



An innovative, participatory method for stakeholder engagement for sea level rise mitigation: experiences from the SAVEMEDCOASTS Project

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One of the main tasks of the SAVEMEDCOASTS project is communication on coastal hazard, concerning sea level rise, storm surges and tsunamis in the Mediterranean region. To this goal, it is crucial to improve governance and raise community awareness towards these related hazards on coastal populations. SAVEMEDCOASTS achieved this goal through the most popular social media, a tailor-made website, which includes an open-access web-GIS platform, and the active involvement of decision-makers and stakeholders.

Their engagement began with a mapping exercise, in each of the three project countries, and resulted in the involvement of 142 people, directly and indirectly affected by sea level rise, including representatives from a wide range of governmental and private organizations, businesses and industry. The innovative nature of the implemented approach stems from the range of stakeholder engagement methods utilized over the duration of the project, each designed to meet the needs of the specific stakeholder groups engaged. The outputs from each stage of stakeholder engagement were analysed and used to fine-tune the next stage. To begin with, the perceptions of a wider range and larger number of stakeholders on risks and impacts of sea level rise, storm surges and tsunamis, as well as on needs and solutions to mitigate and address them were recorded through an online survey, and then validated through face-to-face interviews with selected stakeholders representing industry and governance. Once a preliminary understanding of perceptions was compiled, three small focus group meetings were organized to better define specific research and policy gaps and needs in the areas of study. Finally, 26 decision and policy-makers were involved in national, site-specific workshops, where they were facilitated in the prioritisation of measures to mitigate risks of sea level rise, through the visualisation of the risk hazard through the web-GIS platform, and the implementation of a decision-support methodology.

Results provided an overview of stakeholders' perceptions accounting for both dissimilarities and commonalities of the three countries, which are paramount to prioritize and design interventions while meeting stakeholders' needs. An overview of the methodology and the analysis of the outcomes arising from the SAVEMEDCOASTS Project are then provided to favour coastal hazard communication.