

Round Table 2: Social engagement



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MINUTES OF THE MEETING – TABLE 2

Moderator: Patrick Graf (KULeuven)

Minutes: Francisco López (IDENER)

Participants: Selena Ziccardi (ADBPO), Chiara Montecorboli (ADBPO), Sara Benelli (UniPr), Eulogio Chacón (FIC), Magdalena von der Thannen (BOKU), María (invited).

The meeting began with an introduction by the moderator, Patrick Graf, who outlined the objectives for the session. The discussion aimed to address three main exercises: identifying challenges, determining needs, and proposing collaborative solutions for improving restoration efforts and stakeholder engagement.

Start of exercise 1: Challenges

The first exercise focused on discussing the main challenges faced in the context of environmental restoration and stakeholder engagement. The participants shared insights based on their experiences.

Comments:

- Sara pointed out the challenges of integrating local knowledge into restoration practices, noting the scepticism from communities regarding external interventions.
- María highlighted the importance of involving educational institutions to foster cultural transformation.

Decision of challenges:

1. **Social-Cultural Transformation**
 - The need for changing societal perceptions and cultural attitudes towards restoration.
 - Overcoming scepticism about ecological initiatives.
2. **Direct Involvement of Local Stakeholders**
 - Ensuring local stakeholders are actively participating in the restoration process.
 - Building trust and creating opportunities for collaboration.
3. **Convincing Powerful Stakeholders (Politicians, Private Companies)**
 - Gaining the support of influential stakeholders whose decisions significantly impact restoration projects.
 - Addressing potential conflicts of interest.

Start of exercise 2: Needs

The second exercise focused on identifying the needs necessary to address the previously defined challenges. Participants discussed strategies that could facilitate meeting these needs.

Comments:

- **Communication Strategies and Education:** Participants emphasised the importance of creating targeted communication strategies and educational programmes to raise awareness and foster early sensibilisation.
- **Business Models and Incentives:** María suggested exploring business models that emphasise benefits beyond profit, which could be more appealing to stakeholders.
- **Stakeholder Networks:** Patrick, Sara, and María proposed establishing a network of local stakeholders, emphasising personal over remote interaction. They advocated for a community platform or recurring events where stakeholders could share knowledge and collaborate.
- **Powerful Figure as a link:** María recommended appointing a respected figure to act as a bridge between local communities, businesses, and policymakers to facilitate trust and information flow.
- Sara proposed creating a programme where community leaders could promote the benefits of restoration efforts locally.
- Participants highlighted the importance of involving NGOs to strengthen communication strategies and engage with different community sectors.

Decisions on Needs:

- 1. Early-Stage Education and Sensibilisation**
 - Establish essential environmental education initiatives from early childhood (kindergarten) to drive necessary behavioural change and cultivate a culture of environmental stewardship and conservation.
- 2. Local Platform for Stakeholder Networking**
 - Establish a local forum or recurring event or 'festive day' where stakeholders can interact, share experiences, and plan collaborative actions.
- 3. Beyond-Profit Business Models**
 - Focus on developing sustainable business models that show how stakeholders can benefit from restoration efforts.



Start of exercise 3: Collaborative discussion and creation

The third exercise aimed to discuss potential solutions to address the identified challenges and needs. The participants collaborated on creating actionable solutions based on the decisions made in the previous exercises.

Challenge 1: Social-Cultural Transformation

- **Need 1:** Sensibilisation at Early Stages
 - **Solution 1:** Partnering with educational institutions to embed ecology and environmental studies across all educational levels, incorporating hands-on activities that nurture a deep connection with nature.

Challenge 2: Direct Involvement of Local Stakeholders

- **Need 2:** Establishment of a Local Platform
 - **Solution 2:** Develop a community-building initiative that includes a designated “Restoration Day” for local stakeholders. This day would serve as an opportunity for all actors to share knowledge, discuss ongoing projects, and set future priorities.

Challenge 3: Involvement of Powerful Stakeholders

- **Need 3:** Tailored Business Models
 - **Solution 3:** Design a new business model that emphasises the economic benefits of restoration (e.g., sustainable tourism, ecosystem services) to raise awareness and gain support from influential stakeholders. This approach should include case studies demonstrating financial gains from successful restoration projects.

Final Remarks and Next Steps

The meeting concluded with the moderator summarising the key points and setting an action plan for the next steps:

1. **Collaborate with local educational institutions** to integrate environmental education across different grade levels.
2. **Initiate the development of a local stakeholder network** by organising the first “Restoration Day” to foster community interaction.
3. **Develop a pilot project** showcasing the economic benefits of restoration for businesses to serve as a reference for new business models.