



# BLUE MISSION BANOS

Supporting the Mission  
Ocean Lighthouse in the  
Baltic and North Sea Basins

**Deliverable 3.3:**

**Learning from and contributing to local initiatives.**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This deliverable, D3.3 – Learning from and Contributing to Local Initiatives, reports on citizen engagement activities conducted within Work Package 3 of the BlueMissionBANOS (BMB) project, which supports the Mission Ocean and Waters in the Baltic and North Sea (BANOS) region. The report summarises lessons from three years of local workshops and related initiatives aimed at strengthening citizen involvement in achieving the Mission’s objectives: protecting and restoring aquatic ecosystems, eliminating pollution, and fostering a sustainable, carbon-neutral blue economy.

Between 2023 and 2025, nine local workshops were organised in Belgium, Denmark, and Poland, engaging citizens, NGOs, researchers, policy-makers, and industry representatives. These activities explored barriers and opportunities for public participation in themes such as offshore renewable energy, aquaculture and fisheries, blue tourism, and zero-emission shipping. The workshops served as testbeds for local dialogue, practical engagement tools, and collaboration models that connect communities with Mission Ocean goals.

Across all countries, shared findings reveal that meaningful and early involvement of citizens is essential for building ownership and legitimacy in decision-making processes. Education and ocean literacy emerged as key enablers of lasting engagement, underlining the need for both formal and informal learning opportunities that connect people to the ocean in relevant and accessible ways. Equally important, the workshops highlighted that trust in institutions and science must be rebuilt through transparency, responsiveness, and continuity of dialogue. Stronger collaboration among government, academia, business, and civil society was consistently identified as crucial for aligning objectives and sustaining engagement. Finally, participants emphasised that hands-on participation—through citizen science, community initiatives, and co-created projects—fosters emotional connection, empowerment, and behavioural change.

Country-specific experiences demonstrate different but complementary pathways toward citizen engagement. In Belgium, the process evolved toward co-creation and storytelling, leading to the development of innovative campaigns to link ocean health to everyday life and local identity. In Denmark, the focus was on strengthening democratic participation through structured methods like public consultations, community meetings, and cooperative ownership models in offshore wind, promoting fairness and shared responsibility. In Poland, efforts concentrated on addressing structural barriers to engagement, with particular attention to rebuilding trust, enhancing governance transparency, and improving science communication as prerequisites for future mobilisation.

Together, these insights show that citizen engagement in Mission Ocean is not a stand-alone activity but a continuous, adaptive process requiring supportive policies, stable funding, and culturally sensitive approaches. By connecting local perspectives with the overarching goals of Mission Ocean, BlueMissionBANOS demonstrates how communities can move from awareness to active co-ownership of Europe’s transition toward healthy, resilient, and sustainable seas and waters.



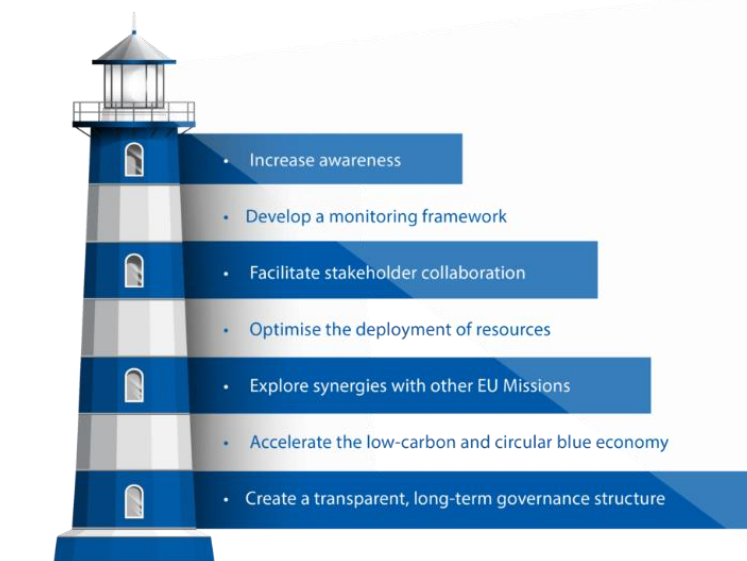
## BLUEMISSIONBANOS PROJECT

BlueMissionBANOS (BMB), as a Coordination and Support Action (CSA) for the Baltic and North Sea (BANOS) Mission Ocean Lighthouse, inspires, engages, and supports stakeholders across the BANOS region in taking positive action to reach the Mission Ocean objectives. In particular, we facilitate the uptake of a sustainable, carbon-neutral, and circular blue economy by connecting national, regional, and transnational actors from politics, industry, and science, thereby creating a governance model that is conducive to innovation.

While fostering the transition towards the blue economy, BlueMissionBANOS supports the prevention and elimination of water pollution and the protection and restoration of biodiversity and marine and freshwater ecosystems. The project focus is on reducing governance fragmentation, facilitating evidence-based decision-making and fostering citizen engagement across the BANOS area. These supporting actions raise awareness, showcase opportunities, and inspire stakeholders to actively contribute to the transition and the preservation of oceans, seas and waters to 2030 and beyond.

To accelerate the transition towards an innovative and circular blue economy, in line with regions' strategic priorities, as defined by their Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3), BlueMissionBANOS organises regional pilot demonstration arenas (Mission Arena) involving innovators, business support and training organisations, local stakeholders and any interested parties to accelerate the uptake of innovative solutions in support of Mission Ocean. Furthermore, BlueMissionBANOS develops a consistent monitoring framework to assess progress in achieving carbon neutrality and circularity.

Finally, BlueMissionBANOS facilitates synergies and matchmaking between actors working towards achieving the Mission Ocean objectives in the BANOS area, by providing a catalogue of services, technical expertise and projects that can foster progress, collaboration and knowledge sharing. The BlueMissionBANOS project is funded under the call HORIZON-MISS-2021-OCEAN-04 by the European Union under Grant Agreement ID 101093845 and runs from December 2022 until November 2025.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. WORK PACKAGE 3 ACTIVITIES

**Work package 3** of BMB focuses specifically on informing and involving the public throughout the Baltic and North Sea (BANOS) area. WP3 activities contribute to an increased awareness of citizens of all ages by strengthening collaboration with and among existing and emerging citizen engagement networks, approaches, and activities with the Mission, providing insights, tools and support to them for increased involvement of citizens.

This WP supports the following specific objectives:

- **O3** Contribute to an increased awareness about the Mission Ocean in the BANOS area by creating added value for existing and emerging citizen engagement networks, approaches and activities, strengthening their collaboration with the Mission and providing insights, tools and support to increase the involvement of citizens at all ages in the implementation of the Mission.
- **O3.1** Contribute towards creating a stronger emotional connection between the public/society and aquatic ecosystems.
- **O3.2** Contribute towards deepened citizen engagement / empowerment in the ocean preservation and restoration.
- **O3.3.** Support a heightened interaction and dialogue on the themes of sustainable, carbon-neutral Blue Economy between citizens, students, industry and policy makers.

### 1.2. TASK 3.3.

This deliverable reports on the activities conducted under **task 3.3 – Learning from and contributing to local initiatives**, which explores local experiences and challenges for stakeholder engagement. Through a series of local workshops, T3.3 reflects on such challenges and possible solutions to reinforce citizen engagement and Mission uptake by citizens. Three cycles of local workshops were organised to understand barriers to citizen engagement and define blueprints for feasible future support tools.

Such local workshops were carried out in three locations:

- ❖ The Belgian North Sea Coast (BE), managed by VLIZ;
- ❖ The Danish Straits (DK), managed by SDU;
- ❖ The Gulf of Gdansk (PL), managed by IOPAN.

This report presents the experiences of citizen engagement, which directly feed the discussions held at the regional level by the Reference Group in the framework of task 3.2 – Develop guidelines, tools and blueprints aimed at citizen engagement and industry/policy. Such regional workshops were held at the biannual Mission Arenas, with local workshops held prior to these events.

The core focus of all locally held workshops is to explore ways to more effectively and meaningfully engage citizens in fostering healthy seas, advancing a sustainable Blue Economy, and ultimately contributing to the overarching goals of Mission Ocean. In this report, we share the lessons learnt from the local context to



support further uptake of the Mission Ocean across relevant local stakeholders and the broader public as a whole.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. LOCAL WORKSHOPS

A series of local workshops took place in Belgium, Poland and Denmark, prior to each yearly Mission Arena events (except for 2025's workshops). Three workshops - one per year – were held in each site in 2023, 2024 and 2025, accounting for nine in total.

Within these workshops, the core focus was linked to three main themes: (1) offshore energy (particularly on offshore wind exploitation), (2) aquaculture and fisheries, and (3) zero-emission shipping, decarbonisation and blue tourism; and how to engage the wider public in these topics.

Each test site could choose whether to combine these three subjects or dedicate a workshop to each of the three themes. Although the workshops could explore different subjects, a similar approach was developed for each of them.

#### Participant selection

The selection of participants for the local workshops was carefully designed to ensure that attendees possessed relevant expertise aligned with the overarching mission of the project. The primary objective was to engage stakeholders who could meaningfully contribute to discussions on sustainable blue economy solutions within the Baltic and North Sea regions and on how to engage citizens in the Mission Ocean narrative.

Participants were identified based on their expertise in key thematic areas, including marine and maritime industries, environmental protection, policy and governance, research and innovation, and community engagement. Efforts were made to include a diverse representation from academia, industry, civil society, and governmental bodies, ensuring a multidisciplinary approach to the workshops. To foster inclusive and balanced discussions, the selection process aimed to maintain a well-rounded audience, incorporating perspectives from various sectors. However, the composition of participants naturally varied across workshops, reflecting the specific focus and objectives of each session.

Despite these variations, the overarching principle remained consistent: to gather a knowledgeable and engaged group capable of driving forward the BlueMissionBANOS objectives and fostering collaborative solutions for the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources.

#### Practicalities

The overall methodology of the workshops at the different test sites was similar. We opted for an introductory plenary session, stating the objectives of the workshop and how the input of the participants would be processed and used afterwards. The chosen format was a 'World Café' approach (figure 1). In this approach, three different discussion tables were set up to discuss the three different themes within the core focus.





**Figure 1: World café approach for local workshops: Participants are divided into three groups, each discussing a certain theme. After some time, participants rotate over the three tables.**

While the general approach remained consistent across all test sites, slight variations exist depending on local contexts, stakeholder dynamics, and specific regional challenges. These differences reflect the unique social, economic, and environmental conditions of each site, influencing how engagement strategies are implemented. In the results section, we provide a comprehensive overview of these variations, offering an in-depth exploration of the nuances observed at each location and detailing the factors that have shaped them. Note that over the years, slight adaptations were made to the general set-up (e.g. adding some extra mechanics). If this is the case for a certain workshop, the alterations will be indicated when describing the results.

## 2.2. OTHER LOCAL SITES INITIATIVES

The local workshops conducted as part of the BlueMissionBANOS project served as a crucial foundation for informing regional-level discussions and strategies. Our local site's experiences and insights were systematically transferred to the regional level through dedicated reporting mechanisms (notably Deliverable 3.3) and ongoing coordination. This ensured that the realities on the ground (both challenges and promising practices) could shape broader regional thinking.

Beyond individual examples (e.g. ZEEKERWETEN – more information on p12), the thematic focus of our local workshops fed directly into regional discussions. For instance, the locally identified barriers—such as limited marine literacy, weak trust in institutions, or fragmented engagement strategies—were echoed and further explored in regional settings, helping to ground higher-level dialogues in real-world experience. Likewise, local solution pathways (such as partnerships with schools, storytelling formats, or inclusive co-design of marine activities) helped shape the regional understanding of what citizen engagement can look like in practice.

Although the feedback loop between regional and local levels was not always fully reciprocal, the project design allowed for iterative exchange, where regional groups could pose questions or seek clarification based on local findings. In doing so, a two-way dialogue was fostered across the cycles, strengthening the coherence between grassroots innovation and strategic regional development.

### 3. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW AND RESULTS

#### 3.1. 2023 ACTIVITIES

##### 3.1.1. LOCAL ACTIVITIES – BELGIUM

The first local workshop in Belgium, organised by VLIZ, took place in Ostend, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October of 2023, and gathered 36 participants. Representatives from the offshore wind and the aquaculture industry joined, as well as from non-profit fisheries organisations, journalists, experts in citizen science and public engagement and tourism and education representatives.

At the tables, focus was set on three different topics linked to effective engagement of the wider public: GOVERNANCE, IMPLEMENTATION and COMMUNICATION & DISSEMINATION. The objectives and particular focus are detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Objectives of each room set up in local workshops.**

Topic	Content
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Effective methods, systems and routines for engaging with stakeholders (financial, etc)</b>
<b>Governance</b>	<b>Reasonable, effective and harmonised regulations and governance for stakeholder engagement</b>
<b>Com &amp; Diss</b>	<b>Best practices for communication and dissemination, how can we reach citizens etc.</b>

Participants were then divided into three groups. Each participant had two colours of sticky notes. The process for each table was as follows:

##### 1) Identifying challenges within citizen engagement

In the first step, we asked to write one challenge to citizen engagement per sticky note within a topic of their choosing. Participants could start from their own experience and expertise, noting down challenges they had in engaging citizens in their field of expertise. These challenges were shared with the group and feedback between the groups was provided. All participants then had to rank these challenges based on their perceived importance.



The challenges raised by participants are detailed in Table 2. The specific explanations of each challenge can be found in Annex 1.

**Table 2: Challenges in citizen engagement in the offshore energy sector in Belgium.**

Governance	Implementation	Communication & Dissemination
Keeping up the engagement is often a challenge.	How to implement citizen engagement in all layers of society?	Lack of easy representation of offshore energy concepts and language
Creating focus when choosing a target audience.	How to measure the impact of a citizen engagement action?	Reaching various target groups need different communication approaches, complexifying the message.
Not having dedicated funds for engagement activities.	Lack of knowledge on the offshore energy sector by the public.	Battling fake news and misconceptions in the sector.
How to involve people who are often not interested/involved?	Engagement setups with high interaction reach fewer people.	
Different target groups have different needs.		

2) Exploring possible solutions to the identified challenges

In a second step, we used the challenges that were raised in the first step to brainstorm possible solutions to those challenges, using a set of sticky notes of another colour.



Solutions to these challenges are gathered in Table 3, with their explanations detailed in Annex 1.

**Table 3: Solutions for citizen engagement in the offshore energy sector in Belgium.**

Governance	Implementation	Communication & Dissemination
Try to amaze participants.	Team up!	Use the power of storytelling.
Create accessible and fun formats.	Include citizens in the creation process of initiatives.	Use different social media channels to reach different people.
Have a clear, simple and uniform message.	Bring science to people by using attractive visuals.	Opt for interactive, immersive and visual formats for engagement.

To make the discussions and proposed solutions more tangible for participants, we provided them with a concrete opportunity to showcase their ideas for citizen engagement at the **ZEEKERWETEN Citizen Science Festival** organised by VLIZ. This festival serves as an interactive platform where science, innovation, and community engagement come together to promote ocean literacy and a healthy ocean.

Workshop participants were encouraged to present their engagement concepts in a real-world setting by creating interactive booths at the festival. This allowed them to test their ideas directly with the public, gather feedback, and explore how their solutions could resonate with and involve citizens more effectively. By integrating their work into ZEEKERWETEN, participants could move beyond theoretical discussions and actively engage with festival visitors, making their contributions more visible and impactful.

This hands-on approach not only reinforced the importance of public engagement in the BlueMissionBANOS initiative but also provided participants with valuable insights into how their solutions could be refined and adapted based on real-world interactions.

A link to the **aftermovie** of the festival can be found here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMxwvG8FdSE>



A sea show for children (“Wild van Water”) answering questions on the ocean (e.g. why water appears blue), fostering ocean literacy and awareness (picture: VLIZ)



The digital experience lab at VLIZ in action. Here citizens can see what happens with our planet and ocean if the CO<sub>2</sub> keeps rising in our atmosphere (picture: VLIZ).

### 3.1.2. LOCAL ACTIVITIES – POLAND

The first local Polish workshop, organised by IOPAN, ran on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October of 2023 with a total of 14 participants. The workshop gathered representatives of research and education, non-governmental organisations, public engagement experts and private sector.

The workshop followed the World Café approach and participants discussed different aspects (governance, implementation and communication) of the offshore energy sector in Poland. The challenges raised by participants during this workshop can be found in Table 4. The specific explanations of each challenge can be found in Annex 1.

**Table 4: Challenges in citizen engagement in the offshore energy sector in Poland.**

Governance	Implementation	Communication & Dissemination
Change the school curriculum to have more interdisciplinarity.	Polarisation of viewpoints.	A certain level of aversion towards researchers and experts.
Lack of governmental complex policy regarding offshore energy.	Lack of public trust in science and scientists.	Lack of codes of good practice when interacting with stakeholders.

Lack of communication between investors and the scientific community.	Social indifference and lack of social skills.	Adjust the message and its form to recipients.
Public consultation is not citizen participation.	Lack of dedicated funds.	Personalised, topical multimedia.
Unattractive forms of communication.	Lack of skilled experts.	Lack of adequate communication language.

The solutions promoted by the participants can be found in the table below, with specific explanations outlined in Annex 1.

**Table 5: Solutions for citizen engagement in the offshore energy sector in Poland.**

Governance	Implementation	Communication & Dissemination
Proper education for all.	Promotion of a diversity of opinions in official media.	Change public perceptions around scientists.
Appropriate regulations.	Transparency of actions and promotion of science.	Develop a code of good practice for stakeholder engagement.
Political choices.	Social networking.	Development of science campaigns.

### 3.1.3. LOCAL ACTIVITIES - DENMARK

The first local Danish workshop took place on the first of September 2023, at The Climate Festival (<https://klimafolkemoedet.dk/in-english/>) in Middlefart, with 16 participants (interested festival participants) from NGOs, private sector and research and education. The workshop was set as an open conversation between the participants guided by an expert moderator, discussing the Danish offshore energy sector.





Participants outlined a series of challenges for citizen engagement in the Danish offshore energy sector, outlined below. Details on each challenge can be found in Annex 1.

**Table 6: Challenges for citizen engagement in the offshore energy sector in Denmark.**

Governance	Implementation	Communication & Dissemination
A general lack of involvement of citizens.	Implementing bottom-up approaches is challenging.	Communication difficulties.
Poor communication from and with public entities.	No funding for local development and citizen engagement.	Little knowledge of the public regarding offshore wind and marine nature.

Citizens and stakeholders do not all have an equal voice.	Engagement setups with high interaction reach fewer people.	
Different target groups have different needs.	Many processes have little citizen and stakeholder engagement.	

Participants then provided input on several solutions, highlighted in Table 7. More information can be found in Annex 1.

**Table 7: Solutions for citizen engagement in the Danish offshore energy sector.**

Governance	Implementation	Communication & Dissemination
Better communication and co-management between public entities	Capacity building	Education of the public on offshore wind and the marine environment.
Fair inclusion of citizens and stakeholders	Funding for engagement activities.	Better planning and training for citizen engagement.
Support for bottom-up initiatives		
Better and timely engagement of citizens.		

### 3.1.3. LESSONS LEARNT 2023

The 2023 cycle of local workshops in Belgium, Poland, and Denmark provided foundational insights into the barriers and opportunities for engaging citizens under the BlueMissionBANOS initiative. Despite each country's distinct political, cultural, and social contexts, common threads emerged, alongside key national differences that warrant tailored engagement strategies.

A few challenges were consistently identified across all three countries:

- **Low public knowledge of the blue sector** was a universal concern. Across all sites, participants pointed to poor marine and energy literacy as a major hurdle.
- **Lack of funding and structural support** for engagement was echoed in each country, making sustained efforts difficult.
- **Fragmented communication and inadequate messaging:** whether too complex, too technical, or failing to resonate undermined outreach efforts.
- **Public skepticism and social disengagement:** whether due to perceived elitism, low trust in institutions, or general apathy were highlighted as persistent obstacles.

Each country acknowledged that successful engagement requires early involvement, inclusive approaches, and a more strategic alignment between policy, communication, and community needs.

Next to these shared lessons learnt across the three countries, the local context of the three countries created also a set of country specific challenges:

- **Belgium** placed strong emphasis on **practical implementation**. Challenges focused on how to sustain engagement, diversify outreach methods, and communicate complex marine topics more accessibly. Solutions included storytelling, immersive experiences, and testing ideas in public at events like the *ZEEKERWETEN Citizen Science Festival*. Belgium's use of interactive public formats gave participants a chance to prototype real-world engagement activities.
- **Poland** identified **deep-rooted structural and communication gaps**. Trust in science and institutions was flagged as weak, while a lack of cohesive government policy limited coordinated engagement. The workshop highlighted the need for education reform, media diversity, and the creation of codes of good practice in stakeholder interaction. Poland's framing of public consultation as distinct from real participation was particularly critical.
- **Denmark** focused on **institutional barriers and stakeholder voice**. Challenges included unequal participation, lack of co-ownership, and exclusionary communication from public entities. Danish participants proposed capacity building, co-management structures, and early stakeholder engagement as essential solutions. Emphasis was placed on fair inclusion, bottom-up initiatives, and targeted training for effective outreach.



### 3.2. 2024 ACTIVITIES

#### 3.2.1. LOCAL ACTIVITIES – BELGIUM

For the second year and cycle of workshops, we based our premise on the output of the first round of local workshops and on the feedback from the regional workshop at the Mission Arena in Riga. At the Mission Arena, solutions were further discussed in detail and certain challenges were prioritised.

##### Workshop set-up

For the second local workshop, we chose to take a deeper dive into the prioritised challenges and explore potential solutions more in-depth with local stakeholders in Belgium. The participant selection followed the same approach as in the first workshop (see p. 7), ensuring a diverse group with relevant expertise and experience in citizen engagement. In total, 25 participants took part, contributing valuable insights and perspectives to the discussion.

Three discussion tables were created, at each of which one prioritised challenge and one solution (not necessarily linked to the challenge) were discussed with the local stakeholders. These challenges and solutions can be found in table 8:

**Table 8: Overview of the three different discussion tables with each its own challenge and solution.**

Discussion table 1		Discussion table 2		Discussion table 3	
Challenge	Solution	Challenge	Solution	Challenge	Solution
Equal voice and engagement of stakeholders and citizens in all layers of society.	Support for bottom-up initiatives	Once public or relevant stakeholders are engaged, keeping up the engagement is often a challenge	Capacity building	Social indifference and lack of social skills	Better and timely engagement of citizens

##### Results

For each discussion table, we aimed to capture the key hurdles in specific challenges and solutions. In addition, we identified possible solutions and outlined the necessary steps to ensure their successful implementation.



At discussion table one, the following challenge and solution was discussed:

Challenge:



**Equal voice and engagement of stakeholders and citizens in all layers of society**

*When setting up events/activities, 'the usual suspects' often participate in activities. There is a tendency to not include/consider the full scope of stakeholders. Some stakeholder groups are better involved than others. There is often a conflict with local fisheries, where fishing grounds are lost to the OWF, which affects local communities (and climate footprint) as fishermen due to displacement may have longer travels and landings moved to other/bigger harbours, resulting in higher costs and loss of local processing facilities and jobs. The big fisheries organisations (POs) have a big say in placement of OWF, but smaller fisher communities are not organised in the bigger POs and have less of a voice.*

Possible hurdles in this challenge	
Lack of long-term vision and marine literacy in the wider public.	Digital illiteracy
Different levels of education within society.	Small institutions and companies have little support measures.
Geographical boundaries can reinforce detachment to the ocean.	Economic focus versus social impact in businesses.

At the discussion table, participants identified much needed steps (see below) in finding a solution to the challenge presented above. A more elaborate explanation of these hurdles and solutions can be found in Annex 2.

Important aspects to solve this challenge	
Regulation and policy adjustments	Cross-generational approach
Creating community spirit	Highlight the value of commons
Working cross-sectoral	Reduce sense of powerlessness
Central framework for organising own initiatives	

Solution:



**Support for bottom-up initiatives**

*Ease of the legislation or provide public support organs that can support citizen driven initiatives and projects, so they have a better chance of implementation.*

Possible hurdles for this solution	
Limited resources to grow	Volunteers have a limit to their commitment, and often there is insufficient financial or organisational support to scale up further.
Overload of volunteers	The struggle for volunteers becomes more difficult as they want more flexibility and fewer long-term commitments.
Creativity required	Starting an initiative requires a lot of inventiveness and motivation

Important points to make solution work	
Support and coordination	Volunteer initiatives need support, for example in the form of budgets, coordination or a leader taking responsibility.
Hero approach	Many initiatives start from the personal network and building awareness within the community.

Next to these points, the participants at discussion table 1 highlighted the need to spark motivation amongst citizens to get involved in various initiatives. Some motives that were discussed are as follows:

- Direct reward: Cleaning up beaches or contributing to clean energy provides visible results.
- Personal pride: Volunteers feel good about their contribution.
- Togetherness: It strengthens a sense of community and social connections.
- Fun: Many people simply find it an enjoyable activity.
- Social pressure: Peer pressure can play a role in participation.

When these motivations are known for a particular target audience, they can be acted upon to get more people involved.

At discussion table two, another challenge and solution was discussed:

This discussion table focused on key concerns and possible handles for engaging an audience for a longer period of time. Secondly, the participant group focused on how building capacity (within citizens and organisations) could increase engagement of citizens in the Mission Ocean.

Challenge:



**Once public or relevant stakeholders are engaged, keeping up the engagement is often a challenge**

*Starting up a citizen engagement activity or event is often doable, however keeping citizens engaged once the activity ends is challenging. How can we go from one contact moment (at the event/activity) to regular stimulation of citizens eventually leading to behavioural change?*

Issues that weighed most heavily for them are listed below:

Key concerns and possible handles			
What's in it for me?	Set your goal before starting the engagement.	Let citizens share in the impact.	Did you think about a plan B?
Focus on 'quick wins'.	Be clear on your own expectations within the engagement.	Add fresh details to your project to keep it interesting.	

A full explanation of these key concerns and handles can be found in Annex 2.

Solution:



**Capacity building**

*Though citizen engagement is new in offshore projects, there are many good experiences from land-based infrastructure, from which it is possible to learn and adjust to marine/maritime development. Building knowledge capacity in agencies and the energy sector and providing useful tools for citizen engagement to this sector, can support a more effective and less costly inclusion of citizens.*

- ❖ Local ownership is crucial. Local actions need to be taken to ensure citizens involvement in the design and implementation of new offshore wind farms.
- ❖ Information on the subject should come from neutral sources and not only by project leaders and energy companies since their discourse could be biased towards economic development. There should be clear information on risks and environmental impacts of such projects, which should be developed through consultations and co-creation.

Capacity building was presented as a solution to discuss. The group decided to interpret this as: skills, tools, training, knowledge, policy framework that you offer to a citizen and/or an organising body, to ensure that they can make their public action better and more successful.

Some important facets were highlighted during this discussion:

Focusing on capacity-building		
A capacity-building expertise center.	Personal support for citizens.	Sharing experiences.

A full explanation of these key concerns and handles can be found in Annex 2.

At discussion table 3, the problem of societal indifference was widely discussed. Individual interest is often paramount and can be a barrier to engaging people. Therefore, one should try to connect with the individual.

Challenge:



**Social indifference and lack of social skills**

*There is a general lack of community and social skills and even needs in the society. People do not have concept of a common good.*

Several principles/examples were cited to address this common problem:

Possible solutions to tackle the challenge	
The push and pull principle.	Having incentives out there for citizens and organisations to set specific projects up provided by the government (push). The will from citizens or organisations to set projects up (pull). Small organisations can act as a crucial bridge function here.
Creating a long-term vision.	To counteract fragmented policy, one possibility could be a broader consortium representing different public and private sectors. One that is not anchored to local politics and thus can think beyond a term in office. Such measures can then also in turn, further roll out the push (e.g. EU) and pull (companies/public bodies) principle.
Raising awareness with the aim of creating a wider support base.	The aim is to create broad-based awareness that not only ensures a larger group of supporters, but also a stronger and more sustainable long-term commitment.  By providing information, encouraging dialogue, and actively engaging, we aim to not only inform people, but also intrinsically motivate them to get involved. Raising awareness can be done in different ways and reach citizens through different ‘entry points’: through education (e.g. sea classes, excursions, teaching packages), through awareness campaigns or even through entertainment.
Creating an emotional connection.	People often want to participate or commit to something they feel connected to or have an emotional bond with. Informing people is not enough. There often has to be a link to their own environment and life before action is taken.

	The world of the arts (visual arts, performing arts, literature and music) can play a key role in bringing the world of the seas and ocean to citizens.
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Solution:



**Better and timely engagement of citizens**

*Legislation that ensures that the citizens and stakeholders are truly heard, and their input is genuinely considered and included in the decision-making process. Early or timely engagement of citizens ensures that their input is included in the decision-making process. Early inclusion may lead to a local ownership that eases the acceptance and thus the implementation. There is good experience from land-based infrastructure on this matter, which can be transferred to an offshore setup. Acceptance can be accelerated by offering local affected citizens to buy shares.*

How can this solution be implemented?	
Timing	Given the highly seasonal nature of coastal areas due to tourism, the number of residents and visitors varies greatly throughout the year. Therefore, it is crucial to maximise the timing of an event.
Focus on your target audience	Careful identification of the target audience is essential for effective engagement. It is important to understand what their daily concerns are and what aspects of your project or theme might appeal to them. By understanding their priorities and interests, communication can be tailored accordingly.
Act local and link up!	Local initiatives can be strengthened by linking them to recognisable and high-traffic locations, such as walking routes, train routes and busy streets. Situating projects in places where many people congregate increases visibility and the likelihood of involvement.
Direct approach	To inspire people and create awareness, it is important to use a direct, appealing approach. Some ways to do this are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good news/positive stories</li> <li>- Awareness boards at strategic locations</li> <li>- Influencers and social media</li> <li>- Campaigns from local government</li> <li>- Show direct effects into the field</li> </ul>

### 3.2.2. LOCAL ACTIVITIES – POLAND

The second workshop in Poland was held in Sopot and was led by IOPAN. In total, 10 participants joined and the main focus of the workshop was set on the blue sector, fisheries and aquaculture. The participants formed a diverse group with experts from various fields:

# participants representing	Category
1	Company/private sector
1	Public engagement expert
6	Research and education
2	Blue economy expert

During the workshop, participants were encouraged to identify additional challenges in engaging the public with Mission Ocean that had not been previously discussed in the first workshop. As a result, six new challenges emerged:

New challenges		
A sense of futility regarding the effectiveness of social consultations.	Lack of education on health benefits of fish products poorly affects development of aquaculture and fisheries sectors.	Competition between industries, lack of sustainable development, and the high start-up costs of blue sector businesses are key factors preventing the sector from flourishing in Poland
Poor promotion of local fish has its impact on poor development of domestic aquaculture.	The administrative issues stem from legal misalignment or non-compliance.	Secondary/functional illiteracy and distrust in experts and scientists.

In the workshop, new solutions were provided as well:

Solutions		
Building public awareness of scientific discourse.	Development of comprehensive policy framework for the blue sector.	Engaging audiences through thematic multimedia and targeted messaging.
Building public awareness of scientific discourse- engaging youth through constructive dialogue.	Code of good practices for investors and associated sectors.	From isolation to interaction: solutions for effective communication.

Poor public perception of the state.	Enhancing trust in science: citizen engagement and tailored messaging.	Restoring confidence: the importance of transparency and science outreach.
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In Annex 2 a full explanation of the challenges and solutions can be found.

### 3.2.3 LOCAL ACTIVITIES – DENMARK

The second workshop in Denmark was held in Middelfart at the climate festival ‘Klimafolkemødet’ on the 31th of August 2024. In total, twelve participants took part in the discussion workshop, all with a different expertise and background:

# participants representing	Category
3	Company/private sector
2	Public engagement expert
1	Research and education
4	Civil citizens
1	Blue Economy Expert
1	NGO

Within the Danish workshop, focus was set on filling out the gaps and identifying other challenges within citizen engagement that did not come to light yet. Through discussion the following new challenges were detected:

New challenges		
Crafting a compelling narrative around low-trophic aquaculture.	The perception among some citizens that individual engagement with low-trophic aquaculture has little impact on sustainability or the environment unless adopted on a large scale	Resistance from local communities to change.
The perception of these products (or the production) tends to fall into two distinct categories: either as niche items associated with environmentally-conscious "hippie" movements focused on health and sustainability, or as	The perception among some citizens that individual engagement with low-trophic aquaculture has little impact on sustainability or the environment unless adopted on a large scale. This belief can lead to apathy, as people feel	Conflicts between existing land-based infrastructure, often tied to traditional fishing industries, and the visual off-shore disturbance and exclusion from areas (e.g. kayak and wind surfing)



<p>exclusive, high-end products reserved for select markets. This dichotomy makes it difficult to connect with the broader public, as many citizens feel alienated to both product and thus production. Bridging this gap is essential for fostering greater citizen engagement, but it requires a balanced narrative that resonates with the everyday consumer while highlighting the ecological and nutritional benefits of low-trophic aquaculture.</p>	<p>their efforts are insignificant in the broader context of environmental change, making it harder to inspire widespread participation.</p>	<p>caused by new aquaculture developments. Many coastal communities are resistant to change, as aquaculture installations can disrupt the familiar landscape, create exclusion, clash with established fishing operations, and alter the visual appeal of the area. These concerns can lead to opposition from local stakeholders (not freeing space in harbour/on land to logistics infrastructure etc.), making it difficult to advance aquaculture projects in regions with strong fishing traditions.</p>
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The workshop participants highlight various solutions or needs in the process of involving citizens within the theme of low-trophic aquaculture:

Solutions		
<p>Better timing of citizen involvement.</p>	<p>Invest in co-creating planning and placement of aquaculture activities with citizens.</p>	<p>Provide hands-on experience for citizens to participate in small-scale aquaculture.</p>
<p>Changing food culture.</p>	<p>Invest in education from a young age on aquaculture.</p>	<p>Creating connection between the public and sustainable aquaculture.</p>
<p>Fostering collaboration between maritime industries to drive innovation and sustainable growth.</p>		

Further explanation of the solutions that were discussed can be found in Annex 2.



#### 3.2.4. LESSONS LEARNT 2024

The local workshops in Belgium, Poland, and Denmark each provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of engaging the wider public in sustainable aquaculture, fisheries, offshore wind, and blue tourism. While notable differences emerged in stakeholder concerns, public perceptions, and proposed solutions, several common themes and cross-cutting challenges were also identified.

During the workshops it became apparent that over the three different countries, specific local contexts highly influence the type of engagement needed in that country.

In Belgium, discussions largely revolved around structural and societal barriers to engagement, such as digital illiteracy, lack of marine literacy, and economic priorities overshadowing social impact. The focus was on creating an inclusive engagement framework that ensures equal participation across different sectors and communities. Participants highlighted the importance of bottom-up initiatives, emphasizing community-building, reducing a sense of powerlessness, and fostering long-term commitment through intergenerational approaches and clear regulatory support.

In Poland, the workshop exposed a deep-rooted skepticism towards public engagement in the blue economy. Participants identified a lack of trust in science, institutions, and social consultations as key challenges, alongside poor public perception of the aquaculture and fisheries sectors. Unlike Belgium, where the focus was on citizen inclusion, Polish stakeholders prioritised policy development, public education on the health benefits of fish products, and the need for greater transparency in governance. Solutions emphasised restoring trust in scientific discourse, improving communication strategies, and strengthening cross-sector collaboration to enhance the blue economy's credibility.

The Danish workshop, on the other hand, underscored the cultural and perception-based barriers to citizen engagement, particularly in relation to low-trophic aquaculture. Participants discussed resistance from local communities, the difficulty of integrating sustainable aquaculture into mainstream food culture, and conflicts between traditional fishing industries and new marine developments. Unlike Poland, where policy and trust were key issues, Denmark's challenges were largely narrative-driven, requiring strategies to shift public perceptions. Proposed solutions focused on hands-on citizen experiences, co-creation in planning aquaculture projects, and fostering a cultural shift towards sustainable seafood consumption.

These differences highlight the need for tailored engagement strategies that address the specific barriers within each national context. In Belgium, fostering inclusivity and intersectoral collaboration is crucial. In Poland, rebuilding trust in institutions and science is a key priority, while in Denmark, engagement efforts must focus on cultural adaptation and community-driven participation.

Despite the country-specific challenges, several overarching themes emerged across all three local workshops:

##### **1. The importance of early and meaningful public engagement**



In all three countries, it became evident that early and continuous citizen involvement is crucial for fostering long-term engagement. Whether through bottom-up initiatives (Belgium), transparent policymaking (Poland), or participatory aquaculture planning (Denmark), the need to engage citizens from the outset was a common finding.

## **2. The role of education in citizen participation**

Education and awareness-raising were identified as key drivers of public engagement across all workshops. In Belgium, marine literacy was seen as a barrier to participation; in Poland, a lack of education on the health benefits of seafood was hindering aquaculture development; and in Denmark, fostering a cultural shift in food consumption required sustained education efforts. All three countries recognised the need to integrate ocean-related education into schools and public discourse to encourage long-term citizen involvement.

## **3. The challenge of overcoming public skepticism**

While Poland highlighted a deep distrust in institutions and scientific discourse, Belgium and Denmark faced public skepticism in different forms. In Belgium, economic priorities often took precedence over social and environmental concerns, leading to a lack of citizen motivation. In Denmark, perceptions of sustainable aquaculture as either niche or elitist limited public interest. Across all countries, solutions involved enhancing transparency, effective science communication, and building trust through citizen involvement.

## **4. Cross-sector collaboration as a key enabler**

Each country recognised that engaging different sectors—government, industry, NGOs, and local communities—was essential to achieving successful citizen participation. Belgium emphasized a structured, cross-sectoral approach, Poland stressed the need for clear policy frameworks, and Denmark focused on co-creation with local stakeholders. Across all three, fostering collaboration between stakeholders was seen as a fundamental step toward achieving broader public engagement.

## **5. The need for tangible, actionable participation**

Across all countries, engagement strategies that offer hands-on participation opportunities were identified as the most effective. In Denmark, citizens were encouraged to experience small-scale aquaculture firsthand. In Belgium, community-driven initiatives played a key role. In Poland, effective engagement required making science and policy relevant to everyday citizens. A shared lesson was that citizens engage more actively when they see direct and personal benefits from their involvement.

While each country faced unique barriers to public engagement in the blue economy, they shared several key challenges and solutions. Early involvement, education, trust-building, cross-sector collaboration, and hands-on engagement opportunities emerged as common pillars for successful public participation. These findings emphasise the importance of tailoring engagement strategies to local contexts while leveraging shared best practices across countries. By addressing country-specific barriers while drawing on common solutions, BlueMissionBANOS can foster broader and more impactful citizen engagement in sustainable aquaculture, fisheries, offshore wind, and blue tourism.



### 3.3. 2025 ACTIVITIES

#### 3.3.1. LOCAL ACTIVITIES – BELGIUM

The final and closing workshop was held in Belgium on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May. In total, 10 relevant stakeholders participated within the workshop. Their expertise and insights were divided across multiple disciplines:

Aquaculture	3 participants
Offshore wind energy	1 participants
Blue Tourism	2 participants
Science Communication	2 participants
Policy	1 participants



The general objective of the workshop was to come up with interactive and innovative initiatives to engage the broader public in the Mission Ocean narrative and objectives. For Belgium this final workshop was seen as a starting point for future practical engagement set-ups and real-world implementation. The workshop session was divided into two parts:

Part one had a series of inspirations sessions across three sectors within the Blue Economy (Aquaculture, Offshore Wind Energy and Blue Tourism) where three experts from these mentioned sectors presented a

case study on how they've engaged the wider public in their area of expertise. The case studies can be found in the figure below:



### Part two

In part two, the participants were divided into two groups and were encouraged to use the inspiration collected in the first part to develop an engagement activity within a topic of their choice (within the Blue Economy). The objective was to pick a specific theme or topic and create an engaging campaign about this. Each group presented their own invented campaign.

The first group presented the campaign "Healthy Rivers, Healthy Seas – From Coast to Kitchen", their core concept consisted of: *"What you do at home is reflected in the sea. Bring the sea's health into your home."*

The campaign highlights the connection between personal health and ocean health, focusing on clean air and nutritious, local food. The campaign aims to engage the public with the Mission Ocean narrative by linking personal health (through clean air and healthy eating) to the health of rivers and oceans. It will roll out in two phases over eight weeks (e.g. May–June: leveraging public holidays and increased local tourism in Belgium), using both local and national touchpoints:

1) Phase 1 – Local activation (May)

Theme: *"Eat Fresh, Breathe Fresh"*

Tactics:

- Collaborate with local fishmongers, bakeries, and supermarkets to promote healthy, sustainable seafood options.

- Run health-themed events and promotions around fresh, local produce tied to ocean-friendly consumption.
- Visual storytelling in-store and online: e.g., “Where does your fish come from?” or “How your choices protect the sea.”
- Emphasis on local identity: involve shrimp fishers, inshore fisheries, and river advocates to tell their authentic stories.

Goal:

Create a sense of shared care and pride in local ecosystems, connecting food choices directly to ocean health.

2) Phase 2: National expansion (June)

Theme: “*Discover Healthy Choices Near You*”

Tactics:

- Broaden the campaign beyond the coast to inland cities like Mechelen, Leuven, Roeselare, and Kortrijk (smaller but very active cities).
- Promote exploration of local healthy food sources and river-based activities through interactive maps, pop-up stands, and storytelling campaigns.
- Highlight the idea: *You don’t have to live by the sea to protect it.*

Goal:

Show that everyone, everywhere is connected to the health of the ocean — through the air we breathe and the food we eat.

The first group also thought out some important aspects to gain meaningful partnerships within their campaign. For them it was important that engagement is collaborative and rooted in authenticity. To that end, including relevant and authentic partners brings trust and local relevance (essential for a campaign that aims to inspire real behavioural change). Some crucial partners that they wanted to include were: local fishers and shrimpers, small food retailers and markets, community health and environmental groups, and city-level cultural organisations.

The second group created a campaign called “The Eleventh Province” – A Gateway to Ocean Knowledge”. Their core vision was to create a central, citizen-friendly digital platform – “*The Eleventh Province*” (there are 10 provinces in Belgium) or “The Sea” – that consolidates trustworthy, up-to-date information about the ocean, the blue economy, innovation, and sustainability in one accessible place. The name symbolises the sea as an integral and shared part of Belgium – just like a “province” – with its own identity, opportunities, and stories.

The group agreed upon some specific goals the platform should take into account. In its core, the platform should provide a comprehensive and neutral information hub about the sea and its many dimensions: health, innovation, energy, jobs, environment, culture, etc. Next to this, it should also enable easy access to news, events, career opportunities, research, and educational content related to the ocean and blue economy.



Building public trust through independence, transparency, and a people-first approach were also indicated as essential for the platform.

Next to the goals, the group also defined some core features the platform should:

(I) AI powered chatbot

- Central feature of the website.
- Users can ask questions and receive instant, reliable answers.
- Powered by verified sources of knowledge across multiple sectors (e.g., marine science, energy, policy, education).
- Customisable user experience:
  - Choose tone of voice: neutral, optimistic, or expert.
  - Multiple language options to broaden accessibility.

(II) Trust and transparency

- The platform operates independently from government, corporate, or academic institutions to maintain objectivity and credibility.
- Content is reviewed and based on validated, non-partisan sources.
- A “Trust Label” is attached to the chatbot and key content areas, signalling reliability and evidence-based knowledge.
- (III) Broad scope of topics available to spark interest such as: Health & the Ocean, Marine Innovation, Offshore Wind & Energy, Coastal Protection, Marine Careers & Education, Events & Citizen Science, Sustainable Seafood, Climate and the Ocean etc.

To make the platform work, some financial funding opportunities were laid out by the group as well. The local stakeholders in the group would aim to have the platform financed through partnerships with larger events, companies and institutions that benefit from visibility and knowledge-sharing via the platform. Creating a win-win dynamic is essential to attract possible investors (businesses and research institutions can promote transparent, ocean-positive work while citizens gain access to valuable information). While creating these financial partnerships, a part of the outreach strategy can be coupled to it as well by doing joint outreach campaigns to maximise visibility and amplify public engagement. Bringing together a coalition of engaged partners from diverse backgrounds (civil society, startups, NGOs, educators, local initiatives) and letting them co-create and co-promote the platform and the events, educational campaigns, and thematic weeks on it can help to expand outreach efforts.

### 3.3.2. LOCAL ACTIVITIES – POLAND

While a local-level workshop was not held in Poland in 2025 this was a deliberate choice aligned with the broader project strategy. Given that the Mission Arena was hosted in Poland this year, it was deemed more effective to allow the two efforts to overlap. By choosing to let both events overlap it ensured that Polish stakeholders (they were invited to the MA) were still meaningfully engaged through a larger, multi-country



platform, avoiding duplication while maintaining strong regional representation. Instead, the process and outcomes of the regional workshop in 2025, with strong Polish participation, are described in deliverable “*Report on guidelines, tools and blueprints aimed at citizen engagement, industry and policy*” (D3.2).

### 3.3.3 LOCAL ACTIVITIES – DENMARK

In Denmark, the first workshop was mostly focused on detecting the biggest challenges within the offshore energy sector when it comes to citizen engagement. In the second workshop, additional challenges were discovered alongside creating possible solutions to the challenges the local stakeholders are facing with the engagement of citizens focussing on coastal and offshore food production (fisheries and low-tropic aquaculture).

The third Danish workshop focused on three engagement methods (existing in official citizen engagement in the Blue economy) to connect Mission Ocean better with the broader public. Here, the workshop participants explored the strengths, challenges, and improvement strategies for various these participatory methods, with a focus on written consultations, public meetings, and cooperative ownership models in renewable energy. The session emphasised inclusive democratic practices, local knowledge integration, and the need for systemic changes to empower community-driven initiatives. Below, the advantages and disadvantages are depicted (written by participants on post-it notes), as well as possible suggestions or recommendations to make the proposed engagement method work.

#### 1. Written public hearings/consultations

Under this concept falls a form of public consultation where individuals and organisations provide feedback on proposed policies, regulations, or projects through written submissions, typically in response to a public notice.

Public hearings/consultations	
Advantages	Disadvantages
Flexibility and iterative contributions	Lack of dialogue
Direct and unfiltered input	Inaccessible deadlines
Broad participation	High entry barrier for written unput
Transparency and openness	Complex language and technical barriers
Resource efficiency	Lack of feedback and transparency
Fosters ownership and engagement	Insufficient contextualisation
Supports local knowledge sharing	Overemphasis on technical criteria
Anonymity possible	Cumbersome verification requirements

<b>Recommendations for improvement of public hearings</b>	
Early engagement and communication	Local knowledge collection before scoping
Stakeholder involvement in planning phases	Realistic and inclusive deadlines
Clear purpose and expectations	

More in-depth information on the advantages and disadvantages can be found in Annex 3.

## 2. Public meetings

With public meetings, a gathering that is open to anyone who wishes to attend is meant. Often organised by government bodies, organisations, or community groups to share information, discuss topics of public concern, and encourage public participation. These meetings are a way for the public to stay informed, provide input, and engage with relevant issues.

<b>Public meetings</b>	
<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Builds trust, presence and local ownership	Exclusion through language and format
Enables rich dialogue and reduces misunderstanding	Unequal participation and power dynamics
Recognises and validates local knowledge	Accessibility and timing barriers
Fosters transparency, trust and institutional connection	Perception and limited impact
Encourages learning, inspiration and new connections	Low value or irrelevant contributions
Effective when timed early and maintained continuously	Resource-intensive and hard to summarise

<b>Recommendations for improvement of public meetings</b>	
Thoughtful timing and early planning	Deliberative and inclusive representation
Thematic meeting series	Participatory formats



Facilitator design and process clarity	Visual storytelling and community voices
Learn from best practices	

More in-depth information on the advantages and disadvantages can be found in Annex 3.

### 3. Bottom-up engagement and the cooperative model in Denmark

Bottom-up engagement is a collaborative approach where ideas, feedback, and decision-making originate from the broader public (often with less decision-making power) on a certain topic and then influence higher levels from the bottom-up (e.g. the municipality – often with more decision-making power).

A cooperative is owned by the broader public through memberships (e.g. shares from an offshore windfarm) and all citizens take part in the daily operation. It is a democratic membership where the standing principle is ‘one co-owner equals one vote’. The profits of cooperatives belong to the members and are distributed in proportion to their share of contributed yields.

Bottom-up engagement	
Advantages	Challenges
Local co-ownership	Lack of economic incentives
Democratic participation	Governance complexity
Social acceptance	Regulatory and legal constraints

Recommendations for improvement of bottom-up engagement	
Policy stability	Economic incentives
Support for facilitation and capacity building	

More in-depth information on the advantages and disadvantages can be found in Annex 3.

### 3.3.4. LESSONS LEARNT 2025

The 2025 local workshops across Belgium, Denmark, and Poland revealed significant variations in how each country interprets, prioritises, and practices citizen engagement in the context of sustainable aquaculture, fisheries, offshore wind, and blue tourism. These differences stem not only from cultural and institutional contexts but also from how far each country has progressed in building a participatory blue economy narrative and framework.

#### **Belgium: Engagement as co-creation and narrative reframing**

Belgium's final workshop stood out for its strategic creativity and storytelling approach. Instead of focusing on barriers, Belgian stakeholders co-developed concrete public engagement campaigns, each rooted in personal relevance, trust-building, and systems thinking. Concepts like *"The Eleventh Province"* and *"Healthy Rivers, Healthy Seas"* reframed marine challenges as local and personal, linking food, air quality, and digital access to the ocean's health.

Some of the key strengths in Belgium are:

- Focus on empowerment through communication, not just consultation.
- Engagement through lifestyle and identity narratives.
- Strong emphasis on partnerships with trusted local actors.
- Design of low-barrier entry points (e.g. local food, digital tools).

Belgium stakeholders viewed engagement particularly as an inclusive, proactive cultural process.

#### **Denmark: Structuring participation through institutional mechanisms**

In Denmark, the workshops focused on evaluating formal engagement methods: written consultations, public meetings, and cooperative ownership models in offshore wind. The approach here was methodological and governance-oriented, targeting systemic reforms that can improve democratic legitimacy and local ownership in marine planning.

Some of the key strengths in Denmark are:

- In-depth analysis of participation formats and their weaknesses.
- Clear articulation of barriers to inclusive participation, such as language, access, and timing.
- Promotion of cooperative, citizen-owned models to support offshore energy development.

While Denmark presented strong institutional learning, the engagement remained somewhat top-down and were geared toward improving policy mechanisms rather than activating grassroots enthusiasm.



### **Poland: Trust and structural reform as pre-conditions**

In contrast to Belgium and Denmark, no separate local workshop was held in Poland, as the country hosted the Mission Arena—a broader regional platform. The Polish engagement strategy, therefore, was oriented more towards regional coordination and policy alignment rather than grassroots engagement.

Earlier outputs from Polish stakeholders highlighted structural distrust, legal misalignment, and public disengagement as core barriers. Proposed solutions focused on enhancing transparency, rebuilding trust in science, and developing coherent policy frameworks for the blue economy.

Some of the key characteristics in Poland are:

- Focus on strategic-level engagement and system reform.
- Deep concern with distrust in institutions and scientific discourse.
- Less emphasis (in this phase) on tangible or co-created public-facing campaigns.

Poland's engagement is framed more as a preparatory phase—addressing foundational gaps (e.g., trust, awareness, governance) before broad public mobilisation can succeed.

### **Shared themes and persistent challenges across all three countries**

Despite national differences, several common themes emerged across the workshops:

- **Trust is foundational.** All countries (whether explicitly like Poland or implicitly like Belgium and Denmark) recognised that trust in institutions, information, and processes is essential for meaningful engagement.
- **Early and inclusive engagement matters.** Denmark's emphasis on pre-scoping consultation and Belgium's participatory co-design approach both stress the need for early involvement and diverse representation.
- **Bridging the personal and the systemic.** Belgium achieved this through relatable narratives (e.g., food and air); Denmark aimed through shared ownership; Poland plans to build the structures that enable it.
- **Public engagement is not just a method—it's a mindset.** Where Belgium treated it as a cultural and behavioral opportunity, Denmark framed it as a democratic process, and Poland focused on it as a governance reform issue.



## 4. CONCLUSION

Over the span of three years, the BlueMissionBANOS local workshops in Belgium, Denmark, and Poland revealed not only country-specific barriers and strengths but also a clear evolution in how public engagement in the blue economy is approached. The differences in progression across the countries reflect varied starting points, institutional cultures, and strategic priorities.

The evolving national journeys of Belgium, Denmark, and Poland within the BMB project have revealed distinct yet complementary pathways for engaging citizens in the blue economy. Belgium's process evolved from identifying barriers to developing imaginative, co-created engagement campaigns, rooted in personal relevance and cultural storytelling. Denmark, by contrast, structured its approach around governance tools—such as public consultations and cooperative ownership—emphasising democratic legitimacy and systemic reform. Poland concentrated on preparing the groundwork for future engagement, focusing on restoring trust, aligning policy frameworks, and improving public perception of the blue sectors.

Despite differences in strategic maturity, a set of shared values and insights emerged across all sites. Early and inclusive public engagement, the importance of trust in science and institutions, cross-sector collaboration, and the need for hands-on, accessible activities were identified as universal pillars. However, each country's approach to these challenges varied — Belgium prioritised emotional and behavioural resonance, Denmark targeted structural mechanisms, and Poland worked on foundational readiness.

By conducting the nine local workshops, we were able to make a comprehensive mapping of the challenges and potential solutions to citizen engagement in Mission Ocean. This mapping provides a vital reference point for understanding not only what hinders public involvement, but also what practical and scalable strategies may be effective across contexts. It also highlights how engagement activities link directly to the thematic priorities of the Mission—such as sustainable aquaculture, fisheries, offshore wind, and blue tourism. Below, the most critical points of the mapping are highlighted:

### 1. Early and meaningful public engagement – Easier said than done?

- While early engagement was a key takeaway across all countries, implementing this in a meaningful way is challenging.
- Governments and industries often operate on tight deadlines and bureaucratic constraints, making it difficult to fully integrate public input in early-stage decision-making.
- Tokenistic engagement (where citizens are consulted but have little real influence) remains a risk, particularly in sectors like offshore wind and aquaculture, where economic and environmental trade-offs exist.

Although early engagement is widely acknowledged as essential, it is often difficult to implement meaningfully. It requires political will, industry commitment, and mechanisms to ensure citizen input has real influence. To move beyond token consultation, governments and developers must embed citizen involvement into formal planning processes, such as scoping phases, permitting procedures, and regulatory reviews. To be able to do this, structural changes in governance and political commitment are needed, such as:



- Clear policy frameworks that mandate early stakeholder inclusion
- Incentives for industry to invest in public dialogue and co-design
- Transparent feedback loops showing how citizen input influences outcomes
- Neutral facilitation to create trust between communities and institutions

Only when citizen contributions are visibly linked to decision-making, will early engagement gain lasting legitimacy and public trust.

## **2. Education as a solution – But who takes responsibility?**

Education was highlighted as a fundamental driver for engagement, whether in marine literacy (Belgium), seafood awareness (Poland), or sustainable food culture (Denmark). But raising awareness alone is not enough. True ocean literacy requires systemic, long-term investment in education and outreach. This means:

- Integrating marine topics into national school curricula across age groups and disciplines, from science to social studies
- Developing partnerships with NGOs, science centres, and museums to support informal, community-based education
- Providing long-term funding for public-facing education initiatives, such as citizen science projects, festivals, and digital tools;
- Training educators and communicators to deliver ocean content in a locally relevant and engaging way

Ocean literacy efforts must go beyond project-based campaigns and be seen as a core building block of public empowerment, critical to achieving the Mission Ocean objectives.

## **3. Overcoming public scepticism – Can trust be rebuilt?**

Distrust in science and institutions (Poland), economic disinterest (Belgium), and cultural alienation (Denmark) all create significant engagement barriers. It is often fuelled by years of poor communication, misinformation, and political decisions that have alienated the public. Transparency and improved science communication help, but trust-building is slow, and once lost, it's difficult to regain.

Trust in science and institutions (especially in regions with histories of exclusion or misinformation) cannot be rebuilt through short-term campaigns. Instead, it must be earned through consistent, inclusive, and transparent practices over time. This includes:

- Opening up institutional processes to community input, including citizens in agenda-setting, monitoring, and evaluation
- Demonstrating follow-through, by visibly linking public input to actual changes in decisions or outcomes
- Building relationships through continuity, not just one-off events—using recurring dialogues, citizen panels, or long-term local partnerships



- Humanising institutions and science, through storytelling, local ambassadors, and face-to-face exchanges with researchers and officials

Above all, trust grows when citizens feel heard, respected, and able to influence change—not just informed after decisions are made.

#### **4. Cross-sector collaboration – Aligning conflicting interests**

All workshops stressed the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration between governments, businesses, scientists, and citizens. The challenge is that these groups often have competing interests:

- Industries prioritise profitability and regulatory flexibility.
- Governments balance environmental, social, and economic goals.
- Citizens want both benefits (jobs, energy, food security) and environmental protection.

Getting these actors to genuinely cooperate, rather than just “tick the box” on participation, is a major challenge.

While collaboration between government, industry, NGOs, and citizens is essential, it often remains superficial without the right structures and incentives. To ensure genuine cooperation, public engagement strategies should:

- Establish formal coordination platforms at local and regional levels, where diverse stakeholders co-design and review initiatives together
- Include public engagement criteria in funding and permitting processes, encouraging companies and institutions to prioritise collaboration
- Facilitate regular dialogue mechanisms, such as stakeholder roundtables, advisory boards, or community liaison groups
- Appoint neutral facilitators or coordinators to ensure balanced participation and follow-through

Only when collaboration is built into the governance framework (with mutual accountability and shared outcomes) will it drive sustained and equitable citizen involvement.

#### **5. Hands-on citizen participation – Feasible, but sustainable?**

Engaging citizens through tangible, action-based initiatives (e.g., beach cleanups, small-scale aquaculture projects, or co-designing marine spaces) is promising. However, volunteer burnout, funding limitations, and lack of long-term commitment make sustaining engagement difficult. Many citizen-driven projects start with enthusiasm but fade away once initial excitement or funding runs out.

While short-term engagement campaigns can generate enthusiasm, maintaining long-term participation depends on structural support and meaningful integration into broader governance systems. To sustain engagement over time, it is essential to:

- Embed citizen roles into formal project or policy cycles, ensuring ongoing involvement beyond initial consultations



- Provide continuous incentives, not just financial, but also social (recognition, community belonging) and experiential (learning, skill-building)
- Ensure stable funding mechanisms for citizen-led initiatives, local coordination, and participatory platforms
- Offer adaptable formats that allow people to contribute at different levels of commitment and expertise, avoiding burnout or disengagement.

Sustained engagement thrives when people feel their involvement is part of a larger, valued and supported system, not just an isolated event.

### **End notes**

Looking ahead, Mission Ocean's citizen engagement strategy must remain adaptive, multi-speed, and grounded in local realities. At the same time, it should encourage transnational learning, drawing from Belgium's creative outreach, Denmark's structural discipline, and Poland's systemic awareness. By bridging these approaches and aligning them with real-world needs and motivations, citizen engagement can help catalyse a truly citizen-driven transformation toward a healthier, more sustainable ocean future for Europe.



## 5. ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1: FURTHER INPUTS FROM THE 2023 SERIE OF LOCAL WORKSHOPS

#### 1.1. BELGIUM

**Table a: Explanation of challenges raised during the first Belgian workshop related to offshore energy, 2023.**

G / I / C&D	Specific challenge	Explanation
Governance	Keeping up the engagement is often a challenge.	<i>Starting up a citizen engagement activity or event is often doable, however keeping citizens engaged once the activity ends is challenging. How can we go from one contact moment (at the event/activity) to regular stimulation of citizens eventually leading to behavioural change?</i>
Governance	Creating focus when choosing a target audience.	<i>Finding a balance between having a specific target audience or reaching as many people as possible for your engagement activity. How can we clearly define suitable target audiences?</i>
Governance	Not having dedicated funds to execute engagement activities.	<i>Having enough resources to carry out citizen engagement activities or finding enough staff willing to lead these events (often planned in weekends/holidays).</i>
Governance	How to involve people often not included/interested?	<i>When organising an activity or event for citizens, people who participate are often already interested in the topic or have a certain knowledge base to fall back onto.</i>
Governance	Different target groups have different needs.	<i>Different target groups might have different needs, especially when focussing on inclusivity. How can we accommodate these different needs with often limited resources?</i>



Implementation	How to implement citizen engagement in all layers of society?	<i>When setting up events/activities, 'the usual suspects' often participate into activities. How can we open this up to a more diverse participant base?</i>
Implementation	How to measure the impact of a citizen engagement action? (How can behavioural change be measured?)	<i>The ultimate goal of citizen engagement activities is to induce behavioural change, but how can this be measured? How can we know that organised actions pay off in the end?</i>
Implementation	Lack of knowledge on the offshore energy sector of the public.	<i>The public is often uninformed about the activities of the offshore energy sector, resulting into low engagement on organised activities. The relevance to engage in these activities is unclear for the public. What is in it for them? Why does it relate to their daily lives?</i>
Implementation	Engagement setup with high interaction reach fewer people.	<i>When creating an interactive engagement activity, where people participate on a high level, the capacity to accommodate many participants often declines. Finding a balance between interactive formats, which might induce behavioural change, and reaching a large number of people is often hard to find.</i>
Communication & dissemination	Reaching various target groups need different communication approaches, complexifying the message.	<i>Self-explanatory case.</i>
Communication & dissemination	Battling fake news and misconceptions in the sector.	<i>When posting on social media on certain topics, adverse reactions might occur from the public showcasing misconceptions or misinformation being spread on the topic.</i>

**Table b: Explanation on solutions raised during the first Belgian workshop related to offshore energy, 2023.**

<b>G / I / C&amp;D</b>	<b>Specific solution</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Governance	Try to amaze participants.	<i>Try to spark curiosity and wonder into participants when engaging them instead of informing them via a top-down approach.</i>



Governance	Create accessible and fun formats.	<i>When organising an engagement activity, try to use an attractive format that is clear and accessible for participants. For example, opt for a festival style setup with various stages all dealing with offshore energy topics.</i>
Governance	Have a clear, simple and uniform message.	<i>Spreading the word about your engagement activity in a clear and uniform way is essential to attract participants.</i>
Implementation	Team up!	<i>Engagement activities can be strengthened by working together with different partners, increasing the impact and reach of the activity.</i>
Implementation	Include citizens.	<i>To create support and cooperation of citizens in certain themes, the allocation of 'citizen budgets' might be an option if resources allow. Here, citizens can execute an idea in a specific topic in their local neighbourhood.</i>
Implementation	Bring science to people by using attractive visuals	<i>Visual art, animation, theatre, film, and photography can bring citizens closer to a specific topic that is otherwise hard to relate to. Let visuals be the bridge between citizens and science.</i>
Communication & Dissemination	Use the power of storytelling.	<i>Work from the strengths of a good story. What reels people in? Build a compelling story to engage participants in an authentic way.</i>
Communication & Dissemination	Use different social media channels to reach different people.	<i>If you wish to reach a diverse audience, various social media channels linked to specific target groups will have to be deployed.</i>
Communication & Dissemination	Opt for interactive, immersive and visual formats for engagement.	<i>Selecting the formats above will engage citizens on a higher level, increasing the chance of behavioural change.</i>

## 1.2. POLAND

**Table c: Explanation of the challenges raised during the first Polish workshop related to offshore energy, 2023.**



G / I / C&D	Specific challenge	Explanation
Governance	Changes in school curriculum for more interdisciplinarity.	<i>Currently, Polish school's curriculum is very fragmented and very focused on particular topics, such as e.g. biology, physics and chemistry. There is very little room for linking the subjects, while the environmental processes can't be analysed in separate categories, since the ecosystem is a complex system with many aspects.</i>
Governance	Lack of governmental complex policy regarding renewable energy.	<i>Self-explanatory case.</i>
Governance	Lack of communication between investors and the scientific world.	<i>There are no legal regulations which would force the investors to seek expertise from the scientific perspective. At the moment it is only a suggestion not a requirement.</i>
Governance	Public consultation is not citizen engagement.	<i>Citizens have a strong feeling that they are being cheated by the consultation process, since their suggestions basically never get any attention at the end.</i>
Communication	Unattractive forms of communication	<i>Communication is run (if at all) in an old-fashioned way, very rarely new methods and techniques are involved.</i>
Implementation	Polarisation	<i>Both stakeholders and citizens stick to the certain way of thinking and hence, they seek information from sources, which often exclude discourse with other points of view.</i>



Implementation	Lack of public trust in science and scientists.	<i>There is a general lack of confidence in the messages that are communicated by scientists. This is a structural problem, since Polish education does not teach respect to scientific knowledge and the past government diminished the role of science in decision making.</i>
Implementation	Social indifference and lack of social skills.	<i>There is a general lack of community and social skills and even needs in society. People do not have concept of a common good.</i>
Implementation	Lack of dedicated funds.	<i>Even if somebody or an institution would have a good idea for implementation of some solutions, then it is very difficult to find the dedicated sources of financing.</i>
Implementation	Lack of skilled experts.	<i>In case of offshore actions, we still lack well-trained experts, who could properly implement the necessary actions.</i>
Communication & dissemination	A certain aversion towards researchers and experts.	<i>Citizens are generally not willing to listen to experts because their communication skills are bad, and their message is complicated.</i>
Communication & dissemination	Lack of codes of good practices to use when interacting with stakeholders.	<i>This problem makes it difficult to convey good communication with various stakeholders, since there is no positive background and examples to make the message positive and attractive.</i>
Communication & dissemination	Adjusting the message and its form to the recipient.	<i>There is need for various forms of reaching the audience, from well-designed web pages, through brochures and leaflets to a variety of educational materials and gadgets.</i>
Communication & dissemination	Personalised, topical multimedia.	<i>There is a strong need for more individual approach to stakeholders and society members.</i>



Communication & dissemination	Lack of adequate communication language.	<i>Too much jargon, not understandable language in communication with stakeholders and society members.</i>
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**Table d: Explanation of solutions raised during the first Polish workshop related to offshore energy, 2023.**

<b>G / I / C&amp;D</b>	<b>Specific solution</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Governance	Proper education for all.	<i>Proper education of all citizens, regardless of age.</i>
Governance	Appropriate regulations.	<i>Preparation of appropriate regulations of public consultation process, that meet international standards and good practices.</i>
Governance	Political choices	<i>Conscious political choices e.g. during the parliamentary or local elections.</i>
Implementation	Promotion of a diversity of opinions in official media.	<i>Promotion of various opinions and public dialog in official media. "Unpacking" of values.</i>
Implementation	Transparency of actions and promotion of science.	<i>Transparency of actions, science promotion, education on how to choose reliable sources of information, properly published information, promotion of open attitude to society among researchers.</i>
Communication & Dissemination.	Change public perceptions around scientists.	<i>Make scientists more likeable. Scientists should use more understandable language. Scientists should become regular people in the common opinion. Knowledge should be applicable to daily activities. People need to understand what they gain from science on a daily basis.</i>
Communication & Dissemination	Develop a code of good practice for stakeholder engagement.	<i>Respect and respect and ability to discuss with others, all parties have equal rights, need for a general code of good practices, which could be</i>



		<i>implemented by stakeholders and consultation organizers. Clear rules during the consultations. Introduction of common values and goals.</i>
Communication & Dissemination	Development of science campaigns.	<i>Cooperation with investors, their engagement in communication. Science campaigns, promoted by relevant ministries. Creation of the service with appropriate knowledge, creation of a dedicated fund and proper evaluation of social promotional campaigns.</i>

### 1.3. DENMARK

**Table e: Explanation of challenges raised during the first Danish workshop related to offshore energy, 2023.**

<b>G / I / C&amp;D</b>	<b>Specific challenge</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Governance	A general lack of involvement of citizens.	<i>Citizens are generally not engaged in planning and designation of offshore wind farms (OWF). Especially when cables go through land or if turbines are visible from land, involvement is important. It is only recently that citizen engagement in OWF has been considered</i>
Communication & Dissemination	Little knowledge of the public on offshore wind and marine nature.	<i>The general public have sparse knowledge about offshore infrastructure, in all manners (logistics, local societal impact, environmental impact and technological). The OWF companies feel a responsibility to inform the public (both those directly affected and not directly affected) about the advantages and disadvantages, as well as mitigation of negative impacts. Danes have little ocean literacy and lack of knowledge about the marine ecosystems/habitats and as a result little engagement (in anthropogenic stress factors).</i>
Governance	Communication from and between public entities.	<i>Permits and legislation is often lost or delayed because of one public entity is awaiting the other. Or there is unclarity about which agency</i>



		<i>is governing the area, and veto over the other. There is not an integrated procedure for involving citizens, this is typical up to energy companies and municipalities. Processes are not always transparent, sometime information is delayed, and important information is not accessible. Processes are long, especially for planning and designation of areas, which has time frames of up to 30 years. There is a request for better national planning.</i>
Implementation	Equal voice between stakeholders and citizens.	<i>There is a tendency to not include/consider the full scope of stakeholders. Some stakeholder groups are better involved than others. There is often a conflict with local fisheries, where fishing grounds are lost to the OWF, which affects local communities (and climate footprint) as fishermen due to displacement may have longer travels and landings moved to other/bigger harbours, resulting in higher costs and loss of local processing facilities and jobs. The big fisheries organisations (PO's) have a big say in placement of OWF, but smaller fisher communities not organised in the bigger PO's have less of a voice.</i>
Governance	Implementing bottom-up approaches is challenging.	<i>There are few experiences with bottom-up processes, where local communities propose collectively owned smaller coastal OWF, and most of them have not had positive results. Most of the time smaller organised citizen groups fail to implement local OWF because the governance structures are hard to navigate and favour bigger companies (local associations cannot get support from municipalities as they must not compete with the private energy companies). Local initiatives are often driven by few highly engaged citizens that end up fatigued due to low resources and lack of help in the system. It is hard for them to prove local gains of jobs which is a valued argument for the public entities. Public entities show more interest in job creation than on the wishes of the local communities.</i>
Governance	Many processes have little citizen and stakeholder engagement	<i>Many decision-making processes are top-down and made on high level with very little or no inclusion of local communities or citizens.</i>



		<i>Some level of engagement is secured for some decision-making processes, as they must include a public consultation (by law). However, this process is carried in the latest stage of the process the public feel that this process is closed and do not take input into consideration. Citizens often feel that the decision is already made, and this process is just carried out because the public entities must, and not because the entities are interested in the input from the consultation.</i>
Implementation	No funding for local development and citizen engagement.	<i>1) There is no national funding for local initiatives and citizen initiated/supported projects. This could support their rights and influence (right holders, duty bearers). 2) Citizen engagement is expensive for the private companies and engagement activities can make them un-competitive.</i>
Communication & dissemination	Communication difficulties.	<i>Different groups of citizens speak “different languages”, and communication and agendas, which can lead to misunderstandings and conflict, which can lead to local resistance.</i>

**Table f: Explanation on the solutions raised during the first Danish workshop related to offshore energy, 2023.**

<b>G / I / C&amp;D</b>	<b>Specific solution</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Implementation	Capacity building.	<i>Though citizen engagement is new in offshore projects, there are many good experiences from land-based infrastructure, from which it is possible to learn and adjust to marine/maritime development. Building knowledge capacity in agencies and the energy sector and providing useful tools for citizen engagement to this sector, can support a more effective and less costly inclusion of citizens.</i>
Communication & Dissemination.	Education of the public on offshore wind and the marine environment.	<i>For the citizens to be able to make informed decisions, it is important to educate the public about the technical and environmental aspects of offshore wind. It could be beneficial to have a non-partial actor carrying</i>



		<i>out the dissemination both during project phase, as well as it becomes an integrated part of e.g. the educational system. OWF companies feel a responsibility to inform the public (both directly affected and not directly affected) about the advantages and disadvantages, as well as mitigation of negative impacts. There is already good experience in dissemination of school and high school pupils in different technical aspects of offshore wind.</i>
Governance	Better communication and co-management between public entities.	<i>A request for better communication and co-management between the energy agency (under Ministry of energy) and the environmental agency (under Environmental Ministry), and integration of citizen engagement in their processes. More transparency about processes, and accessibility of information for all. A more integrated inclusion could be through national and local citizens assemblies.</i>
Implementation	Fair inclusion of stakeholders and citizens.	<i>Secure a more just and fair inclusion of both stakeholders and citizens, that ensure that they have an equal voice and a diverse inclusion in regard to gender, minorities, and groups of stakeholders. This can be done through better training and planning of stakeholder activities.</i>
Implementation	Support for bottom-up initiatives.	<i>Ease of the legislation or provide public support organs that can support citizen driven initiatives and projects, so they have a better chance of implementation.</i>
Governance	Better and timely engagement of citizens.	<i>Legislation that ensures that the citizens and stakeholders are truly heard, and their input is genuinely considered and included in the decision-making process. Early or timely engagement of citizens ensures that their input is included in the decision-making process. Early inclusion may lead to a local ownership that eases the acceptance and thus the implementation. There is good experience from land-based infrastructure on this matter, which can be transferred to a offshore setup. Acceptance can be accelerated by offering local affected citizens to buy shares.</i>



Governance	Funding for engagement activities.	<i>1) National funding for local initiatives. 2) Either funding for inclusion of citizens is needed, or legislation that require citizen engagement so that it is not unfeasible to include during the tender/bidding phase (cheapest bid is chosen).</i>
Communication & Dissemination	Better planning and training for citizen engagement.	<i>Training of personnel and planning for the citizen engagement, including mapping of participants and their prerequisites and preparing material tailored for the particular case and participant setup can seek to mitigate conflicts.</i>



## 2. ANNEX 2: FURTHER INPUTS FROM THE 2024 SERIE OF LOCAL WORKSHOPS

### 2.1. BELGIUM

#### **Discussion table 1:**

Challenge: Equal voice and engagement of stakeholders and citizens in all layers of society.

**Table g: Possible hurdles in challenge “equal voice and engagement of stakeholders in all layers of society”**

Possible hurdles in this challenge	
Long-term vision and marine literacy	Citizens are often not sufficiently aware of the importance of marine literacy and the role of the sea, which prevents them from exerting pressure on political policies. Increasing knowledge can help them exert more influence.
Digital illiteracy	Not everyone has the digital skills to participate in discussions or activities, creating inequality in engagement.
Different levels of education	Complex topics can be difficult for some people to understand, which discourages them from participating.
Small institutions and companies	These groups often lack the resources (time, staff, budget, network) to make a fundamental difference.
Geographical boundaries	People living further from the sea may feel less involved in marine-related initiatives.
Economic focus versus social impact	Many investments are focused on economic gain rather than social impact, which can reduce citizen engagement.

Possible solutions for this challenge:

Important aspects to solve this challenge	
Regulation and policy adjustments	The government can introduce incentive regulations or provide financial support that encourages organisations and citizens to get involved.



Creating community spirit	Promoting a sense of community can help people feel more connected to social issues, such as marine protection.
Working cross-sectoral	Involving different sectors that at first glance have little to do with the sea can create new connections and engagement.
Central framework for organising own initiatives	Initiatives such as a 'Day or Week of the Sea' (similar to World Ocean Day) can generate broad support and awareness. Any individual or (civil society) organisation can organise activities within that framework according to its own capacity, to generate engagement within their network.
Reduce sense of powerlessness	By increasing knowledge, citizens can feel less powerless over complex problems, which strengthens their engagement.
Highlight the value of commons	Individualism can be reduced by campaigns that highlight the value of common goods such as the sea, e.g. awareness campaigns such as 'Here begins the sea'.
Cross-generational approach	Problems that transcend several generations, such as environmental issues, require a long-term framework, for example by involving education in them.

**Discussion table 2:**

Challenge: keep citizens engaged and motivated for longer periods of time

**Table h: Possible hurdles in challenge “keep citizens engaged and motivated for longer periods of time”**

Key concerns and possible handles	
What's in it for me?	<p>What can be the added value for citizens to participate in your public engagement? What benefit can be derived from this? To what can/may a citizen contribute?</p> <p>The benefit for the citizen can come in many forms (social contribution, belonging, friendship, etc.) and depending on your target audience, one form may be more important than another. If you focus on a specific target audience, you can sometimes respond to this more easily.</p>



Focus on 'quick wins'.	If you can invest in some ideas from citizens within your public outreach without having to put in a huge amount of effort, this is definitely worth looking into. By focusing on the things, you can realise relatively quickly, in addition to building on the long-term trajectory, citizens will feel more involved and heard.
Set your goal before starting the engagement.	<p>Beforehand, set a certain goal for your public participation. Be specific: who do you want to involve, for how long, what does success look like, when do you need to make adjustments, what do you expect from your participants, how can you support them?</p> <p>It may be that a one-off action where citizens come into contact with your project once is the ideal way to start engaging them. There does not necessarily have to be a long-term interaction to have an impact or raise awareness among citizens.</p> <p>It can also be advantageous to work in layers, where there are two pathways that can be followed. One that focuses on long-term and actively tries to involve a core group of citizens and another where, for example, people can participate in a one-off activity around a particular theme.</p>
Be clear on your own expectations within the engagement.	Try to be clear about the expectations you have of a citizen participating in your operation. What falls within the citizen's 'responsibility' and what falls outside it? By being clear from the start, wrong expectations can be quickly countered, everyone knows where they stand, and disappointments are minimised.
Let citizens share in the impact.	<p>With public engagement over a long period, it is very important to engage them in the possible impact that the project or operation can have.</p> <p>This impact could be scientific results, possible best practices that have been defined, etc. Passing on this info to them and involving them at this stage can be very valuable to keep the motivation of the public high.</p>
Add fresh details to your project to keep it interesting.	<p>If people have been participating in a project for a long time, you can keep their interest longer if you keep adding some novelties to the project.</p> <p>The basics of the project may of course remain the same but changing some small aspects here and there can attract attention again and feel challenging to the 'ancients' within your project (~ 'adding sweets'). Try to reinvent yourself in small aspects of your operation to keep the interest higher.</p>
Did you think about a plan B?	Within a functioning or project, there are inevitably dropouts of participants. Why participants sometimes quit certain activities is not always clear either. Lay down a plan B in advance, to still achieve your goal. That way, you save time, should plan B be needed.



Solution: Investing in capacity building

**Table i: Important needs or aspects to implement the solution “capacity building”**

<b>Focusing on capacity-building</b>	
A capacity-building expertise center.	<p>This idea emphasises the need for an accessible organisation with a strong local focus, where citizens or organising bodies can go to get tips, tricks and tools when it comes to setting up a project as a citizen or how to involve citizens in your operation.</p> <p>Whether this body should then be connected to an existing something or be a new creation was still open for debate.</p>
Personal support for citizens.	<p>Tailor-made mentoring and direct/personal contacts are a very big part of capacity building.</p> <p>Developing support programs for citizens who participate in a project or people who want to start something up can be very valuable and create a climate where everyone learns. By guiding citizens up close, you can also respond much more closely to their needs and exactly what skills, training or support they need.</p> <p>Even if you start an initiative, you need to know very well what your goal is, what you understand by success, what your desired result is, whether you have a plan B because this will also determine what tools and capacity building you need to achieve that success. Also consider techniques from marketing but aimed at citizen participation. These should be independent and aimed at achieving higher good goals.</p>
Sharing experiences.	<p>By sharing your own experiences and impressions, success or not, with the community, others can learn from them.</p> <p>Setting up moments within your network where good practices and lessons learnt are shared can be very valuable on the road to better public engagement.</p> <p>These shared experiences could also lead, for instance, to a common apotheosis moment where all kinds of things are shown and taught to new participants or organisations.</p>



2.2 POLAND

**Table j: New challenges discovered during workshop in Poland on citizen engagement.**

New challenges	
A sense of futility regarding the effectiveness of social consultations.	<i>The mindset of the Polish population may play a substantial role in shaping their perception of social consultations as ineffective or pointless. People are accustomed to having little influence over ongoing matters and lack the education or encouragement to participate in social consultations. Additionally, there is no transparent system for presenting the outcomes of these consultations. As a result, communication is ineffective in fostering a sense of responsibility within the community or empowering individuals to believe their participation can impact significant decisions.</i>
Poor promotion of local fish has its impact on poor development of domestic aquaculture	<i>The poor promotion of products like domestically reared salmon results in few people choosing to buy local products, hindering the development of aquaculture in Poland.</i>
Lack of education on health benefits of fish products poorly affects development of aquaculture and fisheries sectors.	<i>Inadequate education about the health benefits of fish products, combined with incomplete information on the Baltic Sea's environment, leads to the widespread belief that fish from the Baltic are of poor quality, heavily polluted, and unhealthy for consumption. This perception negatively impacts the reputation and development of both aquaculture and the fisheries sectors.</i>
The administrative issues stem from legal misalignment or non-compliance.	<i>The development of the aquaculture and fisheries sectors in Poland is hindered by administrative challenges, particularly the misalignment of legal frameworks. Current regulations are either outdated or not fully adapted to the specific needs and growth potential of these industries, creating bureaucratic obstacles and limiting the sectors' capacity to expand and innovate. This lack of legal adaptability stifles investment and progress, preventing the effective utilisation of Poland's natural resources for sustainable development in aquaculture and fisheries.</i>
Competition between industries, lack of sustainable development, and the high start-up costs of blue sector	<i>The growth of the blue sector in Poland is hampered by intense competition with other industries and the absence of a well-integrated strategy for sustainable development. Additionally, the high initial costs required to establish aquaculture businesses act as a significant barrier for new entrants, limiting expansion and innovation. These challenges contribute to the slow progress of the sector, despite its potential for contributing to the economy and sustainable food production.</i>



businesses are key factors preventing the sector from flourishing in Poland	
Secondary/Functional Illiteracy and Distrust in Experts	<i>Secondary/Functional illiteracy, characterised by a lack of critical thinking skills and the inability to evaluate information sources, has led to a greater reliance on internet search engines than on scientists and experts. This phenomenon results in the public often placing more trust in easily accessible online information, regardless of its credibility, rather than in the insights provided by qualified professionals. This lack of discernment undermines the authority of scientific research and contributes to the spread of misinformation.</i>

**Table k: Possible solutions to have more citizen engagement in the Mission Ocean narrative.**

<b>Solutions</b>	
Building Public Awareness of Scientific Discourse.	<i>To address the lack of trust in scientists, it is essential to foster a greater public understanding that scientific knowledge is not absolute and can evolve over time.</i>  <i>Educational initiatives should focus on promoting the idea that scientists may hold varying opinions on specific issues due to the complexity and nuance inherent in research. Engaging the community through outreach programs, public forums, and accessible communication strategies can help demystify the scientific process and encourage critical thinking. By cultivating a culture of open dialogue, we can enhance public confidence in scientific expertise and highlight the importance of diverse perspectives in advancing knowledge.</i>
Building Public Awareness of Scientific Discourse- engaging youth through constructive dialogue.	<i>An effective strategy to combat the lack of trust in scientists involves skilful communication with young people that is affirming and encouraging. By introducing them to scientific topics in a supportive manner, we can foster curiosity and interest in scientific discourse. It is important to seek elements within conversations that facilitate the exchange of information, such as shared experiences or relevant examples. Creating an environment where young people feel comfortable asking questions and expressing their thoughts can enhance their understanding of scientific concepts and promote a</i>



	<p><i>more informed perspective. This approach not only empowers youth but also helps bridge the gap between scientific communities and the general public, ultimately building greater trust in scientific expertise.</i></p>
<p>Poor public perception of the state.</p>	<p>Isolated interest groups, or "bubbles," consist of small clusters of people who focus on specific themes and are often closed off to outside perspectives. This issue primarily affects decision-makers and investors, as they are more aware of and sensitive to their public image.</p> <p>The lack of open dialogue and exchange of ideas within these groups can hinder progress and innovation in various sectors. One of the proposed solutions is the need to change the public perception of the state. Currently, inconsistencies in legislation—where one law addresses a particular issue in one way while another law contradicts it—contribute to confusion and mistrust.</p> <p>Establishing a cohesive and transparent legal framework can help create a more favourable environment for collaboration and investment, ultimately leading to better outcomes for all stakeholders involved.</p>
<p>Development of comprehensive policy framework for the blue sector.</p>	<p>The absence of a coherent government policy regulating issues related to the blue sector—particularly those concerning fisheries, tourism and related industries—creates significant challenges. This gap leads to the tendency to bury problems under financial concerns rather than addressing them effectively through initiatives that might not even involve extra budget allocations. To resolve this issue, it is essential to develop a comprehensive policy framework for the blue sector. Education plays a crucial role in this process, as it can help raise awareness about the importance of sustainable practices and the potential of the blue economy to foster economic growth and food security. Additionally, building motivation for action and providing opportunities for diversification can encourage stakeholders to engage in sustainable practices. Promoting collaboration between sectors will further facilitate a more integrated approach, ensuring a comprehensive approach to solving the challenges specific to the blue sector.</p>
<p>Code of good practices for investors and associated sectors.</p>	<p><i>A viable solution would be to establish a code of good practices that encourages positive actions and responsible behaviour. This code should be developed with the primary involvement of investors, as their engagement is crucial for promoting sustainable practices and fostering a culture of collaboration within the industry.</i></p> <p><i>By focusing on recommendations rather than restrictions, we can create a more conducive environment for growth and innovation.</i></p>



<p>Enhancing Trust in Science: Citizen Engagement and Tailored Messaging.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Need for Implementation of Citizen Science: Engaging communities in scientific research to enhance trust and collaboration.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Tailoring Communication to the Audience: Skilful conversations with youth to effectively convey scientific messages and address their concerns.</i></li> <li>3. <i>Building Social Awareness Regarding the Common Good: Raising awareness about the importance of the common good and how renewable energy projects can benefit the community and wider society as a whole.</i></li> </ol>
<p>Engaging Audiences Through Thematic Multimedia and Targeted Messaging.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Creating Thematic Multimedia Content: Develop engaging and informative multimedia materials focused on specific themes related to offshore wind farms and renewable energy. This includes videos, infographics, and interactive content that can capture the attention of diverse audiences.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Personalised and Purposeful Messaging: Tailor messages to resonate with different audiences by addressing their interests, concerns, and values. This approach ensures that the content is relevant and impactful.</i></li> <li>3. <i>Utilising TikTok for Broad Reach: Leverage TikTok as a platform to disseminate multimedia content. Short, engaging videos can effectively reach a wide audience, especially younger demographics, allowing for increased awareness and engagement around the importance of renewable energy and its benefits for the community.</i></li> </ol>
<p>From Isolation to Interaction: Solutions for Effective Communication.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Neutral Media: Establishing and promoting impartial media outlets that provide balanced coverage of topics related to offshore wind farms and renewable energy.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Media Responsibility: Encouraging responsible media practices to ensure that information is accurate and reflects multiple viewpoints.</i></li> <li>3. <i>Facilitating Discussions: Creating platforms for open discussions where individuals from different backgrounds can share their opinions and engage in constructive dialogue.</i></li> <li>4. <i>Using Simple Language: Communicating complex topics in an accessible and straightforward manner to bridge gaps in understanding and reach a wider audience</i></li> </ol>
<p>Restoring Confidence: The Importance of Transparency and Science Outreach.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Promotion of Scientific Impartiality: Emphasise the importance of unbiased and objective scientific research to build public trust in the scientific community.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Showcasing Scientific Evidence: Clearly communicate how scientists arrive at their conclusions by detailing the research process, methodologies, and data used to support findings.</i></li> <li>3. <i>Dissemination of Science: Actively spread scientific knowledge and findings through various channels, ensuring that the information is accessible to a broader audience and fostering a culture of inquiry and understanding</i></li> </ol>



## 2.3 DENMARK

**Table I: Possible solutions to have more citizen engagement in the Mission Ocean narrative.**

Solutions	
Better timing of citizen involvement.	<i>Involve citizens earlier in the planning process when selecting sites for aquaculture development. This gives the citizens the possibility to address local concerns, such as environmental impact, visual disturbances, or potential conflicts with recreational activities. Early involvement allows citizens to provide input and feel a sense of ownership fostering greater trust and cooperation. This collaborative approach not only helps identify the most suitable locations but also builds stronger public support for aquaculture initiatives, making the overall development process smoother and more transparent.</i>
Changing food culture.	<i>Changing the food culture around low-trophic aquaculture can be supported by cooking schools, TV shows, local restaurants, and subscription meal boxes. These platforms introduce marine products to the public, making them more accessible and familiar for everyday meals.</i>
Fostering collaboration between maritime industries to drive innovation and sustainable growth.	<i>A collaboration must be established with maritime industries in product development, aquaculture, and fisheries to drive innovation and sustainable growth.</i>
Invest in co-creating planning and placement of aquaculture activities with citizens.	<i>A more effective solution is to adopt a co-creation approach during the development phase, actively involving local stakeholders in the planning and placement of aquaculture activities and land-based infrastructure. This collaborative process ensures that the needs and concerns of local communities, including those from traditional industries like fishing, are taken into account. By working together to design infrastructure that supports both new aquaculture ventures and ongoing local activities, stakeholders can minimise conflicts, create synergies, and build a shared vision for sustainable development. This inclusive approach not only strengthens public support but also ensures that aquaculture development harmonizes with the existing social and economic setup.</i>
Invest in education from a young age on aquaculture.	<i>Education should start early, introducing sustainable seafood to children in schools and even kindergartens. By teaching kids about the benefits of sustainable seafood as a healthy, easy alternative to less sustainable options, we can build awareness and appreciation from a young age. This foundation helps shape future food choices and encourages a shift towards more sustainable eating habits.</i>



<p>Provide hands-on experience for citizens to participate in small-scale aquaculture.</p>	<p><i>Maritime allotments offer an accessible platform to engage the public and build understanding of marine food production and ecosystems. By allowing citizens to participate in small-scale aquaculture, they gain hands-on experience, fostering a sense of ownership and appreciation for sustainable practices. This approach not only educates but also strengthens community support for broader aquaculture efforts.</i></p>
<p>Creating connection between the public and sustainable aquaculture.</p>	<p><i>Inviting the public to visit sea farms can help build a stronger connection to sustainable aquaculture. These visits offer hands-on learning experiences, allowing people to see how marine products are grown and understand the environmental benefits of low-trophic aquaculture. This direct engagement helps demystify the process and fosters greater public support and trust.</i></p>



### 3. ANNEX 3 – WORKSHOP DENMARK (PUBLIC HEARINGS/CONSULTATIONS)

**Table m: List of advantages and disadvantages when using public hearings as a citizen engagement strategy.**

Advantages written public hearings	
<p><b>Builds Trust, Presence, and Local Ownership</b> Public meetings foster a sense of presence, involvement, empowerment, and shared purpose. Being present among others cultivates group dynamics, empathy, and mutual support. This environment enhances the feeling of being heard and valued, contributing to stronger local ownership and higher likelihood of consensus.</p>	<p><b>Enables Rich Dialogue and Reduces Misunderstanding</b> The format allows participants to explain their perspectives in depth, clarify intentions, and respond to follow-up questions. This reduces the risk of misinterpretation and ensures more nuanced, well-understood contributions.</p>
<p><b>Recognises and Validates Local Knowledge</b> Face-to-face interaction with authorities gives citizens an opportunity to voice local insights and lived experiences, and explore new/not recorded learnings and knowledge. Acknowledging these inputs publicly affirms their importance in the decision-making process.</p>	<p><b>Fosters Transparency, Trust, and Institutional Connection</b> Meetings provide space for authorities to explain processes in detail, answer questions, and engage directly with participants. This strengthens transparency, fosters trust, and builds constructive relationships between citizens and decision-makers.</p>
<p><b>Encourages Learning, Inspiration, and New Connections</b> Beyond formal input, public meetings can be catalysts for knowledge exchange, community learning, and new collaborations. They create a setting where participants can inspire one another and explore shared challenges and solutions.</p>	<p><b>Effective When Timed Early and Maintained Continuously</b> Public meetings are most impactful when held early in the planning process and revisited regularly. Early engagement ensures that community insights help shape direction from the outset, while on-going involvement maintains momentum and commitment.</p>
Disadvantages public hearings	



<p><b>Lack of Dialogue</b> Individual written responses may lack nuances and the common understanding of interactive dialogue. They can reflect narrow perspectives and do not allow for real-time exchange, clarification, or compromise.</p>	<p><b>Inaccessible Deadlines</b> Tight or poorly timed deadlines, e.g., during holidays, can lead to perceptions of intentional exclusion and reduce participation and trust in the system.</p>
<p><b>High Entry Barrier for Written Input</b> Many participants may feel they lack the time, skills, or confidence to express their views in writing, especially in a structured or formal tone.</p>	<p><b>Complex Language and Technical Barriers</b> Official consultation materials often use legalistic or highly technical language, which can alienate non-expert citizens and discourage engagement.</p>
<p><b>Lack of Feedback and Transparency</b> When responses are not acknowledged or visibly incorporated into the process, participants may feel ignored. This perceived lack of impact can discourage future involvement and trust in authorities.</p>	<p><b>Insufficient Contextualisation</b> Materials may overlook cultural or local specificities and fail to connect the current project with relevant ongoing initiatives, reducing perceived relevance.</p>
<p><b>Overemphasis on Technical Criteria</b> When emotional or experiential input appears undervalued compared to technical data, citizens may disengage, deepening divisions between authorities and communities.</p>	<p><b>Cumbersome Verification Requirements</b> Digital platforms requiring identity verification to prevent duplicate or fraudulent input can deter participation, particularly from those concerned about anonymity or digital literacy.</p>

<p>Recommendations to improve public hearings</p>	
<p><b>Early Engagement and Communication</b> Introduce the project at an early stage and throughout the project via webinars or information sessions to establish stakeholder connection.</p>	<p><b>Stakeholder Involvement in Planning Phases</b> Use tools such as surveys or open meetings during the initial decision-making and planning stages to align project design with real-world needs.</p>
<p><b>Clear Purpose and Expectations</b> Define and communicate the objective of the consultation: what input is sought, how it will be used, and what participants can expect in return.</p>	<p><b>Local Knowledge Collection Before Scoping</b> Organise pre-scoping activities (e.g. community meetings or questionnaires) to gather insights on local needs and valuable knowledge.</p>



<p><b>Realistic and Inclusive Deadlines</b> Ensure timelines allow sufficient opportunity for participation and account for periods when many people are likely to be unavailable (e.g. holidays).</p>	
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ANNEX 4: WORKSHOP DENMARK (PUBLIC MEETINGS)

**Table n: List of advantages and disadvantages when using public meetings as a citizen engagement strategy.**

Advantages Public meetings	
<p><b>Builds Trust, Presence, and Local Ownership</b> Public meetings foster a sense of presence, involvement, empowerment, and shared purpose. Being present among others cultivates group dynamics, empathy, and mutual support. This environment enhances the feeling of being heard and valued, contributing to stronger local ownership and higher likelihood of consensus.</p>	<p><b>Enables Rich Dialogue and Reduces Misunderstanding</b> The format allows participants to explain their perspectives in depth, clarify intentions, and respond to follow-up questions. This reduces the risk of misinterpretation and ensures more nuanced, well-understood contributions.</p>
<p><b>Recognises and Validates Local Knowledge</b> Face-to-face interaction with authorities gives citizens an opportunity to voice local insights and lived experiences, and explore new/not recorded learnings and knowledge. Acknowledging these inputs publicly affirms their importance in the decision-making process.</p>	<p><b>Fosters Transparency, Trust, and Institutional Connection</b> Meetings provide space for authorities to explain processes in detail, answer questions, and engage directly with participants. This strengthens transparency, fosters trust, and builds constructive relationships between citizens and decision-makers.</p>
<p><b>Encourages Learning, Inspiration, and New Connections</b> Beyond formal input, public meetings can be catalysts for knowledge exchange, community learning, and new collaborations. They create a setting where participants can inspire one another and explore shared challenges and solutions.</p>	<p><b>Effective When Timed Early and Maintained Continuously</b> Public meetings are most impactful when held early in the planning process and revisited regularly. Early engagement ensures that community insights help shape direction from the outset, while ongoing involvement maintains momentum and commitment.</p>
Disadvantages public meetings	
<p><b>Exclusion Through Language and Format</b></p>	<p><b>Unequal Participation and Power Dynamics</b></p>



<p>The use of technical or legalistic language can alienate participants, making them feel talked down to or disconnected from the conversation. Combined with public speaking anxiety, particularly in small communities where expressing unpopular opinions may have social consequences, this can silence valuable perspectives.</p>	<p>Meetings often favor confident or dominant voices, making it harder for quieter participants to contribute. Local associations or familiar “usual suspects” may monopolise the floor, discouraging others from speaking up. Additionally, facilitators often represent the authorities, which may reinforce an uneven power dynamic and reduce openness.</p>
<p><b>Accessibility and Timing Barriers</b> Meetings held during work hours or late evenings may exclude key demographic group, such as working individuals, parents, or caregivers, resulting in underrepresentation.</p>	<p><b>Perception of Limited Impact</b> When the process lacks transparency or fails to offer genuine co-creation opportunities, participants may feel their contributions are symbolic or ineffective. This perception discourages attendance and fosters a sense of disillusionment or wasted effort.</p>
<p><b>Low-Value or Irrelevant Contributions</b> Some participants may attend out of general interest rather than having a stake or informed perspective on the topic. This can dilute the focus and reduce the quality of discussions.</p>	<p><b>Resource-Intensive and Hard to Summarise</b> Organising and facilitating meaningful public meetings requires significant time and staffing, often a challenge for authorities with limited budgets. The qualitative nature of input also makes it difficult to systematically analyse and integrate into decision-making processes.</p>

<p>Improvements public meetings</p>	
<p><b>Thoughtful Timing and Early Planning</b> Schedule meetings at times that accommodate a broad range of participants, including working individuals and caregivers. Early and continuous engagement ensures that citizens feel involved from the beginning and throughout the process.</p>	<p><b>Thematic Meeting Series</b> Design a series of meetings, each with a specific focus (e.g. visioning, technical input, local concerns). This approach allows for deeper exploration of key topics and invites participation from different interest groups at various stages.</p>
<p><b>Facilitator Design and Process Clarity</b></p>	<p><b>Deliberative and Inclusive Representation</b></p>



<p>Ensure facilitators are neutral or represent a balanced perspective, with clearly defined rules for engagement. Equal speaking time, transparent agendas, and a respectful atmosphere help foster fairness and build trust.</p>	<p>Incorporate randomly selected and compensated (for their time) citizen panels/assemblies or boards to ensure broad demographic representation. This democratic innovation helps elevate diverse voices, supports more inclusive deliberation, and encourages active participation from social groups who might not otherwise engage.</p>
<p><b>Participatory Formats: Group Work and Workshops</b> Breakout groups and workshop-style formats give more people space to speak and feel heard. Smaller group settings foster dialogue, allow for the sharing of deeper insights, gather more local knowledge and promote mutual understanding between participants</p>	<p><b>Visual Storytelling and Community Voices</b> Encourage the creation and use of short videos or visual materials from community members, citizens and stakeholders. Sharing these in meetings helps personalise the issues, spark discussion, and build a sense of collective ownership.</p>
<p><b>Learn from Best Practices</b> Draw inspiration from successful models like the Lake Tahoe Stewardship Plan, which used inclusive strategies and multimedia engagement to strengthen local participation and stewardship.</p>	



ANNEX 5 WORKSHOP DENMARK (BOTTOM-UP ENGAGEMENT AND THE COOPERATIVE MODEL IN DENMARK)

**Table o: List of advantages and disadvantages when using bottom-up engagement as a citizen engagement strategy.**

Advantages bottom-up engagement	
<p><b>Local Co-ownership</b> Encourages shared responsibility and stronger community ties by involving municipalities, citizens, and local stakeholders directly in energy production and benefit-sharing.</p>	<p><b>Democratic Participation</b> Supports transparent decision-making and local empowerment, aligning projects with community values and needs.</p>
<p><b>Social Acceptance</b> Projects with co-ownership often experience higher public support due to increased trust and perceived fairness.</p>	

Disadvantages bottom-up engagement	
<p><b>Lack of Economic Incentives</b> Major energy companies are generally reluctant to engage in co-ownership models, as they prefer to retain full profit control. Without clear financial or regulatory incentives, they have little motivation to include communities as co-investors.</p>	<p><b>Governance Complexity</b> Shared ownership can lead to disagreements around operations, including maintenance responsibilities, cost distribution, and long-term contractual obligations.</p>
<p><b>Regulatory and Legal Constraints</b> Offshore energy projects face specific barriers, as the state owns maritime space and only leases it to developers. Frequent changes in government policies and</p>	



frameworks create uncertainty for long-term cooperative planning and investment.	
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Needs within bottom-up engagement	
<p><b>Policy Stability</b> Long-term, predictable policy frameworks to build trust among communities and investors.</p>	<p><b>Economic Incentives</b> Clear financial mechanisms (e.g. tax benefits, profit-sharing schemes, favorable financing) that encourage energy companies to open ownership models to public or community stakeholders.</p>
<p><b>Support for Facilitation and Capacity-Building</b> Resources to help communities navigate legal, technical, and financial challenges involved in establishing co-owned energy projects.</p>	

