



Approaches to multi-actor participation: factors enabling development and sustainability of engagement platforms

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provincie **Drenthe**

Engagement platforms in Fairway and Optain EU projects

The presentation draws on the results and the experience of multi-actor platforms established in two EU projects, and discusses issues and conditions for meaningful engagement.



Project 2017 – 2021, coordinated by Wageningen Research. European Union's Horizon 2020. <https://www.fairway-project.eu/>



Optimal strategies to retAIN and re-use water and nutrients in small agricultural catchments across different soil-climatic regions in Europe

Project 2020 – 2025, coordinated by UFZ Centre for Environmental Research. European Union's Horizon 2020. <https://www.optain.eu/>

Multi-actor platforms

Multi-actor approaches refer to platforms organized for the interaction between different groups of actors including authorities, experts, and NGOs, civil society representatives etc.

- **As part of collaborative governance**, when engagement is required by legislation, - implying long term and continuous engagement effort (Long term engagement an aim of the Fairway project).
- **Development projects:** Involvement is limited in time, and actors are invited to provide input into an impact assessment, and or planning.
- **Research project:** Researchers and stakeholders participate in joint fact-finding and co-creation of knowledge. (Optain project engagement during the lifetime of the project)



Analytical framework for discussing meaningful engagement

Pressure for change

Pressure for change (relevance): bottom up, and top down sense of urgency for change .

Trust

Trust : (i) trust between actors, (ii) trusting the project approach, (iii) trusting that your perspectives will be considered / included.

Added value

Added value: Exemplified by, receiving agronomic information, advice about economic subsidies, access to networks, platform to talk with other farmers, authorities, private actors etc.

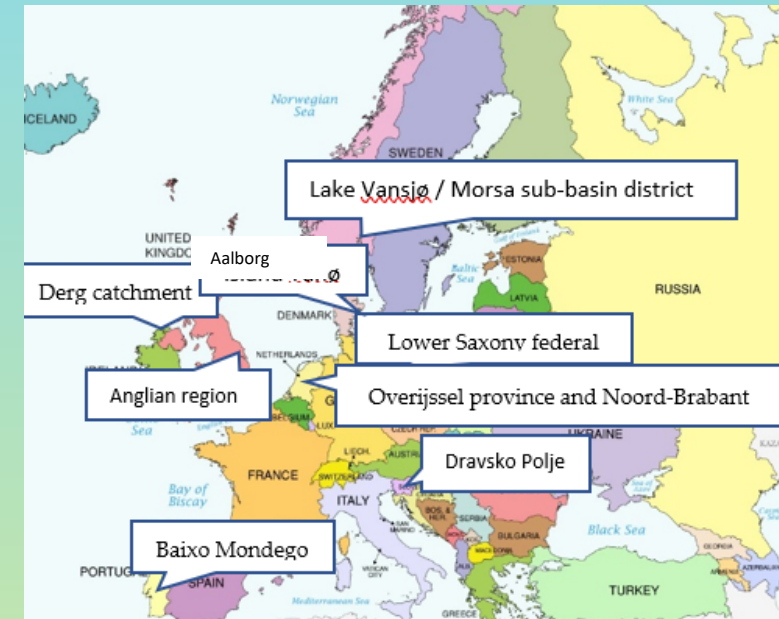
Meaningful engagement is defined as the right to be heard and the possibility to contribute to setting objectives (Pirk, 2002).

Fairway - Farm system Management and Governance for Good Water Quality and Drinking Water Supplies

Project aim: Approaches for protection of drinking water resources, identify measures and governance approaches – including establishment of **long term Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs)**

Where: MAPs were organised in 11 case study countries, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia.

MAP members: Water managers, water companies, national, regional and local authorities, farmers. A MAP coordinator to coordinate and nurture engagement.



Fairway - Multi-actor Platforms (MAPs)

Analysis to assess factors and issues enabling, promoting or representing risks to the project goal of long term engagement platforms

Why: Increasing the understanding of factors promoting long term multi-actor engagement; this is important for addressing environmental concerns.

MAPs represented different histories of engagement: (i) new initiatives, (ii) intermediated ongoing initiated projects, (iii) MAPs representing long-term engagement.

Data collected from survey and interviews with MAP members :

- (i) Purpose of the platform, Participants' understanding of the problem and objectives,
- (ii) Perceptions of synergies / added value, achievements and (iv) Risks challenging long-term continuation of the MAP

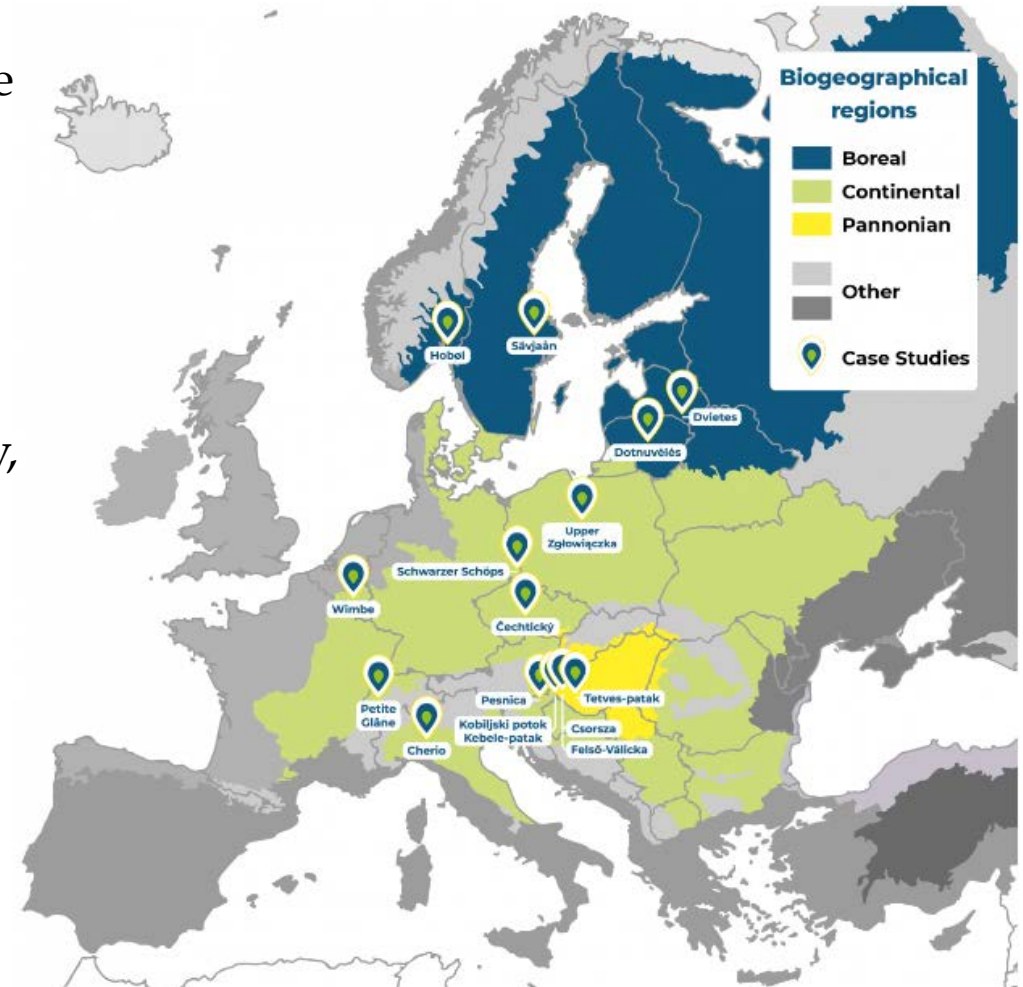


OPTAIN - OPTimal strategies to retAIN and re-use water and nutrients in small agricultural catchments across different soil-climatic regions in Europe

Project aim - identify techniques for the retention and reuse of water and nutrients; optimize combination of measures considering the environmental and economic sustainability.

Where: Multi-Actor Reference Groups (MARGs) are organised for co-creation processes in case areas; Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden Switzerland (project lifetime).

MARG members: Local, regional and national authorities and agencies, farmers, private actors, NGOs. A case study leader organize and facilitate meetings.



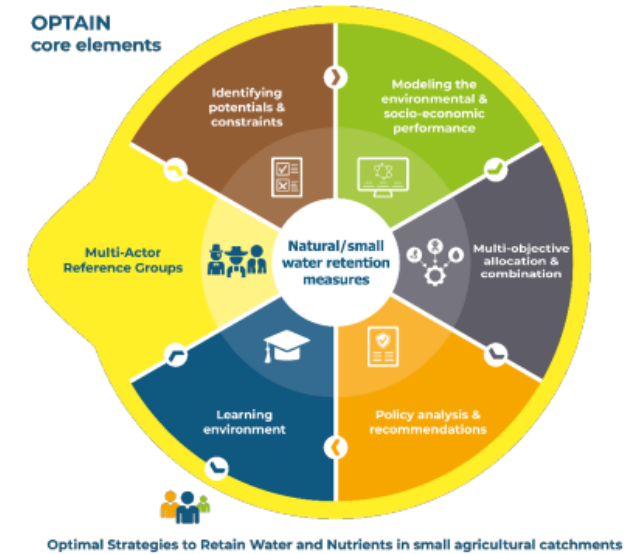
Optain – Multi Actor Reference Groups (MARGs)

Analysis to assess meaningful engagement situation - perspective from case study leaders, and from MARG members.

Why: Meaningful engagement is needed for successful co-creation and joint-fact finding, monitoring the situation enables adaptive actions.

MARGs represent different histories of engagement: (i) new initiatives, (ii) previous collaborations, (iii) ongoing long-term engagement platforms.

Data collected on perspectives of – (i) relevance, (ii) trust, (iii) added value, to assess development during the project years.



Enabling development of trust and added value



Fairway MAP strategies (strategies differed across MAPs):

Approach: Addressing drinking water quality concerns.

The specific agenda decided by each MAP.

Added values: Understanding different perspectives, identifying synergies, information from, field demonstrations w. agronomists, addressing economic performance of agriculture, access to network .



Optain MARG strategies: (strategies differ across MARGs)

Approach: Addressing water quality, water excess, flood and drought concerns.

Predefined agenda for each meeting "project schedule".

Added value : Information about efficient and effective measures for retention and reuse of water and nutrients - addressing environmental and economic sustainability of measures, access to network .

Fairway: analysis results about conditions promoting & risking long term engagement

MAPs - recently established

Strategy: Formal & informal meetings organized to establish the MAP, and to build trust.

Achievements: Understanding perspectives, acknowledging that development of trust requires time.

Risks to long term engagement : Lack of funding, lack of common goals, change of government staff, poor coordination among national-level authorities.

(Nesheim, et al. 2021)

MAPs - intermediate ongoing

Strategy: Interactive events & field demonstrations, discussions, and experiments, access to actors & networks.

Achievements: Improved dialogue, access to agronomic knowledge, advancing knowledge about practices enabling synergies.

Risks to long term engagement: Lack of external funds, need for dedicated facilitation;. Weak and limited mandate.

MAPs - long term ongoing

Strategy: employment of daily manager, knowledge based decision continuous monitoring , intense and frequent communication efforts. Position in governance system - mandate & financial support.

Achievements: Improved water quality; top-down political anchoring , bottom up engagement. Input to decision making processes.

Risks: Ensuring continued bottom up -engagement, relevance, added value.

Optain – meaningful engagement analysis results (first year)



CASE STUDY LEADERS (some different perspectives across CSLs). Information from interviews.

Relevance / pressure for change: High relevance of MARG for reaching project objectives..

Trust: For new engagement initiatives trust is under development. Different ways of trust building strategies. Takes time. Not all cases have yet been able to get farmer involvement.

Added value: Local context information, identifying and ranking indicators, feasibility of measures.

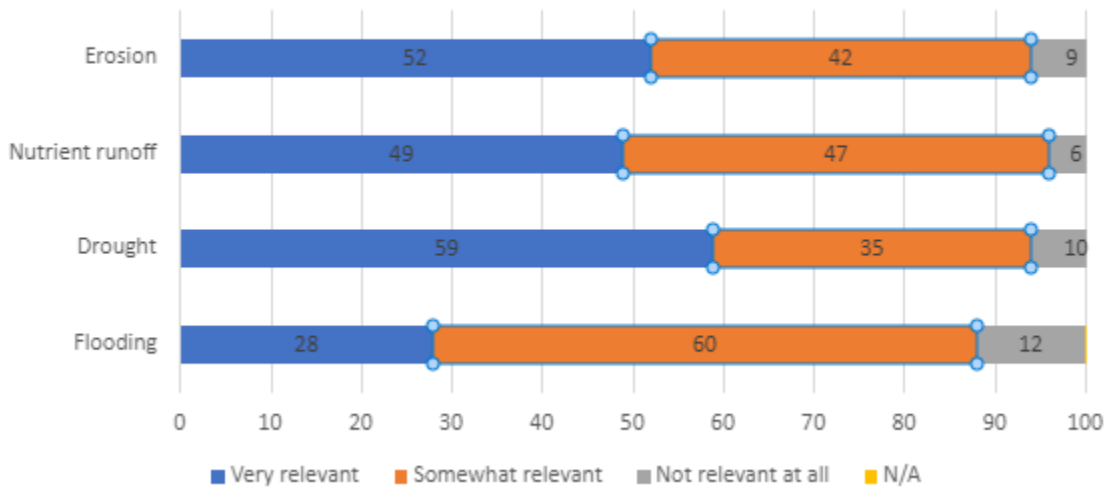
Optain – meaningful engagement analysis results (first year)



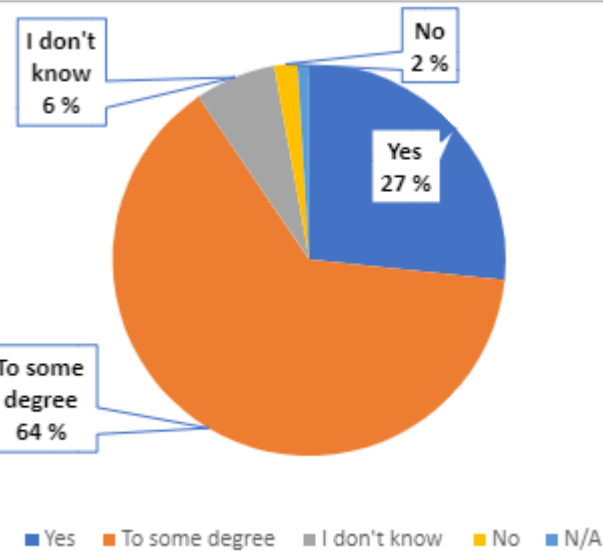
MARG MEMBERS

Relevance / pressure for change

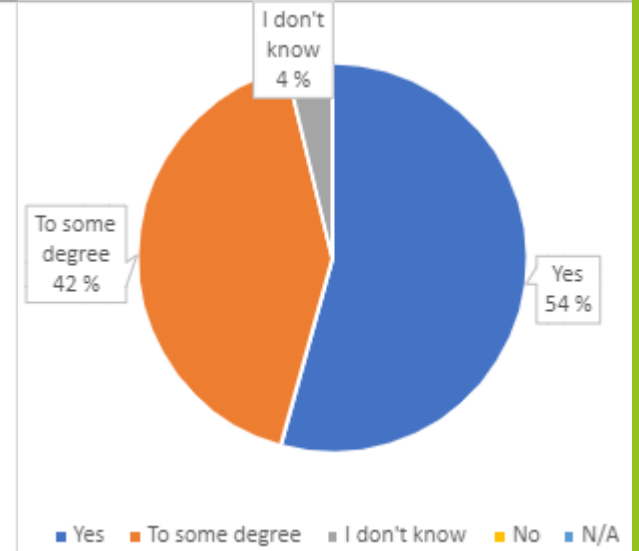
Relevant Problems in your catchment



Trust – Can project contribute to problem solving?

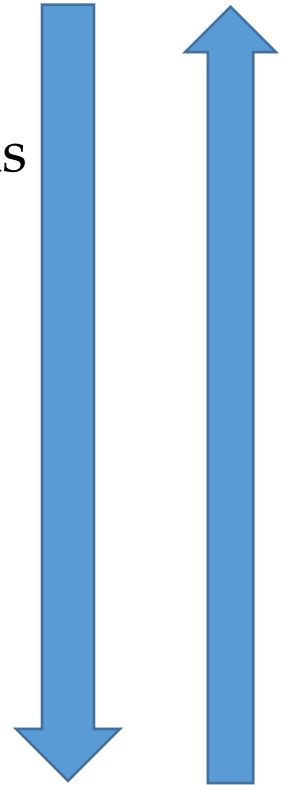


Added value of engaging – access to information



Summary and reflections on meaningful engagement platforms

- Bottom-up pressure for change is important for involvement of local actors and thereby to gain access to local information and for change of behaviour.
- Top-down pressure for change reflected in mandates, policies, and regulations represents political anchoring – this is important for long time engagement.
- Development of formal and informal networks with high cohesions requires skills, financial resources and time.
- Trust between actors is essential, it takes time, when achieved it is not a constant. Interest in challenges, experiences and stakeholder perspectives are important for building trust.
- Stakeholder fatigue is a risk - perceived added value of engagement reduce possibilities of stakeholder fatigue.



Thank you for your attention

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