	Integration of final comments from reviewers
30 Sept	1.0	Kora Dvorski	Sumbission of the report

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Executive Summary

This report focuses on the Living lab testing package (D4.2) which is part of Task 4.2 of the Blue4All project. The Living Lab Testing Package is a step-by-step set of methodologies that guide and standardize the process of tool testing and validation in the project Living labs. Living lab testing package provides guidelines on how to organize co-creation processes in each Living lab and to test and validate socio-economic, governance, as well as ecological and environmental tools and solutions towards effective, efficient and resilient (networks of) MPAs/OECMs. Additionally, the document outlines the process of stakeholder identification and sets up the guidelines on how to gather, coordinate and support dedicated Stakeholder Engagement Groups (SEGs) to facilitate effective stakeholder engagement. The Living lab testing package is aimed at improving conservation and socio-economic outputs of the Living labs through *in situ* co-creation and validation of tools to enable the development of resilient MPAs/OECMs and MPA networks. The ultimate goal is to produce an open-access web-based Blueprint Platform integrating Blue4All findings into user-friendly guidance for effective, efficient and resilient MPAs/OECMs and MPA networks

Key concepts

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

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

Bottom-up approach: A strategy that emphasises the involvement of local communities and stakeholders in decision-making processes regarding management of natural areas and resources. A part of the bottom-up approach is empowering local communities and organizations to take the lead in identifying needs, setting priorities, and implementing projects. It recognizes the importance of local knowledge, participation, and ownership in driving development processes.

Capacity building: Actions aimed at raising ability among stakeholders to actively participate in decision-making processes which include providing training, information, and resources to enhance stakeholder knowledge and skills.

Co-creation: In the context of Blue4All, co-creation is a collaborative process of creating tools and solutions for achieving effective, efficient and resilient MPAs, networks of MPAs, and OECMs. The co-creation of tools and solutions happens between the project partners (scientific community) and the stakeholders in each of the project Living labs (in form of SEGs – stakeholder engagement groups). Term co-creation is also used for collaborative creation/designation of MPAs, or MPA networks.

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Co-management: The arrangement that implies sharing power and responsibility between the government and the local stakeholders. It refers to collaborative decision-making processes in protected or conserved areas. Co-management is a horizontal, rather than a vertical process where, ideally, all stakeholder groups are included in the decision-making.

Contact points (CPs): Contact persons that were assigned among partners in the first year of the project implementation (Table 3) that will be responsible for all direct interactions with their assigned Living lab. The CPs will overlook and supervise the stakeholder engagement within the Living labs in all Blue4All interactions.

Conflict resolution: The approach to solving disagreements in the decision-making processes through the mechanisms of negotiation, and consensus-building to address conflicts and find mutually acceptable solutions.

Information sites (IS): 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): 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.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): Clearly defined areas, 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 (IUCN definition in Day et al., 2012). The essential criterion for MPAs, or protected areas in general, is that nature conservation is the primary objective

MPA networks: Collection of single MPAs working in synergy to fulfil ecological aims more efficiently (WCPA/IUCN, 2007).

Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs): Geographically defined areas, other than MPAs, which are governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services, as well as cultural, spiritual, socio–economic, and other locally relevant values (CBD/COP/DEC/14/8/Annex III, 2018). Fundamental difference between an OECM and an MPA is that in MPAs, in-situ conservation of biodiversity is the primary objective, while the OECMs must show effective biodiversity conservation outcomes, regardless of their objective.

Stakeholder Engagement Groups (SEGs): Focus groups of the Blue4All project. They 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

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civil sector, local community leaders and representatives of stakeholders, and if possible, other key sectoral and interest groups (e.g., scientists).

1. Introduction

1.1. Living lab testing package

The Living lab testing package (D4.2) is a step-by-step set of methodologies that guide and standardize the process of tool application and validation. Living lab testing package is part of Task 4.2 "Co-creating and applying social, governance and economic, as well as ecological and environmental tools in projects Living Labs to validate their effectiveness and build tangible benefits for the involved MPAs and MPA networks". The objective of this task is to improve conservation and socio-economic outputs of the Living labs through in situ co-creation and validation of tools to enable the development of resilient MPAs/OECMs and MPA networks.

The Living lab Testing Package aims to optimize the processes of co-creation and set the baseline for coordination of engagement among all 14 project Living labs. The Living labs are characterized by a variety of environmental and social settings. Some of them are individual MPAs/OECMs, while others make up large MPA networks, spanning through vast marine territories and even several countries. The systems of stakeholder engagement and national legislation vary greatly among the sites.

To organize a consistent, effective and replicable approach towards engaging with main actors in the Living labs, we identified clear roles among the project partners and work packages. As a prerequisite for effective stakeholder engagement, we prepared a detailed process of stakeholder identification and set up the guidelines on how to gather, coordinate and support dedicated Stakeholder Engagement Groups (SEGs).

Standardizing the process of tool testing and validation in the Living labs, we aim to facilitate effective in-situ actions driven by the stakeholders. Co-creating the tools with the variety of Living labs across Europe would bring valuable findings to the project that we would incorporate into the final project result, being an open-access Blueprint platform to inform the design and management of MPAs across European seas. On the other hand, the project Living labs would gather and try out new tools and solutions tailored for their specific natural and social environments. Additionally, SEGs' active participation in the project sets a foundation for the inclusive, effective and efficient development of future processes of stakeholder engagement in the protected or conserved sites.

1.2 Major interactions with the Blue4All Living labs

To ensure the efficient and coordinated process in all Living labs, this testing package guides the user through the **five interactions** with the Living labs (see also figure 1). Those interactions will be flexible and adaptable to various settings of the Living labs:

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1. Mapping stakeholders and stakeholder analysis. Stakeholders may include local communities, local and national government bodies, non-governmental organizations, researchers, private businesses and others. We will analyse which stakeholders are present in each Living lab and in what ways they are connected to the functioning of the site. We will invite stakeholders to join the SEG and see their motivation and availability for the SEG meetings.

2. Establishing Stakeholder Engagement Groups (SEGs). We will establish SEGs in each Living lab to be the main link between the Living lab and the project. The SEG is a working group consisting of the representatives of groups of Living lab's stakeholders that are interested, relevant and available to contribute to the project. SEGs represent the bottom-up approach and will take part in the co-creation of social, governance and economic, ecological and environmental tools for (networks of) MPAs and OECMs.

3. Needs assessment – Stakeholders will address needs specific for their stakeholder group and the Living lab, enabling us to select relevant sets of tools and adapt them for their Living lab. Based on SEGs inputs, the existing socio-economic, governmental, environmental and ecological tools will be further adapted by WP2 and WP3 to the specific needs and conservation and management objectives in each Living lab.

4. Tool testing is a process where SEGs receive a set of tools to develop them for their specific settings and implement, monitor and evaluate their field application functionality to guide their further enhancement. WP2 and WP3 will then adapt the tools based on SEGs' feedback and provide them for re-implementation and final validation.

5. Tool validation – after the tools have been co-developed by WP2, WP3 based on SEGs' input, they are re-implemented for final validation of tool field functionality. The result of the tool validation would be field-tested and stakeholder validated tools will be co-created in a specific setting of each Living lab.

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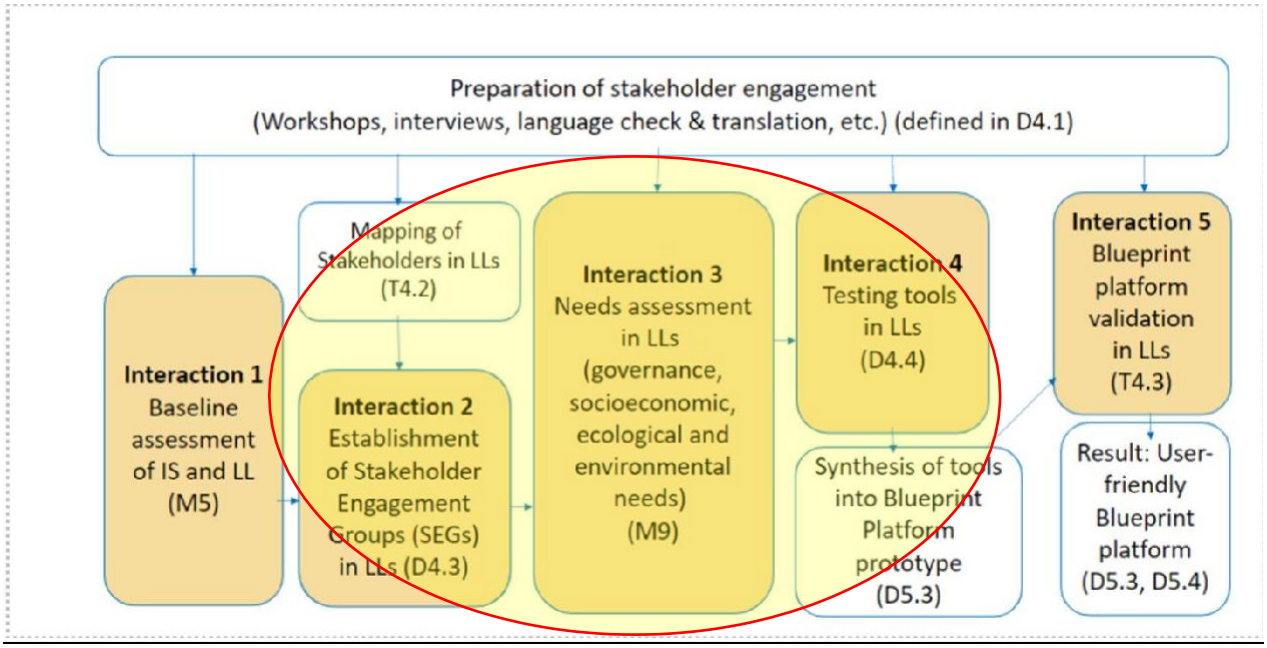

Fig.1 Main interactions with the Living labs as part of this testing package (in a red circle).

1.3 Expected Results

- Bottom-up approach and co-creation processes tested in each Living lab
- Field-tested and stakeholder-validated social, governance, economic, ecological and environmental tools towards effective, efficient and resilient (networks of) MPAs.

The final result: The open-access, web-based Blueprint Platform which will integrate BLUE4ALL findings into a user-friendly guidance for effective, efficient and resilient MPAs and MPA networks.

2. Interaction Flow

2.1. Contact Points and how interactions with the Living labs are organized

WP4 lead (WWF Adria) will coordinate and supervise interactions with the Living labs throughout the project. They will do so through the contact points (CPs) which were assigned within the project partnership (Table 3 in chapter 2.6). CPs will be responsible for all direct interactions with their assigned Living lab. They will also overlook and supervise the stakeholder engagement within the Living labs in all Blue4All interactions.

Throughout each project assessment, the CPs will be in consultation and communication with the Living lab staff who will be able to provide direct knowledge and information about the Living lab and its stakeholders. CPs will reach out to experts within their assigned Living lab, not necessarily only MPA directors and managers, but also i.e. conservation or other department officers, community engagement officers, administrative officers, or any person in the Living lab that would

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be available for the engagement in the project and well-informed about the Living lab's stakeholders and socio-economic, governance, ecological and environmental features.

To maintain successful stakeholder engagement for the duration of the project and beyond, it is crucial that the CP who will be in contact with the stakeholders is positively recognized among the stakeholders and maintains with them a good relationship.

The CP's roles:

- Communicates regularly with WP4 lead (WWF Adria) and delivers tasks accordingly;
- Guides the Stakeholder engagement groups (SEGs) and makes sure that the processes feed into the Blue4All project;
- Adapts the assessment materials to the local cultural context and translates or adapts the language of materials and results if needed;
- Conducts stakeholder analysis in consultation with the Living lab managers and reaching out to stakeholder groups directly;
- Organizes SEG meetings and makes sure they contribute to the Blue4All project;
    - Date and schedule – coordinates with the project activities and adapts to ongoing seasonal activities within the Living lab
    - Organizes the signing of documentation and delivering to WP4
    - Prepares meeting agenda
    - Facilitates the meetings, if not agreed differently, keeping the project goal at the point of the meeting, ensuring the meeting feeds into the Blue4All project – organizes discussions, surveys, questionnaires, follow-ups if needed
- Supports SEGs through need assessment, tool selection, implementation and validation
- Supports SEGs in Blueprint Platform testing and validation

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2.2. Internal loops

To avoid stakeholder fatigue by reaching out to stakeholders too many times, internal loops will be implemented. As agreed in the D4.1 Stakeholder engagement plan, the internal loops are shown in Fig 2.

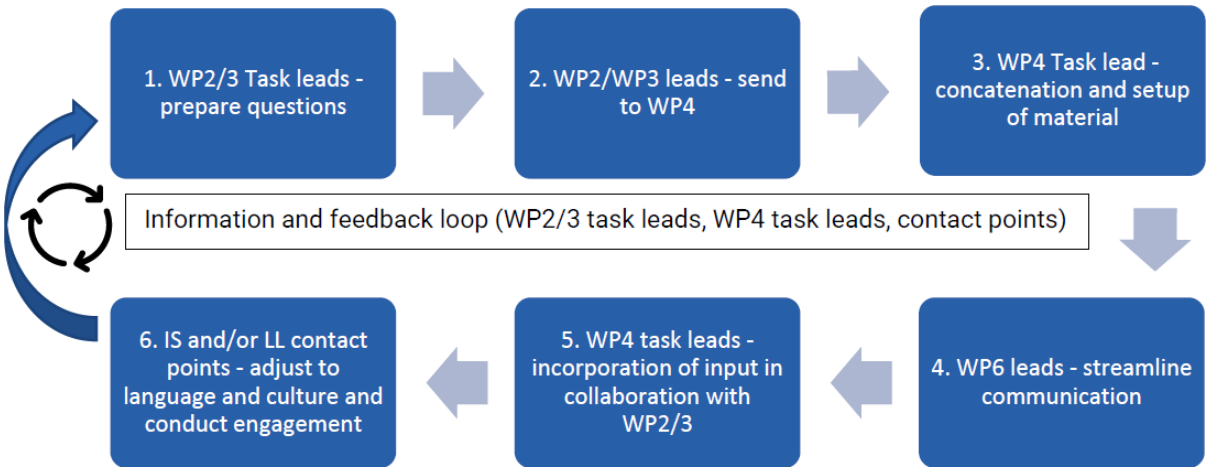

Fig. 2 Internal loop of preparation and information handling. After the engagement in LL, information will be delivered to the relevant task leads who will evaluate if extra interaction with the LL is needed to elaborate on information given during the initial interaction.

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2.3. Interactions between the work packages

In Blue4All, WP2 and WP3 are preparing socio-economic, governmental, ecological, and environmental tools for testing in Living Labs. WP4 oversees stakeholder analysis, optimizing tool testing and liaising intensively with the Living Labs, aided by designated project contact points (CPs). Meanwhile, WP6 refines assessment language, ensuring clarity for all stakeholders. By late 2025, WP5 collaborates with WP4 for Blueprint platform testing. The synergy, especially between WP2, WP3, and WP4, forms the backbone of tool testing and validation in the Living labs. The process and timeline is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Timeline of interactions

Task	Time	Involved	Comments
Stakeholder analysis	October – December 2023	WP4, CP (WP2, WP3)	In line or parallel with the baseline assessment in the LLs (T4.1)
Call for SEG members SEGs are formed Letter of Intent	Until 31 January 2024	WP4 (D4.3), CP	31 January 2024 is due date when we need to have all SEGs formed
Needs Assessment	January – March 2024	Assessment questions prepared by WP2, WP3 (M7, M8) Assessment conducted by WP4 (M9), CP	Direct needs of the stakeholders in SEGs concerning the LL
Needs analysis and tool compilation	March - August 2024	WP2 (M10), WP3 (M11)	Preparing a set of tools to test within each LL, based on needs
Tool testing and validation	August 2024 – 30 October 2025	WP4 (D4.4), CP, SEGs	30 October 2025 due date for tool validation reports (D4.4)
Blueprint platform testing	Nov 2025 – Sept 2026	WP4 (T4.3), WP5, CP, SEGs	

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2.4. Work packages roles

WP1

- Provide a theoretical framework and a comprehensive knowledge base for the interactions with the Living labs (D1.1, D1.2, D1.3)

WP2 and WP3 (WP2, WP3 and WP4 interactions are explained in detail in table 1)

- Create a base of social, governance and economic tools
- Create a base of ecological and environmental tools
- Prepare protocols for need assessment
- Analyse the needs and select tools for testing and validation in each Living lab
- Adapt the tools according to SEG's feedback to re-implement
- Select successful tools to incorporate in the Blueprint platform

WP4

- Initiate and coordinate all interactions with the LLs (tasks T4.2, T4.3)
- Coordinate the CPs
- Prepare stakeholder analysis
- Letter of intent for SEGs (D4.3 - signed in all LLs)
- Lead the processes of: SEG establishment, needs assessment, tool testing (T4.2)
- Deliver all assessment materials from the LL (CPs) to WP2 and WP3

WP5

- Align the testing process with the Green List Standards (together with WP2, WP3, and CPs interested in the process)
- Blueprint platform testing and validation (Nov 2025 – Sept 2026)

WP6

- Distribute bi-monthly newsletter to inform Information sites, Living labs and other partners on the process and make all information available on Blue4All website.
- Review assessment materials from WP2 and WP3 and reformulate if needed to make the language approachable to a broad range of stakeholders

2.5. GDPR aspects

Information collected during interviews, surveys, as well as all interactions that may contain stakeholders' personal data will be treated confidentially. This chapter specifically applies to collected SEG member information and to the materials collected from the questionnaires and

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interviews, as well as any recordings of the on-line meetings with the SEG members and stakeholders.

Blue4All must be compliant with the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) regarding the protection of personal data from any survey or questionnaire that involves the collection of this type of data. Furthermore, personal data must not be transferred to other entities. Blue4All will collect personal data from those interacting with the project through workshops, interviews, demo sessions or the newsletter, always in compliance with the GDPR. Consent will always be obtained before collecting personal data using an Informed Consent Form (Annex A), which will be developed and used to inform and obtain the written consent of each individual outside of the consortia participating in the project activities and/or each individual whose personal data is to be collected in the project (i.e. for the purpose of the newsletter, public surveys, interviews, interactive workshops - demos, recorded training sessions and webinars). Participation in these activities will always be entirely voluntary. The Informed Consent Form has been developed as a part of deliverable D7.3 and is available in Annex A: Informed Consent Form. WP4 with lead partner WWF Adria is responsible for delivering the Informed Consent Form to all participants. WP7 with lead partner RBINS is responsible for developing The Data Management Plan (DMP) and making sure that all personal data is handled in line with the GDPR.

3. Living Labs

In the project we partner-up with 14 Living labs, among them 5 are in the Mediterranean, 5 in the N-E Atlantic and 4 in the Baltic Sea. Among the Living labs, 9 are single MPAs, while 5 are MPA networks (some of them very large networks of more than 100 MPAs (i.e., Baltic Sea MPA network includes all 188 HELCOM MPAs)). Therefore, stakeholder engagement should be very flexible depending on the local specificities of each Living lab.

Table 2. List of Living labs

Sea basin	MPA name	Single/network
MED	Capo Carbonara	single
	Torre Guaceto	single
	Otranto Leuca	single
	Capo Gallo	single
	Platamuni, Katic and Stari Ulcinj	National network (3 MPAs)
N-E Atlantic	Danish Wadden Sea	single
	SBZ 1-3	single
	Vlaamse Banken	single
	Irish MPA network extension	National network
	French Network Channel - North Sea	National network (38 MPAs)
Baltic	Vainameri MPA	single

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	Vaike vain MPA	single
	Finland MPA network development process	National network
	Baltic Sea MPA network	Transboundary network (188 MPAs)

3.1. List of Contact points (CPs)

Contact points (CPs) are designated individuals from project partners familiar with specific Living Labs, established during the first project year at the interim General Assembly meeting (Table 3). While CPs exist for both Living Labs and Information sites, this D4.2 report focuses on Living Lab CPs. Throughout the project, they handle direct interactions with their respective Living Labs and oversee stakeholder engagement in all Blue4All interactions.

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Table 3: Contact information of the Contact points per Blue4all Living lab.

No	Living Labs (country)	Project contact point (CP)	Name	Email
1	**Platamuni, Katič and Stari Ulcinj (MNE)**	WWF Adria	Kora Dvorski	kdvorski@wwfadria.org
2	**Capo Carbonara (I)**	MEDSEA FOUNDATION	Francesca Frau	francescafrau@medseafoundation.org
3	**Torre Guaceto (I)**	CMCC	Lecci Rita	rita.lecci@cmcc.it
4	**Otranto Leuca (I)**	CMCC	Lecci Rita	rita.lecci@cmcc.it
5	**Area Naturale Marina Protetta Capo Gallo - Isola delle Femmine (I)**	UNIPA	Gianluca Sarà	gianluca.sara@unipa.it
6	**Väinameri MPA (EST)**	Estonian Environmental Board	Agnes Putnik	agnes.putnik@keskkonnaamet.ee
7	**Väike väin MPA (EST)**	Estonian Environmental Board	Agnes Putnik	agnes.putnik@keskkonnaamet.ee
8	**Finland National MPA network (FIN)**	SYKE	Varjopuro Riku	riku.varjopuro@syke.fi
9	**Baltic Sea MPA network (DK-S-FIN-RUS-EST-LV-LT-PL-D)**	HELCOM	Jannica Haldin	jannica.haldin@helcom.fi
10	**Irish MPA network expansion (IRL)**	UCD	Crowe Tasman	tasman.crowe@ucd.ie
11	**Danish Wadden Sea (DK)**	SDU	Cecilie Petersen/Cintia Organo Quintana	cep@sdu.dk / cintia@biology.sdu.dk
12	**Vlaamse Banken (BE)**	RBINS	Degraer Steven	sdegraer@naturalsciences.be
13	**SBZ 1-3 (BE)**	RBINS	Degraer Steven	sdegraer@naturalsciences.be
14	**French Network Natura 2000 Channel**	OFB	Maëlla Sicard	maella.sicard@ofb.gouv.fr

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4. Description of the process

4.1. Utilizing the theoretical framework, knowledge base and intelligence gathering

Work package 1 with deliverables D1.1, D1.2 and D1.3 sets a theoretical framework and the knowledge base for the project interactions. These deliverables, along with work package 4 deliverable D4.1 feed into processes of tool testing and validation in the Living labs and should be consulted in all main interactions with the CPs and Living labs.

WP1 provides an essential knowledge foundation for the engagement with the Living labs. It compiles a theoretical framework and knowledge base, outlined in three key reports:

- D1.1: *Report on the benchmarking of institutional and policy frameworks* provides a comprehensive overview of institutions and policies relevant to marine protected areas (MPAs) in Europe, covering also the means and frameworks for public participation in MPAs across Europe.
- D1.2: *Report on the available frameworks and tools for building constituency and expectations management* introduces the bottom-up approach in marine conservation, examines stakeholder engagement strategies in Europe and suggests ways to enhance engagement. The report also emphasizes the role of gender and intersectionality in marine conservation, providing guidelines for their integration within this project's stakeholder engagements.
- D1.3: *Report on the review of socio-ecological framework and methodologies* covers evaluation of ecosystem services within (networks of) MPAs, exploration of business cases and opportunities linked to MPAs and assessment of tools and methodologies to gauge and address impacts related to MPAs/OECMs.

WP2 and WP3 will draw from these reports and from the T4.1 *Intelligence gathering* from the Information sites for the preparation of Living labs assessments and the tool testing and validation. Meanwhile, WP4 will utilize WP1's insights when planning on adapting interactions to each of the Living Labs, and will also reference D4.1 *Information sites engagement plan* to inform stakeholder engagement, stakeholder analysis, addressing possible risks, informing conflict resolution strategies, etc. The interactions between the tasks in Blue4All are shown in the Fig. 3. All the above mentioned deliverables refer to the tasks in the picture with the same numbering. The processes that feed into WP2, WP3, and basically prepare assessment materials for all the interactions with the Living labs are encircled in red. Direct interactions with the Living labs are encircled in blue.

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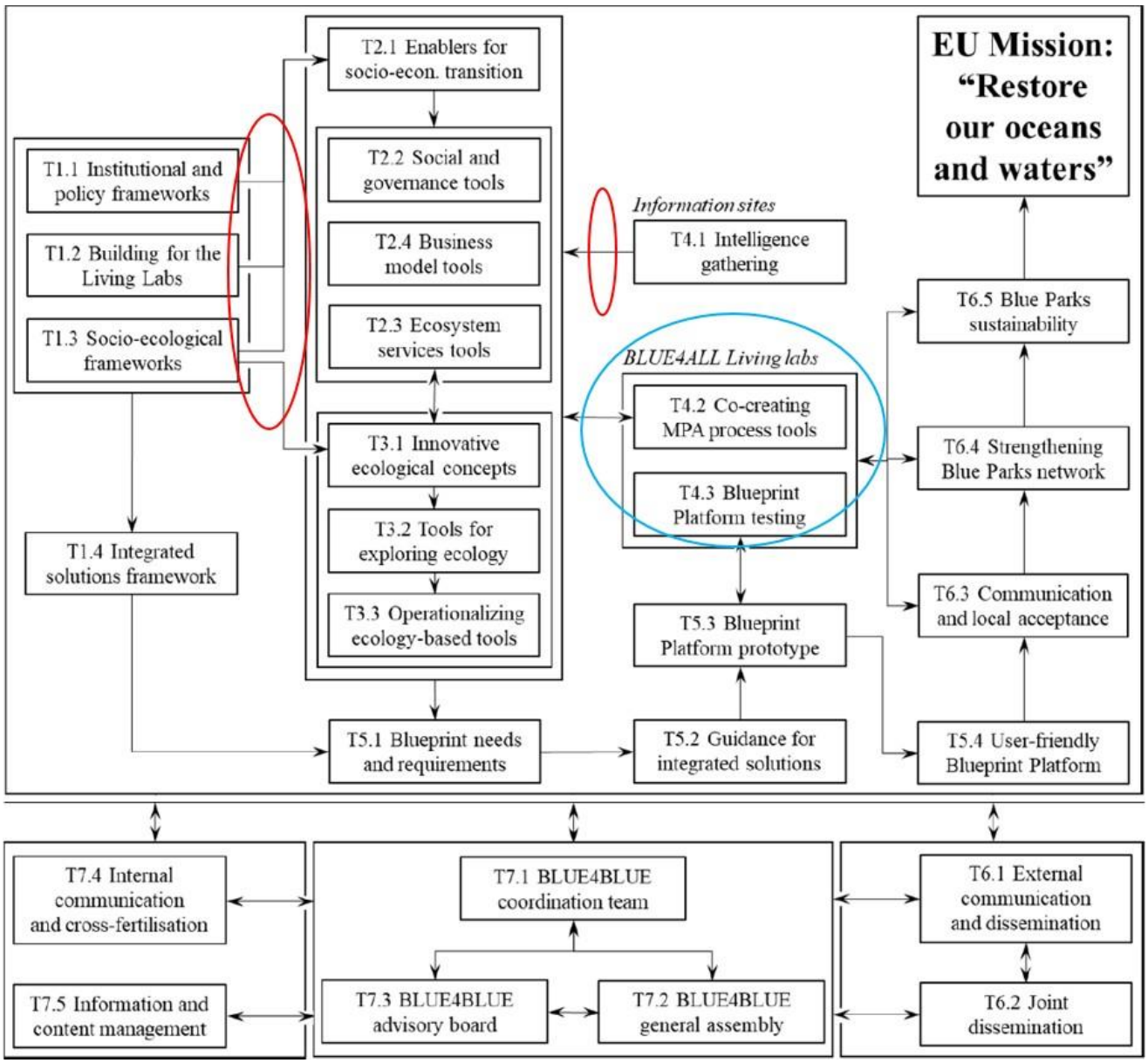

Fig. 3 BLUE4ALL task flow. Encircled in red: interactions that feed into WP2 and WP3, and consequently T4.2 *Co-creating MPA processes*. Encircled in blue: direct interactions with the Blue4All Living labs.

4.2. Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder analysis is a way of understanding Living labs through the stakeholders. This way we will look at their interests, objectives, expectations, knowledge, relationships and interactions. Relevant stakeholder groups that will be included in the tool co-creation and validation include MPA managers, local communities, fishers, businesses, NGOs, government agencies, academia, and others. For each Living lab, we will identify all existing stakeholder groups. When choosing the stakeholders that will represent the SEG, we will focus on the stakeholders that are motivated to

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participate and have the knowledge they can contribute with in the tool co-creation, in order to ensure the group is productive and headed towards a shared goal.

We should be aware of the possible risks such as exclusion and conflicting stakeholder groups (see deliverable D4.1 Information testing package, chapter 3.3 Risks). We can prevent exclusion by being aware of our ways of communication, regarding language, wording and platforms we use, accessibility of the physical meetings. In the stakeholder analysis phase, we need to consider that we might engage stakeholder groups from different backgrounds that may have conflicting interests, priorities, or perspectives in the SEG-s. By knowing the possible conflicting groups, we can plan in advance the measures to mitigate the conflicts of the SEG operations and during SEG meetings (conflict mitigation measures are covered in the chapter 3.3 Interactions).

4.2.1. Mapping of stakeholder interest and influence

As a part of stakeholder analysis, we need to understand influence and interest of each stakeholder group. **Influence** in the context of Blue4All is the level of knowledge and/or practical experience in either socioeconomic, governmental, environmental and/or ecological aspects of the Living lab. Some level of influence regarding the Living lab is required from the SEG members in order to bring relevant input to the project, understand the needs of their Living lab as well as the importance of implementing, testing and validating the tools in their Living lab. We will make sure to support the SEGs through capacity building activities and workshops to make sure everyone participates and is informed of the activities, tools and topics that matter to a broader range of stakeholders. In the context of Blue4All, **interest** is stakeholders' attitude towards actively participating in the Blue4All project and willingness to contribute to their Living lab in either ecological, environmental or social aspect. Interest also refers in this case to their capacity and availability to do so.

Stakeholder analysis is a basis for organizing efficient stakeholder engagement groups that will take part in tool implementation, testing and validation in their Living labs. In stakeholder analysis, we should ask ourselves:

- Who do we involve? (types of stakeholders, i. e. academia, NGO, fisheries, etc., connection to the LL, form of involvement in the MPA – formal, non-formal, co-management, non-existent)
- Why do we involve them? (our expectations)
- How do we value their voice? (their level of knowledge and experience of social, economic, governmental, environmental, ecological, or other aspects of the Living lab)
- Why do they wish to be involved? (their motivations and expectations, previous experience of participating in projects)
- Why might they wish not to be involved? (their attitude toward the project, possible conflicts with other stakeholders, factors that could prevent them from joining/obstacles to participate, biases, previous experience participating in projects or stakeholder groups)

WP4 will, in consultation with other work packages and CPs, create:

- stakeholder analysis table (first scanning) – for CPs to conduct analysis with the MPA managers

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- invitation with the short questionnaire for the stakeholders (second scanning) – to ask for direct feedback from stakeholders/stakeholder groups of their influence and interest

4.2.2. Stakeholder Analysis in Singular MPAs and small MPA networks

First scanning of stakeholders: the CP will organize a guided interview with the MPA manager or other relevant authority that has a comprehensive knowledge of the Living lab's stakeholders. They will list all the existing stakeholder groups and analyse them through a set of questions in the stakeholder analysis table. The emphasis is to include all stakeholders in the scanning, not only the ones that the manager prefers to work with, and this should be taken into account by each CP.

To avoid biases towards the stakeholders by either MPA manager or the CP, we will make sure to reach out to each identified stakeholder group that was identified to have a certain level of knowledge related to the Living labs, individually and directly through **the second scanning**. CPs will send an invitation to each recognized stakeholder group, writing that they have been recognized as stakeholders and that their contribution to the co-creation in the project could be valuable. The call should contain information on the main roles and tasks within the SEGs. The invitation will be accompanied with a short questionnaire on their self-assessed knowledge and awareness on certain topics, their motivation and availability to join, as well as any obstacles they might foresee to joining and taking an active part in the group. In case of stakeholders from scientific community and academia, we could reach out to a specific person whose expertise we find valuable for the process. In case of stakeholder groups such as fisheries organizations, non-profit organizations, and administration, the call should be directed towards the whole organization, leaving to them to choose the representative.

4.2.3. Stakeholder Analysis in large or transboundary MPA networks

For the Living labs that are large MPA networks, we will plan our approach differently and try to adapt to their contexts. CPs of larger MPA networks are either working in organizations that are linked to their assigned Living labs, or are in close contact with such organizations (i.e. HELCOM is responsible for Baltic Sea MPA network, OFB for French Network Channel, SYKE is in close contact with the Ministry of Environment of Finland, involved in management of Finland MPA network).

Larger MPA networks already have working groups or higher-level bodies and structures that could be utilized for the project. Not being able to conduct a comprehensive stakeholder analysis for such large networks, the project will analyse the working groups active in the network. CPs will analyse working groups in their assigned Living lab similarly to the process explained in previous chapter 3.1.2. (conducting analysis table and reaching out to the groups directly) to organize approach, in constant back-and-forth communication with WP4 and other work packages. CPs will make sure that the processes in those working groups (i.e., their regular meetings) feed into the Blue4All process.

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4.3. Establishing Stakeholder Engagement Groups (SEGs)

4.3.1. Participation

SEGs are the working groups in each Living lab, responsible for co-creation, implementation and validation of social, governance, economic, ecological and environmental tools, and finally testing the Blueprint platform. SEGs are a joint committee of MPA managing bodies, fisheries representatives, scientists, NGOs, tourism operators, private businesses, etc.

SEGs would strongly influence the final shaping of the tools and Blueprint platform and the Living labs would be impacted by their co-creation processes. Therefore, they should ideally be high influence/high interest and their members need to be chosen carefully to form a productive team for co-creation processes. SEG members will be engaged in tool testing and validation through **participation/involvement level** (table 4)**.** In such a dynamic, we will ensure that their inputs and concerns are fully understood and incorporated in the project work. The results of their engagement will enable us to develop high quality and useful tools tailored for their Living lab (table 5). SEG members will be a part of the team, participating in the working meetings, engaging in delivering tasks, and taking responsibility for a certain area or activity, but would not have the full responsibility as it would be in the partnership or collaboration. **They will sign a non-binding Letter of intent** stating they will take active part in the Blue4All project.

Table 4. Levels of communication according to influence and interest, based on 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

Table 5. 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.

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4.3.2. SEGs in single MPAs or small MPA networks

CPs of singular MPAs/small networks will be involved in coordination of SEGs in collaboration with the Living lab staff. CPs of large MPA networks will not necessarily always coordinate SEG meetings, as the project would probably need to adapt to those groups' regular meetings. In that case, CPs will be on those meetings to represent the project and make sure that the results of those meetings contribute to Blue4All. This could include follow-up questionnaires and surveys after the meeting, reaching out to specific persons, or finding experts and relevant persons and groups more locally, among the group members' network of contacts. In singular MPAs/small networks we aim to organize stakeholder representation so that one person presents each stakeholder group. In networks of MPAs this will be organized differently as we will engage higher-level (national/regional) stakeholders at the start, and in the later stages inform and consult with more local levels of stakeholders and groups to contribute to the process of tool testing and implementation. Generally, in MPA networks we will combine national/regional with the local levels of involvement, according to the stages of the project.

When contacting representatives of stakeholder groups in the SEGs, we need to take care that the person who represents the group acknowledges that they represent the views of the whole sector, not only their personal views (Santarossa et al, 2019). Several times during the project, the SEG representatives need to report to their local stakeholder groups and inform the whole community about the progress.

SEG members need to be recruited and informed about the project some time before we start with regular engagement and expect their input. This way we will ensure they become familiar with the project goals. We can then get to know their capacities and plan the activities accordingly, decide if we organize capacity building workshops to ensure more equitable participation and empowerment of the different stakeholders (Santarossa et al, 2019). However, organization of the meetings SEG meetings and capacity-building workshops will be agreed during the process.

All SEG members sign the non-binding document, i.e. the Letter of Intent on the first SEG meeting. The Letter of Intent will be produced by WP4 by December of 2023 the latest and distributed to all CPs to present at their first SEG meeting. Signing the Letter of Intent, stakeholders will agree to be involved in the Blue4All project and contribute to the project's objectives. The letter will outline the activities that the SEGs will take part in. A Letter of Intent will be signed by SEG members of each Living lab by 31 January 2024 (as a part of deliverable D4.3).

4.4. Interactions with the Stakeholder engagement groups

4.4.1. Meetings of Stakeholder engagement groups

SEG interactions will start with a kick-off meeting and signing the Letter of Intent. Afterwards, meetings and other forms of interactions such as surveys, interviews and follow-up sessions will be

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organized in agreement between WP4 and CPs. Some guidelines for organizing successful meetings are presented below:

The main ingredients of an effective meeting according to RAC/SPA and IUCN-Med (2013) are:

1. Common focus on the content.
2. Common focus on the process.
3. Responsible person assigned for maintaining an open and balanced conversational flow.
4. Responsible person assigned for protecting individuals from personal attack.
5. Everyone's role is clearly defined and agreed upon for the duration of the meeting.

In order to involve more of the stakeholders, meetings will be live, as much as possible.

When planning a meeting, we need to ask basic questions, such as (adapted from RAC/SPA and IUCN-Med, 2013):

1. Why have a meeting? What are the objectives and expectations?
2. What type of meeting do you want to have?
3. Whom do you want to attend?
4. What kind of involvement and participation do you want?
5. How many people do you want to attend?
6. Where are you going to meet? How should the room be arranged?
7. What roles and responsibilities should individuals have during the meeting?
8. Who will have the power and authority to make decisions?
9. What methods and techniques of discussing, planning problem solving and decision-making are you going to use?
10. Will there be an agenda?
11. Will there be presentations?
12. Will there be some kind of record?
13. What are the desired outcomes of the meeting?
14. How are you going to determine tasks? Deadlines? And responsibilities?
15. How to feed input from other Living labs? (presentation by CP of the other LL or some other means?)

4.4.2. The Interaction Method

RAC/SPA and IUCN-Med (2013) proposed the interaction method as one of the most successful ways of leading a meeting. The interaction method is based on establishing four roles: facilitator,recorder, member and manager.

1. **The Facilitator** is a neutral member of the group who does not contribute their ideas to the meeting. Their role is establishing and keeping a conversational flow and keeping the group focused on the task at hand (content and process). Facilitator takes care of maintaining an

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open and balanced conversation, ensuring that everyone has time to speak and that all individuals are protected from personal attack. Facilitator opens and closes the meeting and takes care of the time.

2. **The Recorder** is also a neutral member of the group that writes down the basic ideas on a large sheet of paper in front of other participants. They do not paraphrase but write using the words of each speaker. The objective is to capture the main points of the meeting so they can be returned to later. They write down new ideas, decisions taken and direct feedback from the participants. Recorder reports to CP and WP4, who reports to WP2 and WP3 for any adaptation of the process.
3. **The Group Members** are active participants of the meeting, contributing their ideas and opinions. The group members are responsible for keeping the facilitator and the recorder in their neutral role. The control of what happens during the meeting is in the hands of the group members – they can overrule the suggestions of the facilitator, suggest new procedures and generally determine the course of the meeting.
4. **The Manager** does not run the meeting but becomes an active group member. The interaction method is also used to keep the "boss" from making all the decisions and retaining all power and responsibilities. Instead, it helps establish a co-management approach where all group members of the group are equal and make decisions together.

If we choose the interaction method for the SEG meetings, the method should be explained and agreed upon by all SEG members. The four roles should be defined in one of the first meetings and agreed upon by all members. CP could be in the role of the **Facilitator**, or, alternatively, the group should find a new, neutral person for that role. It would be useful to have a person to be the **Recorder**, also a neutral role, sharing the responsibility of reporting with the CP. The group is responsible for keeping the facilitator and recorder in their neutral role. Living lab manager or director, if taking part in the meetings, should be actively and equally involved with the rest of the group, giving their opinion and not being the one responsible for the final decisions or being in the position of power within the group. Other SEG members are in the role of Group Members, actively stating their opinion in the meeting discussions.

4.4.3. Other methods for SEG meetings

- **Participatory mapping** - stakeholders are involved in the creation of maps that reflect their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives, as well as the tools they use, and the solutions they need. This can be a useful tool for identifying resources, challenges, and opportunities within the Living labs.
- **Shared history exercise** – in case there is a clearly identified problem or set of related problems that has been controversial, a joint discussion on the history of the problem and different stakeholders' relation to it can be very useful and informative. It helps the stakeholders to understand others' views and motivations collaborative. During the shared

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history exercise, participants spend 30 minutes creating a timeline on butcher paper (more information in the paper by Childs et al, 2013).

- **Learning exchange** – representatives of different stakeholder groups share their experience with the others. This is a good basis for achieving better understanding of different stakeholder groups and getting to know their knowledge and expertise. Focus is not only on sharing best practices but opening a discussion and generating ideas for improvement.

4.4.4. Frequency of interactions

SEGs interactions will take place between November 2023 and September 2026 (2 years and 10m), in line with the project phases: needs assessment, tool testing, tool validation, Blueprint platform testing, and validation. Regular meetings ensure that stakeholders that do not feel involved build a sense of ownership in the MPA/OECM. However, meetings should be organized in line with MPA activities and according to SEG members' availability. We will use follow-up sessions, questionnaires and interviews as alternative methods when organizing a meeting is not possible. The SEG engagements should cover:

I. Needs Assessment
II. Preparing for Implementation of Tools
III. Feedback and Evaluation of Tools (regular during the implementation period)
IV. Re-implementation of Tools
V. Tool Validation
VI. Blueprint platform testing
VII. Blueprint platform validation

4.5. Tool testing and validation

4.5.1. Needs Assessment and Tool Selection

We use co-creation, a collaborative process that involves multiple project partners and stakeholders in the design and implementation of tools for MPAs/OECMs tailored for the specific Living labs. To set up a basis for the co-creation with the Living Labs, we will assess the needs for Social, Governance, Economic, Ecological and Environmental Tools in each Living lab. We will approach the SEGs within each Living lab with a set of pre-defined questions about the tools they use, or have used, and their needs for new tools and solutions. This information would enable WP2 and WP3 to prepare a set of tools for validation and co-creation within each Living lab, adapted to their setting.

Steps:

1. **Protocol** for Needs Assessment in the Living labs created by WP2 and WP3 which contains the guidelines for collecting information on needs in SEG groups (for CPs)
2. **Surveys** about stakeholder needs prepared by WP2, WP3. Needs Assessment will be a part of the SEG meetings or a follow-up to a meeting in form of a questionnaire for all SEG

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members. It is also possible to organize a discussion at the SEG meeting where priorities are agreed upon. Assessment process is coordinated by the CPs.

3. WP4 delivers Information packages on SEGs' governance, socioeconomic, ecological and environmental **needs** to WP2 and WP3.
4. Based on these findings, WP2 and WP3 develop a set of prototype tools for the validation and co-creation by the Living Labs.
5. Prototype tools are delivered to SEGs after going through Internal Loop (WP4) and presented on the SEG meeting or through the capacity building workshop for SEG members. The workshop should present the tool and support implementation and validation processes, details will be agreed upon on the way.

4.5.2. Tool testing

Stakeholders receive and agree how best to implement selected tools. After implementation they report on tool field application functionality to guide further enhancement of the tools. The general process is outlined below, but a more detailed instructions on validating and co-creating tools with the SEGs, adapted to the local conditions will be developed by WP4 in collaboration with the CPs and WP2 and WP3 until August 2024.

1. Sets of tools for Implementation and Validation presented in the SEG meeting (CP, LLMC)
2. Instructions on validating and co-creating tools with the SEGs (WP4, CP, WP2, WP3)
3. Support in tool implementation:
    1. **Capacity building workshop** for stakeholders. We will define within the partnership:
        i. Who leads the workshop
        ii. Who to involve
        iii. How to provide translation if needed
        iv. Shared topics – is the workshop for all Living labs, or organized locally
    2. **Individual meetings** and ongoing support from the CP to support specific tool implementation
4. Implementation of tools, consider to…
    1. **Publicly inform the local stakeholders** in advance of the tool implementation
    2. **Plan timing** – organize testing in the off-season months, as some time is needed for establishing the process. We expect higher stakeholder engagement when they are not preoccupied with seasonal work.

4.5.3. Tool validation

Tool validation is a continuous process that we run parallel with the tool testing. CP will guide SEGs through the process. The general overview of steps we need to take is outlined below, but a more detailed step-by-step process will be developed by WP4 in collaboration with WP2 and WP3 until August 2024.

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1. Monitoring and Evaluation of Tool Effectiveness: During tool implementation, SEGs need to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness. Stakeholders may play an important role in data collection and monitoring tool effectiveness. **Regular feedback and evaluation sessions should be organized** (evaluation questions prepared by WP2 and WP3, going through internal loop)**.** Feedback on tool effectiveness reported by the SEGs and delivered to WP2 and WP3 who then achieve real-time information on the shortcomings of tested tools and need for their adaptation. WP2 and WP3 will have developed clear criteria to measure tool effectiveness, which they would compare to collected data and stakeholder feedback.
2. Adaptation. Based on the monitoring and evaluation, the tools are adapted by WP2 and WP3 to better fit the needs and context of the stakeholders. This is an ongoing process, as tools may need to be adapted multiple times as conditions change, or new challenges arise.
3. Re-implementation of tools for the final validation. After adaptation, tools will be implemented again before the final validation, or new tools will be adopted and tested. The process is followed with monitoring and evaluation.
4. Final validation implemented in the SEG meeting.
5. Final tool validation reports[1] collected. Reports comprise the gathered experiences and recommendations on tool functionality from Living Labs (one per Living Lab).

Result of the final validation: WP2 and WP3 will propose robust social and governance tools towards effective, efficient and resilient (networks of) MPAs.

Next steps: Co-creation and validation of the Blueprint Platform. Tools that have passed through validation process will be included in the Panorama booklet with series of solution case studies for MPAs.

Informing the Blueprint design and optimizing user-friendliness, efficiency and effectiveness in the Living Labs will be conducted in collaboration with the SEGs, coordinated by WP4 and WP5.

Final result: Open-access, web-based Blueprint Platform (D5.3) which will integrate BLUE4ALL findings into a user-friendly guidance for effective, efficient and resilient MPAs and MPA networks.

5. Conclusion

The Living Lab Testing Package (Blue4All D4.2) provides guidelines on how to organize co-creation processes in each Living lab and to test and validate social, economic, governance, as well as ecological and environmental tools and solutions towards effective, efficient and resilient (networks of) MPAs/OECMs. This process increases stakeholder engagement and establishes participation of stakeholders in the project.

[1] Deliverable D4.4 – Tool validation reports. Due date month 34.

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Through tool co-creation of tools in the Living labs, the project sites can learn and adopt new solutions tailored to their needs. All these experiences will be put together in the final Blueprint platform open for everyone.

This process sets a foundation for more effective stakeholder engagement in the protected or conserved sites, highlighting the importance of stakeholders being involved in decision-making regarding site management to increase buy-in and effective conservation. Ultimately, we aim to improve the health and productivity of the Living labs and contribute to building stronger marine protected and conserved areas and networks of areas.

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6. Annexes

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

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