Stakeholder engagement and participation in Forest Ecosystem Research. Insights from SINCERE and NOBEL.

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why to engage with stakeholders in FES research?

Insights from HORIZON 2021-2022 (EU research)

1. To increase the relevance and impact of the project
   "Outcomes are more demand-driven, reliable and relevant for society"

2. To develop opportunities for innovation through co-creation activities
   "End-users and intermediates are to be involved not as an object of study but to use their practical and local knowledge and entrepreneurial skills to develop solution and create co-ownership of the results for (end-users) and practitioners"

3. To enhance acceptance and scaling up
   "This will speed up the acceptance and take-up of new ideas, approaches and solutions developed"

https://www.horizon-europe-infodays2021.eu/
Why to engage with stakeholders in FES research?

Insights from SINCERE and NOBEL research proposals

1. To promote policy innovations towards a coordinated Europe-wide incentive system for FES
   By connecting actors across sectors and policy levels in a multi-actor approach, it explicitly explores and promotes

2. To build up and run a Learning Architecture
   Through Cross-fertilization activities from the cases developed in the projects

3. To enable interactive innovation models
   through demand-driven partnerships between foresters, business, society and research

4. To understand hindering and supporting factors for the implementation of the identified business models.
   Through the analysis of actors and institutions
Why to engage with stakeholders in FES research?

Insights from SINCERE’s stakeholders expectations

1. To increase participation and conflict resolution
   • “Create a better dialogue among stakeholders”
   • “It is impossible to reconcile totally divergent opinions of some stakeholders”
   • “We have been able to maintain those two groups involved, even if it has been difficult sometimes”

2. To increase effectivity and to ease implementation
   • “To mobilize a specific set of actors that we could get a efficient and pragmatic PES scheme”

3. To increase knowledge integration and education
   • “Many people are not familiar with the concept of forest ecosystems”
   • “Involvement is important to ensure knowledge transfer in the region”
How to engage with stakeholders in FES research? Examples of methodologies used in SINCERE and NOBEL

Passive involvement in FES research
- Surveys to assess individual FES preferences
- Surveys to collect data on FES demand and provision

More stakeholder participation in research
- Test innovative mechanisms such as Auctions
- Workshops to explain trade-offs between FES
- Multi-Actors Groups to support IA implementation

Active involvement in FES research
- Co-design event of IA
- Cross-fertilization activities
- Workshops to identify business models

* Based on IAP2 framework; Bammer 2019)
Whom to select? – Insights from SINCERE

Contacting / selecting actors for the MAG meetings, which of the following criteria were considered most important to cover? (Check all that apply)

- Gender balance: 6 (40%)
- Age balance: 5 (33.3%)
- Private/public sector balance: 8 (53.3%)
- Actors from different nationalities: 0 (0%)
- Academic discipline balance: 3 (20%)
- Diversity of opinions (e.g., support, non-support): 13 (86.7%)
- Power balance (powerful vs. powerless): 8 (53.3%)
- I don’t know / I wasn’t involved: 1 (6.7%)

Who are the main actors involved in the innovation action in your region? These may include actors that do not form part of the MAG as well. (Check all that apply)

- Forest/Land owners or managers: 15 (100%)
- Final end-users (e.g., society): 8 (53.3%)
- Private companies (e.g., SMEs…): 8 (53.3%)
- Public entities (e.g., council, region): 13 (86.7%)
- Advisory services: 9 (60%)
- Researchers: 10 (66.7%)
- I don’t know: 0 (0%)
Whom to select? – Insights from SINCERE

Have you managed to get on board the variety of actors you were aiming at for the MAG meetings?
15 responses

- 33.3%: Yes, we managed to involve over 75% of actors we aimed at.
- 66.7%: Yes, we managed to involve between 50 and 75% of actors we aimed at.
- 13.3%: No, we managed to involve less than 50% of those we aimed at.
- 13.3%: I wasn’t involved in this process.

Please indicate how many of the stakeholders originally selected for the MAG meetings have been participating until the end of the project.
15 responses

- 33.3%: Less than 25% of the MAG stakeholders who participated in the first MAG meeting have participated in the post...
- 40%: Between 25% and 50% of the MAG stakeholders who participated in the first MAG meeting have participated in the...
- 13.3%: Between 50% and 75% of the MAG stakeholders who participated in the fi...
- 13.3%: Over 75% of the MAG of the MAG stakeholders who participated in the fi...
The process: challenges and enabling structures

1. How to manage:
   • Past conflicts among stakeholders
   • Too diverse opinions/interest to come to a conclusion

2. Communication difficulties because different levels of knowledge about the subject and the context

3. How to organize and exchange information in the meetings

4. How to go beyond the particularities of individual cases/business

1. Facilitation skills of the coordinator or an external mediator. Genuine participation. Openness.

2. Organizing parallel sessions tailored to different actors needs and capabilities. Providing opportunities for both formal and informal interactions.

3. Bringing in experts' insights throughout the process.

4. Finding enough common ground for generalizations and scaling up.
The process: different levels of engagement in SINCERE

1. Innovation mechanism(s) designed or implemented in our innovation action responds very well to the pre-existing forest ecosystem services demand-supply mismatch in the innovation action region.
2. Relevant actors have been involved in the planning and design of the innovation action in our region.
3. Relevant actors have been involved in the implementation and execution of the innovation action in our region.
4. Relevant actors have been involved in the dissemination of the innovation action in our region.
5. Relevant actors have stayed engaged in all relevant innovation action processes in our region.
6. Our innovation action has a positive impact for the sustainable provision of forest ecosystem services in the innovation action region.
7. Our innovation action is targeted to the needs, problems and opportunities of end users in the innovation action region.
8. The innovative mechanisms and other activities developed in our innovation action are succeeding at creating co-ownership among relevant actors.
9. The input of MAG participants have been taken into account in the design and implementation of innovative mechanisms in our innovation action.
The impact: stakeholders’ perceived benefits

1. **Strengthening plurality and value of the processes**
   - Rich exchanges of information
   - People pushed to sit together and involvement of “unusual suspects”
   - Diversity of stakeholders can give the value to different ES

2. **Increasing the stakeholders’ skills and capabilities (learning)**
   - How to develop the innovation action (PES scheme and design)
   - What are FES concepts and different types of PES schemes
   - How to organize stakeholder participation
   - How and to whom to communicate the importance of FES

3. **Increasing the stakeholders’ interactions and resources**
   - Sharing and dissemination of best practices for FES provision
   - Networks connecting innovation actions across countries
Final remarks and lessons learnt

1. It is possible to bridge between science and practice.
2. Involving different actors help to understand differences in values, beliefs and attitudes.
3. If actors feel can shape the innovation, their engagement increases.
4. Conflicts can arise but can be solved during the process.
5. The dependence on local contextual factors. One size do not fit all.
6. Challenges of co-creation: tension between flexibility and boundaries.
7. Different countries have different participatory cultures.
Thank you

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