

Handbook: Process, Methods and Tools for Stakeholder Involvement in MSP

Executive summary

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), as with any other type of planning, is not just about the plans and their content, but the process of making those plans. Incorporating expert knowledge and the perspectives of different sea users and interests' groups through stakeholder involvement (SI) processes is a central element in the design and implementation of marine spatial plans (MSPs).

This handbook explores some of the key issues relating to SI in MSP, including:

How to think about involving stakeholders? How to understand their needs? Who to involve? When is the appropriate time to involve them? What methods and tools are needed? What are the drawbacks? And how can a process leader carry an effective, transparent and fair process?

This handbook provides practitioners with some practical answers to these questions by offering a framework for thinking systematically about SI in the MSP process. The ideas and approaches to SI outlined are based on first-hand experiences from planners in the Baltic Sea Region and cover the whole of the MSP policy cycle.

SI Conceptual Framework:

SI in MSP is intended to help relevant stakeholders to influence and inform the content and direction of a planning process. The 'stairway of participation' represented in Figure 2-1 provides a visualisation of different SI objectives and the increasing intensities of power sharing as one climbs the levels of interaction with stakeholders. **Chapter 2** promotes systematic thinking about SI by answering to the following questions:

- **Why?** Consider the main objectives and purposes for involving stakeholders in the planning process. These reasons can be both 1) normative: to promote stakeholders' democratic rights to participate or to empower stakeholders; and 2) instrumental: to fulfil the legal requirements, to exchange knowledge, or to promote interaction. Purposes can then be subdivided depending on the phases of MSP and events e.g. informing, collecting information, cross-learning.
- **Who?** Depending on the scope and stage of a planning process, different types of actors will have a stake and should be involved. Stakeholders have different interests and varying capacity/power of influence depending on their legal mandate and resources. Stakeholders can be grouped as: institutions/authorities, NGOs, citizens, businesses, other countries, etc.

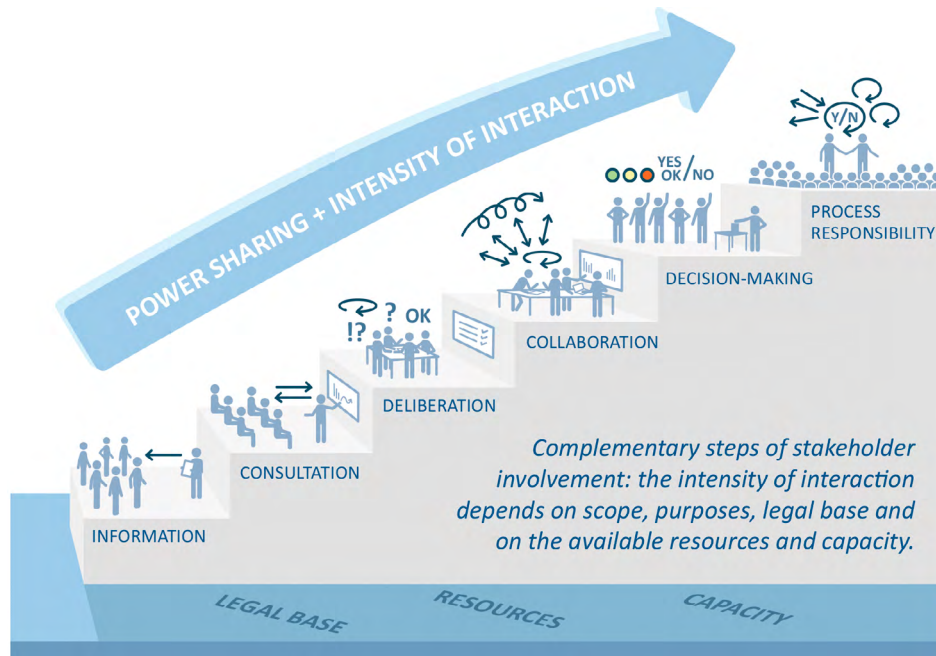


Figure 2-1
Stairway of participation in marine spatial planning. Developed by A. Morf & co-authors using Morf et al. 2019b

- **When?** Stakeholders may become relevant at different points in the planning cycle. The Planning Process Loop in Figure 2-2 depicts the policy process as a loop. It shows that SI is never linear but cyclical, with some continuous elements, while other kinds of SI are tied to specific policy phases.
- **How?** Many practical decisions need to be made from the overall SI process including the selection of venues and SI methods and tools to be used during specific events. Chapters 3 and 4 provide first-hand examples on how countries in the Baltic Sea Region have approached SI.
- **How these all come together?** The why, who, when and how are interconnected and should come together in a detailed strategy, with a timeline, specific targets and events. This can be done in line with a communication strategy tailored to stakeholder groups to clarify how, when and where they should be involved. However, this should not be a rigid strategy but adaptive to emerging needs.
- **Building the Institutional Knowledge-base (the responsible team):** SI requires specific knowledge and experiences, therefore, building institutional memory helps develop internal SI skills and expertise (including facilitation). External expertise from consultants, authorities, and the stakeholders themselves, complements this internal knowledge.
- **Stakeholder mapping and analysis:** Knowing which stakeholders to involve in planning and keeping them up to date with relevant information is key for a successful SI process. Creating a 'stakeholder list' with contact details of key individuals, groups and institutions can help this process. Performing an in-depth stakeholder analysis can be important for understanding stakeholder priorities and needs which can help incentivize their involvement and determine what approaches, methods and tools to use in SI processes.
- **Strategy:** A strategy with a timeline, targets and events is a necessary tool to organise the SI process. Developing a comprehensive SI strategy or SI pilot plans can lay solid foundations for effective SI processes.
- **Communication:** Both formal and informal methods of communication can be used for keeping individuals, sectors or targeted groups informed of MSP information and activities. Official websites, local newspapers, phone calls, email, Twitter and Messenger can all be effective communication and dissemination tools on different occasions.

Effective SI Processes: General Principles based on lessons from the Baltic Sea Region

Chapter 3 examines some important principles for developing effective SI processes, drawing on first-hand experiences from national planners of the Baltic Sea Region (i.e. Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia and Sweden). These principles include:

- **Designing meetings:** The design of effective SI processes depends on the why and who questions. Many things need to be considered by planners in preparation, including the size of the meeting venue, which day to hold the meeting, the start time of the event and the technical knowledge level of participants.
- **Dealing with feedback:** Addressing stakeholder feedback is mandated by law but is also a valuable source of information. Collecting and processing input, therefore, needs to be systematic and transparent to avoid losing information, maintaining stakeholder trust and legitimising decisions.
- **Working across-countries:** Neighbouring countries are important stakeholders in MSP and the EU MSP Directive requires coordination across borders. The BaltSeaPlan, PartiSEaPate, Baltic SCOPE and Pan Baltic Scope projects have served as platforms for cross-country interaction. Language and administrative differences, and countries' different stages of planning can make transboundary SI challenging, however, it has offered an opportunity for planners and stakeholders to exchange knowledge and learn from each other's SI methods and practices.

Practical SI methods and tools:

Chapter 4 provides planners with different SI methods and tools that can be adopted at the four main stages of the planning process.

- **Scoping Phase:** The scoping phase should start with designing the MSP SI strategy according to the purposes and resources available. Moreover it is about mapping/contacting stakeholders and defining their role in developing marine plans. In most countries, the informal process of contacting stakeholders started far earlier than the official date. Typically, the kick-off event was a large conference with an open and inclusive participation of mixed stakeholders.
- **Drafting and Consulting Phase:** The drafting phase is when stakeholders and planners start identifying concrete planning solutions for which more refined SI tools and methods are needed. Different forms of interaction come into play, such as: **on-site visits** (to better understand place-specific characteristics and empower local communities), **online meetings** (with coastal municipalities to inform them about their roles and possibilities), **thematic meetings** (to delve into sectoral specific content, needs and technical limitations), **bi-multi-lateral meetings** or **world-**

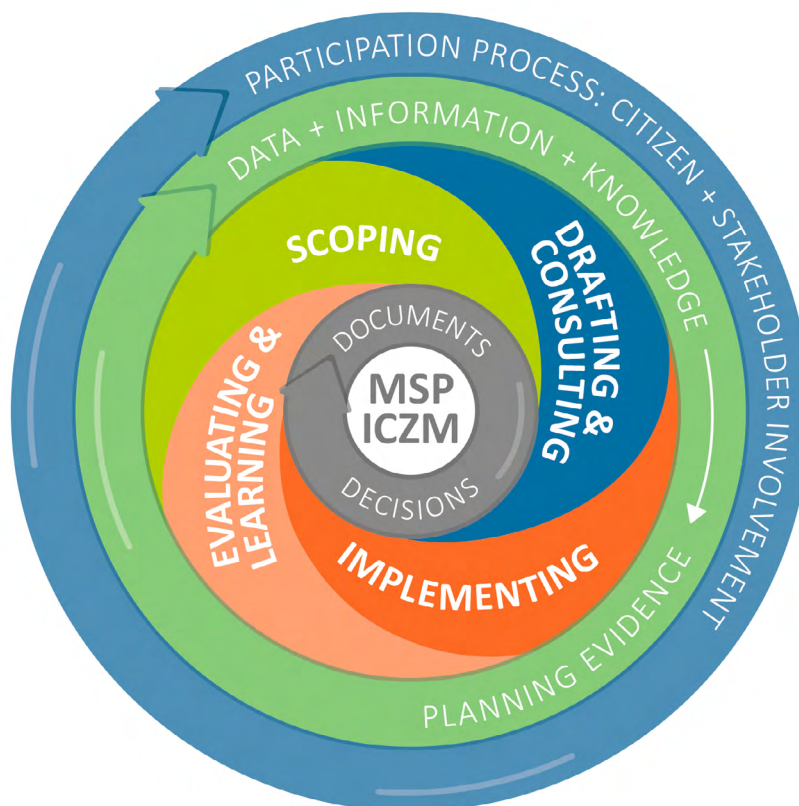


Figure 2-2

The Planning Process Loop of MSP and ICZM. Developed by A. Morf & co-authors

café (to support interaction between stakeholder groups, identify conflicts and synergies, develop joint solutions), **work in geographical sub-areas**, (to narrow down the focus), **working with maps** (to better visualise possible solutions and enhance discussion), **the matrix of interests** (to identify sectoral interests and possible conflicts or synergies with other activities), **scenario-building** (to show what potential implications the plans can have on different stakeholders), **Impact Assessment** (to ensure MSP includes environmental considerations), and others. Interestingly, planners did not use sophisticated models and digital spatial decision support systems (SDSS) for stakeholder participation as they were considered too complex, rigid and expensive. Additionally, **consultations** occurred far beyond formal requirements and feedback came in multiple forms, from **email, face-to-face discussions on a draft plan, digital maps** and **open meetings**, etc. Normally, feedback became more detailed the more the process advanced.

- **Implementation Phase:** Not many countries in the BSR are at the implementation stage, therefore, there is not much empirical information about SI in this phase of the process. What is worth noting, is that once the plan is completed it requires government approval which can lead to a long process of evaluation and revision. Once the plan is approved, planners are required to monitor the implementation of the plan, identifying management and practical solutions with stakeholders', and depending on responsibilities, other administrative roles, such as emitting licences for different uses.
- **Evaluation and learning Phase:** There is little empirical evidence relating to this phase as very

few national plans have been fully implemented. Yet, an effective evaluation will review the content of the plan, the planning process, how well a plan is working and the plans overall impact (effectiveness, satisfaction etc.). The results may provide the basis for learning that can feed into future plans. In the case of Germany, mid-term reviews and qualitative evaluations of its plans have been carried out. The reviews show how the wider context has changed, which may call for revisions in the second round of planning. Specifically, the ambitious national targets set for renewable energies make it fair to expect that a new plan might seek to expand the area set aside for offshore wind farming.

Future Direction of SI in MSP:

SI should be considered a continuous process that accompanies MSP at all stages, rather than a single event. As planning teams, socio-economic settings, national interests and priorities change, so do stakeholders and their roles. Therefore, planners have the continuous challenge to be flexible and perceptive of the changing needs of stakeholders and the SI approaches and tools they use. Nevertheless, MSP is unlikely to solve all sea use conflicts and challenges. Therefore, planners need to be pragmatic in their use of SI processes and make decisions with the best available stakeholder knowledge and expertise available. This handbook provides many first-hand SI tools and methods available to develop and implement effective MSP processes. However, successful MSP will ultimately depend on a combination of carefully chosen SI methods and tools, as well as the ability of process leaders and planners to adapt SI approaches to suit different needs and contexts.

Authors: Alberto Giacometti (a), Andrea Morf (a,b), Kira Gee (c), Michael Kull (a), Hanna Luhtala (d), Søren Qvist Eliassen (a), Elin Cedegren (a)

Layout: Vaida Ražaitytė (a)

Picture: pixabay.com

(a) Nordregio, Stockholm, Sweden

(b) Swedish Institute for the Marine Environment, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

(c) Helmholtz-Zentrum für Material-und Küstenforschung GmbH, Geesthacht, Germany

(d) University of Turku, Finland

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