



# Report on Regional Workshops

## Deliverable 7.4

Dissemination level

**Public**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Objective of this deliverable

Deliverable 7.4 (*'Report on Regional workshops'*) is a report of the activities carried out by the DEVOTES project to interact with stakeholders and end-users of the project results and outputs through meetings, conference sessions, workshops, seminars and webinars. As such, the title "*Report on Regional Workshops*", which comes from the Description of Work (DoW), is not comprehensive.

The project participants aimed to generate improved interfacing mechanisms in the management process, among science, policy, through involvement, motivation and integration of key stakeholders (see 1.2) during the project. DEVOTES used a bottom-up approach, through which the stakeholders interacted with the researchers at all stages of the project to define their related research needs and important issues for each Regional Sea context. The aim was to integrate selected key stakeholders in the project and to work jointly with them to address relevant issues, taking into account their needs and feedback during the whole project.

## 1.2. Audience and major stakeholders

The audience for the deliverable is managers and scientists seeking information about participatory processes.

The major stakeholders and end-users of the DEVOTES project results were identified as the competent authorities of the EU Member States and associated countries, Regional Seas Commissions and UNEP, the European Environment Agency (EEA), DG Environment (DG ENV) and the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES). Another group of potential end-users are Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) that may use some of the products such as the assessment tool.

In order to get an immediate feedback from those stakeholders, some of them (i.e. DG ENV, HELCOM, OSPAR and Bucharest Convention) were included in the DEVOTES Advisory Board from the kick-off meeting of the project.

## 1.3. Plans and execution

The stakeholder and end user regional workshops were planned to be held at the primary study sites, with the aim of building a network between researchers and stakeholders. This was adjusted to better fit in with the expressed needs of the stakeholders. During the subsequent meetings, sessions and workshops, the researchers presented their results to the stakeholders and asked the latter to provide

their comments, suggestions and constructive criticism. To facilitate such a participative consultation, dissemination and informative multi-language pamphlets and brochures were made available, freely distributed and also made available on the website (link with task 7.1.1: 'Project Website').

Regional workshops were originally planned in Months 1, 17 and 35 (associated with annual and final meetings, link with WP8). However, these timings were also modified to fit in with the stakeholders and the DEVOTES output production. Both separate and joint workshops were offered for each regional sea, as well as webinars, which are still ongoing during the last 6 months of the project.

DEVOTES thus received inputs and feedback from several actors and bodies at all levels of governance to develop innovative and integrated management strategies and tools for the assessment of biodiversity (links with research work-packages WP1-6). Consultation with end-users at all of the sites allowed the exchange of experience, technical know-how and research ideas and to ensure that the strategies and DEVOTES tools are known and available to all parties to be incorporated into future management, and shared at the largest geographical scale possible. The initial plan was a 2-day (+1½ day project meeting, link with WP8) workshop with approximately 50 invited key stakeholder representatives (e.g., scientific organizations, SMEs, NGOs, EEA, EC) in Months 11, Month 17, Month 23, Month 35, however these timings were modified to fit in with the stakeholders and the DEVOTES output production. The main theme was different in the three years: "*Issues and integration*" (1st year); preliminary outcomes and tools, including software from task 6.1.6 ('*Software tool for biodiversity assessment*'); 2nd year); and task 6.2.6 ('*Testing and validation of biodiversity assessment tool*'); 3rd year).

## 1.4. Acknowledgements

Throughout the life of the DEVOTES project, close contact was maintained with the Regional Seas Commissions (RSC) and ICES, that participated actively in the Advisory Board of the project and gave guidance. The DEVOTES project acknowledges this invaluable advice, the goodwill and helpful suggestions that doubtless contributed to improve the project outputs. Thanks is also due to interactions with DG Environment, the European Environment Agency, UNEP, and the competent authorities of Member states and associated countries. Thanks is also due to other projects that interacted with DEVOTES through joint dissemination activities. These included EU projects such as COCONET, COLOMBUS, EMODNET, IRIS-SES, KNOWSEAS, MARMONI, MARS, MISIS, PERSEUS, STAGES, VECTORS, WATERS; EEA projects such as SOPHIA and many national projects.

## 2. Networking with the stakeholders

### 2.1. Networking with the stakeholders during the co-design of the project

The DEVOTES project drafting committee recognized as soon as the call was announced that it was important to involve the major stakeholders in the project from the onset. Contacts were immediately established with the RSC, DG Environment and ICES to invite representatives to participate in the project as members of the Advisory Board. In this way, DEVOTES was a transdisciplinary, participative process from its inception. In particular, the Advisory Board members were instrumental in defining the policy needs and framing the research questions.

During the drafting of the project, the DEVOTES project partners carried out a scoping exercise and several partners were also selected for their existing links with OSPAR, HELCOM, the Barcelona and Bucharest conventions. Thus, many of the DEVOTES partners are experts serving on various RSC committees. Furthermore, several DEVOTES project partners act as advisors to Member States and associated countries on the national implementation of the MSFD and/or RSC. Several DEVOTES project partners also act as advisors to DG Environment. This formed the basis of the network with the stakeholders and facilitated a constant exchange of information.

### 2.2. Networking with the stakeholders during the project life-time

Once the project was approved, but even before its start date and kick off meeting, a stakeholder and governance mapping exercise was carried out to highlight the known communication channels, but also scope any channels that had not been previously identified. DEVOTES participants that serve on the various expert committees for the main stakeholder were reminded of: (i) the important role that they would play throughout the project lifetime and beyond to bridge the science-policy gap, (ii) to listen to stakeholder needs, and (iii) to disseminate the results and outputs of the project. However, the emphasis and purpose of the networking with the stakeholders evolved during the project lifetime as described below.

#### 2.2.1. The first 18 months of the DEVOTES project (Nov 2012-April 2014)

In the first 18 months of the project, DEVOTES participants both attended and organized meetings, conference sessions, workshops, and seminars. The objectives of these were to: (i) maintain, strengthen

and broaden the network, (ii) engage with new stakeholders, (iii) inform stakeholders about project activities and how to participate. These events have been listed in the management reports and so are not in this deliverable (D7.4). The focus in this deliverable is on the main events and the outcomes from these interactions. The purpose of the multiple interactions with stakeholders was to update on DEVOTES progress and also ask for feedback, to ensure that stakeholder needs would be properly addressed by the project during product development.

The most important of these events were the STAGES-DEVOTES joint stakeholder workshop (12<sup>th</sup> February 2014 in Brussels) and the “*Healthy Oceans – Productive Ecosystems*” (HOPE) Conference, on 3-4 March 2014 in Brussels. This conference, organized by the European Commission, brought together those working with the European marine environment, providing an opportunity to discuss progress made since the adoption of the MSFD, the problems that still remain and the solutions for improved coherence and better marine governance. Several of the DEVOTES participants were invited speakers at the conference and the indicator catalogue (DEVOBAT) was presented.

During this 18 months period, DEVOTES also participated 3 regional seas workshops: HELCOM-CORESET, (January 2014), OSPAR-COBAM (March 2014) and UNEP-MED (April 2014). AZTI and NOAA (observer partner) organized a session on marine genomic applications at the Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF) meeting, in San Diego (USA), on November 2013 (<http://www.sgmeet.com/cerf2013/>). AZTI and NILU, along with other colleagues held a special (DEVOTES) session at the EGU conference in Vienna, on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (<http://meetingorganizer.copernicus.org/EGU2014/session/14076>).

Stakeholder needs were identified as a result of interactions at these various events. These needs are summarised in Box 1.

## BOX 1. Summary of initial needs of stakeholders

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**Need 1** – *A catalogue of tried and tested indicators;*

**Need 2** – *A methodology including criteria for locally appropriate indicator selection;*

**Need 3** – *A methodology for attributing areas and defining habitats;*

**Need 4** – *A methodology for weighting important habitats, irrespective of small areas;*

**Need 5** – *A methodology that is Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) compliant, is harmonized with Water Framework Directive and with Regional Seas Conventions;*

**Need 6** – *A tool that is transparent and calculates uncertainty;*

**Need 7** – *A tool that allows for aggregation;*

**Need 8** – *Guidance and discussion about various aspects of MSFD implementation, such as Good Environmental Status, aggregation, special cases and many others.*

The results of this consultation were analysed and discussed by the DEVOTES participants and this knowledge was used to guide the development of some of the products of the project. Needs 1-7 were considered in the catalogue of indicators (DEVOBAT) and DEVOTOOL, the initial version of the Nested Environmental status Assessment Tool (NEAT). Need 8 topics were addressed in several of the DEVOTES panels and scientific publications of the project. As this report is not a report on scientific publications, the titles only of a few of these are given here to show how they link to the needs of the stakeholders, but the full citation is in the reference list, see section 4.

- Indicators for sea-floor integrity under the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
- Development of innovative tools for understanding marine biodiversity and assessing good environmental status, within the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
- Good Environmental Status of marine ecosystems: What is it and how do we know when we have attained it?
- Tales from a thousand and one ways to integrate marine ecosystem components when assessing the environmental status.

### 2.2.2. Months 18-36 (May 2014- Oct 2015) of the DEVOTES project

The DEVOTES dissemination team prepared a series of panels and a power point presentation on “*The importance of advanced marine monitoring*” (Milestone 30) that were also used at multiple events during the second 18 months of the project. The DEVOTES project participants attended and organized

many meetings, conference sessions, workshops, and seminars. These have been listed in the management reports and so are not transcribed in D7.4. The purpose of these interactions with stakeholders was to update on DEVOTES progress and also ask for feedback, to ensure that stakeholder needs would be properly addressed by the project during product development. Thus, the objectives of these events were to: (i) maintain, strengthen and broaden the network, (ii) engage with new stakeholders, (iii) inform stakeholders about project products, and (iv) obtain feedback from the stakeholders to refine the products.

The most important of the events were the joint symposium (DEVOTES, MARS and WATERS) in Malmö 6-7 May 2015, the 17<sup>th</sup> Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (Istanbul 20-22 October 2015) and the First Meeting of the Regional Seas Indicators Working Group (Istanbul 23 October 2015). The DEVOTES dissemination team prepared panels for each Regional Sea to capture the attention of the representatives. The advanced prototype of the environmental assessment tool was presented at the 17<sup>th</sup> Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans. This generated considerable interest from the Regional Seas representatives, for the 4 European seas but also for others (*e.g.* NOWPAC). There were also meetings with individual RSC. These included frequent meetings with representatives of Black Sea (two in October 2015), OSPAR (four in 2014 and two in 2015) and HELCOM conventions, presentations at ICES Working Groups, like benthic ecology and biodiversity, in 2014 and 2015.

There were requests from the stakeholders for workshops dedicated to how the tools developed by DEVOTES could be used. There were also requests for online training. These multiple requests from the stakeholders were the basis for the plans for the next periods (see 2.2.3 and 2.2.4).

The DEVOTES catalogue of indicators was presented at the First Meeting of the Regional Seas Indicators Working Group. This generated considerable interest from the Regional Seas representatives and from UNEP, and culminated in the invitation for a DEVOTES representative to participate in the UNEP working Group.

AZTI and NILU hold a special session at the IMBER OSC in June 2014, <http://www.imber.info/index.php/Meetings/IMBER-OSC-2014/Sessions-Workshops/Marine-environmental-status-and-biodiversity-from-structure-to-functionality-delivering-ecosystem-services>.

DEVOTES progress and results during the conference “*Ecology at the Interface*” Conference, 21<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015 in Rome (Italy). The DEVOTES stand included the panels on the Importance of Marine Monitoring, videos and demonstration of ARMS and ASUs.

DEVOTES organized four special sessions at ASLO 22-27 February 2015, at EAERE, 24-27 June 2015 and at ECSA55, 6-9 Sept 2015.

Interactions with SMEs were mainly at EuroOCEAN 2014, 7 to 9 October 2014 in Rome (Italy) and World Research & Innovation Congress Oceans, 15-16 October 2014 (Lisbon).

The results of interactions to identify user needs and feedback from the various events are summarised in Box 2.

## BOX 2. Summary of needs of stakeholders

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**Need 9** – *A tool tested in the various regional seas;*

**Need 10** – *A tool that is flexible;*

**Need 11** – *A tool that can be locally adapted;*

**Need 12** – *A tool that is user friendly;*

**Need 13** – *A tool that is freely available in both Windows and Apple version;*

**Need 14** – *Training sessions on the use of the tool and clear, on-line instructions;*

**Need 15** – *A tool and guidance that is available after the life of the project;*

**Need 16** – *Guidance and discussion about challenges implementation, e.g. how to monitor large areas, exceptions, climate change context.*

The results of this consultation were analysed and discussed by the DEVOTES participants and this knowledge was used to guide the development of some of the products of the project, in particular the final version of the Nested Environmental Assessment Tool (NEAT) that incorporated Needs 9-15. Needs 16 were the topics for several of the scientific publications of the project. As this report is not a report on scientific publications, the titles only of a few of these are given to show how they link to the needs of the stakeholders, but the full citation is in the reference list, see section 4.

- Implementing the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive: Scientific challenges and opportunities.
- Force majeure: Will climate change affect our ability to attain Good Environmental Status for marine biodiversity?

### **2.2.3. Months 37-43 (Nov 2015-May 2016) of the DEVOTES project**

During the later part of the project, the NEAT tool had been tested in all Regional seas and at the study sites and adjustments made for the presentation of the final version to the stakeholders. The DEVOTES project participants then organised stakeholder interactions with competent authorities of several member states, the European Environment Agency and ICES. Stakeholder sessions were organized with the competent authorities of Portugal, Spain, HELCOM and ICES. Further sessions were planned for UK, Germany and Norway (see 2.2.4).

The Mediterranean RSC, the Black Sea RSC and NOWPAC all requested training sessions as did several other stakeholders. The DEVOTES dissemination team and the members of the project that had developed the NEAT tool prepared and held a series of Webinars in May 2016, with around 70 attendees in total. However, in order to meet the increased demand, it was decided to put a Webinar on-line, as well as more training material (see 2.2.4).

### **2.2.4. The last months (June-October 2016) of the DEVOTES project and beyond**

The last months of the project lead up to the final conference with a dedicated stakeholder session on day 1. Already representatives of major stakeholders, e.g. DG Environment, DG MARE, DG Research, RSCs, MEP's, and the legal firm Milieu, have confirmed their participation.

Demonstrations of the NEAT tool have been requested by more member states and associated countries. A demonstration for Germany has already been held and a demonstration for Norway is planned. On 29<sup>th</sup> June a workshop organized by H2020 COLUMBUS project in Vigo (Spain) was dedicated to explore the potential of NEAT to be used in Environmental Impact Assessment, with the presence of stakeholders from the Ministry, local government, consultancies, and universities.

A seminar in Montreal (Canada), organized by the Canadian Healthy Oceans Network (CHONe), to explore the possibilities of applying the NEAT method in Canada is planned in the last week of September 2016 it.

Meanwhile, work is continuing to guarantee excellent support for the use of the DEVOTES tools. This includes a guidebook-manual of NEAT and a series of 4 YouTube training sessions on the use of NEAT. This is in addition to the already existing presentation about NEAT and Webinar. The “virtual” temporal extension of the DEVOTES outcomes will be guaranteed through the development and release of permanent products: the website will be maintained after the end of the project, the software and user

interfaces will remain available for free download from different platforms (e.g., websites and application stores). The Core Dissemination Team already explored the different possibilities for the maintenance of the DEVOTES website: (i) the domain www.msfd.eu was purchased for the KnowSeas project legacy until 2017. DEVOTES website could be transferred to it and the members of the Dissemination Team would pay for the service from 2017 to 2022; and (ii) AZTI and Ecoreach can host the DEVOTES website as subdomain after the end of the project.

### 3. Conclusions

The DEVOTES project has lived up to its ambition to be transdisciplinary in its approach by involving stakeholders from the start to the finish.

Stakeholder needs and feedback have guided DEVOTES product development.

The outputs of the project have been tested and disseminated to the potential end-users in all regional seas.

Competent authorities from Member States and associated countries are aware of the tools and have been offered demonstrations and training which has already been taken up by several.

Support material for training is already freely available through the website, as are the tools.

The final conference has a special session on day 1 that is dedicated to stakeholders and this is already attracting registrations.

The impact of the DEVOTES project will be realized if the stakeholders such as Member States and RSCs use the project outputs, especially NEAT.

### 4. References

Title	Citation
Indicators for sea-floor integrity under the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive	Rice, J., Arvanitidis, C., Borja, A., Frid, C., Hiddink, J. G., Krause, J., & Enserink, L. (2012). <i>Ecological Indicators</i> , 12(1), 174-184.
Development of innovative tools for understanding marine biodiversity and assessing good	Borja, Angel, and María C. Uyarra. <i>EGU General Assembly Conference Abstracts</i> . Vol. 16. 2014.

<p>environmental status, within the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive</p>	
<p>Good Environmental Status of marine ecosystems: What is it and how do we know when we have attained it?</p>	<p>Borja, A., M. Elliott, J. H. Andersen, A. C. Cardoso, J. Carstensen, J. G. Ferreira, A.-S. Heiskanen, J. C. Marques, J. M. Neto, H. Teixeira, L. Uusitalo, M. C. Uyarra, N. Zampoukas, 2013. <i>Marine Pollution Bulletin</i>, 76: 16-27.</p>
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<p>Implementing the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive: Scientific challenges and opportunities.</p>	<p>Newton, A., A. Borja, C. Solidoro, M. Grégoire, 2015. <i>Continental Shelf Research</i>, 108: 141-143.</p>
<p>Force majeure: Will climate change affect our ability to attain Good Environmental Status for marine biodiversity?</p>	<p>Elliott, M., Á. Borja, A. McQuatters-Gollop, K. Mazik, S. Birchenough, J. H. Andersen, S. Painting, M. Peck, 2015. <i>Marine Pollution Bulletin</i>, 95: 7-27.</p>