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LitusGo Manual
Module 2
**Stakeholder
involvement/Public Participation**



Lifelong Learning Programme

Editor: Isotech Ltd, Environmental Research and Consultancy
www.isotech.com.cy

LitusGo is funded with the support from the European Commission through the Leonardo da Vinci Programme - *Multilateral Project for the Development of Innovation, 2009.*

This educational manual reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

ISBN set 978-9963-720-00-2

ISBN 978-9963-720-03-3

Preface to the LitusGo Education Manual

The LitusGo Manual is part of the LitusGo educational package which is included in the LitusGo portal: www.litusgo.eu. LitusGo aims at the training and capacity building of Local Authorities and local stakeholders in Integrated Coastal Zone Management issues and the reaction to the impacts of climate change.

This Manual consists of 20 autonomous, self-contained and inter-related modules. The modules are available in four languages, Greek, English, Maltese and Turkish and in three different forms: the dedicated wiki application in the LitusGo portal, the dvd and the hard copy version. This hard copy version of the LitusGo Manual consists of 20 self-contained booklets, one for each module, kept in a hard collective case.

List of modules of the LitusGo Educational Manual

- Module 1: European legal framework
- Module 2: Stakeholder involvement/Public participation
- Module 3: Sustainable tourism-carrying capacity
- Module 4: Water resources management
- Module 5: Fisheries/fish farming
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- Module 10: Land uses/urban planning/coastal over-development
- Module 11: Landscape and marine-scape management
- Module 12: Coastal erosion control
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- Module 14: Community annoyance issues 2: light and thermal pollution, odours
- Module 15: Archaeological areas/historic sites/cultural heritage
- Module 16: Extreme conditions management: flood risks, coastal flooding and storm surge
- Module 17: Droughts
- Module 18: Desertification
- Module 19: Energy use, consumption and management
- Module 20: Green buildings

Credits

The LitusGo Education Manual has been developed by the LitusGo Educational Manual Working group:

Modules 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19 have been prepared by the scientific team of the beneficiary/coordinators ISOTECH Ltd. Major authors: Michael I. Loizides, Chemical/Environmental Engineer and Xenia I. Loizidou, Civil/Coastal Engineer. Constantinos Georgiades (MSc in ICZM) is responsible for the overall editing. The hard copy of the educational Manual is designed by Anastasia Georgiou.

Modules 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 15, 20 have been prepared by the scientific team of the Sustainable Aegean Programme of ELLINIKI ETAIRIA - Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage. Major authors: Georgia Kikou, Geographer, MSc Environment (Manager of the Sustainable Aegean Programme), Alexandros Moutaftsis, Economist, MSc Environment, Leonidas Economakis, Political Sciences, MA International Development.

Dr Alan Pickaver on behalf of partner The Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) was responsible for the quality control of the educational material.

LitusGo partnership:

Coordinator/Beneficiary:

ISOTECH Ltd Environmental Research and Consultancy

www.isotech.com.cy

Cyprus:

Municipality of Pafos www.pafos.org.cy

AKTI Project and Research Centre, www.akti.org.cy

Greece:

ELLINIKI ETAIRIA - Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage www.ellet.gr / **Sustainable Aegean Programme,**
www.egaio.gr

ONISIS web development www.onisis.gr

Malta:

Municipality of Kirkop www.kirkop.gov.mt

The Netherlands:

EUCC – The Coastal & Marine Union www.eucc.net

Module 2

Stakeholder Involvement/Public Participation

1| Theoretical background

The right of public participation in decision making in environmental matters was officially recognized and secured with the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters which was adopted on the 25th of June 1998. The Aarhus Convention is the first international agreement that links citizen's environmental rights and human rights. The Convention stresses the need for active participation of the citizens and for access to information held by public authorities. It recognises that sustainable development can be achieved only with the involvement of all the stakeholders and it raises the issues of Government accountability, transparency and responsiveness. Since then, the European Union has adopted two Directives and a Regulation concerning the three "pillars" of the Aarhus Convention that were to be implemented in the national law of the EU Member States. More information on the EU legislation in relation to the Aarhus Convention, as well as on the implementation status in each Member State can be found in the dedicated website <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/aarhus/>.

A precondition for public participation is the access to environmental information. According to the Convention:

- Public authorities respond to the request for information with

copies of the actual documentation and in the form requested (without an interest to be stated by the person requesting the information);

- The information should be made available within 1 month;
- Public authorities may refuse only for certain reasons (e.g. national defence, public security, intellectual property rights, etc);
- Practical arrangements should be made for the collection and dissemination of information (publicly accessible lists, registers, points of contact, electronic databases, etc);
- Development of a mechanism to ensure sufficient product information for the consumers;
- Establishment of a nationwide system of pollution inventories that is computerized and publicly accessible.

In relation to the Public Participation in decision making, the Aarhus Convention emphasises that the public concerned shall be informed by public notice or individually EARLY in an environmental decision making procedure and in an adequate, timely, and effective manner:

- Information should be provided on the proposed activity, the nature of possible decisions, the authority responsible, the procedure (commencement of procedure, opportunities to participate, time, venue, where information can be obtained or comments submitted, what environmental information is available), and if the activity is under Environmental Impact Assessment procedure;

- Sufficient time should be allowed for informing the public and for the public to prepare and participate;
- Public participation should begin when ALL OPTIONS ARE OPEN;
- The public should have access to all the information relevant to the decision making (including expected residues and emissions, significant effects to the environment);
- Procedures shall allow the public to submit comments, information, opinions;
- Ensure that the outcome of the public participation is taken into account in the decision making;
- Inform the public of the decision – the decision text, with necessary explanations, is made available to the public ;
- Ensure public participation in the preparation of plans, programmes, policies, regulations etc related to the environment (with limitations).

In addition, the two E.U. Directives on Environmental Assessment (the Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment Directives) aim, as a common principal, to ensure that public participation is a built-in process in decision-making procedures for the integration of environmental considerations. Hence these two Directives are considered as crucial tools for achieving sustainable development. More information can be found at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/home.htm>.

2| Objective

Decision makers, often need to act quickly to prevent or solve a problem related to the coastal management or other environmental issues, and have to face the bureaucratic processes, conflicting legislations and interests of the different governmental departments, restricted budget lines and the anger of the stakeholders. So, the question that can arise naturally in their minds is why should the public be involved? Where is the time and money to inform and educate people, especially on a scientific subject like ICZM and climate change, in order to be represented in equal terms in the decision process?

The objective of this module is to present possible problems that can arise from the failure to identify and involve the key stakeholders in a decision making process and to provide methods of involvement and good examples of implementation of public participation. The aim is to promote the importance of the involvement of all the stakeholders and the long term benefits that arise from the public participation procedure.

3| Problem

Public participation procedures demand careful design, time, resources, long-term commitment by the key actors, negotiations and many times compromises resulting in changes in the initial plans. Consequently, there are cases that the national and public authorities may be unwilling to inform and involve the stakeholders

and the public in the decision making process. Nevertheless, during the last decades, the experiences gained with regards to the development and implementation of projects related to nature protection and management, showed that public participation is the only way to ensure the legitimacy of the decisions and the sustainability of the initiatives.

Failure to identify and involve the local stakeholders in the decision making process may lead to significant opposition resulting in delay or even cancellation of a project.

In the cases described below the local authorities did not identify the key local stakeholders affected by the proposed project and their concerns had not been addressed during the decision making process.

The Livadia case

The Cyprus Government proposed the development of a treatment plant for the purification of tertiary treated waste water by a reverse osmosis system in the area of Livadia (Larnaka district). The clean water would have been used for irrigation of edible crops and the residual brine would have been discharged in the nearby sea, five hundred meters from the coast. The government managed to secure the initial approval from the involved local authority to proceed with the project. The stakeholders and the public concerned were not identified or consulted and important issues had been overlooked. As a result the stakeholders consisting mainly of hoteliers, owners of restaurants and villas located close to the relevant coast opposed the decision and intend to take legal measures against the

implementation of the project. The project has been blocked.

The Lymbia case

The national decision to construct a municipal waste management and disposal (landfill) site in Lymbia village for the dumping of municipal solid waste of all Larnaca District, created major anger and opposition demonstrations from the residents of the Community affected. The public concerned had not been informed and consulted from the beginning of the process and the stakeholders' concerns relating to health, quality of life and property value had also not been taken into consideration. The public was involved when the location of the landfill had been already decided at which time the community was opposed to the decision. As a consequence, since the project was co-financed by the EU and the procedure followed was not compliant with the provisions of the Environmental Assessment Directives related to public participation, the financial assistance of the EU was frozen. The problem was overcome with the creation of a negotiation committee consisting of local authority members and independent scientists/consultants acting as representatives of the community. The committee undertook the task of observing and evaluating the procedure during the construction and operation phase of the waste management and disposal facility, in order to ensure that all safety measures concerning health and quality of life issues would be implemented and maintained/inspected properly.

4| How to deal with the problem

Methods of involvement of the stakeholders

There is no prescription for success in the involvement of all stakeholders and not all stakeholders have the same knowledge, skills, and means to participate. The public concerned and the residents can be involved directly in open procedures to express their concerns and opinions or they can be represented indirectly in committees and structured meetings by local authority members, consultants/experts, NGO's etc.

- A good start for a participation process could be an open information gathering of the residents in each of the communities affected organized in cooperation with the local authority. These gatherings should be organized early in the procedure when many options are open and the public concerned will have the opportunity to be informed and express their thoughts and concerns freely.
- Smaller focus groups with people with specific sensitivities can be organized for providing information and for locating and recognizing potential problems as well as understanding the expectations of the residents regarding the project implementation. Individual interviews with respected or influential community people could also be very helpful for gathering data and local know-how.
- The preparation and wide dissemination of audio-visual material, maps and printed information, and material in a simplified user-friendly form can be used by national authorities to inform and educate the public.

- For a better understanding and visualization of the project, the authorities can organize site visits inviting the public concerned, civil society interest groups, local representatives and experts.
- Radio and TV broadcasts, and newspaper articles in local and national newspapers can be very useful tools for reaching the wider public and for providing an open floor for questions and discussion.
- The authorities should create and maintain electronic tools, databases and help-desks, open to the public seeking information related to the project and procedures that are being followed.

Successful public participation

When dealing with a project of nature protection and management, stakeholders' involvement and public participation procedures can be rewarding because they can secure democratic governance and the actions taken are legitimate and respected even by the people that may disagree and oppose them. Public participation can be considered effective and successful when:

- The public concerned is informed, understands and recognizes the opportunities and benefits that will be created from the implementation of the project.
- The residents are participating or represented in decision making meetings and express their opinion concerning the design and implementation of the project.
- The local people affected by the project contribute with information, know-how and experience.
- Through the participation procedure the project has been

changed, improved and benefited from the know-how, experiences, information and resources of the residents.

- Groups of common concerns related to the project are created and new job opportunities for the locals arise as a result of the project.
- The stakeholders and the local authorities involved are represented in the project management committee for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

References/useful information:

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E-sources:

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2012

ISBN set 978-9963-720-00-2

ISBN 978-9963-720-03-3