RETOUCH NEXUS

REsilienT water gOvernance Under climate CHange within the WEFE NEXUS

# Deliverable D2.4

# Annex on Tools, Templates, and Guidelines

Binayak Das, Carolina Borges, Lilly Aufdembrinke, and Lisa Oppermann (adelphi), Celia Schmidt, Berlin, Germany

Date (30/09/2025)

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

RETOUCH NEXUS

# Table of Content



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## List of Tables



## List of Figures



## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AI | Artificial Intelligence |
| CoP | Community of Practice |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| EU | European Union |
| EWA | Energy and Water Agency |
| GA | General Assembly |
| HHNK | Hoogheemraadschap Hollands Noorderkwartier |
| KPIs | Key Performance Indicators |
| MSPs | Multi Stakeholder Partnerships |
| MYP | Meaningful Youth Participation |
| NCV | Non-violent communication |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organisation |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| RBO | River Basin Organisation |
| VR | Virtual Reality |
| WEFE | Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems |
| WG2027 | WaterGovernance2027 |
| WP | Work Package |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

# 1. Introduction to the annex

The annex is a vital part of Deliverable D2.4, providing essential tools, templates, and guidelines to assist case studies and other interested stakeholders in planning and implementing effective stakeholder engagement activities. Designed to offer practical support, the annex ensures that users have access to resources that streamline coordination, enhance reflection, and promote best practices in engagement.

Firstly, the annex includes in **chapter 2** an Excel file for activity planning. This versatile tool enables project managers, coordinators, and case study teams to systematically organise, structure, and track both planned and completed activities. Its purpose is to help users maintain a clear overview of ongoing processes, ensuring nothing is overlooked and facilitating smooth project management.

In addition, the annex features in **chapter 3** an evaluation questionnaire for stakeholder engagement activities. This questionnaire is a valuable resource for project coordinators and case study leads, allowing them to reflect on the effectiveness and outcomes of their engagement efforts. The insights gathered can be used for internal reports and to generate content for social media channels, enhancing transparency and communication.

The annex contains in **chapter 4** a comprehensive document called "Stakeholder Engagement Approaches and Guidelines for WEFE Nexus and Beyond." This document provides in-depth guidance on stakeholder engagement and is complemented by a curated list of 16 tools in **chapter 5.** Each tool is accompanied by explanations on their application. These resources are designed to support the development of inclusive and impactful engagement strategies, both within the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) nexus context and beyond.

Finally, **chapter 6** provides a guide for a follow along exercise designed to guide users through the process of quantifying nexus-smart water governance. Drawing on the indicator workshop conducted within the Dutch case study, this chapter outlines step-by-step instructions for using the RETOUCH NEXUS Indicator Application.

Together, the materials in the annex equip users with the means to plan, execute, and evaluate stakeholder engagement activities effectively, contributing to the overall success and sustainability of their initiatives.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## 2. Activity planning

*Table 1: Case study's activity planning*

<table>
<tr><th colspan="11">Case Study Name</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3" rowspan="2">Verification</td><td rowspan="2"></td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">Engagement Activities</td><td colspan="5">Engagement Activities</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Engagement Formats</td></tr>
<tr><td>Activity conducted (yes)</td><td>Within the original timeline (yes)</td><td>If the activity was not conducted within the original timeline, please explain why.</td><td>Title of activity</td><td>Goals</td><td>Work packages and tasks addressed</td><td>Workshop</td><td>Training</td><td>Training on Indicators</td><td>Citizen Engagement</td><td>Awareness Raising</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| Case Study Name | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Engagement Activities | | | | | | | | | Communities of Practice | | Are you using innovative engagement mechanisms? If yes, what? |
| Set Up | | | Number of Participants | | | | Time | | Do you need a CoP | Role of CoPs | |
| Online | In-person | Hybrid | Stakeholders | Women | Experts | Number | Month | Duration | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

# 3. Evaluation questionnaire on stakeholder engagement activities

Note on the questionnaire

The online Questionnaire on Stakeholder Engagement Activities is designed by the work package leaders of WP2 (adelphi) and WP5 (EQY) for the six RETOUCH NEXUS case study leaders. The questionnaire aims to organize, support, and track the preparation and evaluation of stakeholder engagement activities. It will be used by EQY, TUM and adelphi for documentation purpose.

Case studies are asked to answer all questions in the questionnaire and upload it on their respective SharePoint folder within one week after the implementation of the stakeholder engagement activity.

1. General information

| | |
|---|---|
| Case study name: | |
| Name of stakeholder engagement activity: | |
| Venue: | |
| Date and Duration: | |
| Contact person: | |

2. Stakeholder engagement activity

| |
|---|
| Please describe the stakeholder engagement activity. In what context did the activity take place? What is the concept? What actions were taken during the activity? What are specific objectives or goals?<br><br>(150 – 200 words) |
| |

Set up: ☐ Online ☐ In-person ☐ Hybrid

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| What are the overall goals of the activity? | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Inform about RETOUCH NEXUS project<br>☐ Raise awareness among stakeholders<br>☐ Creative communication strategies<br>☐ Close data gaps | ☐ Encourage stakeholder cooperation<br>☐ Problem solving<br>☐ Provide feedback on project results<br>☐ Other: ______________________ |

| Please select the format of the activity. | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Workshop<br>☐ Training<br>☐ Indicator Training<br>☐ Citizen Engagement<br>☐ Awareness Raising | ☐ Community of Practice<br>☐ Podcast Episode<br>☐ News Article<br>☐ Other: ____________________________ |

| Please select which stakeholder groups participated in the activity and add the number of participants. | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Industry / business partners: _________<br>☐ Innovators: ______________________<br>☐ EU Institutions: ___________________<br>☐ National Authorities: _______________<br>☐ Regional authorities: _______________<br>☐ Local authorities: __________________<br>☐ Civil society: ______________________<br>☐ Citizens: _________________________<br>☐ Research communities: ______________ | ☐ Specific end-users' communities (e.g. farmers): ___________________________<br>☐ Associations: ______________________<br>☐ International organisation<br>(e.g. UN body, OECD, etc.): _____________<br>☐ Investors: _________________________<br>☐ Other (e.g. women and youth): ______________________________ |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| Were women, youth, and other vulnerable groups part of the activity? If yes, please provide more information on how they were included. If not, please explain why. (150 – 200 words) |
|---|
| |

| Were innovative engagement mechanisms part of your activity? If yes, please provide further information on the innovation. | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Digital Platforms and tools:<br><br>☐ Interactive workshops (e.g. school summer camps): | ☐ Creative communication strategies (e.g. podcast episode<br><br>☐ Other (e.g. water experience container): |

3. Communication and dissemination

| What kind of communication channels were used to promote the activity? | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Event | ☐ Print materials | ☐ Exhibition |
| ☐ conference | ☐ brochure | ☐ Press release |
| ☐ meeting | ☐ leaflet | ☐ Interview |
| ☐ workshop | ☐ posters | ☐ social media |
| ☐ internet debate | ☐ stickers | ☐ Media article |
| ☐ round table | ☐ banners | ☐ TV/radio campaign |
| ☐ group discussion | ☐ Other: | ☐ Newsletter |
| ☐ Other: | | ☐ Other: |

| Please describe why you used the above selected communication channels. (100 – 150 words) |
|---|
| |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">What kind of dissemination activities are planned to be used to make knowledge and results of the activity available?</th></tr>
<tr><td>☐ Clustering activities (refers to the process of bringing together related projects or consortia to share knowledge, best practices, and resources to address common challenges, and enhance the overall impact of results)<br><br>☐ Collaboration with EU-funded projects</td><td>☐ Conferences<br><br>☐ Education and training events<br><br>☐ Meetings<br><br>☐ Other scientific collaboration: ________________________________<br><br>☐ Other: _______________________</td></tr>
</table>

| Please describe why you used the above selected dissemination activities with reference to a specific project output. (100 – 150 words) |
|---|
| |

4. Lessons learned, review and outlook

| Which key results, and/or lessons learned resulted from the activity? Please add minimum three points. (150 – 200 words) |
|---|
| |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

RETOUCH NEXUS

| What kind of materials are available to document the activity? Please upload them on Sharepoint under WP2 in your respective case study folder. | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Agenda | ☐ Recordings |
| ☐ List of Participants | ☐ Report |
| ☐ Pictures | ☐ Other: ______________________ |

| Which next steps are planned? Please add minimum three points. (150 – 200 words) |
|---|
| |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

RETOUCH NEXUS

# 4. Stakeholder engagement approaches and guidelines for WEFE Nexus and beyond

Preface

*This "Stakeholder Engagement Template for WEFE Nexus" serves as a hands-on practical manual to support the six European case studies in their ongoing process of planning and implementing stakeholder engagement activities, such as workshops, awareness raising activities, podcasts, and school summer camps. It serves as a guiding document for practitioners interested in effective and sustainable stakeholder engagement in the RETOUCH NEXUS project and beyond. It includes guiding sections on how to engage with stakeholders in the WEFE Nexus, as well as practical tools, checklists and templates for collaborating with stakeholders.*

Who is this document for?

*This guide is for everyone who is (in)directly involved in stakeholder engagement activities – as stakeholder, facilitator, leader or partner. It provides you with both the conceptual foundations as well as practical tools to foster successful partnerships.*

*Primary Target Group: Case Study owners and partners within WEFE Nexus*

*Secondary Target Group: Water governance professionals and practitioners (interested in) implementing stakeholder engagement activities especially in the WEFE Nexus but also beyond.*

How to use this guide

- *This guide is structured around three key sections—the 3 Ps: Purpose, Principles, and Practice. The first section, "Stakeholder Engagement: What It Means and Why It Matters," introduces key definitions and explains the importance of stakeholder engagement within the WEFE Nexus. The second section, "Designing the Process," provides guidance on how to structure an effective engagement process—whether you're planning a one-day workshop or a longer-term initiative. It outlines core principles for success and shares best practice examples from the WEFE context. The third section, "From Design to Practice," walks you through the typical steps of stakeholder engagement. It offers practical tips, addresses common challenges, and presents a set of tools to support planning and implementation.*
- *Note that there is a toolbox with 16 practical templates and step-by-step instructions in the appendix of this guideline document. You can use and complete these templates and get started right away, because this guide is, above all, a practical, hands-on tool rather than a theoretical treatise The document repeatedly refers to the (numbered) tools from #1-#16, often with the symbol of a light bulb.*
- *Feel free to use the guide as needed. If you want to start from scratch and remind yourself (and others) why stakeholder engagement is important, read the first chapter. Are you already in the middle of the process and looking for inspiration for your next workshop? Then feel free to jump straight to the tools. Keep in mind, however, that it is still recommended to work*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

*through the guide step by step, as the recommendations at the end are based on the previously developed strategy.*

Questions this guide will answer

- *How to address existing challenges within the case studies with regards to stakeholder engagement*
- *How to design and facilitate improved stakeholder engagement activities in the WEFE Nexus processes and beyond*
- *How to find suitable and innovative stakeholder engagement tools for your specific case example*
- *How to initiate and manage long-term stakeholder partnerships beyond the scope of the RETOUCH NEX project*

## 4.1. Purpose – Stakeholder engagement: What it means and why it matters

### Defining stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement means informing, listening to, or collaborating with stakeholders of an organization or project. It can also be a combination of all three. Depending on the level and intensity of the process, stakeholder engagement can be an overarching framework or individual components of that framework. As preparation for the actual engagement activity, the process includes identifying, mapping and prioritizing stakeholders (and their needs). This is the basis to develop the best strategy on how to engage them and to make the best use of available resources. It goes without saying that it is not just about efficiency; stakeholder engagement helps to proactively (and preventively, before a potential conflict arises) consider the needs and desires of anyone who has a stake in an organization or project to ensure long-term success.[1] In the case of the RETOUCH NEXUS project, each case study engages with their own circle of stakeholders that were mapped and described at the beginning. The description included an overview of the sectoral affiliation of stakeholders involved (water, energy, food, ecosystem) as well as the type of their relation to each other (joint interest, cooperation, conflict).

In a nutshell, stakeholder engagement means:

- the process by which an organization involves people who may be affected by the decisions it makes or can influence the implementation of its decisions
- proactive interaction and collaboration with individuals or groups affected by a project or business activity
- understanding, involving and responding to expectations and concerns to ensure the success of the project or operation

[1] https://www.smestrategy.net/blog/stakeholder-engagement-management-for-strategic-planning

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## Who can be a stakeholder?

Stakeholders are not just the general public, they are specific groups of people or individuals, each with different needs. A stakeholder is anyone who has a stake in your organization, project or activity, either through interest, influence or both. In the WEFE Nexus, depending on the scope of the project, stakeholder groups can range from government and policy makers (like ministries or departments of water, energy, agriculture, and environment), to private sector (such as agribusinesses, water utilities or technology providers), to civil society and local communities (such as farmers, civil society organisation (CSOs), non-governmental organisation (NGOs), or residents), to universities and research institutions, international organizations, as well as consumers and the general public. In the RETOUCH NEXUS project, stakeholders from all these categories are engaged which not only broadens the circle of people involved but also enriches the quality of discussions, implementations, and upscaling around WEFE Nexus solutions. This diversity of potential stakeholders already shows why integrated governance and participatory planning are key in the WEFE Nexus approach. To identify the “right” stakeholders and develop a strategy for effective communication, a thorough analysis is necessary.

## Why is it important to engage stakeholders?

When done well and at the right time, stakeholder engagement can improve connection, trust, and buy-in for your key initiatives. It goes beyond merely informing stakeholders, because they themselves can be actively involved as experts by providing information that was previously not known. Moreover, well selected stakeholders can also give feedback on the feasibility of a project or activity to ensure that planning does not fail reality and that needs are met. For example, in the context of modelling, which is done a lot in the case studies Germany and Spain, stakeholders can assess different scenarios in which water is used more sustainable through the implementation of economic incentives and policies. Bringing consent and reservations to light and ensuring that diverse perspectives from politics, water providers, and users are considered in decision-making can have tremendous effects. Furthermore, stakeholder engagement can foster transparency and mutual understanding by identifying and mitigating potential risks and conflicts at an early stage, including uncertainty, dissatisfaction, disengagement, and reservation to change.

Effective engagement also enhances communication, minimizes resistance, and helps align stakeholder expectations with project goals. By actively involving those who are affected by or can influence a project, projects or organizations can gain valuable insights, and create more sustainable, widely supported outcomes even in complex contexts. In summary, stakeholder engagement can have many positive effects:

- a better understanding of the stakeholders and project risks
- improved acceptance of decisions among all parties
- more effective management of stakeholder expectations

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

- more success through increased trust and goodwill

### Stakeholder engagement in the WEFE Nexus

Since 2010, the WEFE Nexus approach has been adapted in various regions and in different programs and projects. The community is actively working towards integrating water, energy, food, and ecosystem considerations into policy and practice. Much has already been achieved, for example, common financing and funding schemes, tools, frameworks and dialogue platforms. Besides the RETOUCH NEXUS project and its sister projects GOVAQA and INNWATER, recent examples include the RECREATE project, the WEFE Nexus international conference in Rabat in February 2025, the annual Dresden Nexus Conference as well as online platforms such as The Water, Energy & Food Security Resource Platform or the WEFE4MED Knowledge Hub. These examples are part of the outreach and engagement strategy of the RETOUCH NEXUS project.

Stakeholder engagement in the WEFE Nexus is especially critical due to the complex, interconnected nature of resources and services. As mentioned in Deliverable 2.1 (p. 5), we need water in all areas of life and sectors, otherwise our ecosystem would collapse. At the same time, various actors from different sectors have their own vested interests in this increasingly scarce resource while climate change is exacerbating this scarcity. To ensure that European countries are well prepared and promote robust, integrated, sustainable, inclusive and up-scalable water governance practice, it becomes more and more important to involve stakeholders systematically and as early as possible. This is why stakeholder engagement is a key component of RETOUCH NEXUS building on the WEFE Nexus.

As mentioned in Deliverable 2.1 (p. 56) "…stakeholder engagement in the RETOUCH NEXUS case studies aligns with different spheres of influence and interests, with a range of stakeholders representing societal, government, private, and research sectors. Collaboration, coordination, and proactive outreach are essential to address common interests, potential conflicts, and foster effective engagement for sustainable water management."

Stakeholder engagement provides the basis for participatory decision-making and integrated planning. However, there are still major reservations within the WEFE sectors, as stakeholders fear to lose decision-making power and that it causes additional effort to involve other sectors in decision-making process. Stakeholder engagement can help to resolve this misunderstanding. First, by making processes of collaboration more effective and efficient in the long term. Second, it helps to raise awareness for the opportunities of a WEFE Nexus approach, not only because different sectoral perspectives are heard, but also to emphasize that the WEFE Nexus itself offers a solution to the dilemma of increasingly scarce resources. Third, stakeholder engagement can help to clarify roles and responsibilities, especially at political level and opens opportunities for exchanging perspectives and interests: What are the priorities of each stakeholder? What matters most? What aspects are negotiable? And what shared goals can we work toward? Forth, stakeholder engagement also helps build bridges between diverse stakeholder groups—for example, exploring how research can inform policy and practice, and how this knowledge can be effectively communicated to practitioners such as farmers. Due to growing application and recognition of the WEFE Nexus approach, it also leverages new funds and funding sources which did not exist before. And again, stakeholder engagement plays

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

a central role, as it represents the common ground on which all collaborations – including financial ones – are built. Finally, ongoing interaction fosters a two-way exchange of knowledge: not only from the RETOUCH project to stakeholders, but also from policy and practice back into research. This dynamic was evident for example in the Netherlands case study, where a workshop on stakeholder participation was organized from project side to facilitate such engagement.

In a nutshell, stakeholder engagement in the WEFE Nexus helps to

- bring people and different WEFE Nexus voices together
- develop a common understanding on how to best manage our resources
- inform and raise awareness for the added value of the WEFE Nexus approach

## 4.2. Principles – Designing the process

### Key principles for successful stakeholder engagement[2]

The content of this subchapter 2.1 is largely adapted from [Brouwer, H., Woodhill, J., Hemmati, M., Verhoosel, K., & van Vugt, S.] (2019), who provide a comprehensive overview of seven principles that make multi stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) effective (p. 40 ff). Some of the seven principles have been applied, summarized and rephrased to suit the context of this document and of RETOUCH NEXUS.

### Navigate power dynamics

Politics and underlying power structures play a major role in managing the WEFE Nexus. Power can bring about change. However, what matters is how it is used and towards what end – especially when looking at it from a less powerful position. Power dynamics will inevitably play a role in any stakeholder engagement process. How you deal with them will influence the levels of trust, openness, and overall legitimacy of the process. If you want to bring about transformative change means that you need to be aware and in a best-case scenario also tackle the underlying issues that have created power differences. An example could be to give small-scale farmers access to information about market prices. Another possibility is to address often neglected target groups through a conscious choice of media. For example, young people through a podcast series such as [RETOUCH NEXUS Narratives](). Finally, the opening of spaces for certain target groups, such as women is another option. Be aware that powerful stakeholders could capture the process and further disadvantage already disempowered stakeholders (Brouwer et al., 2019, p. 80). If women or farmers cannot speak freely in mixed groups due to power imbalances, organizing separate discussion rounds for them can help.

[2] Adapted from: Brouwer, H., Woodhill, J., Hemmati, M., Verhoosel, K., & van Vugt, S. (2019). *The MSP guide: how to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships*. (3rd ed.) Practical Action Publishing. https://edepot.wur.nl/543151

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

While this doesn't solve the underlying issues, it allows voices and perspectives that might otherwise be missed to be heard.

If you include prior work with less influential stakeholders, you can ensure that they participate more meaningfully and take part in a dialogue with those with more power. At the same time, you may need to work with more privileged groups to raise awareness and increase their willingness to share and delegate power. Moreover, language and phrasing play a central role in shaping, maintaining, or challenging power structures. Try using different words (instead of 'power' talk about politics or contributions so that power structures are not reinforced by the choice of words). And keep in mind, that in some cases, terms can have a different meaning when translated. Apart from that, when scientific or technical language is used (as it is often the case in the WEFE Nexus context) make sure that it is accessible to the target audience – no matter whether you are talking to a politician, a farmer or a tenant. (Interim) results should always be communicated in plain language. Avoid acronyms (or explain them if they cannot be avoided), use short sentences, visual aids, like infographics or videos and engage local intermediaries whenever possible.

In the context of the WEFE Nexus, differing expectations, interests, and power dynamics inevitably converge. These tensions exist both vertically—from individuals, such as residents and farmers to regional organizations and national political institutions—and horizontally, across the WEFE Nexus sectors. Increasing resource scarcity and the impacts of climate change demand a departure from siloed approaches, urging us to adopt more integrated and holistic strategies. The WEFE Nexus offers a valuable framework for facilitating the transition towards a future in which we learn to live well with limited resources.

### See conflict as an opportunity for growth

Conflict is inevitable and normal in any multi-stakeholder process. We talk about conflict when parties or individuals have genuinely different interests and struggle over them. When facilitating a process with different stakeholders try to understand and work with the underlying causes. You cannot ask other people to change their beliefs. But you can achieve that benefits and synergies are becoming obvious and more likely to choose than following the old path, characterised by sector singularity. Therefore, support people in becoming aware of their beliefs and the beliefs of others. Through dialogue, we can provide a safe place for people to shift their perspectives. Also don't be afraid of conflict, we naturally surround ourselves with people from *our bubble*, but if we want to work towards systemic change, we will also need to deal with other perspectives, so dare to disagree!

> External facilitation: In some cases, it might be advisable to get an external moderator or mediator to support you as a third party with no stake in the conflict or process. Advantages range from impartiality and fairness to improved communication and focus. The Maltese case study, for example, engaged an external facilitator for all their workshops to support the process with the necessary distance and neutrality as the invited stakeholder group was very diverse – ranging from public and private institutions over all WEFE sectors – and as such their interests as well.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

### *Useful Tools: #3 Six Thinking Hats, #4 The Wheel of Multiple Perspectives*

#### Facilitate clear communication

People being able to communicate with each other in an open, respectful, constructive and empathetic way is one of the key factors of a successful stakeholder engagement process.

> Non-violent communication (NVC) is a communication approach developed by Marshall Rosenberg that focuses on fostering understanding, empathy, and connection. It encourages individuals to express their feelings and needs without blame or judgment, while also actively listening to others' emotions and needs. NVC emphasizes using "I" statements, avoiding defensive or accusatory language, and seeking collaborative solutions to resolve conflicts peacefully.[3]

Ensure that you invest time in understanding the different views of the problem and their underlying assumptions. People often assume that all stakeholders understand the problem or issue in the same way, but it can be seen rather differently. So rather than moving too quickly to the solution and possible strategies, dare to spend time analysing the problem. There are various approaches, for example you can play through the scenario by asking "what is the worst thing that can happen?". As a facilitator, help participants to identify, understand, and create awareness about communication patterns. Help your stakeholders to become active listeners and break bad habits (Brouwer et al., 2019, p. 100). Help your participants to recognize and acknowledge their emotions and those of others. It can be difficult to listen properly when you are triggered emotionally. Try to build trust and resolve conflicts through open communication and increasing understanding of the different points of view.

### *Useful Tools: #2 SWOT Analysis, #3 Six Thinking Hats, #4 The Wheel of Multiple Perspectives, #5 Power Ranking, Role Plays*

#### Promote participatory learning

Participatory learning happens when stakeholders learn from each other's experiences to solve problems and innovate. You could think of the process as a play (or a battleground) for dealing with strategic challenges (Brouwer et al., 2019, p. 109). Create learning environments that are safe but challenging enough to inspire people to think outside the box. If divergent groups come together, choose a neutral location. Include group work and peer-to-peer learning such as in a community of practice (CoP), to emphasize learning with and from stakeholders, not just delivering information to

[3] https://www.scienceofintelligence.de/the-power-of-non-violent-communication/

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

them. Jumping too early to decisions and action will hinder the learning process. Remember that learning is not only about building capacity it is also about innovation: understanding the challenge, identifying new options, and testing until something works. Use creative methods like social media or visual harvesting. When collecting feedback, play with different variations, like oral/written, anonymous/public, online/offline, and more.

### Support systemic change

When it comes to systemic change, we know that human systems are complex and will not change overnight. This is both good and bad news. You don't need to expect to bring about change in the shortest possible time, because it's simply not feasible. So, stay realistic here, systemic change is complex, takes time, and only works if all relevant stakeholders are involved. In the context of RETOUCH NEXUS, systemic change is achieved through a holistic perspective – not only on different sectoral stakeholders but also by (a) taking into account the lived realities of the six case studies, by (b) analysing governmental processes, and finally by (c) working on economic models to identify new strategies on how to achieve sustainable water use across Europe with spillover effects beyond.

As mentioned in the beginning, on a broader level, the WEFE Nexus community is actively working towards integrating water, energy, food and ecosystems to foster systemic thinking. Achievements include common funding schemes, tools, frameworks and dialogue platforms. Also in RETOUCH NEXUS, through collaborative efforts, knowledge sharing, and practical demonstrations, different stakeholders are making remarkable progress in addressing complex challenges. Two compelling examples from the RETOUCH NEXUS illustrate how stakeholders are addressing the challenge of enhancing water resource management, in Malta the project partner Energy and Water Agency (EWA) is spearheading innovative efforts by integrating energy and water. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands the key stakeholder Hoogheemraadschap Hollands Noorderkwartier (HHNK) – the regional water authority – has established an entirely new department, the Freshwater Availability Program to meet the increasing demand for freshwater amid declining freshwater supplies. A participation process is a core component of their implementation strategy.  part of their strategy to implement.

Another global example is South Africa that restructured its cabinet, merging several ministries to promote integrated governance. Notably, the Department of Water and Sanitation was combined with the Department of Human Settlements, and the Department of Agriculture was merged with the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development. These actions aimed to streamline responsibilities and enhance coordination across sectors. [4] These examples show how the WEFE Nexus community has catalysed systemic thinking and structural reforms to improve the resilience and sustainability of resource systems.

Acting systemically also means aligning change processes with the way in which systems evolve. So don't expect things to go as planned, include multiple cycles of reflection, planning, and action so you can always adapt your plans to unexpected change. Recognize that change happens because of the

[4] https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/president-cyril-ramaphosa-announces-reconfigured-departments-14-jun-2019

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

actions of many different actors and try out a range of options and tools. Expect failure and learn from it.

### *Useful Tool: #15 Constellations*

### Best Practice and innovative approaches

Innovative approaches to stakeholder engagement in the WEFE Nexus are helping to make participation more inclusive, impactful, and forward-looking. Mobile engagement platforms such as the RETOUCH Indicators App or the GTI App bring data and information directly to communities, increasing accessibility in rural and under-served areas. Digital storytelling and podcasts like RETOUCH NEXUS Narratives humanize technical content by sharing real-world experiences from diverse voices across sectors reaching broader audiences. Tools like virtual reality (VR) offer immersive simulations of nexus trade-offs, helping policymakers, communities, and others visualize complex future scenarios as it was done by case study Netherlands with their VR nexus game. Youth engagement at kindergarten, schools, and universities through dedicated WEFE Nexus session is building long-term awareness and empowering the next generation of decision-makers. Meanwhile, CoPs on stakeholder engagement itself, or on WEFE Nexus monitoring approaches foster continuous learning across sectors through webinars and online forums. Finally physical spaces such as the WaterProof Experience container from case study Belgium are being used to simulate resource trade-offs, encouraging empathy, systems thinking, and collaborative problem-solving.

For more detailed insights, take a look at Deliverable 2.2 "Factsheets on Good Practices and Innovative Tools for Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation" as well as on the innovation handbook in Deliverable 2.5 that will further describe innovative solutions and will be released in April 2026.

## 4.3. Practice – From design to practice

### Typical steps

### Identify and list stakeholders

In the first step you identify and list all actors who have a direct or indirect interest / stake in your project or activity (see subchapter on "Who can be a stakeholder"). It is important that you do not limit yourself in this first brainstorming phase, think outside the box and be creative, prioritization will only take place in the next step. In the RETOUCH NEXUS project, different pathways for stakeholder engagement were chosen. Some case studies engage different stakeholders on various occasions, which is advantageous to introduce new voices, respond to changing contexts, or transition to a new project phase or scale. Other case studies maintain engagement with the same stakeholder groups over a defined period to build trust and strong relationships. Long-term involvement also enables stakeholders to deepen their understanding of nexus issues, becoming more effective co-creators of solutions. Additionally, continuity helps preserve valuable institutional memory, allowing stakeholders to recall previous discussions, conflicts, and agreements.

Also take another look at previous deliverables for key considerations for stakeholder mapping and analysis based on case studies (D 2.1, p. 55) such as defining system boundaries, considering the scale

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

and population of the case study area when identifying stakeholders and tailoring the stakeholder involvement based on the nature and focus of the project.

### Assess influence / importance and level of impact

There are many ways to analyse and prioritize stakeholders, e.g. the Importance-Influence Matrix (see Tool #1 "Stakeholder Analysis") or the Stakeholder Onion that has been used in RETOUCH Deliverable 2.1. Tailored precisely to the project context, stakeholders have been classified according to their importance and interest to RETOUCH. While the first category 'key stakeholders' includes all those stakeholders that can use their skills or power to influence the RETOUCH case studies and without whose participation the targeted results cannot be achieved, the second category are 'primary stakeholders' who are directly affected by or have direct impact on the RETOUCH NEXUS challenges in respective the case study. The third category (basically the outer layer of the onion) are 'secondary stakeholders' who are only indirectly affected by nexus challenges. For further details, look at D2.1 Annex, p. 2.

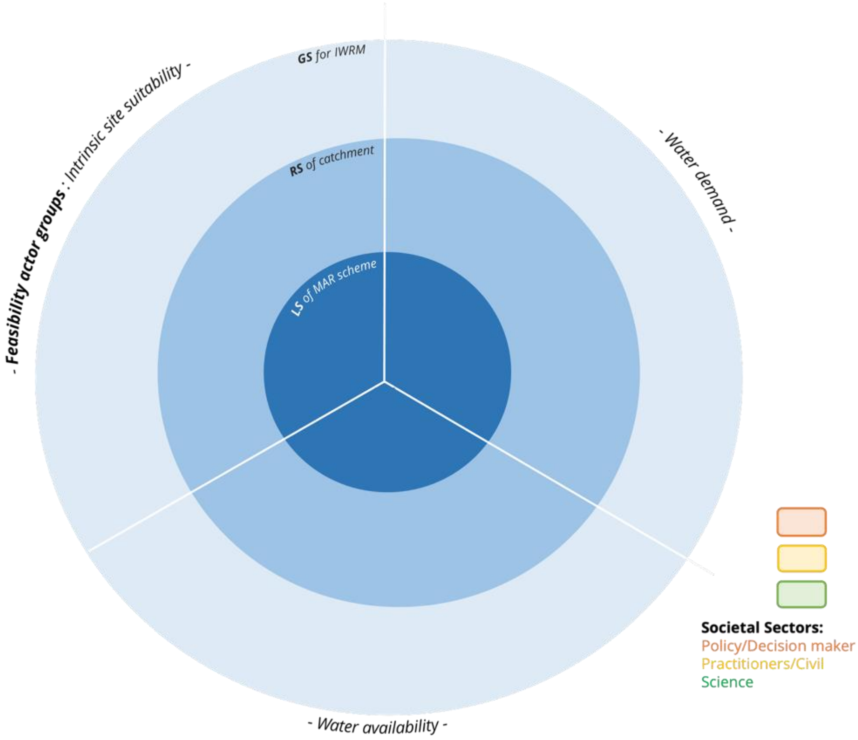



*Figure 1: Template for Stakeholder Onion*

Deliverable 2.1 (Chapter 3) shows the result of the Stakeholder Mapping Exercise for the different case studies. Traditional representatives from WEFE sectors include farmers, water utilities, river basin organisations (RBOs), environmental NGOs, and government authorities. These actors are directly responsible for managing or regulating resources, making their participation crucial for designing integrated and context-sensitive solutions. However, the stakeholder landscape is increasingly expanding to include groups beyond the conventional WEFE sectors. Greater attention is now being

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

given to women and youth, who often face barriers to participation but bring vital perspectives and long-term sustainability insights. Business parks and private sector actors are emerging as important contributors, particularly in innovation and resource efficiency. Academic institutions also play a key role by generating knowledge, facilitating dialogue, and training the next generation of decision-makers.

### Define level of engagement and the respective goal of the activity

After prioritizing the most important stakeholders, the next step is to define their appropriate level of engagement based on the project's goals and the stakeholders' roles. Engagement levels typically range from Inform (providing stakeholders with relevant information), to Consult (seeking their feedback), Involve (actively including them in decision-making processes), and Collaborate (partnering with stakeholders in shared decision-making and implementation). Clearly defining the level of engagement helps tailor activities to each group's needs and capacities, ensuring effective communication, meaningful participation, and stronger partnerships throughout the project. It is advisable to consider at the start of the project at which point in time which engagement level can best be strategically utilized to best support the project and its objectives.

→ Note that the level of engagement often decreases as the number of people increases, so be aware of what is more important to you: reaching as many people as possible or working together effectively?

### Define engagement approaches and methods

There is a variety of stakeholder engagement approaches that can be used to reach different audiences and meet diverse needs. There are both classic and innovative, out-of-the-box formats, and both are important. Sometimes you don't have to reinvent the wheel, but it can be refreshing to try something new. The important thing is that you get started.

A website serves as a central hub for information and updates, while a newsletter provides regular, targeted communication to keep stakeholders informed. Podcasts offer an accessible and engaging format to share stories, insights, and expert perspectives. Questionnaires and Online Surveys are useful tools for gathering feedback and understanding stakeholder priorities.

Some practical examples from RETOUCH NEXUS include the RETOUCH NEXUS project website, the RETOUCH NEXUS newsletter, the podcast series called RETOUCH NEXUS Narratives, a tailored questionnaire on Stakeholder Engagement Activities (to document what kind of activities have been carried out by the different case studies and for what goal and with whom), a survey (case study Germany conducted a survey with representatives from different departments of the Government in Upper Franconia – responsible for water, agriculture, and ecosystems – and non-governmental stakeholders such as environmental organisations to receive feedback on vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms which are currently in place).

While online tools are often used in the initial phase and for "information purposes", it is more effective to work together in person for a more intensive engagement. Workshops with 20-40 participants create interactive spaces for dialogue and co-creation. One innovative example is the so-

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

called “WaterProof Experience container” from case study Belgium that has been developed to translate the lessons learned on water management from the WaterProof project on the business park Tielt Noord towards other business parks; it is a physical container which can be moved to different locations and people can enter it and explore sustainable/circular water use options in the context of business parks. When it comes to youth engagement, the case study Germany applied the WEFE Nexus Game on water abstraction fees with students, the case study Netherlands developed a farming game with VR glasses and case study Slovakia piloted the GTI app with students. Another, more long-term engagement mechanism is a CoP that fosters continuous learning and exchange among professionals. Examples from RETOUCH are the CoP with RECREATE project on stakeholder engagement itself; as well as the CoP following the Dresden Nexus Conference 2025 around WEFE Nexus monitoring approach, e.g. via the RETOUCH NEXUS indicators app,

You want to engage stakeholders, but you do not know where to start? Check out our template to contact stakeholders in the annex.

### Tips and tricks: Facilitation of multi-stakeholder processes

Facilitating multi-stakeholder processes is no easy task, as it involves managing diverse, sometimes even opposing perspectives, interests, and goals. – not only among the target group but also within the relation between project partners and their key, primary, and secondary stakeholders. However, with the right mindset and tools, you can ensure that all voices are heard, and the group moves forward productively. Here are some tips and tricks to help you plan, manage and facilitate multi-stakeholder processes:

### Set clear objectives and expectations

- Define the Purpose: At the outset of any activity (regardless of whether it is a one-day workshop or a process lasting several months) set a clear goal and ensure all stakeholders are on board. Clearly articulate what you want to achieve and why it matters to everyone involved. Here are some examples for objectives:
    - Align stakeholder priorities with national or regional WEFE Nexus strategies.
    - Explore the use of digital tools or modelling approaches for cross-sector scenario planning.
    - Map key stakeholders and identify synergies and conflicts in current resource use and planning strategies.
    - Share recent findings from pilot projects or research initiatives to get feedback for further development and discuss their relevance to local planning.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

A clear and realistic objective, which the participants have agreed upon, is essential, as it not only helps you choose the right methods and tools but also ensures that you do not lose focus during the process. As soon as the discussion goes in a different direction, keep reminding the participants of the (jointly) set goal. Make sure the goal is visualized (and visible) throughout the process. *Tipp: You can work with a so-called "idea basket" on a board or flipchart where you store topics and questions that come up during the process but are not necessarily related to the workshop goal. In this way you acknowledge it but are still able to stick to your plan.*

- Establish Ground Rules: Set clear expectations for behaviour and communication. These can include respecting different opinions, ensure active listening, and stay solution oriented.
- Ensure clear time management: Especially in short meetings and when there are stakeholders who like to talk a lot. Ensure a proper briefing (tell participants that you will need to cut them off after a defined amount of time to ensure a fair process for everyone) and remind speakers when they run out of time. You could also introduce a cards-based time keeping approach as part of the ground rules in the beginning. Whenever a participant exceeds the time, you hold up a (yellow, orange, or red) card.
- Clarify Roles: Make sure each stakeholder understands their role in the process, whether it is providing expertise, making decisions, or ensuring follow-up.

### Build trust and inclusivity

- Foster Open Communication: Encourage transparency and honest dialogue. Let stakeholders voice their concerns, ideas, and perspectives without fear of judgment.
- Be Neutral: As a facilitator, it's crucial to remain impartial. Your role is to guide the process and support people in achieving common goals. In terms of conflicts of interest (e.g. because you possess another role within the discussion besides being a facilitator), assign another person with moderation such as an external facilitator.
- Engage All Voices: Ensure that every stakeholder can contribute. This can be challenging when there are power imbalances, so actively encourage quieter voices to participate (e.g. through different tools, group sizes, and constellations).
- Remain patient and flexible: Stakeholder processes can take time, especially when dealing with complex or sensitive issues. Avoid rushing the process by including time buffers in your planning. But never skip pauses as they are key for informal discussions and clarifications. Be prepared for the process to evolve as new stakeholders, issues, or perspectives arise. Flexibility is key to success.

### Choose the right tools to structure the discussion

- Develop an agenda: After setting a goal, a well-structured agenda is critical for guiding the discussion and ensuring that all key topics are covered. Share it in advance so stakeholders can prepare and make sure it is obvious from the agenda where their explicit contribution is expected (e.g. by assigning responsibilities in each section).
- Use interactive tools: Include interactive and innovative tools for brainstorming and decision-making, to structure discussions and gather input. When the group is larger, break participants into smaller working groups to foster everyone's participation. This allows more focused and intimate conversations before reconvening with the large group.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

- Create Visuals: Visual tools like diagrams, charts, and mind maps can help to simplify complex discussions and ensure everyone is on the same page.
- Online Collaboration Tools: In case stakeholders are not in the same location, use online tools like Miro, Zoom, Slack, or Google Docs to facilitate communication and collaboration.
- Survey Tools: Use surveys (e.g., SurveyMonkey, Mentimeter, Google Forms) to gather input, measure satisfaction, or gauge opinions on specific issues.

### Provide opportunities for reflection and feedback

- Check-in Regularly: Regularly seek feedback on how to improve, use tools like surveys or (anonymous) feedback to gather insights.
- Adjust When Needed: Be flexible and willing to adapt the process based on feedback to improve engagement or address emerging concerns.

### Manage conflicts effectively

- Acknowledge Tensions: Tensions (or conflicts) are not uncommon in multi-stakeholder processes when competing perspectives come together. Typically, underlying conflicts arise when the space is there. This is challenging, but also a great opportunity for collaborative learning. Choose tools (like the #14 Circle of Coherence or #4 The Wheel of Multiple Perspectives) to recognize the conflicts early on and address them constructively. Encourage respectful debates that can lead to better solutions.

### Keep the momentum going

- Assign Action Items and ensure accountability: After each session, make sure that specific actions are assigned to relevant stakeholders to keep the momentum going. Ensure that there's accountability. Follow up on actions and outcomes after the meeting (e.g. via a summarizing mail) to maintain engagement and ensure that commitments are being met.
- Document Outcomes: Summarize what has been decided and keep detailed records of decisions, discussions, action items and who is responsible for what. Share these with all stakeholders to ensure transparency and prevent misunderstandings.
- Communicate Next Steps Clearly: Make sure stakeholders are clear about the next steps and timelines.
- Create a Roadmap: If the process spans over a long time, create a roadmap or timeline to keep everyone aligned and informed. Break the process into manageable milestones and celebrate progress along the way.

### Challenges within RETOUCH NEXUS and how to tackle them

In the face of climate change, breaking away from business-as-usual habits is essential to make space for new and more adaptive approaches. However, institutional settings—particularly within government—tend to evolve slowly and can be highly rigid, making it difficult to implement integrative frameworks like the nexus perspective overnight. Timing becomes crucial when sharing project

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

results, as findings may touch on politically sensitive issues or highlight tensions between scientific insights and policy priorities, potentially sparking heated discussions (see also chapter on "How to engage stakeholders in a politically sensitive environment?" on p. 23). This can complicate stakeholder engagement, which is not always easy to position, especially when key political decisions have already been made or are pending.

As mentioned in D 2.1, the WEFE Nexus community had to deal with typical challenges related to the inclusion of marginalized groups. In some cases, stakeholder communication tends to be project-based and lacks a long-term communication strategy and platform, or the scope and purpose of engagement sometimes lack an integrated nexus approach. In other cases, the administrative framework is too complex leading to high costs.

> Deliverable 2.1 shows a comprehensive overview of typical challenges in stakeholder engagement within RETOUCH NEXUS (see chapter 1.1, p. 13).

## Gender equity and social inclusion in the WEFE Nexus

The lack of representation of marginalized groups such as women is a critical weakness in many WEFE Nexus initiatives and is due to different reasons like power imbalances, communication barriers, accessibility issues, economic constraints, or resource dependency. Water issues are linked to gender, as women are mainly involved in water procurement at household level. In addition, women or youth often have fewer financial resources, making it harder to participate in unpaid engagement processes. Another obstacle are communication barriers, for example, youth may struggle to express their concerns in settings dominated by older, more experienced participants. Furthermore, power dynamics play a significant role. Often marginalized groups are sidelined, not invited or do not get the opportunity to speak. It is therefore important to create safe space where they can share their inputs and opinions.

It goes without saying that all groups should be included but especially in the development sector it is still the case that marginalized groups are seen as "beneficiaries" or "recipients" instead of experts in their own realities with vital insights into what works and what needs to change. The WEFE Nexus community suggests frameworks and tools for moving from resource-centric to more people-centric WEFE Nexus approaches in which stakeholder engagement plays a central role.[5]

While RETOUCH Deliverable 2.2 already presents some inclusive engagement mechanisms (p. 24-31), here are some recommendations on how to make your stakeholder engagement process more inclusive and sustainable.

**Co-creation instead ticking boxes**

Include representatives already in the conceptualization phase, not just during consultation or implementation. Identify and work with (intermediaries from) community-based, grassroots

[5] https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fuploads.water-energy-food.org%2Fresources%2F2.4_GESI_WEFE_Nexus_learning_module_FINAL_ENG.pptx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

organizations, youth networks, women's groups to co-design how engagement will take place. There are many tools for co-creation to build trust and relevance (see Tools and Templates).

In RETOUCH NEXUS, it is essential to recognize the diverse contexts in which the case studies operate, particularly the varying structural conditions. To address these differences and ensure more inclusive outreach, case studies can benefit from exploring alternative engagement formats—such as podcast series, virtual reality experiences, or educational collaborations with schools and universities—that cater to different audiences and access levels. Additionally, enhancing the visibility and participation of women remains a key priority. Examples such as a dedicated LinkedIn posts for International Women's Day or the WE-ACT webinar series highlight effective ways to spotlight female voices and leadership within the WEFE Nexus discourse.

**Avoid Box-Ticking**

Sometimes, due to donor requirements or time pressure and reporting purposes, the inclusion of youth, women and other vulnerable groups in development projects often ends up being tokenistic or "box-ticking". If you follow the following principles, you can avoid pseudo participation.

- Be aware and address the root causes of exclusion, like unequal power dynamics and discrimination.
- Go beyond simply asking marginalized groups for their opinions – provide them with knowledge and tools and the space to raise their concerns and influence decisions.
- Ensure that the voices of marginalized groups actively shape project design and outcomes.
- Establish robust systems of accountability to ensure that these groups' participation is not just symbolic but leads to real change in project design, policies, or outcomes.

**Build capacity for participation**

Partnering up with trusted organizations or individuals, NGOs, community leaders, grassroots movements or collectives often helps to ensure real participation and meaningful involvement. If you provide these (often voluntary) groups with capacity support like technical or financial support everyone could benefit even more. Practical services like childcare or transportation support could further enable participation. Pre-engagement trainings and mentorship programs are further possibilities to ensure that women, youth and other vulnerable groups can participate confidently and stay engaged.

**Meet people where they are**

This includes using easy (or local) language, engaging and visual tools. Consider also digital accessibility and flexible locations and times like meetings outside working or school hours and in community-friendly, safe, and accessible spaces. Combine offline and online options, consider social media or radio to reach wider audiences, especially in rural or low-connectivity areas.

Within the RETOUCH NEXUS project, there are numerous examples of engaging stakeholders in accessible and context-sensitive ways. For instance, a workshop with the government of Upper Franconia, Germany was conducted directly at their premises, fostering a sense of ownership and

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

convenience. In the Netherlands, HHNK is consistently engaged through on-site visits, ensuring direct interaction with the local context. In Malta, the case study team rented a seminar room in a hotel to create a more personal and welcoming setting for stakeholder discussions. Meanwhile, the Belgian case study utilises a mobile container unit, allowing them to meet stakeholders at various locations across the country—bringing the project directly to the communities involved.

**Create Safe and inclusive spaces**

In some cases, it might make sense to collaborate with trained experts who ensure inclusive dialogue and actively mitigate power imbalances (since there may be tensions among diverse ethnic groups as well). Sometimes, hosting dedicated events for marginalized groups can allow more open and honest participation.

Two successful examples of external facilitation within RETOUCH NEXUS include the Malta case study, which brought in an external facilitator to guide discussions, and the Upper Main case study in Germany, where consultations with government agencies were effectively supported by a RETOUCH NEXUS project partner, but not by the German case study itself.

**Monitor, Learn, and Adapt**

Stakeholder engagement is a learning process for everyone involved. Try to learn from each engagement by obtaining and analysing feedback and adjust methods to be more inclusive over time. Tracking representation over time on who is participating (including factors like age, gender, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status) can provide interesting insights, but here too the focus should not lie on reporting objectives, but on doing the work better. Note that discussions around water management can be a real door opener for the empowerment of women if it is implemented in a context-specific manner, with a broader time perspective and in close cooperation with the target group and its environment.

> The Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP) Toolkit[6] is a useful source as it outlines various levels of youth participation ranging from “Inform” to “Collaborate” and offers inspiring examples of youth participation at various levels.

### How to engage stakeholders in a politically sensitive environment

In the WEFE Nexus, stakeholders often interact in a highly political context. It can be very crucial and sensitive to decide about how and whom to engage. Engaging stakeholders in a politically sensitive environment requires a careful, context-specific approach that prioritizes trust-building, neutrality, and risk mitigation. Begin by conducting a stakeholder and institutional analysis to understand power dynamics, interests, and potential risks. Who holds power – formally and informally? Work together with trusted intermediaries, respected local figures or community leaders to facilitate dialogue, and

[6] Meaningful Youth Participation Toolkit: https://media.unesco.org/sites/default/files/webform/ed3002/NL%252BMFA%252BMeaningful%252BYouth%252BParticipation%252BToolkit%252BEnglish%252BEN%2520%25281%2529.pdf

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

frame engagement around shared, non-controversial goals such as development, service delivery, or community well-being. Ensure confidentiality and provide safe spaces—virtual or in-person—for participation, especially for vulnerable or dissenting voices. Gradually build legitimacy and buy-in through transparent communication, inclusive processes, and small, confidence-building actions that demonstrate mutual benefit without triggering political backlash. Depending on the context, collaborate with local facilitators with local knowledge, or facilitators that are conflict sensitive, trauma-informed or trained in mediation.

A notable example of the challenges in stakeholder engagement can be seen in one of the case studies, which involved selecting a location for a wastewater treatment plant. This decision was highly political and sensitive due to its direct impact on residents, making it difficult to integrate broad stakeholder participation as many discussions took place behind closed doors. Such situations highlight the complexity of balancing political considerations with inclusive engagement processes. Similarly, trade-offs often arise between political decisions on water usage and distribution and the real needs of key stakeholders, such as agricultural actors. These examples underscore the importance of carefully designing stakeholder engagement strategies that navigate political sensitivities.

**Data Protection in Stakeholder Engagement**

Data protection and privacy are a fundamental part of stakeholder engagement as it aims at securing private and sensitive information. On a broader scale, interference with privacy can undermine public engagement in development and democratic processes and reshape how information flows through society. These concerns are equally relevant on a smaller scale—particularly in stakeholder engagement processes, whether conducted online or in person.

To foster a safe and trustworthy environment that encourages open, meaningful exchange, it is essential to consider appropriate data protection mechanisms early in the planning phase. The following three aspects are key to ensuring privacy and safeguarding participants:

1. Identify sensitive topics or data – such as personal details or confidential information.
2. Limit access and exposure – by controlling who can view or use the shared information (while at the same time considering transparency and reporting obligations in publicly projects)
3. Choose appropriate engagement methods – that align with the sensitivity of the information and the preferences of participants.

Transparency around documentation is also crucial. Participants should be clearly informed about any video recordings or photo documentation beforehand, with the option to consent or opt out. For example, this is important when recording podcast episodes, but also in relation to webinars. Decisions on whether and how to document an engagement process must be handled with care.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## Stakeholder engagement in formal and informal processes

While formal stakeholder engagement such as public consultations, official surveys or panels is often more mandated with clear procedures and documentations, informal processes such as community meetups or social media conversations tend to be more flexible, spontaneous and relationship driven. Formal engagement is structured, often mandated by policy or regulation, it provides transparency, accountability, and documented input at key project stages. In contrast, while informal engagement may lack formal documentation, it fosters trust, real-time feedback, and ongoing dialogue. Combining both approaches ensures not only compliance and legitimacy but also responsiveness and deeper stakeholder relationships.

## Online, hybrid, and in-person settings

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we've become accustomed to switching to online or hybrid formats. The advantages and disadvantages of the various formats are outlined below. Fortunately, we now have a choice again, so it makes sense to take a moment to choose the right format. We now have more options and can adapt the format even better to the context.

*Table 2: Format of stakeholder engagement*

| | In-Person | Hybrid | Online |
|---|---|---|---|
| Outreach / Group size | + More inclusive for those without digital access<br>- Limited reach, especially across regions | + Greater accessibility for diverse groups<br>+ Combines the reach of online with the depth of offline<br>+ Flexibility to adapt to participant needs | + Increases reach, especially across geographies |
| Costs | - More expensive and time-consuming<br>- Logistical complexity (venues, travel, visas, etc.) | -Technically complex to coordinate<br>- Higher resource demands (both tech and facilitation)<br>- Needs strong planning to ensure equity and engagement across both modes | + Cost-effective (no travel/logistics)<br>+ Easier documentation and data collection |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| | In-Person | Hybrid | Online |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level of engagement / Relationships | + Builds stronger trust, rapport, and connection<br>+ Easier to manage sensitive or political discussions<br>+ Body language and informal interactions enhance communication | - Risk of unequal experience (online participants may feel sidelined) | -Digital divide: excludes those without access or skills<br>-Attention fatigue and distractions<br>- Lower personal connection/trust<br>- Difficult for complex negotiations or emotional topics |
| Flexibility | | *+ offers choice between physical and remote* | + Easy to schedule and time-efficient<br>+ Allows asynchronous participation (e.g., surveys, forums)<br>-Moderation is less flexible, because meticulous planning is important in online settings |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## Strategies and further recommendations in the context of RETOUCH NEXUS

Within the framework of the RETOUCH project, the six case studies identified various challenges related to stakeholder engagement and developed strategies to address them. The following section provides a brief overview of current challenges—ranging from legal and financial barriers to issues related to target groups and engagement methods—alongside practical recommendations.

*Table 3: Changes and strategies of stakeholder engagement*

| Type of challenge | Challenges Faced | Strategies adopted | Further ideas and recommendations |
|---|---|---|---|
| Legislative and governance Issues | Lack of willingness, because of already existing strong Flemish legislation | Show that the implementation of smart solutions and a more robust, sustainable and inclusive water governance might create co-benefits | • Map the legal landscape (start early by conducting a legal and regulatory review to identify specific laws or policies that restrict engagement)<br>• Build alliances (work with stakeholders to advocate for legal or policy changes that enable more inclusive engagement)<br>• Document and demonstrate impact (show how stakeholder engagement leads to better outcomes like policy effectiveness and greater public trust)<br>• Use informal or parallel processes where formal engagement is restricted, consider alternative mechanisms like community forums or digital platforms |
| | Frequent political changes disrupt continuity, concepts and plans change with every election | Inviting all relevant policy makers (difficult) | |
| | Shift in the political agenda and (partly related) delays in the previous case study focus | Shift in focus towards the Freshwater Availability Program, leveraging existing stakeholder engagement activities and collaborating with proactive, input-driven contacts (plus more scope for nexus) | |
| Cost-related challenges | Fear of increasing costs | Smart and innovative solutions save costs in the long run | • Demonstrate cost-savings from other contexts, such as reduced conflict and litigation and implementation that tends to move faster and more smoothly. |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| Type of challenge | Challenges Faced | Strategies adopted | Further ideas and recommendations |
|---|---|---|---|
| Target Group | Difficult to approach broader audience, because the very technical events attracted audiences with prior knowledge in the field<br><br>Content is too scientific for non-scientific stakeholders | Organize additional events focusing on blue-green measures that are interesting for other groups of society (youth, women, elderly, minorities)<br><br>Keep it simple | • Use target group specific channels, such as social media, work with influencers, collaborate with youth organizations, visit places where the target group is (for example, elderly are usually less mobile)<br><br>• Use simple language that is accessible for a broader audience, avoid acronyms and test with intermediaries if content is understandable |
| | Engaging non-governmental stakeholders | Attend other stakeholder events within the study area | |
| | Lack of inclusion of minorities and vulnerable groups | Preparation of a specific workshop with women | |
| | Insufficient vertical and horizontal coordination and communication (Proposals and feedback from local authorities and stakeholder (e.g. farmers) are often ignored | Media involvement, innovative communication, stakeholder engagement events | |
| | Meetings are not interactive and engaging enough | Include professional moderator to ensure participatory and engaging meetings | • Try out unconventional formats and tools to engage these groups, highlight and communicate incentives for farmers to collaborate (illustrate where they can meet their primary (economic) objectives while also meeting project goals) |
| Methods | Little interest in RETOUCH NEXUS due to current state of the model development | Action year 2025 > Finalization of model(s) | • Try out innovative tools (some of them are also possible without external facilitation) to make meetings more interesting and fun |
| Other | Lack of specific focus of the case study | 10 issue areas based on the interviews to be further explored and selectively implemented | • Show why and how RETOUCH NEXUS is / will be relevant to respective stakeholders in the future |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

RETOUCH NEXUS

As can be seen in the table, stakeholder engagement within RETOUCH NEXUS faces a range of legislative, political, financial, and communication-related challenges. A major barrier is the lack of willingness to change existing governance structures, particularly where strong national or regional legislation is already in place. Frequent political shifts further disrupt continuity, often causing delays and changes in focus.

To overcome these issues, stakeholders are encouraged to map the legal landscape early on to identify engagement barriers, build alliances to advocate for policy reform and inclusive governance and leverage informal or alternative engagement channels where formal processes are limited.

Cost concerns also hinder participation, particularly due to fears that stakeholder engagement will drive up expenses. However, showcasing long-term cost benefits—like smoother implementation and reduced conflict—can counter this perception.

A key communication challenge lies in reaching broader audiences, as technical language and scientific framing tend to exclude non-experts. Solutions include simplifying language, avoiding jargon, and tailoring content to specific groups, using inclusive channels, such as social media or community-based events, to connect with youth, minorities, and the elderly as well as organizing targeted workshops to engage underrepresented groups, particularly women and farmers.

Finally, weak horizontal and vertical coordination remains a barrier, with local feedback often ignored. This calls for more interactive formats, better facilitation, and innovative tools to make engagement more dynamic and inclusive.

Many of these challenges are common and can be observed across different contexts. Regardless of how advanced your process is, obstacles are inevitable. Human systems are inherently complex, and meaningful change takes time. It is also important to recognize that not all challenges are within your direct control. Tools like the SWOT analysis (see **Tool #2 SWOT Analysis**) can help identify effective strategies and clarify your sphere of influence. This strategic clarity not only supports progress but can also make stakeholder engagement more rewarding and even enjoyable.

Don't be afraid to make mistakes, if you stick to the recommended tools and strategies, your stakeholder engagement activities will gradually become more resilient, inclusive and impactful.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## 4.4. Contact form for stakeholders

You can use and adapt this form if you want to reach out stakeholders via email:

Subject Line: You are invited: *(Event Name and Date)*

Dear *(Stakeholder Name / Organization Name),*

we are pleased to invite you to an upcoming event hosted by *(your Organization/Project Team),* as part of the RETOUCH NEXUS project, which is dedicated to tackling the growing challenge of water scarcity by promoting an integrated WEFE Nexus approach that supports the EU water economy and relies on ecological and social considerations.

Your involvement as a stakeholder is incredibly valuable to the success of this project, and we'd be honoured by your presence at our upcoming event.

- Event Name
- Date
- Time
- Location
- Purpose (Short sentence about what the event aims to achieve)

At this event, you'll have the opportunity to *(List benefits depending on your activity)*

- Hear project updates or impact stories
- Network with other stakeholders and collaborators
- Provide feedback or participate in planning

Please confirm your attendance by (deadline date) using the form below *(it can be advisable to use a Google Form if you plan with more than 20 participants*) or by replying directly to this message.

We truly appreciate your continued support and interest in [Project Name]. We look forward to your participation and valuable insights at the event.

Warm regards,
*(Your Name, position, organisation, contact details)*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## 4.5. References

Brouwer, H., & Brouwers, J. (2017). The MSP Tool Guide: Sixty tools to facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships. Companion to The MSP Guide. Wageningen University and Research, CDI. https://mspguide.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/msp-tool-guide-wur-wcdi.pdf

Brouwer, H., Woodhill, J., Hemmati, M., Verhoosel, K., & van Vugt, S. (2019). The MSP guide: How to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships (3rd ed.). Practical Action Publishing. https://edepot.wur.nl/543151

Science of Intelligence. (n.d.). The power of non-violent communication. https://www.scienceofintelligence.de/the-power-of-non-violent-communication/

SME Strategy. (n.d.). Stakeholder engagement & management for strategic planning. https://www.smestrategy.net/blog/stakeholder-engagement-management-for-strategic-planning

South African Government. (2019). President Cyril Ramaphosa announces reconfigured departments. https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/president-cyril-ramaphosa-announces-reconfigured-departments-14-jun-2019

UNESCO & Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (n.d.). Meaningful youth participation toolkit. https://media.unesco.org/sites/default/files/webform/ed3002/NL%252BMFA%252BMeaningful%252BYouth%252BParticipation%252BToolkit%252BEnglish%252BEN%2520%25281%2529.pdf

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## 5. Tools and templates

Selected Tools for small groups (up to 25 people) and big groups (25-100 people)

1. Stakeholder Analysis
2. SWOT Analysis
3. Six Thinking Hats
4. The Wheel of Multiple Perspectives
5. Power Ranking
6. Role Plays
7. Fishbowl
8. Prototyping
9. Prioritizing and Ranking
10. Speed Dating
11. World Café
12. Open Space
13. Visioning
14. Circle of Coherence
15. Constellations
16. Polls / Voting

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

**#1**

**Name: Stakeholder Analysis: Importance vs. Influence Matrix**

Goal: *To identify, map and prioritize stakeholders and to capture the degree of influence and level of interest of each of them over the issue at stake.*

## Template to fill out

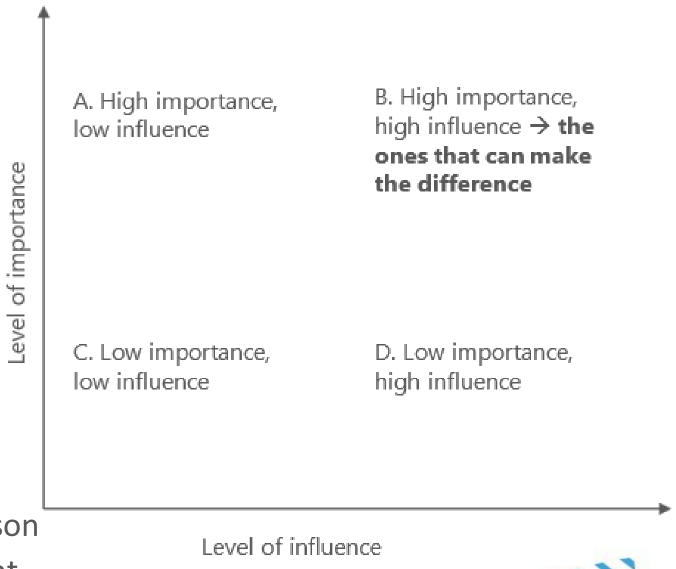



*Figure 2: Stakeholder analysis template*

### Short Description

*An « Importance vs. Influence Matrix » helps to map out stakeholders and their relation to the issue at stake. The analysis generates insights on the importance and influence of each stakeholder and helps to develop a specific strategy for the identified stakeholders. It should be used at the beginning of a project and can be repeated several times.*

### Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Identify and list the most important stakeholders in your project / program.
2. Draw 4 quadrants and the two named axes (see template)
   a. Importance: The priority given to satisfying the needs / interests of each person
   b. Influence: The power a stakeholder has to facilitate or impede the achievement of an activity's objective. The extent to which the stakeholder can influence others.
3. After filling out the matrix, several conclusions can be made Group A requires special initiatives to protect their interest, Group B are the « ideal stakeholders » which is why we should create a good relationship with them, Group C can be given less priority and Group D should be carefully

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

#2

**Name: SWOT Analysis**

Goal: Identify the key internal and external factors that impact the functioning of a group or organization.

### Short Description

*A SWOT Analysis is a well-known strategic planning tool to discover weaknesses and strengths of an individual, group or organization.*

### Step-by-Step Guidance

The group defines and discusses as many factors as possible for each heading. Make sure that strengths and weaknesses should refer to internal aspects of the group or organization while opportunities and threats can be looked at as internal or external factors affecting them.

-> Alternatively, different subgroups in a workshop can conduct a SWOT analysis on their own to later compare similarities and possibilities with the others.

Based on the SWOT analysis, discuss what actions are needed:
« How can we use our strengths to avert threats or make use of the available opportunities? » « How can we deal with our weaknesses? »

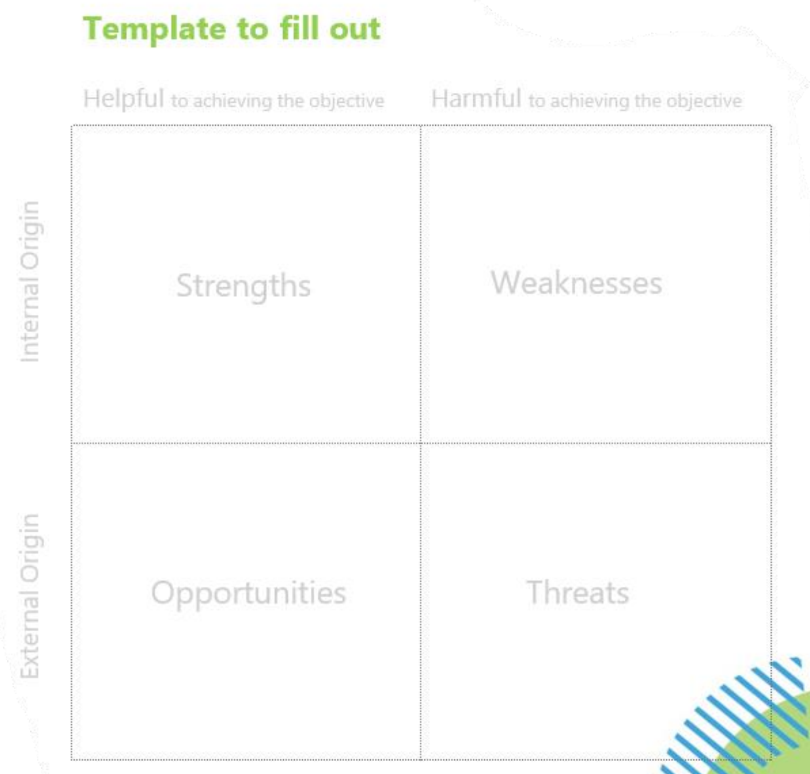



*Figure 3: SWOT analysis template*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## #3

## Name: Six Thinking Hats

Goal: *By systematically "wearing" a different hat, participants are encouraged to explore issues from multiple angles, fostering more comprehensive and balanced decision-making.*

### Short Description

*The Six Thinking Hats method, developed by Edward de Bono, is a structured approach to problem-solving and decision- making that encourages individuals or groups to think from different perspectives. Each "hat" represents a different mode of thinking:*

- *White Hat: Focuses on facts, data, and information.*
- *Red Hat: Represents emotions, feelings, and intuition.*
- *Black Hat: Involves critical thinking, judgment, and identifying risks or negative aspects.*
- *Yellow Hat: Emphasizes optimism, benefits, and positive outcomes.*
- *Green Hat: Encourages creativity, new ideas, and alternatives.*
- *Blue Hat: Focuses on the process, organization, and managing the thinking.*

### Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Introduce the method and distribute the different hats in the group (the method can be illustrated with real hats / accessories)
2. State the issue or topic you are addressing and write down guiding questions for each hat (i.e. ask the Black Hat about potential downsides or risks, ask the Red Hat how the person feels about the situation, ask the yellow hat what the benefits and opportunities of this idea or solution are, etc.)

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

#4

**Name: The Wheel of Multiple Perspectives**

Goal: *The goal of the Wheel of Multiple Perspectives is to encourage a comprehensive understanding of a situation or issue by examining it from various viewpoints. Ultimately the goal is to foster open-mindedness, collaboration, and a deeper, more inclusive analysis of issues.*

## Short Description

*The Wheel of Multiple Perspectives is a method used to explore an issue or situation from various viewpoints, helping to gain a more comprehensive understanding. It involves looking at the topic through different "lenses," such as cultural, social, emotional, logical, or ethical perspectives. By considering multiple angles, the Wheel encourages broader thinking, enhances creativity, and fosters empathy, allowing individuals or groups to see a more complete picture before making decisions or taking action. This approach helps prevent narrow thinking and promotes well-rounded problem-solving.*

## Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Prepare: Write the name of the issue, project or task on a large card and put it on the centre of the table. Then write up cards with the names or titles of 6-8 stakeholders involved. The stakeholders can be listed through a quick brainstorm or taken from earlier stakeholder analysis exercises.
2. Generate Perspectives: Distribute the stakeholder cards randomly among the participants. Ask participants to put themselves in the position of this stakeholder and comment on the issue one by one. Collect the main points on a flipchart.
3. Repeat Step 2 at least 3 times to allow people to explore different perspectives.
4. Working with the perspectives: Finally, reflect on the exercise by asking questions like: « What are similarities and what are differences? » « What new thoughts could enhance your capacity for dealing with this issue?

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

#5

## Name: Power Ranking

Goal: *Power Ranking helps participants experience how every person has different kinds of rank and privileges, and to see how this influences group power dynamics. The methods helps to evaluate and prioritize items, ideas, or individuals based on their perceived importance, influence, or impact in a given context.*

### Short Description

*Participants rank the items on a scale, often from most to least powerful, based on specific criteria. Power ranking is commonly used in decision-making processes, strategic planning, or group discussions to align on what matters most. Rank describes how influential someone is in the hierarchy of a group, it is the level of an individual's social or personal power.*

### Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Depending on the example and context, you can do the exercise with the « real » people who are present in the room (and their actual rank) or use prepared roles that are handed out to the participants on slips of paper
2. Introduce the method using a very specific situation / case example (»Who has most decision-making power when it comes to identifying and managing sources of water in this community? »)
3. Ask participants to form a line and rank themselves from the person with most decision-making power to the person with least decision- making power. When the line is formed, ask « How does it feel to stand where you are now? »
4. Repeat this with each rank and ensure to include people who have not spoken yet.

## Template to fill out

| **1. Situational Rank** (Position in an organization) | **2. Social Rank** (Gender, educational, rank, age, race) | **3. Personal rank** (charismatic, insecure, avoiding conflict, communicative ...) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. | 2. |

*Figure 4: Power ranking template*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

**#6**

**Name: Role Plays**

Goal: Encourage active participation, increase engagement, and enhance understanding for other perspectives on a specific topic. Develop communicative skills and create in depth understanding of a situation.

### Short Description

Role plays in a workshop setting are interactive activities where participants take on specific roles and act out scenarios to practice skills, explore perspectives, or solve problems. These exercises simulate real-life situations, allowing individuals to experiment with different behaviours, communication styles, and decision-making strategies in a safe and controlled environment. Role plays are commonly used for team building, conflict resolution, customer service training, leadership development, and other skill-building purposes.

### Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Provide a sketch of the situation and distribute different perspectives on the situation to all participants. Each role includes an objective to be fulfilled during the play which might be in conflict with the objectives of fellow role players.
2. After the role play, participants are asked to reflect upon what they have experienced during the play.
3. Assign 1-2 participants as observers to provide feedback after the role play.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

**#7**

**Name: Fishbowl**

Goal: *Facilitate focused, inclusive, and dynamic dialogue on controversial issues, encourage active listening, share diverse perspectives, and promote engagement from both the inner and outer circle.*

## Short Description

*A Fishbowl is a group discussion method used to facilitate open dialogue and encourage participation from a larger group while maintaining focus on a specific topic. It involves two groups: an inner circle (the "fishbowl") and an outer circle. The inner circle consists of a small group of participants who engage in a conversation, while the outer circle observes. After a set time, participants from the outer circle can switch places with those in the inner circle, allowing for a dynamic exchange of ideas. This method is often used to promote active listening, diverse viewpoints, and an inclusive conversation.*

## Step-by-Step Guidance

1. After a general introduction on the technique, process and objective, a selection of experts on the selected theme is invited to the inner circle, the facilitator explains that only the inner circle is allowed to speak
2. The facilitator should make sure the outer circle observes silently, takes notes and prepares questions so they are ready to move into the inner circle.
3. Participants are allowed to switch between the inner and outer circle to either contribute or observe.
4. Once the topics or the time allocated have been covered, the facilitator should summarize the discussion and open the floor for a debriefing to review key points, and the groups feelings regarding particular issues.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

#8

**Name: Prototyping**

Goal: Prototyping fosters creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving by encouraging participants to translate abstract ideas into something tangible and actionable.

Short Description

Prototyping is the process of creating quick, tangible models or representations of ideas to explore, test, and refine concepts. Participants use low-fidelity materials (such as paper, cardboard, or digital tools) to build prototypes that illustrate solutions or concepts. This hands-on approach allows for experimentation, feedback, and iteration, helping participants visualize and refine their ideas in a practical way.

Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Sketch your prototype
2. Turn the sketch into a quick and testable prototype, this can be a paper prototype, a storyboard, a mock-up or even a role-play
3. Test and get feedback (present your prototype to other workshop participants or even to potential users)
4. Reflect and iterate
5. Refine the prototype and document key learnings

#9

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

**Name: Prioritizing and Ranking**

Goal: *This tool can help you select the most promising ideas or options when many have been generated during prototyping (see previous tool).*

## Short Description

*After a creative brainstorming session in which as many ideas as possible were generated, this method helps to decide which ideas to keep and which ones to discard. This template shows 3 different methods to do this.*

## Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Select promising ideas (a. Cluster the ideas, b. Vote for favourite ideas using sticky dots or simply drawing a dot, c. Discuss the results)
2. Narrowing a list by following criteria for selection (importance, time needed, cost, urgency, feasibility, desirability etc.)
3. Ranking and Scoring
    a. Write all ideas on a Flipchart paper
    b. Ask participants to rank the ideas by assigning a number to each item - from most important (10) to least important (1)
    c. Calculate average scores and rewrite the items in the new order
    d. Select the prioritised / most important 3-5 ideas

**#10**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

**Name: Speed Dating**

Goal: *The purpose is to encourage quick introductions, idea sharing, or networking in a fun and dynamic way.*

## Short Description

*Speed dating in a workshop setting is a structured networking activity where participants engage in brief, timed one-on-one conversations with multiple people. Each interaction typically lasts 3-5 minutes before participants rotate to the next person. This activity is often used to foster connections, encourage interaction among participants, and generate diverse perspectives in a short amount of time. It's particularly useful for breaking the ice, building rapport, and stimulating creativity in group settings.*

## Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Set up the space (arrange two rows of chairs facing each other or a large circle with inner/outer rings)
2. Prepare guiding questions (depending on goal and purpose of the exercise) and read out the next question before each round
3. Time each round (3-5 minutes per round) and use a timer or bell to keep it moving
4. Wrap-up (optional) asking what was surprising or inspiring

**#11**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

**Name: World Café**

Goal: *To foster collective intelligence by creating an open, informal environment where ideas are shared, connections are made, and collective insights emerge.*

Short Description

*The World Café is a collaborative dialogue methodology designed to facilitate meaningful conversations in large groups. It involves participants engaging in small, rotating groups to discuss a series of questions related to a central theme. The format encourages active listening, diverse perspectives, and the co-creation of solutions, making it particularly effective for addressing complex issues and fostering community-building. By mixing up participants at each table more diverse perspectives can be ensured.*

Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Prepare the environment (i.e. several round tables covered with a flipchart paper tablecloth and coloured pens)
2. Welcome Participants and Set the Context (purpose and questions)
3. Facilitate the conversations (one moderator per table)
4. Switch tables: After a certain time, participants are asked to change groups.
5. Harvest insights: Invite everyone to reflect on the key insights gathered. Each table can prepare a summary or key points.

**#12**

**Name: Open Space**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Goal: *The method encourages collaboration, creativity, and flexibility, with a focus on peer-led discussions and spontaneous ideas.*

## Short Description

*The Open Space Method is a participatory and self-organizing approach to meetings or workshops where participants create and manage their own agenda around a central theme or issue. At the start, the facilitator introduces the broad topic, and then participants suggest discussion topics they are passionate about. These topics are posted, and participants freely choose which discussions to join based on their interests. It works well for fostering innovation, addressing complex issues, and engaging all participants in meaningful conversations.*

## Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Define a clear theme (formulate an inviting, open-ended guiding question)
2. Prepare the space (a large room and materials)
3. Explain the process and the 4 principles: 1. Whoever comes is the right people, 2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could, 3. Whenever it starts is the right time, 4. When it is over, it is over
4. Participants propose sessions themselves by writing title and name on a sticky note and announcing it (topic, time and location) briefly to the group
5. Participants attend whichever session they are drawn to
6. End with a closing circle to share takeaways or insights (optional)

**#13**

**Name: Visioning**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

**Goal:** *The goal is to inspire and align participants around a common vision, providing clarity and direction for decision- making, planning, or problem-solving.*

## Short Description

*The Visioning Method in a workshop setting is a process where participants collectively imagine and create a shared vision of the future. This method involves guided exercises to help individuals or groups visualize their desired outcomes or goals, often using creative techniques such as storytelling, imagery, or future scenarios. It encourages creativity, collaboration, and a sense of purpose, helping to generate enthusiasm and commitment toward achieving the envisioned future.*

## Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Set the stage (give a clear introduction, explain why visioning matters and start with a guided breathing or grounding moment to foster creative thinking)
2. Frame the visioning prompt (choose a future point in time, example: « We write the year 2050, we have achieved our sustainability goals. What does it look and feel like? »
3. Let participants visualize the future individually (quiet writing or drawing)
4. Have participants share their vision with the rest of the group
5. Create a collective vision (optional)

**#14**

**Name:** **Circle of Coherence**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Goal: *The aim is to create a sense of coherence, where diverse perspectives are integrated, fostering mutual understanding and collective clarity.*

### Short Description

*The Circle of Coherence is a method used to align participants around shared values, goals, or understanding by encouraging open dialogue and collective reflection. Participants sit in a circle and engage in discussions where everyone has an equal opportunity to speak and listen. This method promotes deeper connection, empathy, and collaboration, helping participants find common ground and strengthen group cohesion in tackling challenges or making decisions.*

### Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Prepare the space (create a large circle on the floor, e.g. with masking tape, divided into 6 segments)
2. Set the intention and introduce the method (« We will walk through six key areas that help us create coherence for ourselves and our shared future »)
3. Walk through each field (Purpose & Vision, Values & Attitudes, Relationships & Stakeholders, Resources, Actions, Reflection & Learning)
4. Group sharing or harvesting
5. Integration & Closing

## #15

**Name: Constellations**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Goal: *Gain insight into how different components interact and influence each other.*

Short Description

*The method of Constellations is a visual and experiential approach used to explore complex systems, relationships, or problems. It involves positioning people, objects, or symbols in a space to represent various elements of a situation. This method is often used in group settings to uncover hidden dynamics, patterns, and perspectives, helping to identify solutions or new ways of thinking about challenges. It is commonly used in organizational development, coaching, and conflict resolution.*

Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Define the focus and formulate a guiding question.
2. Ask participants to place themselves (or objects that represent different stakeholders) in the space in relation to each other, based on their sense of the relationship and dynamics.
3. Reflect on the constellation and ask the group to share their observation (« Are there any imbalances? », « Do any elements seem disconnected or isolated? », «What emotions emerge when participants observe the setup? »)
4. Experiment with adjustments and explore possible solutions (« What happens if two elements are moved closer together? »)
5. Look for insights and conclusions (« How have the dynamics shifted? », « What does the new configuration tell us about possible actions or solutions? »

**#16**

**Name: Polls / Voting**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Goal: *Polls foster interactivity and enable effective feedback. Possibilities range from mood pictures, queries to voting.*

### Short Description

*(Digital) polls during conferences are interactive tools used to gather real-time feedback from participants. They engage the audience, provide immediate insights into opinions or understanding, and allow organizers to adjust the content or discussions accordingly. The advantages include increased participation, anonymous input, data-driven insights, and the ability to quickly gauge consensus or make decisions, leading to a more dynamic and responsive event. Polls can also be conducted before a workshop or event, i.e. to collect expectations in a structured manner and to set priorities. Polls can also be used for voting when a decision needs to be taken.*

### Step-by-Step Guidance (Voting)

1. Stickers
    a. Write down every option on a flipchart
    b. Give every participant three sticker to allocate to their preferred options
    c. *Variation*: use different colours of stickers
2. Raising hands
    a. Ask participants to raise their hands for the option they prefer
    b. Use online tools so participants can vote anonymously
3. Online Tools (Survey Monkey or Mentimeter)

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

# 6. Indicator workshop quantification of nexus-smart water governance

## 6.1. Workshop – follow along exercise

In this exercise we will walk through the process of using the RETOUCH NEXUS Indicator Application for the quantification of WEFE Nexus Smart water governance.

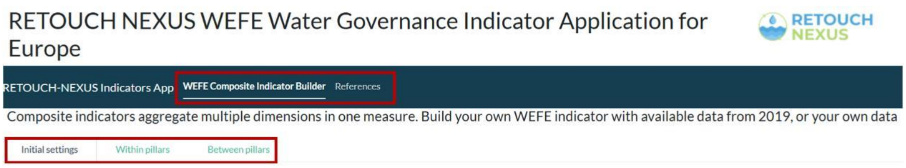
1. Please access the application at: https://qrto.org/aFt9Wm
2. Now try to familiarise with the app:
    a) Navigate through the panels.
    b) Open, read, and understand the "Help" boxes.
3. The instructions below describe in detail the use of the application. In this workshop we will use these instructions, and we will guide you through the application in a follow along exercise to:
    a) Understand the application
    b) Upload customized and own data
    c) Run the application with different settings
    d) Analyse and interpret the results.

### Familiarising with the app

#### First steps – the layout

First, let's explore the layout of the app.

- At the top of the app, a menu allows the user to navigate through 2 panels
    - "WEFE Composite Indicator Builder" is the main panel of the app, which includes a second menu (in green) of sub-panels. These contain the three successive decisional steps that are necessary to run the app and generate WEFE composite indicator scores.
    - "References" is instead a panel where the main references that have been used to build the app are collected



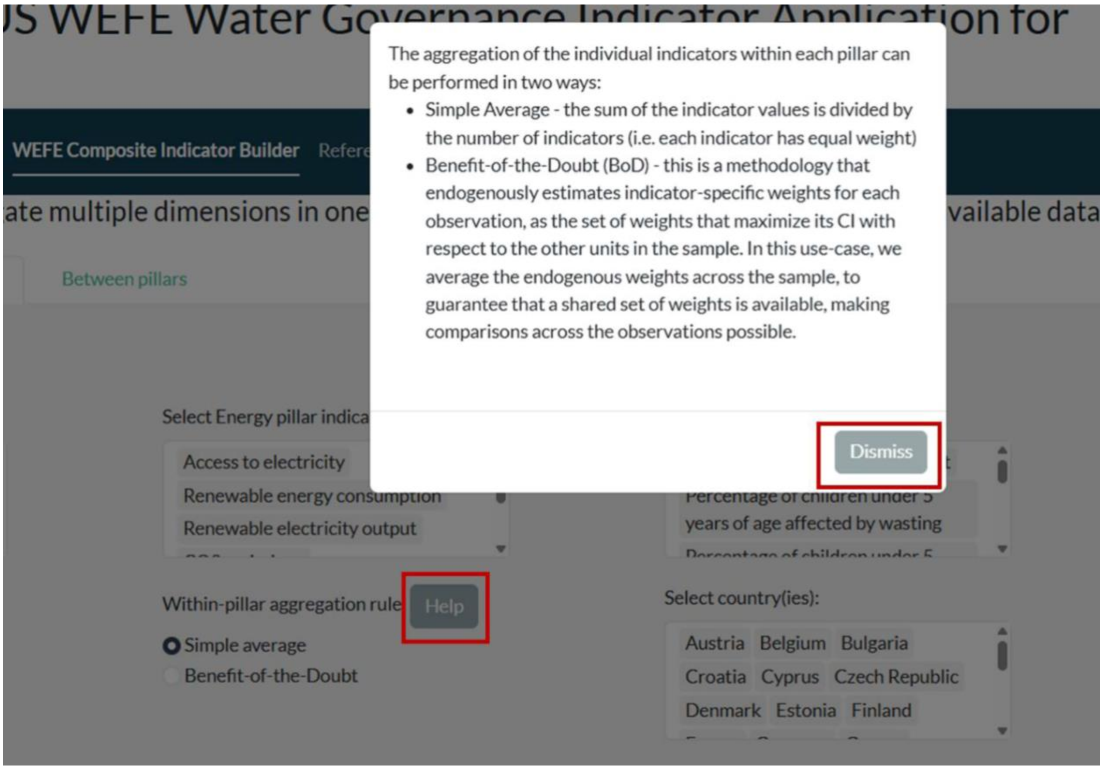

- Below the sub-menu, depending on which panel is selected, the user can make several decisions to build his/her desired WEFE composite indicators
    - In the "Initial settings" panel, the user chooses which data to work with (sample data or upload his/her own), and what results to look at (spatial plot or just quantitative plots?)
    - In the "Within pillars" panel, it is possible to decide which indicators to consider for each of the four pillars (WEFE), which observations, which time periods, and how to aggregate several indicators within each pillar

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

- In the “Between pillars” panel, the final decisions on the weight of each pillar and how to aggregate W, E, F, and E scores are taken

- To move from one sub-panel to the other, the user can either click on the sub-panel title in the green menu, or click on the “Back” and “Next” buttons at the bottom right of the screen


- Several “Help” boxes assist the user in the interaction with the app. These can be opened by clicking on them. To close a “Help” box, click on the “Dismiss” button in its lower right corner, or on the screen outside of the box.




- Once all decisions have been made, the user clicks on “Run Nexus Composite Index” in the “Between pillars” sub-panel, to run the program and generate the final WEFE composite indicator scores. The results will be automatically updated and displayed at the bottom of the screen


  - At the bottom of the screen, an additional sub-menu (in green) organizes the visualisation of results among “WEFE pillars” - a plot of the observed performance across each pillar, and “WEFE Composite Indicator scores” - the overall composite scores in quantitative form and in a spatial plot (i.e., a mat, if the user expressed the will visualize it in the first sub-panel “Initial settings”)


Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

- After generating the results, the user can also download a summary, by clicking on the button “Download results”


The app works with three main input data:

- A dataset of indicator values, with structure as follows

| Observation | Spatial_ID | Time_ID | Ind_1 | Ind_2 | Ind_3 | Ind_4 | ... |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Italy | 2021 | 1 | 23 | 12 | 0.4 | ... |
| B | Italy | 2022 | 0.14 | 4 | 10 | 5 | ... |
| C | France | 2021 | 9 | 98 | 4 | 0.12 | ... |
| D | Germany | 2022 | 12 | 44 | 7 | 2 | ... |
| ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |

*Example 1.* Data table

- A *dictionary* providing more details on the individual indicators, with structure as follows

| Indicators | Dimension | UnitOfMeasurement | ... |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ind_1 | Water | l | ... |
| Ind_2 | Water | kg | ... |
| Ind_3 | Energy | m3 | ... |
| Ind_4 | Ecosystem | m3/inhab/year | ... |
| ... | ... | ... | ... |

*Example 2.* "Dictionary" table for each indicator.

- A *shape file* with multipolygons for plotting the results at relevant geographical scale

The user can choose to upload his/her own data for all three inputs, or to use the sample data provided with the app (EU countries, at the national level).

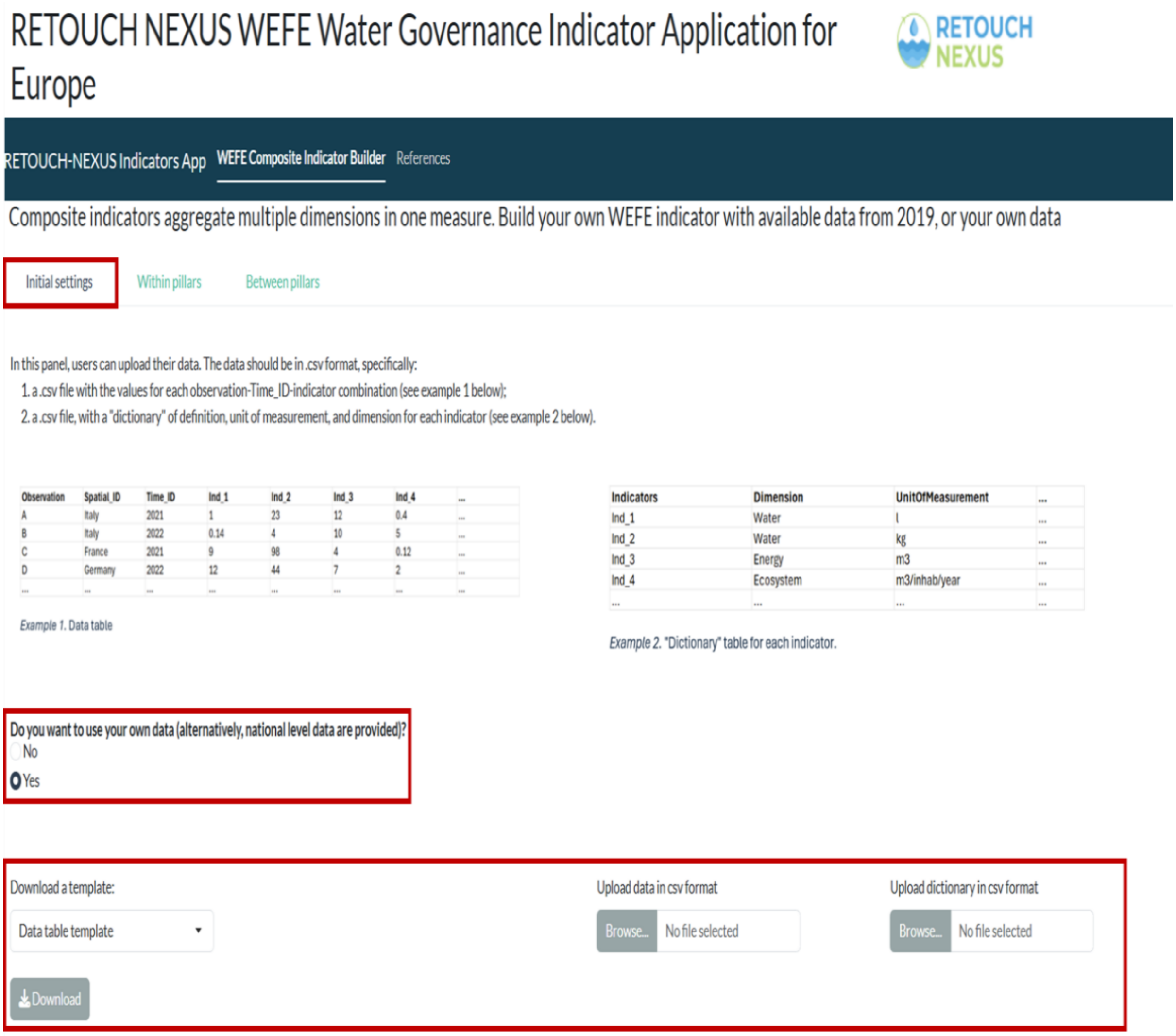
### Adding your own indicator data and dictionary files

The app comes with a dataset of sample indicators (and its dictionary file), across the four WEFE nexus dimensions, at the national scale. However, the user can supply his/her own data and dictionary, to make the analysis specific to a context.

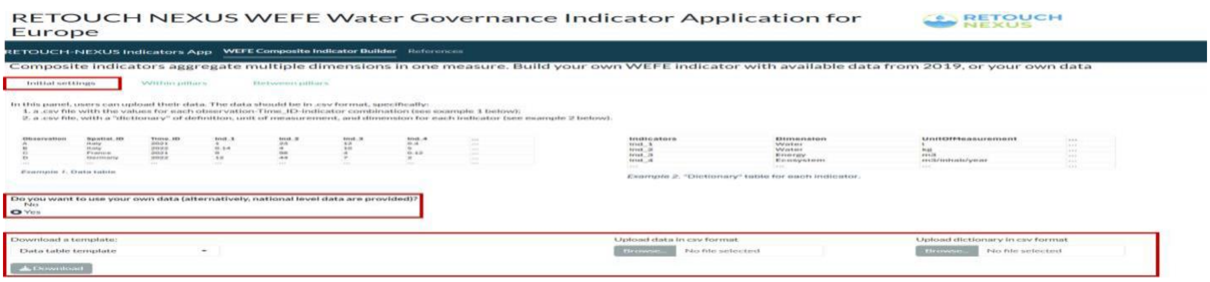
To do so:

1. navigate to the *“Initial settings”* sub-panel (the first to the left of the sub-menu in green),
2. scroll down and select “Yes” for *“Do you want to use your own data (alternatively, national level data are provided)?”*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.




3. Three new elements will appear
    a) A dropdown menu below *"Download template"* allows the user to download two individual .csv files for the indicator data and the *dictionary* inputs. These can be filled with the user's own data, to avoid formatting issues at later stages,
    *b)* Under *"Upload data in .csv format",* the user can upload his/her own *indicator data,*
    c) Under *"Upload dictionary in .csv format",* the user can upload his/her own *dictionary*



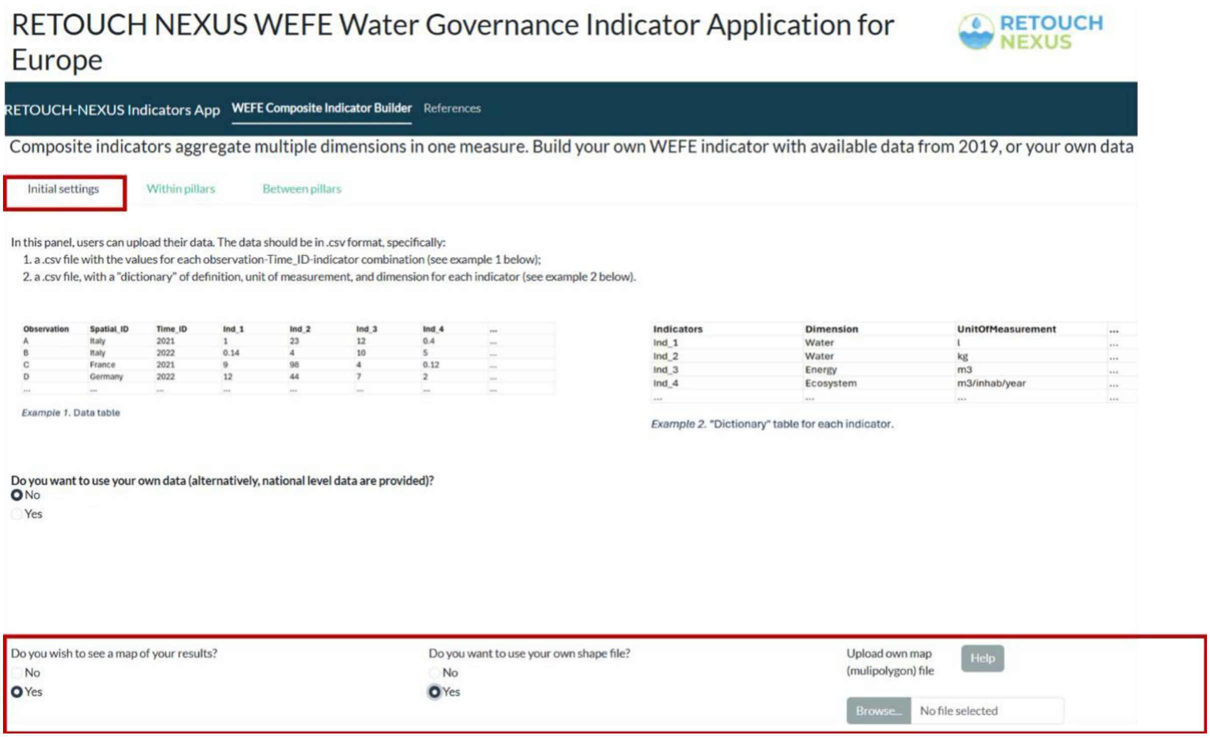
Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## Using your own shape file

The application comes with a pre-loaded shapefile of EU countries, to plot results at the national level. Alternatively, to provide a visualization that is specific to the scale and the context under analysis, the user can also provide his/her own shape file.

To do so:

1. navigate to the *"Initial settings"* sub-panel (the first to the left of the sub-menu in green),
2. scroll down and select "Yes" for *"Do you wish to see a map of your results?"*




3. A new element will appear asking "Do you want to use your own shape file?", select "Yes"
4. A new element will appear, where the user can select and upload a .rds file of two columns, as specified in the help box (can be opened by clicking on it) *"Own map files can be uploaded in .rds format. These should serve as the basis for plotting the results in a map. The file should consist of:*
   *a) A column, called "name", with the identifiers of each unit (e.g. these would be country names, if the map is at the country scale)*

*A column, called "geometry", with the MULTIPOLYGON data of each spatial unit"*

## Using the application for WEFE Nexus composite indicator analysis

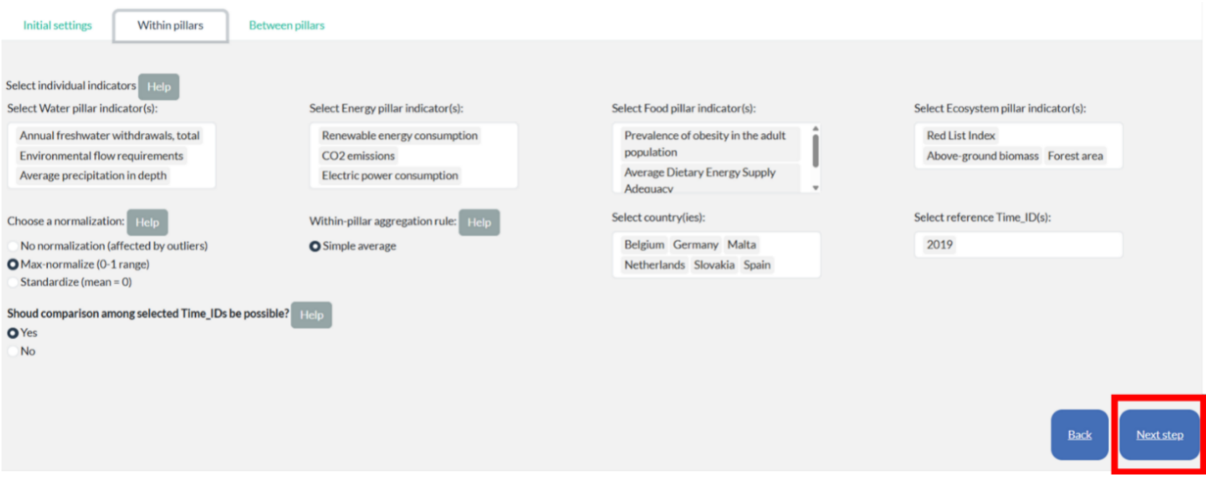
Once you have selected the desired initial settings, you may use the tool for the creation and analysis of WEFE Nexus composite indicators. For this, first you need to choose the desired settings in the "Within Pillars" and "Between Pillars" sub-menus.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## Within pillars – Selection of indicators and normalisation rules

The functionality of this sub-menu is to select the indicators of your interest for each of the WEFE nexus pillars.

1. <u>Selection of indicators:</u> The default selection of indicators is the complete set (pre-loaded or uploaded) of indicators. For each of the pillars you can select the entire set of indicators or manually remove or add indicators from the boxes "*Select … pillar indicator(s)*".
2. <u>Selection of normalisation rule:</u> For every composite indicator it is recommended to determine a normalisation rule. The tool allows to choose no normalisation, max-normalisation and standardisation.
3. If your data has a time component, you can optionally select if you want to additionally compare among time components.
4. Once you have decided your indicator parameters, go to the "*next step*" by clicking in the button.




To have a better understanding of the data, the user can open the "Help" box at the top of the "Within pillar" sub-panel.

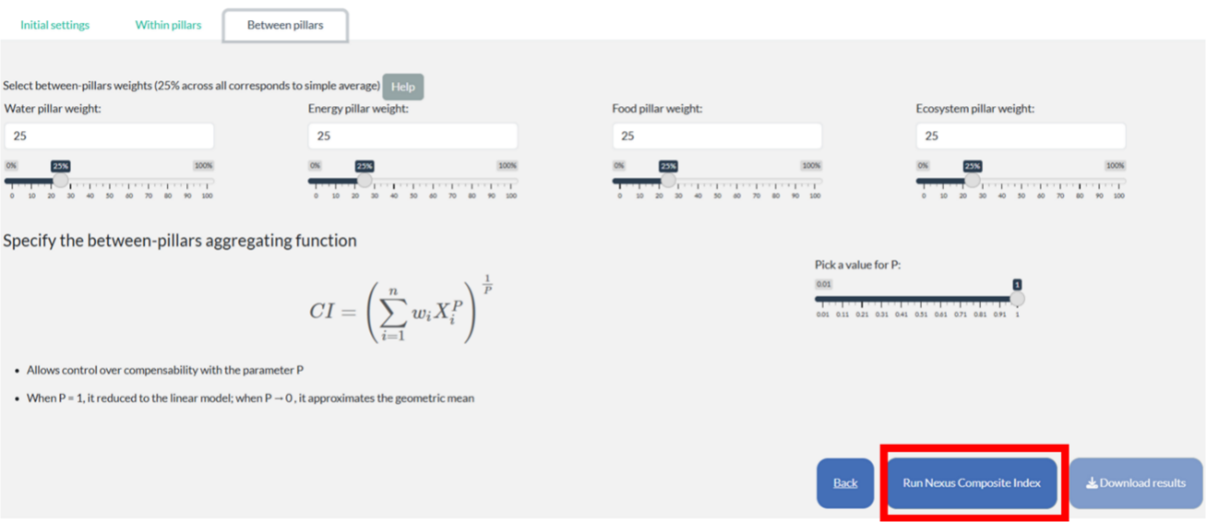
Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

RETOUCH NEXUS


## Between pillars – Selection of aggregation rules

This sub-menus allows selecting the aggregation rules for your composite indicator.

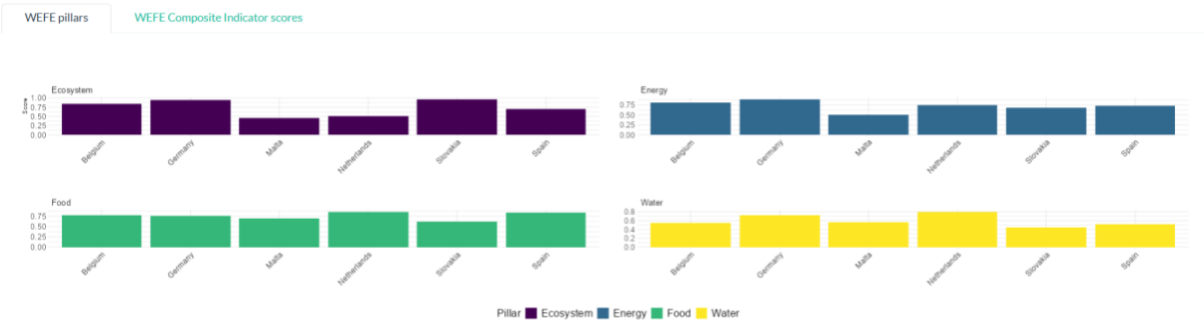
1. Select weights. For every composite indicator you need aggregation rules. This first rule is the weight of each pillar. The application defaults the weights to 25% so that each pillar has the same importance. If you want to assign specific weights (e.g., stakeholder priorities) you can do so by dragging the slider bars.
2. Select aggregation function. There are different functions for aggregating indicators. The application allows selecting different function using the slider and parameter "*p*". For linear aggregation use p=1. For different aggregation select smaller values of "*p*". When "*p*" is small the aggregation rule is similar to the geometric mean.
3. Once you have decided weights and aggregation function, press "*Run Nexus Composite Index*".




Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

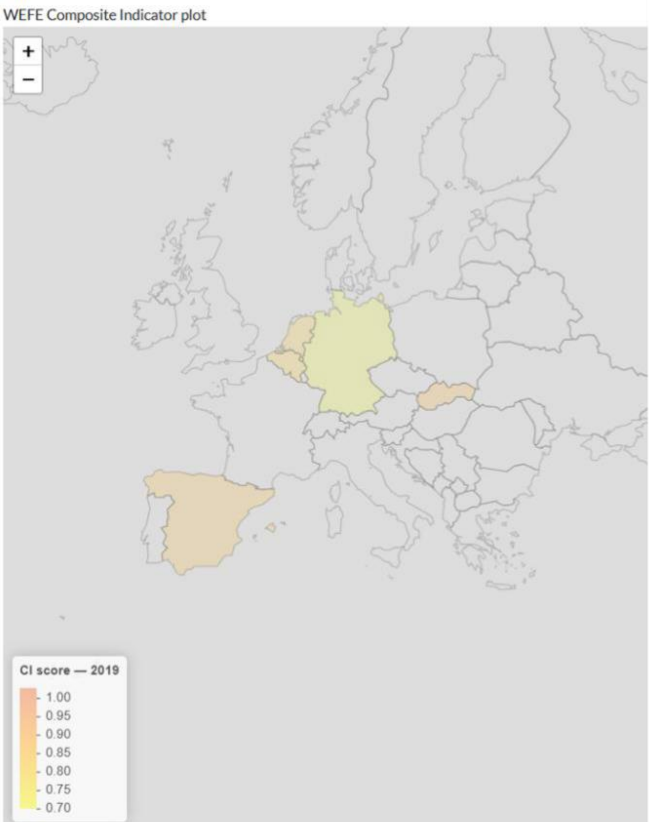
## Analysis of results – WEFE pillars

The first part of the composite indicator results is given in the "*WEFE pillars*". Here you can see the *score* of each of your spatial units for each of the WEFE Nexus pillars. Higher scores represent better *performance* in each category. The graph allows comparison among spatial units and WEFE Nexus Pillars to identify *top-performing* units and pillars.




## Analysis of results – WEFE composite indicator scores

In the "*WEFE Composite Indicator Scores*", the tool displays a table of the aggregated final scores as both a table and a map (if the user previously selected the desire to visualise the map from the "Initial settings" sub-panel).




WEFE pillars | WEFE Composite Indicator scores

| Observation | Spatial_ID | Time_ID | CI |
|---|---|---|---|
| Germany | Germany | 2019 | 1.00 |
| Belgium | Belgium | 2019 | 0.90 |
| Netherlands | Netherlands | 2019 | 0.88 |
| Spain | Spain | 2019 | 0.85 |
| Slovakia | Slovakia | 2019 | 0.83 |
| Malta | Malta | 2019 | 0.67 |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

RETOUCH NEXUS

# 7. Tailored terminologies for RETOUCH NEXUS: A reference guide

## 7.1. About the glossary

There are numerous terminologies that are applied within the RETOUCH NEXUS project, within the project proposal, and within the engagement process with stakeholders (especially in the six cases studies). New activities and terms are also included as the project progresses. Most of the referred terms have a standard universal definition; however, in the context of RETOUCH NEXUS, the terminologies need to be tailored to the purpose of the project and the stakeholder groups involved and for connecting to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

To guide the Consortium partners and the case studies, this Glossary has been developed by adelphi (WP 2 Lead) that serves as a reference guide for case studies in the development and implementation of activities and engagement with stakeholders.

## 7.2. Definition of terms in the context of RETOUCH NEXUS

*Table 4: Glossary*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Artificial Intelligence** | Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the use of software-based AI for translation tasks (e.g. translation of RETOUCH NEXUS website, translation of materials for stakeholder engagement activities), transcription (e.g. online meetings, webinars), and text assistance (writing and improvements of texts and voice assistants). |
| **2** | **Case Study** | In the RETOUCH NEXUS project, a case study is understood as context-specific setting in which stakeholders aim at improving water economy at micro-level by enhancing the interaction of the WEFE Nexus pillars. Therefore, integrated and climate-resilient water governance schemes and innovative engagement mechanisms can be appraised. |
| **3** | **Stakeholder Engagement Formats** | **3a. Awareness Raising Activities**<br><br>These activities can include campaigns, educational programs, platforms, podcasts and interactive project sites. They aim at the general public or citizens who are not necessarily stakeholders but are either beneficiaries or impacted by the project. Furthermore, these activities also focus on specific target groups such as authorities (e.g. water- or agricultural-related; public or private; at local, regional, or national level) or the private sector as well as on potential future stakeholders. Special emphasis should be paid to marginalized groups such as women, youth or people with disabilities. This can be achieved by utilizing multilingual communication, targeted outreach, and clear communication of benefits through various channels such as newsletters, websites, and public announcements. |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | **3b. Citizen Engagement**<br><br>Citizen refers to a person who is either involved as a professional or expert in the project or to a person who is affected by the project and its outcomes. Citizen engagement usually follows the awareness raising activities and involves actively involving the public in decision-making processes through public consultations, focus group discussions, and stakeholder workshops. This engagement is aimed at all stakeholders, especially women, youth, and vulnerable parts of societies, and is facilitated by adapting approaches to local contexts, simplifying administrative procedures, and providing adequate support and resources to encourage active participation. It aims at empowering citizens in the case studies to meaningfully participate in and influence water governance.<br><br>**3c. Citizen Science**<br><br>Citizen Science refers to the involvement of citizens in scientific research and data collection, particularly in environmental monitoring, where a comprehensive data collection would otherwise not be feasible. Local communities and interested individuals participate in workshops and training sessions to learn scientific methods. Digital tools are used to facilitate data collection and communication, thereby enhancing public involvement in scientific and research projects. Thus, water governance processes can be modernised. However, such activities are not yet envisaged within the RETOUCH NEXUS project. |
| **4** | **Capacity Development** | Capacity development focuses on enhancing the abilities and skills of stakeholders, from the regional to the level of the European Union (EU), through training activities and workshops. These initiatives can target government agencies, private sector organizations, water sector professionals, WEFE Nexus researchers or officials at RBOs as well as the leaders of the six case studies themselves, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary knowledge and competencies. Tailored training programs that address specific needs and local contexts are essential for effective capacity building and to ensure "future-proofed" decision-making. For instance, under RETOUCH NEXUS activities around capacity development, one of the intended trainings on WEFE Nexus governance indicators will target some of the stakeholders mentioned above within the EU. |
| **5** | **Co-creation** | Co-creation is a collaborative process where various stakeholders, including public entities, private organizations, and civil society, jointly make decisions and develop solutions. This is achieved through inclusive decision-making processes and co-creation workshops that foster an environment where all voices, from citizens over wastewater treatment plant officials to EU-policymakers, are heard and cross-sectoral collaboration is encouraged. Furthermore, co-creation can also refer to the joint creation of a workshop or a training itself, for example between the RETOUCH NEXUS case studies and adelphi, lead of WP2. |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 6 | **Community of Practice** | A CoP is a virtual or physical forum for peer-to-peer exchanges and knowledge sharing across professionals and practitioners from the different case studies. These CoPs are often established using online platforms, e.g. using the GTI Web-App, to facilitate regular interaction, collaborative problem-solving, and the sharing of expertise among members. A cross-sectoral exchange with nexus-related partner projects (e.g. InnWater and GOVAQUA) is highly recommended and will be further explored. |
| 7 | **Conflicts of Interest** | Conflicts of Interest arise when personal or organizational interests potentially influence the impartiality of decision-making processes. Especially at horizontal scale between different WEFE Nexus sectors, such conflicts of interest are likely to occur. Single-sector decisions are often accompanied by trade-offs for other sectors, that is why the WEFE Nexus tries to align sectoral interests and strengthen synergies between them. Identifying and addressing these conflicts is crucial for maintaining transparency and trust among stakeholders and the involved community. This can be achieved by establishing clear guidelines, promoting transparency, and implementing feedback mechanisms. Frequent and open communication should be formalised to ensure accountability. Successful management and disclosure of conflicts of interest possesses significant importance as e.g. water law and policy making are characterised by compromise and solution orientation. |
| 8 | **Consultation Mechanisms** | Consultation mechanisms include formal processes that enable stakeholders, mostly from the public sector, to engage with and impact on water law or policy development. They can include public meetings, online platforms, surveys, and stakeholder panels designed to gather diverse perspectives from groups such as farmers, energy providers, water managers, and environmental NGOs. Such consultations are essential for ensuring that policies reflect the needs and insights of all stakeholders involved in the WEFE Nexus. These mechanisms have a greater scope as they are formalised and thus institutionalised. |
| 9 | **Duration** | Careful planning of the duration of the sub-steps of a project is essential for a successful and punctual implementation of the project. For trainings on WEFE Nexus topics, a modular structure can be best adapted to the respective needs, for example if a three-day training course can also be shortened to half a day. For workshops and trainings, a short duration (e.g. one or a half day) is recommended. Awareness raising products such as podcasts last only about ten to fifteen minutes. Duration can also refer to long-term planning with an overall duration in place (e.g. in terms of the case studies roadmaps). |
| 10 | **Empowerment** | **10a. Gender**<br><br>In terms of participation, the equal empowerment of all genders is not granted and differs in different countries and regions. One possible step towards improvement is through awareness raising activities and trainings on gender |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | equality, detecting unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers. Furthermore, formats with an explicit gender-focus could also be implemented.<br><br>**10b. Women**<br><br>Women are often at disadvantage when it comes to participation processes. This is particularly troubling, as they are on average specifically affected by lack of access to water. It is important to provide equal opportunities for leadership to women, e.g. by taking them into the lead of decision-making processes. In the case studies, that has significant influence on the development of the case itself.<br><br>**10c. Youth**<br><br>The younger generation is often considered a key stakeholder group in sustainable development projects, especially when it comes to long-term projects and objectives. Engaging youth in resource management initiatives ensures the inclusion of fresh perspectives and innovative ideas. Youth engagement can be fostered through innovative awareness raising, educational programs, social media campaigns, and participatory projects, empowering them to contribute to sustainable solutions (e.g. case study Germany's summer camps for kids and students).<br><br>**10d. Inclusion**<br><br>Inclusion refers to the practice of actively involving various stakeholders such as farmers, youth, and women. Marginalized and vulnerable groups in particular need to be included in the engagement process. Ensuring inclusion enhances the representativeness and fairness of decisions as well as their subsequent acceptance. |
| **11** | **Exchange Platforms** | Exchange platforms are digital or physical spaces where stakeholders can share information, ideas, and experiences related to resource management (e.g. the GTI App). These platforms facilitate knowledge transfer and collaboration among diverse groups. They can include (online) forums, social media, workshops, websites and conferences. They should aim to have high degrees of transparency and accessibility, to disseminate information and foster collaboration. For detailed information on knowledge exchange and transfer, please have a look at Deliverable 2.2 (Factsheets on Good Practices and Innovative Tools for Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation). |
| **12** | **Experts** | Experts are individuals with specialized knowledge or skills in specific areas such as water management, agriculture, energy, or environmental science. This includes both practitioners and academics. Their involvement is crucial for providing technical insights, validating data, and ensuring informed and safe decision-making. Experts can participate in consultation bodies, advisory panels, and workshops, offering their expertise to guide project outcomes. |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 13 | **Format** | **13a. Online**<br><br>Online interactions like videoconferences, webinars, podcasts and surveys (e.g. case study Germany's online survey on horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms) are nowadays very common as they represent a low-threshold and cost-efficient way of communication.<br><br>**13b. In Person**<br><br>In person communication like workshops (e.g. case study Slovakia's stakeholder engagement workshop on resilient water governance under climate change), trainings and conventions are more cost-intensive and complex to set up. That can lead to fewer participants but at the same time it also has advantages compared to online or hybrid formats. Especially the WEFE Nexus field bears potential for conflicts and discontent among stakeholders. Face-to-face discussions and conversations tend to solve potential conflicts better.<br><br>**13c. Hybrid**<br><br>The hybrid format provides the opportunity for face-to-face conversations, while still offering the possibility to participate online, thus raising the number of potential participants (e.g. participation of RETOUCH NEXUS partners in the InnWater General Assembly (GA) – WaterGovernance2027 (WG2027) session). |
| 14 | **Goals** | Goals are specific objectives that a project or engagement process aims to achieve. Clearly defined goals provide direction and purpose, helping to align stakeholder efforts and measure progress. In the context of resource management, goals often include improving public participation, fostering collaboration, and achieving or improving sustainable development goals (e.g. goal of case study Malta's first Business Breakfast: "Establish the basis for effective stakeholder engagement to support the development of the Malta case study"). |
| 15 | **Governance** | Governance refers to the structures, policies, and processes that guide decision-making and ensure accountability within an organization or project. Effective governance involves transparent practices, inclusive participation, and clear roles and responsibilities. Governance mechanisms such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Principles on Water Governance are essential for coordinating stakeholder activities and integrating their inputs into policy and project decisions. |
| 16 | **Innovation** | Innovation in stakeholder engagement involves adopting new methods, tools, and perspectives to enhance participation and collaboration. This can include the use of digital platforms and tools (e.g. the Dutch Context Scan Tool Omgevingsscan, the GTI Web-App), interactive workshops (e.g. school summer camps), and creative communication strategies (e.g. podcasts, VITO's water experience container). Innovation helps to engage stakeholders more effectively and address complex challenges with new approaches. |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 17 | **Key Performance Indicators** | KPIs are specific, quantifiable elements used to evaluate the success of a project or engagement activity. They provide a way to track progress, assess effectiveness, and identify areas for improvement, e.g. through the variables expected outcome and wider impact. In the context of stakeholder engagement, KPIs might include levels of participation or stakeholder satisfaction. It is very important to account for representatives of all groups of interest when doing the assessment. |
| 18 | **Living Lab** | Living labs are innovative user-centred ecosystems that operate within real-life environments, establishing partnerships between public, private, and communities. They use a co-creation approach, integrating research and innovation processes within real-life communities and settings, fostering a bottom-up policy coherence. However, such activities are not yet envisaged within the RETOUCH NEXUS project. |
| 19 | **Marginalised and Vulnerable Groups** | Marginalized and vulnerable groups include populations that face social, economic, or environmental disadvantages. Engaging these groups in decision-making processes is crucial for ensuring equity and addressing specific needs. Strategies highlight the importance of including refugees and minorities in environmental and climate-related initiatives (see also the definition of Inclusion mentioned before). |
| 20 | **Number of Participants** | The number of participants of engagement activities should be planned carefully. Dissemination activities allow a higher number of participants than trainings or workshops, where active exchange is encouraged. As staged in KPI 14, a total number of 1500 citizens (see for clarification definition of citizen before) should be engaged via engagement mechanisms and guidelines (expected outcome). The wider impact foresees a total number of 3000 engaged citizens. A gender balance should be achieved as well as a balanced participation of the different WEFE Nexus sectors. |
| 21 | **Podcast** | A podcast is a digital audio program that can be used to disseminate information, share stories, and engage with stakeholders. Podcasts are an accessible way to reach a broad audience and can be used to highlight project updates, expert insights, and stakeholder experiences. They are particularly useful for engaging youth or expert networks (e.g. the Trend Observatory on Water Podcast). |
| 22 | **Policy and Decision Makers** | Policy and decision makers are individuals or institutions responsible for creating and implementing policies. Engaging these stakeholders is essential for ensuring that project outcomes align with regulatory frameworks and public policies. Effective engagement with policy and decision makers helps to influence and shape policy decisions that support project goals. This can happen within a ministry of a WEFE Nexus sector (e.g. water professionals at the EU-Level) but also across different WEFE Nexus sectors' ministries. |
| 23 | **Participation** | **23a. Public** |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Public participation involves engaging citizens (see for clarification definition of citizen before) in decision-making processes. This can be achieved through public consultations, surveys, community meetings, and other inclusive practices. Public participation ensures that the voices of citizens are heard and considered in policy and project development.<br><br>**23b. Private**<br><br>Private participation refers to the involvement of businesses and private sector entities (e.g. business parks) in stakeholder engagement processes. This includes collaboration with industries, corporations, and private organizations to leverage their expertise, resources, and influence. Engaging the private sector can enhance innovation and drive sustainable development initiatives. |
| **24** | **Stakeholder** | A stakeholder is any individual or group that is interested in or affected by a project or decision. Stakeholders can include government agencies, private sector organizations, civil society groups, local communities, specific groups (e.g. farmers) and citizens. Effective stakeholder engagement involves identifying, understanding, and addressing the needs and interests of all relevant stakeholders. |
| **25** | **Stakeholder Engagement Mechanisms** | **25a. Formal**<br><br>Formal stakeholder engagement mechanisms are structured processes with defined protocols and procedures. These include official consultations, advisory committees, public hearings, and formal partnerships. Such mechanisms ensure accountability and systematic inclusion of stakeholder inputs and can be beneficial when engaging with larger groups of stakeholders.<br><br>**25a. Informal**<br><br>Informal stakeholder engagement mechanisms are more flexible and less structured. These can include casual meetings, informal discussions, social media interactions, and ad-hoc collaborations (e.g. case study Germany's informal preparation meeting with representatives of the Government of Upper Franconia). Informal mechanisms allow for more spontaneous and dynamic interactions, often fostering creativity and innovation, and can be more suitable when engaging with small groups or individuals, e.g. in RBOs. |
| **26** | **Target Group** | A target group is a specific segment of the stakeholders identified for focused engagement efforts (e.g. WEFE Nexus-related stakeholders). This group is selected based on shared characteristics or interests relevant to the project or policy. Targeted engagement ensures that the needs and perspectives of particular groups are adequately represented and addressed. |
| **27** | **Training** | **27a. General Training** |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | General trainings are used to establish, enhance and strengthen the skills and knowledge base of stakeholders on a specific topic (e.g. indictors). They can include seminars, online courses, and hands-on training sessions. Training empowers stakeholders to contribute meaningfully and ensures informed participation.<br><br>**27b. Indicator Training**<br><br>For a better understanding of current baseline conditions and a streamlined monitoring and evaluation process of water governance, indicator training is essential. The training is targeted towards the six RETOUCH NEXUS case study leaders and their respective target group (e.g. government officials, water- and agricultural-related authorities, non-governmental stakeholders such as farmer associations or environmental groups, RBOs, residents, and more). As part of the training, a context-specific set of indicators should be identified, and their use and application should be trained. Important indicators for a governance enabling environment focus for example on policy coherence, institutional settings, innovative governance and stakeholder engagement. |
| **28** | **Training Materials** | Training materials are resources used to support the training process. These can include manuals, guides, presentations, videos, exercises and interactive tools. Well-designed training materials enhance the learning experience and provide stakeholders with reference information to support their ongoing engagement. For the RETOUCH NEXUS project, these training materials will be developed under Deliverable 2.4 by adelphi (WP2 leader). |
| **29** | **Training Modules** | Training modules are structured learning units that cover specific topics or skills. They can be part of a larger training program and are often delivered in a specific order. Modules provide a targeted training approach that allows participants to gradually build their knowledge and skills. They further provide flexibility, for example by exchanging a three-day training course with a half-day session. This will be provided for the indicator training. |
| **30** | **Water Governance** | Water governance refers to the political, social, economic, and administrative systems in place to manage water resources and services. Effective water governance ensures sustainable and equitable access to water, balancing competing needs and protecting water ecosystems. Engaging stakeholders on different spatial and administrative levels in water governance is crucial for addressing complex water management challenges (e.g. lack of stakeholder/public concern and awareness of WEFE Nexus issues, inadequate availability of information, lack of political will and leadership for engaging stakeholders and/or the public, lack of human and financial resources to carry out engagement processes, and more). |
| **31** | **Workshop** | A workshop is an interactive session designed to engage stakeholders in discussion, problem-solving, networking and knowledge exchange. Workshops are effective for generating ideas, building consensus, and developing practical |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | solutions. They often involve a mix of presentations, group work, and plenary discussions to facilitate active participation. Collaborative activities like these are essential in the WEFE Nexus context, as there is often a special need to empower and engage a large and diverse number of stakeholders with different interests. |

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or REA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.