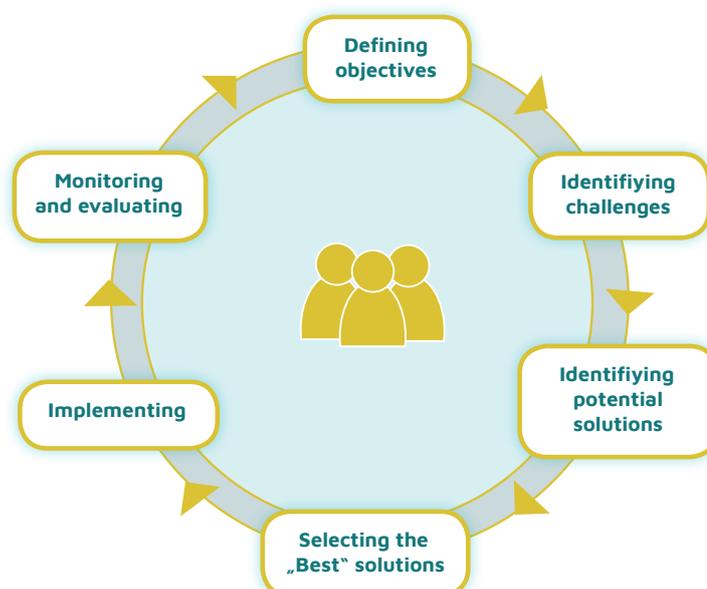


Identifying Goals: Mobilising Stakeholders for supporting Ecosystem-based Management

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT – AND WHY IS IT USEFUL?

Ecosystem-based management calls for transparent management with broad stakeholder participation (see [Ecosystem-based Management](#)). Stakeholders can support management at every step of the ecosystem-based management process:

- **Objectives:** Stakeholders will help you identify societal objectives that are complementary to the ones specified in existing regulations (e.g. ensuring a given water level in a lake for supporting tourism development). They can also help you prioritise between conflicting objectives, or propose local operational targets for policy objectives that are too broadly defined (see [Integrative environmental objectives](#)).
- **Understanding the social-ecological system:** local stakeholders are (often low cost) sources of insight, data, knowledge, and subject-specific expertise essential for understanding how society and the ecosystem are interlinked.
- **Identifying and evaluating ecosystem-based management measures/policies:** With their expertise and their practical grounding, stakeholders can co-create innovative management measures, assist with implementation, as well as provide practical feedback on proposals and evaluations.
- **Monitoring, evaluation:** Stakeholders can also support effective adaptive management by providing feedback.



GUIDANCE FOR ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS IN ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT

Stakeholder mobilisation is embedded in existing environmental regulations such as the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Simple stakeholder consultation is however the rule under the formal implementation processes of existing legislation: active participation of stakeholders for co-building priorities and selecting measures remains an exception for more local (catchment, coastal zone, marine protected area...) processes.

When dealing with ecosystem-based management, stakeholder mobilisation needs specific attention:

1 First, stakeholder involvement needs to **start as early as possible** - when defining objectives, and for helping to understand the functioning of the ecosystem under investigation in its complex relationships between drivers, activities, pressures, states and ecosystem services delivered. Indeed, some of the causal relationships between some drivers and activities (e.g. how a change in market prices can affect farming and nutrient use), or between the functioning of the ecosystem and the services it delivers (or how a change in lake water levels can affect tourism), are best known and understood by those that are "part of the system";

2 Second, because of the need to give attention to the many links between activities and ecosystems on one hand, and ecosystems, services delivered and beneficiaries on the other hand, **ecosystem-based management requires mobilising widely**: e.g. to simultaneously achieve the targets of the Biodiversity Strategy, the WFD and the MSFD, a wider range of "environmentalists" (bird specialists, wetland gurus, river renaturation experts and coastal zone NGOs) are needed. Additionally, to understand all the important activities that both put pressures on ecosystems and are impacted by/benefit from services delivered by ecosystems, more economic sector representatives are needed. In some cases, it can be important to mobilise representatives of the value chains (retailers, food processing industry, consumers) of primary producers (e.g. fishers and farmers) as their decisions impact directly or indirectly on the practices and decisions of primary producers and thus on pressures imposed on ecosystems.

Example: If a WFD expert considers multifunctional measures delivering multiple benefits such as carbon storage, flood risk mitigation, adaptation to climate change, amenities to cities..., he/she will need to mobilise representatives from these different sectors that are not necessarily his/her traditional "water stakeholders". These might indeed help to better capture benefits, provide financial resources to support the implementation of measures, or help monitor the impacts that the measure will deliver.

When applying ecosystem-based management in territories where governance already exists for natural resources

(e.g. water, Natura 2000 sites, or marine protected areas), it is important to build on the existing governance – but do not limit yourself to it. Indeed, existing governance mechanisms are mostly designed with a primary focus (e.g. water management) with other relevant functions and services that ecosystems can deliver not necessarily accounted for or made explicit. When ecosystem-based management requires addressing fresh and marine waters together, it is important to mobilise stakeholders and governance of both water types at the same time, as these too often remain disconnected.

When applying ecosystem-based management at very large scales...

e.g. the Danube River basin (see [Case Study: Danube](#)) or the North Sea (see [Case Study: North Sea](#)) to cite the two large scale case studies of AQAUCROSS, mobilising widely can be very challenging. Indeed, the existing governance at such large scales is driven by very formal information exchange, decision-making rules, and memberships. Thus, it can be challenging to widen the community to discuss combined issues relevant to biodiversity, the WFD, the Floods Directive, the MSFD, adaptation to climate change, etc. and identify win-win solutions going beyond the objectives of one (or two) pieces of legislation.

Further information

This is one of 38 short briefs summarising the key results of the AQUACROSS Project. For more detailed information on the topics covered in this brief, see the following:

- [AQUACROSS Case studies](#)
- Mattheiß et al. (2018) Evaluation of Ecosystem-Based Management Responses in Case Studies. Deliverable 8.2, European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation grant agreement No. 642317. ([Deliverable](#) and [Executive Summary](#))



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