SEETIPOCEAN

D2.1 – ‘Best practice’ guidelines on community engagement

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the energy transition, the development of ocean energy is becoming an urgent priority, marked by ambitious objectives in Europe. However, these ambitions are hampered by delays in the development of projects, which limits the deployment of the technologies despite a strong potential. Among the obstacles to the development of ocean energy, several studies identified the consenting process as the second main obstacle, especially because of the complexity of regulatory frameworks and the difficulties to engage with local communities (Vasconcelos et al., 2022).

Notably, many European Member States do not yet have specific permitting procedures for ocean energy projects, which contributes to delays in obtaining permits. Furthermore, the existing permitting procedures do not always specify how developers should engage with local communities. In this context, the engagement of local communities in ocean energy projects relies on developers' knowledge and experience. The sharing of this experience is therefore essential.

Long-term planning to meet the EU's decarbonisation targets needs to be supported by a better understanding of engagement processes and public perceptions, together with the development of tools and recommendations to support the coexistence of ocean energy with a wide range of stakeholders.

This study is focused on the ocean energy integration in coastal territories, based on feedback from ocean energy developers in Europe. This feedback is collected through online surveys and interviews and summarise the perception of developers about bottlenecks in both legal and political frameworks at the EU scale and in several European countries. In relation to this regulatory framework perspective, the practices of developers to engage with local communities are identified and evaluated.

The results illustrate a willingness to integrate local communities in the development of ocean energy projects. In almost all the cases studied, the level of local community participation in project development is higher than the legally required participation' level. Most developers set up public meetings, meetings with key stakeholders, or set up specific measures to communicate with local communities and to consider the needs and requirements of the communities.

All this information is encapsulated into a set of guidelines to improve engagement with local communities and the integration of ocean energy projects in coastal territories. For the developers, this report contributes to the sharing of knowledge and practices necessary for the development of the sector. For public authorities, it highlights the requirements to support the local community engagement which ensures the development of coastal economies.

1. Introduction

1.1 Objective

Renewable energy production is expanding and is expected to accelerate by 85% by 2027, compared to the period 2017-2022 (Soukissian et al., 2023). The oceans hold a vast potential for renewable energy, the exploitation of which is at the heart of the global blue economy. As the ocean energy sector matures, it will become a pillar of future energy generation across coastal Europe and beyond, contributing to the energy transition away from fossil fuels.

Beyond the development of the technologies, their integration within coastal territories, already largely exploited by a multitude of human activities, can be a challenge in itself (Oiry, 2015). The development of ocean energy, while limiting the impact on the environment and without constraining other human activities, must be duly considered before the construction of projects and must be discussed with the local communities.

The present report focuses on local community engagement in ocean energy projects. It synthesises feedback from European wave and tidal energy developers, to put forward a set of good practices on local community engagement. This 'best practice' guide is not intended to be exhaustive. Nevertheless, it summarises a set of general information to be considered to improve the integration of ocean energy projects in coastal territories and to ensure best interactions between developers and local communities. It also summarises the legal requirements for local community engagement in the countries currently developing these technologies and compares their effectiveness with the actions already carried out in the projects.

This guide is intended primarily for developers of ocean energy projects in Europe, but more broadly for any local stakeholders potentially involved in ocean energy projects.

The content of the report is divided in five parts:

1. Background on the perception of ocean energy, and the need to put in place good practices for local community engagement.
2. Methodology, explaining the two-step survey methodology and presenting the analytical framework used to analyse the impact of engagement measures.
3. The results contain an analysis of engagement measures through four aspects. First, a presentation of mandatory engagement measures in different countries in Europe and comparison with the practices of the developers. Second, a description of these practices and their characteristics. Third, an analysis of the potential impact of these engagement measures, both for the development of the project and the local communities. Finally, the results are completed by the proposed guidelines for developers to engage with local communities.
4. The final part of the deliverable discusses the results and presents specific engagement measures derived from our study.

1.2 Background on the perception of ocean energy and issues of local community engagement

Europe has a strong ocean energy potential and is historically the most advanced continent in ocean energy development with 27.9 MW of tidal stream energy capacity and 12 MW of wave energy installed in Europe since 2010. This represents 77% and 51% of global capacity respectively (Soukissian et al., 2023). However, this competitive advantage is diminishing, with growth in financing and new projects development in several countries outside of Europe (China, USA, UK, Canada) (OEE, 2023). To maintain Europe's technology and market lead in ocean energy, it is important to support the development of ocean energy technologies and the deployment of demonstration projects in Europe.

The development of these technologies must take place in accordance with the local communities. Although not abundant, and mainly focusing on offshore wind (59% of studies - Wiersma & Devine-Wright, 2014), research on the perception of ocean energy identifies attitudes that are globally positive to the development of marine energies (Oiry, 2015; Sokoloski et al., 2018). The technologies are welcomed as a solution to combat climate change. As many ocean energy projects are currently test devices or pilot projects, they are associated with an important scientific and technological objective and not commercial exploitation (Cronin et al., 2021). Local concerns focus primarily on the impact on the landscape, which for ocean energy is generally very limited, or on the environment. Demonstration and pilot projects also have a small spatial footprint, limiting possible spatial conflicts with other uses. Nevertheless, the measures of local community engagement must be designed to consider the contrasting points of view of stakeholders (table 1) and accompany the implementation of projects in the territories.

Table 1: Typology of positive and negative behaviour of stakeholders in the frame of the development of a renewable energy project. (Bas, 2017)

Positive behaviour	**Negative behaviour**
Supporter of green energy, and wishing to fight against climate change	Defender of personal interests (NIMBY)
Supporter of innovating technologies	Skeptical of the effectiveness of technologies (to produce energy or fight against climate change)
Supporter of potential positive environmental impacts.	Conservatives: against the project because of potential environmental or landscape impacts
Supporter of potential positive social and economic impacts.	Questioning local territorial benefits and economic interests

1.3 Local community engagement in practice

Beyond the general perceptions of the sector, the sharing of scientific information around projects (Joalland & Mahieu, 2023) and the way in which local communities are involved greatly influence the emergence of controversies and their evolution (Wahlund & Palm, 2022). The way public consultations are conducted is sometimes raised as an argument against developing projects (Oiry, 2015).

Several studies have already identified good practices to facilitate the engagement with local communities in offshore wind development. Among the good practices highlighted are:

- Early and meaningful stakeholder engagement (Cronin et al., 2021)
- Stakeholder involvement at all stages of project development (Jones & Eiser, 2009)
- Transparency in information sharing between developer and local communities (Dwyer & Bidwell, 2019)
- The formulation of community benefits negotiated with project developers (Klain et al., 2017)
- A need for training of local communities on local issues and potential impacts of technology development (Bush & Hoagland, 2016)

Although these good practices are known, they are not always followed (Cronin et al., 2021). In addition, the requirements for, and the type of public engagement developers undertake varies greatly from one European country to another (Burkhard & Gee, 2012).

Long-term planning to meet European decarbonisation targets needs to be supported by a better understanding of engagement processes and public perception, together with development of tools and recommendations to facilitate support from, and coexistence of ocean energy with a wide range of stakeholders. Guidelines for local community engagement targeted at ocean energy developers are currently lacking.

This report seeks to address these shortcomings by providing an in-depth analysis of local community engagement in ocean energy development through:

1. A review of the legal requirements for local community engagement,
2. An overview of local community engagement processes,
3. An analysis of the impact of these engagement measures. The focus is on identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of local community engagement,
4. A synthesis of good practices in local community engagement in ocean energy development.

2. Methodology

The methodology is based on a two-step survey to obtain feedback from developers about local community engagement in ocean energy projects. This allows issuing recommendations based on real experiences of ocean energy developers. Through their feedback, developers can express any difficulties and good practices they may have identified.

The survey was disseminated to developers active in different European countries, which allows comparing different situations. The general parameters that influence engagement processes are then identified, especially concerning regulatory frameworks, and discussed.

2.1 Analytical framework of engagement with local communities

Local community engagement in ocean energy projects can be approached from two axes. First, from "**the regulatory and political framework perspective**", that looks at the role of institutions, legal procedures, and consenting processes in the development of ocean energy projects. Second, by analysing the **stakeholders' networks** around the development of ocean energy projects, and how they influence or are influenced by the projects. The first approach can provide recommendations for regulators and territory managers to simplify the procedures. It can also provide tools that facilitate the development of ocean energy projects and the way in which consultations with stakeholders are conducted. The second approach refers more to our methodology. The results are intended for the developers and stakeholders involved in the development of the projects. They seek to improve developers' practices in communicating and interacting with local communities, taking their needs into account and reducing potentially conflicting situations.

Nevertheless, the results provide an analytical view of the forms of engagement and participation. To understand the impact of participation for both project developers and communities, we analyse the degree of power sharing between these two types of stakeholdrs in engagement practices. To do this, we refer to the ladder of citizen participation, developed by Arnstein (1969), completed by Wilcox (1994) which are still reference typologies in the context of natural resource use. We have simplified and adapted this typology to the ocean energy context.

The typology contains four increasing levels of importance of power sharing between developers and local communities. The first level refers to practices in which the participation of local stakeholders consists of providing information about the project. In the last level, local stakeholders themselves organise the ocean energy consultation and planification. They also call upon external institutions and developers to support the project. In between, there are two intermediate levels with specific power sharing arrangements between developers and local communities.

The use of this typology allows us to analyse contrasting situations and to identify types of practices according to the different categories. This classification is not intended to identify the last level, 'delegation', as the "goal of participation". We use this typology as a framework

for analysis, and as we shall see, some levels are difficult to implement because of the specific regulatory and structural contexts and because of the types of projects to be developed.

The different participation levels are defined in Table 2. Other notions and concepts used in this report, such as “participation” or “engagement” are defined in appendix 1.

Table 2: Different levels of participation in the context of engagement in ocean energy projects, based on the degree of power sharing between project developers and local communities (adapted from Arnstein 1969).

Level of participation	Description
Information	The local community receives information about the project but does not participate in decision making.
Consultation	The local community is informed and can express their opinion, without any guarantee that it will be considered by the project leaders or the competent authorities.
Conciliation	Representatives of stakeholders or citizens are consulted and have some decision-making power in the ocean energy project. Negotiations are undertaken to set up compensatory measures to address potential environmental and socio-economic impacts of the project.
Partnership	Representatives of stakeholders or citizens in the local community participate to the decision-making bodies. The location of the project, its spatial extent or certain technical characteristics may evolve to consider the needs and constraints of the local communities. Negotiations are undertaken to set up measures to (1) avoid, (2) reduce and (3) compensate the potential environmental and socio-economic impacts of the project.
Delegation	Some responsibilities are delegated to local communities (organisation of consultations, management of the ocean energy project, communication, etc.). The decision-making power is held by the communities, and the ocean energy project supports community initiatives.

2.2 Survey methodology

We chose to organise a two-step survey to avoid overburdening stakeholders and to easily identify projects that have implemented community engagement actions in Europe. First, we conducted an online survey disseminated to project developers. We then contacted them again for a deeper interview if they had carried out engagement activities with local communities.

Several SEETIP Ocean project partners participated in the dissemination of this survey, mainly to their contacts in the European countries.

2.2.1 The online survey

The online survey followed three objectives:

- To identify existing mechanisms implemented by developers to involve local communities,
- To understand regulatory frameworks for ocean energy deployment and define a typology of regulatory frameworks implemented at the European scale,
- To identify projects where specific engagement actions had been implemented.

We chose the tool "Google forms" to build the online survey. It contained three main sections (see the survey grid in appendix 2):

1. Ocean energy project information. This section aimed to obtain general information about the projects (name of the project, location, type of project, technology, status, commissioning and decommissioning dates).
2. Presentation of the regulatory frameworks (licensing and consenting processes) for ocean energy deployment (the name of the regulatory authorisations, and which administrative authorities they depend on) and within this regulatory, what the obligations are for engaging with local communities.
3. Presentation of the engagement measures for local communities (the type of measures the developers implemented).
4. Personal information (name, e-mail, company) and acknowledgements for participating in the survey.

The online survey was administrated by e-mail to 55 potential participants from 12 countries (France, UK, Sweden, Ireland, Denmark, Portugal, Italy, Finland, Norway, Netherland, Spain, Germany). The sample was composed of project developers or research institutes managing test sites. Both tidal stream and wave energy technologies were represented.

2.2.2 The interviews

Once we obtained the online survey results, we proposed to the respondent to organise an interview (~30 min) to further develop their answers. The objectives of this interview were:

- To list the forms of community engagement.
- To analyse their relevance and effectiveness through a SWOT analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats).
- To obtain information on the needs and problems expressed by the communities and the possible compromised solutions.
- To list guidelines on how to best engage with local communities.

The interview grid was divided into five parts (see the survey grid in appendix 3), the first two aiming at presenting the interviewee and the ocean energy projects. The third part was related to the presentation of the community engagement measures. We asked at what stage

of the project, and what type of engagement measures were implemented, and their purpose. The fourth part was a SWOT analysis that identified the strengths and weaknesses of the engagement measures for the developers and the projects' development, as well as the opportunities and threats related to the impact of the engagement processes for the communities. This SWOT analysis was the main analytical part of the interview. The last part asked developers to list a set of good practices for (1.) improving local community engagement, and (2.) facilitating the integration of projects in the territories.

3. Results of the study

12 participants filled in the online survey, 9 of them were also interviewed, and 2 developers were interviewed only. The interviewees provided information about 18 projects, mainly Device demonstrator type (table 3). 12 projects were about wave technology and 5 projects about tidal. Six highly active countries/regions in ocean energy development in Europe are covered by the study (figure 1): Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland, France, Portugal and Scotland.

The results of the study are divided into three parts:

1. Presentation of engagement measures required from a regulatory perspective. This section is based on the results of the online survey, coupled with a review of online reports and documentation about regulatory frameworks for licensing processes in Europe and public participation in ocean energy context.
2. The second part presents the community engagement processes and developer practices. This part uses directly the results of the interviews.
3. The final section assesses the impacts of community engagement measures, based on a cross-sectional analysis of the SWOT assessed in the interviews.

Table 3: type of ocean energy projects for which we obtained information.

Project type	N	%	Technology	Status
Commercial project	1	3	wave	Planned
Device demonstrator	14	77	• 11 wave • 4 tidal	• 3 wave planned • 1 wave approved • 3 wave construction • 3 wave production • 1 wave decommissioned • 2 tidal stream planned • 2 tidal stream production
Pilot farm	3	17	• 2 wave • 1 tidal	• 1 wave approved • 1 wave planned • 1 tidal stream planned

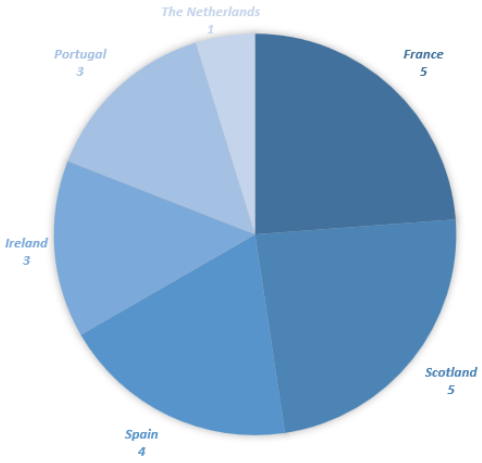

Figure 1: number of ocean energy project studied per country.

3.1 Regulatory framework of engagement

3.1.1Planning and implementing frameworks for ocean energy projects

The regulatory framework of engagement in ocean energy projects is specific to each European country and may vary according to the nature, size or location of the projects. In addition, several countries do not have a dedicated regulatory framework for ocean energy (Simas et al., 2015), and most remain unclear about the inclusion of local communities (Vasconcelos et al., 2022). This results in a wide variety of procedures to engage with local communities when deploying ocean energy projects in Europe.

In this report, we will not detail the procedures in each country. For analysing the level of participation mandatory in each country and simplifying the analysis, we will only distinguish two distinct regulatory framework types in Europe associated with the development of ocean energy projects. We will consider separately the **planning** and **implementing** frameworks.

The **planning framework** concerns both sectoral policies, specific to each human activity at sea, and the maritime spatial planning (MSP). MSP is a public mechanism for analysing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities at sea. MSP aims to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives specified by policy processes at the EU level and at the national level to ensure a more rational use of maritime space (Defingou et al., 2019; Miossec, 2012).

The **implementing framework** concerns all the licensing and consenting processes that will authorise the sea space occupation, generally considering safety and environmental impact conditions. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is an important procedure to which ocean energy projects are generally subjected (in some countries it depends on the characteristics of the project). EIA refers to the set of documents required for projects with a potential significant impact on the environment. The EIA consists of assessing both the initial state of an environment that will be affected, and the effects of the project on this environment. It proposes a set of measures to avoid, reduce or compensate the identified impacts (Bigard et al., 2020).

3.1.2 Legal obligations to engage with local communities

Within the European Union framework, public consultation is generally conducted in both the planning phase and the implementation phase. Member States' requirements for maritime spatial planning[1] include information and consultation of local stakeholders, public authorities and citizens concerned by the project, at an early stage of the MSP development.

For the implementation phase, the EU requires that each Member State disseminates the EIA reports to the local authorities and the public. Moreover, a real opportunity for the communities to express their opinion on the project and the results of the EIA[2] is mandatory. However, the precise conditions and modalities of the consultation are set by the Member States.

Under these regulations, the EU only requires Member States to inform and consult the public and local stakeholders potentially affected by the development of ocean energy projects.

Most European countries have developed a more detailed protocol to engage with local communities, as part of the licensing and consenting processes (Table 4). This protocol seeks to develop greater involvement of local communities by specifying, in part, the conditions for carrying out participation (timing, types of stakeholders consulted, types of issues studied). Some countries, such as Germany, France and Sweden, impose several moments of consultation with local stakeholders during the development of projects. It is also mandatory to discuss the potential environmental impacts or conflicts of interest with other human activities in Germany and Sweden.

Beyond the legally required engagement measures, in practice, a minimum level of engagement corresponding to a *'partnership'* level of participation has been observed in almost all the countries studied (table 5). This shows that informing local communities about projects is not enough and that developers need to put in place more extensive measures to involve local communities.

In addition, two projects can be considered as examples of *"delegation"* (table 5). The description of the procedures for engaging local communities at each level of participation is detailed in the following section.

"Engage rather than consult" (quote from the interviews)

"The regulatory obligations for involving communities are limited and not enough to capture all people's interests" (quote from the interviews)

[1] *Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning.*

[2] *Directive 2014/52/EU of the European parliament and of the council of 16 April 2014, amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.*

Table 4: Reglementary obligations for consultation with local communities in ocean energies projects. Level of participation estimated by the developers during the online survey, completed with Vasconcelos et al. 2022, www.ocean-energy-systems.org and www.tethys.pnnl.gov

Country	Description of the consultation processes	Level of participation
Denmark	• Consultation is done at the stage of preliminary investigations • Local municipality must be consulted, and a public hearing meeting held.	Consultation
France	• A first public concertation occurs before launching the national tender process • A second public consultation is organised along the authorisation process of the selected project. The public consultation stands at a local level as public meetings that are conducted by a representant of the dedicated French institution, the National Commission of Public Debate[3]. • A public enquiry is then organised when the project is defined, to collect individual and collective remarks, comments and propositions from local stakeholders working or living near the project.	Consultation
Germany	• The consultation starts upon the submission of the project application to the competent authorities. • Many stakeholders are involved, as well as the public • A first consultation of stakeholders and public is organised, followed by a public hearing meeting. During this meeting, the developer can present the project. The conflicting interests and uses are also discussed.	Conciliation
Ireland	• Follows the EU directives and recommendations.	Consultation
Netherlands	• Follows the EU directives and recommendations.	Consultation
Portugal	• Consultation is usually required as part of the legal licensing process and is usually made after the EIA.	Consultation
Scotland	• Consultation process is initiated after the initial checking of the application. This is done online or by e-mail. Meetings and consultations of specific stakeholders are not mandatory.	Information
Spain	• Consultation is usually required as part of the legal licensing process and is usually made after the EIA.	Consultation
Sweden	• Consultation is done early in the process and organised by the developers. • A first consultation with public authorities is organised to discuss the whole project and its environmental impacts. • A second consultation with stakeholders and public is dedicated to the location, scale, design and environmental impacts. The type of stakeholders and the way in which they are involved are determined by the size of the project and the potential environmental impacts.	Partnership

[3] National Commission of Public Debate is a French institution that ensures the right information and public participation in the development of projects and public policies with a potential impact on the environment

Table 5: Comparison between the level of participation mandatory within the regulatory framework and the level of participation observed in the different case studies. Please refer to table 2 for the definition of each level of participation.

Country	Level of participation (legal)	Level of participation observed in the case study
France	Consultation	1 project: consultation (early stage of development of the project) 4 projects: partnership
Ireland	Consultation	1 project: Partnership 1 project: Delegation
Netherlands	Consultation	1 project: Consultation 1 project: Partnership
Portugal	Consultation	2 projects: Partnership 1 project: Delegation
Scotland	Information	Partnership (for all studied projects)
Spain	Consultation	Consultation (for all studied projects)

3.2 Presentation of the local community engagement processes

The local community engagement practices carried out by the developers were identified through the interviews. We used the same scale of participation to describe the different local community engagement practices: information sharing, consultation, conciliation, partnership and delegation.

3.2.1 Information sharing

Information sharing is mandatory and present in all projects.

The information about the project is mostly transmitted through newsletters, information pages on websites, social media and newspapers.

Most developers have a communication officer. A communication plan is drawn up before the project. It facilitates constant communication throughout the project, accentuated during major events (construction phase, stages of the licensing process, start-up, etc.) or important changes in the project (new machine, introduction of a compensation measure, delays, etc.).

Several projects mobilise a local mediator, i.e. a stakeholder who acts as a mediator between the developers and the local stakeholders and citizens and makes it easier to establish a trusting relationship with the community. The mediator also ensures a better transmission of information.

3.2.2 Consultation

Consultation is a more in-depth form of information sharing. Local communities are informed and invited to react on the project, but the developer is not obliged to consider the reactions expressed.

This is the level of participation generally required from a regulatory perspective.

3.2.3 Conciliation

It is at this level that local communities begin to have some degree of influence in the project. Communities do not have a duty to decide on the location of the project or its technical characteristics. However, potential negative externalities of the project are considered, and compensatory measures are negotiated with local communities. The engagement measures only focus on stakeholders at stake.

This level of participation is not observed in any of the projects studied but could be an option for future projects with good public acceptance.

3.2.4 Partnership

Most projects follow the *"partnership"* model. The partnership is organised differently depending on the projects and the countries. Three different approaches can be observed:

1. **Public meetings**, where all the population concerned is invited, without restriction. This type of meeting is often coupled with specific meetings with key stakeholders. This approach is more common in countries where the perception of ocean energies is strongly positive, and several ocean energy projects are already in operation.
2. **Specific meetings with key stakeholders**. This situation is the most commonly observed in our sample. Key stakeholders are identified by the developers, based on the potential impacts of the ocean energy project. Fishers are generally the main identified key stakeholder group. The developers organise specific meetings with these key stakeholders to integrate them in the project development and identify trade-offs to potential conflictual situations.
3. **Creation of a "Steering committee"**, associating several stakeholders since the beginning of the project. The projects developing such an approach highlight the usefulness of these management groups. Firstly, because this "steering committee" can easily make the link with the communities. Secondly, because it is an appropriate place to discuss the issues and bottlenecks related to the projects.

The objective of the conciliation is to gauge perception of the public and local stakeholders, improve public acceptance of the project, and identify potential benefits for the local community.

3.2.5 Delegation

In *"delegation"*, the ocean energy project is considered as a "territorial project" that is useful for the development of the territory and its visibility. The community usually initiates the ocean energy project and participates in its design.

In this situation, the local stakeholders, either the public stakeholders or a representative of a key stakeholder, carry out the project and organise the consultations. Here, the project

developer is put in the background and considered as one stakeholder among others. The community is also responsible for the communication around the project.

The projects are associated with an important innovation part and the respect of the democratic process. Equality between members of the community and an equal distribution of power for the decision-making process are usually also objectives of the project itself.

This type of project is highly acceptable to the community and the consenting process is facilitated.

3.3 Impact assessment of engagement measures

We have used the SWOT analysis to present the impacts of the engagement measures and to synthesise the interviews (table 6).

In our use of the SWOT approach, we consider "strengths" and "weaknesses" as internal to the project development, analysed from the point of view of the developers. “Opportunities” and “threats” refer to the point of view of the local communities.

3.3.1 Strengths of the engagement measures

The interviewees identified two main strengths of the engagement measures for the development of the ocean energy projects:

1. **Increase support for the project.** For project development, this is the primary objective of engagement measures. It enables communities to understand the project, its objectives, its interests and to potentially join the project. Indirectly, by increasing the support for the project, it facilitates the consenting process.
2. **Encourage information sharing between developers and communities**. This includes the opportunity for developers to (i) identify the needs of local communities, (ii) better understand the territory in which the project is set up and (iii) consider the evolution of the project in relation to it. For the communities, information sharing brings new knowledge both about the technologies and about their own territory. This encourages collective learning.

More anecdotally, good consultation between the developer and local communities can serve as an example for other projects.

3.3.2 Weaknesses of the engagement measures

The weaknesses of engagement cut across three aspects:

1. **Community engagement requires specific skills** and human qualities to establish a real relationship between developers and communities. The developers pointed out that it is difficult to know when to communicate, to whom and how.
2. **Community engagement can be challenging.** Specific skills and knowledge are needed to co-construct a project with communities and set up engagement measures and effective communication. This task takes time and has a cost that is important to anticipate.

3. **Making all points of view heard.** In projects, it is common for opponents of the project to be more vocal. It is important to ensure that all views are expressed to achieve effective consultation that respects the democratic process.

3.3.3 Opportunities revealed by the engagement measures

Opportunities are composed by a set of arguments that developers should keep in mind when presenting their ocean energy project to communities. It is essential to identify the potential benefits that communities could gain from the ocean energy projects. These items can help to identify them:

1. **Provide economic and employment benefits.** These potential benefits should be identified at the outset of projects and discussed with local communities.
2. Engagement measures provide opportunities for local communities and developers to **produce co-constructed projects and promote democratic processes**.
3. **Increase local knowledge, awareness and education**. The innovative technologies developed in the territories represent a unique opportunity for local communities to develop educational materials related to ocean energy. The projects represent real opportunities to develop local knowledge relative to the technologies, but also to understand the issues at stake in the territory.
4. **Assess the environmental and socio-economic conditions of the territory.** This opportunity is related to the previous one. The EIA and the specific studies required for the development of the ocean energy projects represent a pool of scientific knowledge that can serve the territory and scientific research in general.
5. **Increase the visibility of the territories** as innovative territories, acting against climate change and developing ocean energy. The project and its integration within the territory can also serve as an example for the development of similar projects.

3.3.4 Threats for the engagement measures

Finally, community engagement reveals several threats that can compromise the commitment and the development of ocean energy projects:

1. **Political and policies framework**. First, this overlaps with unclear consenting processes, which can undermine the democratic process and interfere with the relationship between project developers and local communities. Secondly, the political context must be considered as political stakeholders can use ocean energy projects in their political campaigning arguments. These elements were mentioned several times in interviews in some countries, notably in France and Spain.

Poor communication or a **lack of information** about the problems encountered on the project can lead to the creation of fake news. This also includes attention to the media and ways of disseminating information.

Beyond these threats, there are potential oppositions and controversies. These controversies and oppositions can be particularly powerful when they are expressed by structured pressure

groups. Controversies evolve over time and depend on uncertainties and the state of knowledge. If controversies arise, developers must develop means to improve the integration of projects in the territories.

Table 6: the SWOT of engagement practices. Set of strengths and weaknesses of engagement processes for the developers and set of opportunities and threats revealed by the engagement processes for the communities. The threats represent also potential issues that could affect the participation.

Item	Description
Strengths	- Increase support for the project and positive perception of ocean energies - Provide information for local communities - Consider the needs of local communities - Knowledge of the community, identify local stakes and stakeholders - Define the value and impacts of the project - Communicate and promote the project and the actors involved - Help consenting process and reduce potential oppositions - Enhance motivation to develop the project - Serve as an example to improve participation and consultation measures
Weaknesses	- Requires specific skills to communicate - Identify who involved in the participation process - Co-construct a project with communities is not easy - Communicate sensitive information (industrial secret) - Give a voice to opponents - Time and cost consuming
Opportunities	- Co-construct the project with the communities - Improve local knowledge, education, “ecological awareness” - Improve information sharing - Understand the technical and economic issues of projects - Be part of an innovative project - Improve benefits for local communities, employment - Improve visibility of the territory - Improve democracy - Participate to the environmental assessment
Threats	- Controversies and oppositions - Opposition groups - Unclear consenting processes - Tensions led by potential delays and technical problems - The political context can support or disrupt the project - Fake news - Information can be badly relayed or distorted by newspapers, medias or mediators - Economical, sanitary, politic crisis and national events that could generate delays or affect communication around the project

3.4 'Best practices' guidelines for community engagement

From the interviews, we were able to identify a large set of best practices for community engagement (table 7). We have classified them according to four items:

1. Project preparation and research needs,
2. Improved engagement process,
3. Improved communication and information sharing,
4. Appropriate skills and behaviour.

For the **project preparation and research needs**, the key points are to ensure a good knowledge of the technologies and their potential barriers. It is also important to have an important knowledge of the territory where the project is located. All of this is necessary to anticipate the potential difficulties relative to community engagement.

Improving local community engagement processes can be summarised in three points. First, engage communities as early as possible and ensure information sharing throughout the project. Secondly, ensure that there is representation from all perspectives, including all stakeholders potentially affecting or affected by the project. Finally, specific expertise is needed. All projects that set up a "Steering committee" highlighted the value of such an organisation for building trust, facilitating decision-making and ensuring effective information sharing.

The third item is **improved communication and information sharing**. In terms of organisation, lots of developers insist on the importance of having local contact within the communities that could act as a mediator. This is similar to the previously mentioned interest in setting up a "steering committee". It is important to communicate all types of information and as much scientifically validated information as possible. A scientific watch on the environmental and socio-economic impacts and on the evolution of the industry is also necessary. Finally, in debates, rely on tangible examples of similar projects and reliable scientific information, even if they are carried out in very different contexts to support the discussion.

Developing trust with local communities can take time. It requires a set of human qualities and openness to different views and needs, which is why **appropriate skills and behaviour** in engaging with local communities are essential.

Table 7: A set of good practices identified by developers to improve local community engagement. These good practices refer to four important components of local community engagement: 1. The project preparation and research needs, 2. Improvement of the engagement processes, 3. The communication and information sharing, and 4. The appropriate skills and behaviour the developers should have to best engage with local communities.

PROJECT PREPARATION AND RESEARCH NEEDS	
Ocean energy projects and technologies	• Anticipate potential delays and issues • Develop projects in areas with less potential impacts for communities
Territory and local communities	• Assess societal impacts, not only environmental • Carry out these assessments as early as possible • Map stakeholders correctly • Identify potential benefits and impacts for the community • Anticipate potential political interferences
Engagement	• Anticipate the complexity of engaging with local communities • Identify the best media and way of sharing information in the community
IMPROVING THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESSES	
When?	• Engage with communities as early as possible and inform them throughout the project
With whom?	• Address all stakeholders equally • Involve scientists and academia to provide information and credibility. They are neutral in case of conflicts.
How?	• Involve communities in decision-making as much as possible • Use an expert in consultation to engage with communities • Bring forth different points of view by inviting each representative of marine or coastal activity to participate in the debates and meetings organised in the frame of the project • Create a *"Steering committee"* with representatives of each activity, public authorities and project developers to support decision-making and information sharing
BETTER COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SHARING	
Organisation and interactions	• Identify a mediator within the community that can relay the information. If there is a steering committee, the mediator is optional. • Set up a clear communication strategy for the community engagement to ensure that all stakeholders potentially affected by the project or its construction are informed • Provide a small amount of information on a regular basis, rather than a large amount of information on an ad hoc basis • Ensure that the mediator and media do not explicitly encourage criticism. For that, ensure that information is understood, respond to any issues raised by the mediator or the media and maintain a manageable number of close interlocutors to share information with to avoid misunderstandings (e.g. one journalist per media).
Content	• Present the project scope and objectives clearly • Generate social awareness about the potential issues

	• Anticipate fake news by identifying potential scientific uncertainties and publish counterarguments as quickly as possible • Educate the public on the technologies and the potential technological obstacles and issues encountered • Do not present the project as commercial if it's not • Present tangible examples of environmental and socio-economic impacts in other ocean energy projects to anticipate potential change occurring with the deployment of the project.
SKILLS AND BEHAVIOUR	
To do	• Monitor the evolution of perceptions within the local community, e.g. through regular public opinion surveys • Be adaptive, transparent, honest and consistent in the engagement • Don't promise things you are not sure about, don't be afraid to say you don't know • Don't be overly optimistic about potential technical barriers • Improve your engagement skills through learning by doing • Share your experiences with the ocean energy industry to build a stronger local communication engagement skillset across the sector

4. Conclusion

The proposed guidelines and analysis of engagement in practices and policies aim to help the integration of ocean energy projects within local communities. Our results are consistent with the literature on the subject and allow to complete it with concrete examples on ocean energy and good practices directly formulated by and for developers.

This study highlights the need to better integrate key stakeholder groups (Michler-Cieluch & Kodeih, 2008), to set up an effective communication structure between policy authorities, project developers and local communities. Such an approach requires a good knowledge of the territories and local environmental and socio-economic issues to build an effective communication plan. It is particularly important to communicate the benefits of ocean energy projects, and even to discuss with the community how to maximise them. Transparency is thus an essential quality of project developers (Cronin et al., 2021) which allows the establishment of trust and effective information sharing, reducing uncertainties.

Beyond these good practices, our study looks at the participatory processes themselves. We proposed a simple typology of practices, outlining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with their use. The typology of practices we propose focuses on the power relationship between communities and developers. Most situations correspond to a “partnership level”, illustrating a willingness to integrate local communities in the development of ocean energy projects. In almost all the cases studied, the level of local community participation in project development is higher than the participation level legally required. Most developers set up public meetings, meetings with key stakeholders, or set up a specific organisation (creation of a steering committee or identification of a mediator) to communicate with local communities and consider the needs and requirements of the communities. In this respect, several developers warn of the complexity of the consenting process and the lack of clarity on the involvement of local communities from a regulatory point of view. It should be noted that in almost all EU countries, no legislation and regulation have been adapted to better suit ocean energy (Simas et al. 2015).

Each project must adapt the form of participation to the needs of the communities in relation to the development of the ocean energy project. This begins with the identification of the key stakeholders to be consulted and a reflection on the level of participation that can be achieved. In this respect, several developers mentioned the interest of a complete mapping of stakeholders before the development of the ocean energy projects.

A level of participation where a significant decision-making power is given to the communities (partnership or delegation types) is to be favored, especially in potentially conflictual situations, with many local issues. The perception of ocean energy is also important to consider, as well as the potential presence of existing ocean energy project. On the participation scale, delegation is the "last level", indicating a strong decision-making power for local communities. However, this does not indicate that this is the optimal level of participation to seek. The scientific literature often points out the bias to the use of Arnstein's

ladder of participation (Ferraton, 2017). In the ocean energy context, delegation is observed when the project represents a development opportunity for local communities, initiated and driven by them. Achieving a level of delegation for a project initiated by an industrialist would require a lot of work to engage local communities, leading to the establishment of strong local support. Such an approach could be encouraged by a marine planning and consenting process which would include a diagnostic phase of the ocean energy potential. This diagnosis would provide a local community awareness of the potential for ocean energy development, prior to the development of projects.

The types of participation that involve less engagement with local communities (e.g. consultation type) should only be considered in countries where ocean energy is already well established, with a strong positive perception of the technologies, and environmental impact studies identifying no significant environmental impacts.

Furthermore, the main projects represent demonstrator devices and commercial projects are rare. Our sample follows this observation. Nevertheless, the set of recommendations put forward are valid for all types of ocean energy projects and should be considered in situations where this is possible.

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6. APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Glossary of engagement and participation used in this document

Concept	Definition	Source
Engagement	A broad term to consider both issues around "social acceptability", expectations and interactions between local stakeholders, renewable energy stakeholders and the way in which the whole is framing public responses to the development of ocean energies.	Wiersma & Devine-Wright 2014
Social Acceptability	A process of political evaluation of a socio-technical project involving a plurality of stakeholders, involved at various scales and from which institutional arrangements and rules are progressively constructed and recognized as legitimate, because they are consistent with the vision of the territory and the development model favored by the actors concerned (Fournis and Fortin, 2013, p13). Several studies encourage to stop using the concept of social acceptability, and rather use the term of "support", whose use is clearer (Batel et al. 2013).	Oiry 2015
Participation	Participation refers to the involvement of individuals or interest groups when it comes to defining and implementing public policies or territorial projects. Its modalities vary greatly (Blondiaux 2008, Casilio). The objectives of the participation are to reduce and/or renegotiate the distance between the governors and the governed, experts and citizens, by opening debate and decision-making procedures, by encouraging the consideration of non-expert points of view and knowledge, and sometimes by bringing out counter-powers.	Alexandre et al., 2020
Stakeholder	Individuals and formal or informal groups and organizations with an interest or involvement ocean energy or its systems context, either because the person/group is itself influenced by offshore wind farming or because the person/group actively influences offshore wind farming or its systems context'. Group stakeholders represent institutions, organizations or networks; individual stakeholders represent selected local residents.	From Lange et al., 2010
Local communities	A social group or institution united by similar interests, sometimes with common origins and often a common territory. Community implies stronger ties than society or collectivity and means that there has been voluntary membership, or awareness.	Brunet et al., 1992

Appendix 2: information notice about the use of personal information in the survey.

From the regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the european parliament and of the council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).

Person in charge of the treatment

The information collected about you will be processed as part of the SEETIP Ocean project for the "task 2.1 - 'Best Practice' report on local community engagement for project developers", whose scientific and technical lead is provided by the ITE FEM (Energy Transition Institute "France Energies marines"). Representative: Mrs. Jehanne PREVOT.

ocean energy (Ocean Energy Europe - representative: Ms. Lotta Pirttimaa), SEAI (Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland - representative: Mrs. Emer Dennehy and M. Forest Mak), PLOCAN (Consorcio para el diseno, construccion, equipamiento y explotacion de la plataforma oceanica de canarias - representative: Mrs. Silvia Hildebrandt and Mrs. Nadia Achargui), are partners in this task and can participate in its execution.

Data processing will be carried out by Mr. Yoann Baulaz, as a research fellow. Tel: +33 06 24 85 36 64, mail: yoann.baulaz@france-energies-marines.org.

Aims of the project

SEETIP Ocean's mission is to enhance cooperation and collaboration amongst stakeholders both inside and outside of the European ocean energy sector. This mission is broken down into 6 objectives:

1. Maximise European scientific excellence in ocean energy
2. Make sustainability and the Just Transition an integral part of ocean energy's development
3. Build a deeper understanding of how ocean energy can optimally fit into the wider energy, industrial & infrastructure systems and planning systems, and help realize this integration
4. Empower the SET Plan Ocean Energy Implementation Working Group and other public authorities by monitoring, analysing and reporting annual commentary on the sector's progress
5. Reinforce and expand the ocean energy network through strong outreach actions

6. Continue the work of ETIP Ocean and SET Plan Ocean Energy IWG after the project ends Ocean energy can power European society and economic life with electricity that is renewable, dependable and in harmony with local communities and environments.

To reach this potential, sectoral stakeholders must collaborate, share knowledge and avoid duplication of efforts.

Aim of the survey

This survey aims to address the second objective of the SEETIP Ocean project, to make sustainability and just transition principles an integral part of ocean energy development. This will be achieved by focusing on how project developers can best engage with local communities, and by dissemination knowledge and resources for consenting and environmental impacts.

Particularly, this task will produce recommended guidelines for local community engagement in the ocean energy sector. The guide will synthetize the methods for stakeholder's engagement implemented by the ocean energy sector and identify and highlight best practices. Social Science and Humanities experts will conduct interviews and collect data from ocean energy developers and impacted local communities – e.g. local councilors, community group members.

We expect you to participate in a survey during which we will ask you questions about the potential community engagement actions that you developed or are developing within a ocean energy project. The questionnaire will take between 5 and 15 minutes to complete, depending on the level of detail you wish to provide in your responses.

You may be asked to provide additional information to your answers threw an online interview during the end of the year 2022 or 2023.

Type of collected data

Only the data strictly necessary to carry out our research will be collected and processed. The personal data collected correspond to the following types:

- Identification data
- Data on professional life

Legal Basis for processing

The legal basis for the processing is the execution of a public research mission.

Participation

Your participation in the SEETIP project is entirely free and voluntary.

Withdrawal of consent

Any participant in the SEETIP project is free to withdraw or cease participation in this project at any time. This withdrawal will have no consequences.

Privacy

The SEETIP project makes the following commitments:

- Your identity will be concealed with a random number for all types of information collected
- Only the data controller holds the correspondence table that allows the link between your identity and the random number assigned in the various files (questionnaires, analyses and summaries of results)

Recipient of personal data

The recipient of these data are the SEETIP project, task 2.1 participants (FEM, ocean energyE, SEAI, PLOCAN). All data will be kept in Europe and permanently archived in an anonymous way.

Information outreach

The results of this research will be disseminated anonymously in professional and scientific conferences, in reports to authorities, in professional and academic journals and in media aimed at the general public.

Individual rights

You can ask questions about the SEETIP Ocean project at any time by contacting the project manager: l.pirttimaa@oceanenergy.eu

You can ask questions about the work conducted for the “task 2.1 ‘Best Practice’ report on local community engagement for project developers”, at any time by contacting the task leader: yoann.baulaz@france-energies-marines.org

You can access and obtain a copy of your data, object to the processing of your data, have them corrected or deleted. You also have the right to limit the processing of your data. You can exercise these rights by contacting Yoann Baulaz - yoann.baulaz@france-energies-marines.org) or Sybill Henry - Sybill.henry@france-energies-marines.org

After having contacted us, if you feel that your data protection rights are not respected, you can file a complaint online with the CNIL or by mail. CNIL, 3 Place de Fontenoy, TSA 80715 - 75334 Paris Cedex 07 (https://www.cnil.fr/).

Apendix 3: survey grid used in the study

Recommend guidelines for local community engagement in the ocean energy sector

Here, some recommendations relative to the introduction of the interview
ITW timeline:

- *2 min: your presentation + presentation of SEETIP OCEAN*
- *3 min: presentation of the interviewee*
- *5 min: presentation of the ocean energy project*
- *5 min: presentation of the community engagement actions*
- *10 min: SWOT analysis*
- *5 min : Final questions and end of the ITW.*

TOTAL ITW for 1 project : between 30 and 35 min.

STUDY CONTEXT

Thank you for accepting this interview…
Present yourself …
Project presentation: this interview is part of the SEETIP Ocean project, which aims to help the development of ocean energies (tidal and wave) by facilitating the sharing of knowledge between partners in the sector. The project is organized around numerous round tables bringing together ocean energy stakeholders in Europe, the organization of webinars and recommendation reports.

This survey is part of a specific task dedicated to improving the integration of projects in the territories and local communities. Our goal is to produce a good practice guide on local community engagement. This guide will be based on the results of the first online survey you answered, and this interview in which I will try to get your feedback on the integration of marine energy projects in the territories.

INTERVIEW OBJECTIVES

I am going to ask you a certain number of questions, to initiate discussions around the community engagement measures that you have carried out around your projects. We will consider their advantages and disadvantages, and then identify the points of controversy and problems expressed by the communities and the possible compromised solutions debated during the community engagement actions to face them.
Eventually add this: In the online survey, you presented 2 different projects. So, the first part of this ITW will be focused on the first project you mentioned (project 1 name), and the second part about the other project you mentioned (project 2 name).
Until the end of the ITW, please consider only the ocean energy projects where public meeting, workshop, interview, or consultation with specific stakeholders has been implemented.

I. Profile of the interviewee

Aim: Listing of the stakeholders who have used specific local community engagement actions in marine energy projects

1.1 Presentation of the interviewee

	ITEM	Advice	Answers
1	Name/last name	Can be filled in before the ITW	
2	Contact (mail address)		
3	Position		
4	Structure		
5	Country		
6	Can you briefly present your working activity?		

Comments:

II. Presentation of marine energy projects *(PROJECT 1)*

Aims: Describe the project where community engagement actions has been implemented

2.1 Fill up the following matrix with the project information

	ITEM	Advice	Answers
1	Name of the project	Can be filled in before the ITW	
2	Developer name		
3	Technology		
4	Location (country)		
5	Status		
6	Duration		
7	Type		
8	Total production capacity (MW)	This information is not always available	
9	Number of devices		
10	Distance to shore		
11	Can you quickly present the context in which this project emerged?	History of the project, origins and local environmental and socio-economical context	

Comments:

3. Presentation of the local communities engagement process

Aims: Describe the chosen local community engagement processes and identify the main concerns expressed by the communities and the possible identify solutions to the problems

	ITEM	Advice	Answers
1	What type of measures did you implement? And at what stage of the project did you engage local communities?	Public meeting, workshop, interviews, information …	
3	For you, what was the objective of the communities engagement process?	Information, consider some issues, co-construct decisions, delegate responsibilities, financial support …	
3	What type(s) of stakeholders did you consult?		

Comments:

4/ Evaluation of the impact of the engagement process *(you can share your screen for this question)*

Aim: Threw a SWOT (Strenght, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) approach, evaluate the relevance of the engage procedures, their role in the acceptability of the project (INTERNAL), and in the integration of the project in the local communities (EXTERNAL)

4.1 Please fill up the SWOT (Strenght, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) matrix, to evaluate the impacts of the engagement process

	HELPFUL	**WEAKNESS**
INTERNAL *for the project developer*	***Strengths of the processes*** *(How the engagement process was beneficial to the implementation of the ocean energy project?)*	***Weaknesses of the processes*** *(how the engagement process was source of difficulties to the implementation of the ocean energy project?)*
EXTERNAL *for the local communities*	***Opportunities*** *(how the engagement process was useful for the stakeholders? Some compromise solutions have been identified?)*	***Threats*** *(Has your project been subject to any form of contestation or opposition from local communities and stakeholders? By which stakeholders?)*

Comments:

4.2 What advice(s) would you give to a project leader wishing to set up the same community engagement procedure? *(Focus: community engagement actions)*

4.3 What advice(s) would you give to ensure a better acceptability of an ocean energy project? *(Focus: the whole project)*

4.4 Do you have another project where local community engagement actions have been made? *(if yes, continue the interview, with the same questions for the second project)*

THANK YOU !

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

At the end of this study, the results could be communicated to you if you would like to.