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TOURAL

Multidimensional model of tourism verticals driving the sustainable balanced growth among rural & remote grids and urban clusters of rural regions, fostering macro-regional cooperation

101132489, HORIZON-CL2-2023-HERITAGE-01

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Executive Summary

EU rural and remote areas face diverse socio-economic and territorial challenges, prompting the European Commission to introduce the *Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas* and its Rural Action Plan. A key challenge is the diversification of economic activities beyond traditional sectors, with tourism recognised as a catalyst for sustainable economic growth. In this context, the TOURAL initiative promotes cultural and creative tourism as drivers of sustainable development, aligned with the EU Tourism Transition Pathway, while contributing to the long-term preservation and valorisation of cultural heritage through smart, multi-destination tourism and integrated local value chains.

Deliverable **D2.4 Stakeholders' Engagement Plan (vFinal)** presents a structured, evidence-based framework for identifying, mapping, engaging, and sustaining collaboration with stakeholders relevant to the TOURAL project.

The deliverable supports the project's overarching objective of fostering sustainable, balanced, and inclusive tourism development in rural and remote areas of the Adriatic–Ionian macro-region (Italy, Croatia, Greece) and the Black Sea basin (Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine), with a specific focus on UCCST tourism sectors (Underwater Cultural & Nature Heritage Tourism , Cultural & Creative Tourism, Cultural Science Tourism, and Silver Tourism).

The document builds on earlier project tasks (T2.1-T2.3) and integrates desk research, surveys, and Living Labs activities to identify more than 240 stakeholders across six diverse pilot sites (Greece, Italy, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine). Stakeholders are analysed using the Mendelow power–interest matrix, enabling a clear understanding of their influence, interests, and optimal engagement strategies at both project and pilot-site levels.

A key contribution of this deliverable is the development of a replicable stakeholder engagement model, combining:

- systematic stakeholder mapping,
- tailored engagement methods,
- clearly defined roles and responsibilities through a RACI framework, and
- continuous improvement via the PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycle.

The engagement plan promotes co-creation, transparency, and inclusiveness, ensuring that public authorities, industry actors, cultural and educational institutions, NGOs, local communities, and tourists are meaningfully involved.

Particular attention has been given to addressing regional diversity, capacity gaps, conflicting interests, and contextual challenges, including environmental sensitivity and geopolitical constraints.

Planned outcomes include increased stakeholder participation, strengthened skills and capacities, enhanced macro-regional cooperation, and the development of sustainable, place-based tourism solutions. By aligning local engagement with regional and European policy objectives, the plan strengthens governance capacity and supports the long-term sustainability and transferability of TOURAL results.

Overall, Deliverable D2.4 provides a robust operational framework that underpins effective stakeholder collaboration and maximizes the project's impact, serving as both a practical guide for TOURAL partners and a reference model for similar initiatives in rural and heritage-based tourism development.

List of Symbols and Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
CCT	Cultural & Creative Tourism
CST	Cultural Science Tourism
EU	European Union
ICOMOS	The International Council on Monuments and Sites
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
LAG	Local Action Group
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDCA	Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle
RACI	Responsible – Accountable – Consulted – Informed model
SLT	Silver Tourism
UCCST	UCNHT-CCT-CST-SLT
UCH	Underwater Cultural Heritage
UCNHT	Cultural & Nature Heritage Tourism
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	The World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism)
UW	Underwater
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

1 Introduction

EU rural and remote areas exhibit substantial heterogeneity in terms of socio-economic and territorial characteristics, while simultaneously facing a distinct set of structural challenges. In response, the European Commission introduced the *Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas*, which identifies key challenges and opportunities and outlines a corresponding Rural Action Plan. Among the most pressing challenges is the diversification of economic activities beyond traditional agriculture, farming, and forestry sectors, which is widely recognised as a prerequisite for stimulating sustainable economic growth. In this context, tourism has significant potential to serve as a catalyst for the economic development of rural and remote regions. Building on these considerations, the TOURAL initiative positions cultural and creative tourism as key drivers of sustainable development, explicitly recognising their role in safeguarding, revitalising, and enhancing cultural heritage assets. At the same time, it aligns closely with the requirements of the European Commission's Tourism Transition Pathway, situating its approach within a framework of smart, multi-destination and multi-dimensional tourism offerings, supported by macro-regional tourism cooperation and integrated local value chains, thereby ensuring the long-term conservation and meaningful valorisation of cultural heritage.

Project TOURAL focuses on a multidimensional approach to UCNHT-CCT-CST-SLT tourism (in short UCCST) in rural and remote areas of the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region (Italy, Croatia, Greece) and the Black Sea basin (Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine). UCCST tourism is an abbreviation which consists of multiple tourism niche sectors:

- Underwater Cultural & Nature Heritage Tourism (UCNHT)
- Cultural & Creative Tourism (CCT),
- Cultural Science Tourism (CST), and
- Silver Tourism (SLT).

Through a multi-level approach, the goal of deliverable D2.4 is to provide Stakeholders' Engagement Plan and replicable model for stakeholder engagement with the aim of achieving project goals.

Identification & mapping of competent stakeholders is performed through multiple channels - surveys, desk research, Living Labs, with the aim of identifying level of readiness, cooperation level, interests and potential collaborations.

In relation to the Living Labs, they are interactive workshops that have been used as a co-working method within the TOURAL project to raise awareness and engage various stakeholders in the co-design and co-creation of scenarios for the UCCST tourism development of the six TOURAL pilot sites. The Living Labs were prepared and implemented under WP2 ("CCT Analysis & Policy Pathways") and, particularly, Task 2.3 ("Co – Work Method & Processes"). All relevant information and outcomes from the Living Labs can be found in Deliverable 2.5 "Preliminary Analysis of TOURAL Co-"Work" Processes"[1] and Deliverable 2.7 "TOURAL Co-"Work" Processes & Funding Support for Tourism Value-Chains".

[1] https://toural-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/TOURAL_D2.5_Preliminary-Analysis-of-TOURAL-Co-_Work_-processes_v2.pdf

1.1 Deliverable Scope

The scope of Deliverable **D2.4 Stakeholders' Engagement Plan (vFinal)** is to define a comprehensive, structured, and replicable framework for the identification, mapping, engagement, and sustained involvement of stakeholders relevant to the TOURAL project.

The deliverable supports the achievement of project objectives by ensuring that key actors across policy, industry, academia, civil society, and local communities are actively involved in the design, implementation, and sustainability of project actions, particularly within the UCCST tourism sectors.

Specifically, the deliverable:

- establishes a methodological approach for stakeholder identification and analysis at both project level and pilot-site level;
- provides a systematic stakeholder mapping using the Mendelow power–interest matrix to assess influence, interests, and engagement needs;
- defines a Stakeholders' Engagement Plan with tailored engagement methods, roles, and responsibilities (via the RACI model);
- proposes monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation mechanisms based on the PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycle;
- addresses potential challenges and mitigation strategies related to stakeholders' participation, capacity, and conflicting interests.

The deliverable applies across all six TOURAL pilot regions and is designed to be scalable and transferable, enabling its use beyond the project lifetime.

By aligning local engagement processes with regional, macro-regional, and EU-level strategies, D2.4 contributes to effective governance, enhanced cooperation, and the long-term sustainability of TOURAL results.

1.2 Deliverable Structure

Deliverable D2.4 **Stakeholders' Engagement Plan (vFinal)** is structured to guide the reader logically from the conceptual background to practical implementation and conclusions.

The document is organised into the following chapters:

Chapter 1. Introduction: Presents the context of the TOURAL project, introduces the concept of UCCST tourism, and outlines the purpose and relevance of stakeholders' engagement within the project framework.

Chapter 2. Methodology: Describes the methodological approach used for stakeholders' identification, mapping, and engagement planning. This section explains data collection tools (desk research, surveys, Living Labs) and analytical methods, including the Mendelow power–interest matrix and the PDCA cycle.

Chapter 3. Identification and Stakeholder Mapping: Provides a detailed analysis of stakeholders at both the project and pilot-site levels. It includes stakeholder categorisation, mapping results, and region-specific analyses for all six pilot areas.

Chapter 4. Stakeholders' Engagement Plan: Defines engagement objectives, strategies, and methods tailored to different stakeholder groups. This section introduces engagement tools, the RACI model for roles and responsibilities, monitoring indicators, and practical guidance for implementation.

Chapter 5. Cooperation Potential: Examines intra-regional and extra-regional cooperation opportunities, highlighting how stakeholders' collaboration supports knowledge exchange, innovation, and the scalability of project results.

Chapter 6. Conclusions: Summarises key findings and outlines how the engagement plan contributes to project sustainability, governance capacity, and long-term impact.

Chapter 7. References: Lists key policy documents, methodologies, institutional sources, and literature underpinning the deliverable.

Chapter 8. Annexe: Include supporting material such as stakeholder questionnaire and assessment tool used during data collection.

This structure ensures clarity, coherence, and usability, allowing the deliverable to function both as a project deliverable and as a practical guide for stakeholder engagement within and beyond the TOURAL project.

2 Methodology

The document consists of few elements. The first step is a stakeholder analysis with mapping, followed by the development of stakeholders' engagement plan.

2.1 Creation of a stakeholder map

The stakeholder analysis was created based on data obtained from three sources:

1) desk research of online sources according to the topic and focus of the project (TOURAL is focusing on cultural & creative tourism as drivers for sustainable development of rural areas);
2) online questionnaire which was conducted as part of the activity T2.1. Regional/Macro-Regional Research on Policy Instruments, Strategies & Funded Projects and presented in the project deliverable D2.1 Identified Good CCT Practices & Stakeholders Cooperation Level in Adrion & Black Sea;
3) two questionnaires - one before (online) and the other during the Living Labs (T2.3 Co-"Work" Method & Processes).

Desk research of online sources served to set the framework and gain a deeper understanding of the six projects pilot sites, as well as relevant data and research related to the focus of the project focus. TOURAL adopts a comprehensive approach by positioning cultural and creative tourism as central drivers of the sustainable development of rural areas. By leveraging local cultural assets, creative industries, and intangible heritage, the initiative aims to stimulate economic diversification, strengthen local value chains, enhance social cohesion, and contribute to the long-term preservation and valorisation of cultural heritage, while ensuring alignment with broader European sustainability and tourism transition objectives.

The first online survey was available to participants from March 25 to May 15, 2024. The link to the survey was sent to the TOURAL project partners through the joint mailing list (list-toural@iti.gr). The objective of the research conducted through the first online survey was to collect qualitative insights from relevant stakeholders on the current state, challenges, and potential of cultural and creative tourism within the framework of the TOURAL project. The survey aimed to identify good practices, map key stakeholders at regional and national levels, and assess the level of cooperation among them, with particular emphasis on the role of cultural and creative tourism in supporting the sustainable development of rural areas. The collected data provide a foundational evidence base for subsequent analytical and strategic project activities, including the formulation of recommendations and measures to strengthen stakeholder cooperation and integrated local value chains. A total of 17 responses were received (Table 1), 16 of which were responses from project partners (15 institutions out of 20, as 2 responses were from the TOURAL project partner Atlantis Consulting). One response was received from an institution that is not a project partner - National Institute for Economic Research, Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova. The participation in the research was voluntary. Furthermore, the data of the respondents were collected only for the purposes of additional explanations and will not be publicly available. Questionnaire can be found in the corresponding deliverable 2.1 Identified Good CCT Practices & Stakeholders Cooperation Level in Adrion & Black Sea. The questionnaire consisted of 26 questions, and all questions were open type structured. The first three related to demographic characteristics (name, contact, institution they represent) of the participants, while other questions were thematically oriented according to the research objective. From questions 23 to 25, the focus was on tourism stakeholders - detecting stakeholders at the regional and national level and their cooperation.

This was followed by two additional questionnaires conducted from March to May 2025. In the online questionnaire, in which the data for each pilot location was collected before the Living lab itself (TOURAL Living Labs: Preliminary Questionnaire to Define the Problem in [name] pilot site), the following was asked: *Identifying the main actors (stakeholders) from Policy-Industry-Academia-Society in the UCCST tourism sectors at the Pilot Site*.

For each pilot site, the questionnaire was sent to a wide circle of relevant stakeholders. acronym UCCST was explained in the introduction for a better understanding of all the 4 niches approached by the project; the pilot area was specified. At the beginning of the questionnaire the acronym UCCST was explained and the pilot area was specified.

The aim of the two additional questionnaires was to systematically identify, map, and assess key stakeholders involved in the UCCST tourism sectors at each TOURAL pilot site. The first (pre-Living Lab) questionnaire aimed to identify the main actors from the Policy–Industry–Academia–Society quadruple helix relevant to each pilot area, thereby providing an initial stakeholder landscape tailored to the specific territorial context.

Based on the received responses (list of stakeholders), the content of the second questionnaire for each pilot site was created and filled out during the Living Lab. Within a predefined framework, the partners responsible for implementing the living lab listed the stakeholders that the participants evaluated. Participants could also list additional stakeholders if someone they considered to be a stakeholder was not listed. The goal of the questionnaire was to define the level of power and interest of each of the detected stakeholders on a scale of 1 to 5.

A sample questionnaire is attached as Annex 1.

Table 1: Numerical summary of stakeholder data collection during Living lab

Pilot site	Number of completed surveys during the Living Lab	Number of mapped stakeholders
Region-1: North Sporades, Greece	19	27
Region-2: Province of Teramo, Italy	20	54
Region-3: Island of Pag / Village Šimuni, Croatia	20	34
Region-4: Nessebar, Bulgaria	21	21
Region-5: Danube Delta, Tulcea County, Romania	30	54
Region-6: Kutsurub rural region, Ukraine	22	28

Considering the high tourist activity in the Adrion Macro-region and Black Sea Basin and their significant economic importance, it is not surprising the large number of recognized stakeholders.

After identifying stakeholders and the questionnaire data processing, the mean (Average) was calculated for each power/interest score and graphic presentation using Power/Interest matrix was created for each of the pilot sites and one at the project level (Figures 5 - 12).

Power/Interest matrix is also called Mendelow's Matrix[2] after the name of its creator. Mendelow's Matrix was created in 1991 to analyse individual stakeholders by measuring their interest and power.

[2] https://blog.oxfordcollegeofmarketing.com/2018/04/23/what-is-mendelows-matrix-and-how-is-it-useful/

The Mendelow Matrix is a stakeholder analysis tool used to classify and prioritise stakeholders based on two key dimensions: level of power (the ability to influence a project or decision) and level of interest (the degree of concern or involvement in the project's outcomes). By plotting stakeholders on a two-dimensional matrix—power on one axis and interest on the other—the Mendelow Matrix helps decision-makers determine appropriate engagement and management strategies for different stakeholder groups. Typically, stakeholders are categorised into four quadrants.

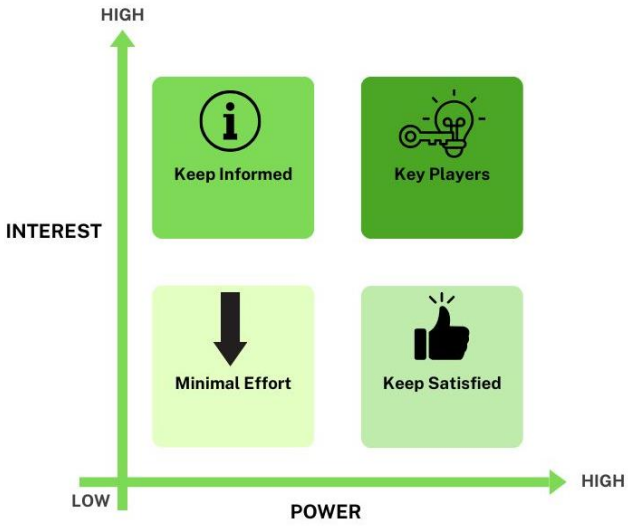


Figure 1: Stakeholders' power/interest matrix (Mendelow matrix)

High Power/High Interest:	Stakeholders in this quadrant are crucial players requiring close collaboration due to their significant influence and vested interest in the subject matter
High Power/Low Interest:	While these stakeholders possess substantial power or authority, they may not be directly invested in the subject's outcomes. It's crucial to maintain their satisfaction without inundating them with excessive communication.
Low Power/High Interest:	Stakeholders here may lack significant power but hold a strong interest in the subject's outcomes. Engaging them effectively can garner support and address potential concerns.
Low Power/Low Interest:	These stakeholders have limited influence and interest in the subject. While they may not necessitate intensive engagement, keeping them informed fosters transparency and goodwill.

Figure 2: Quadrants of Mendelow matrix[3]

[3] https://www.interreg-central.eu/news/enhancing-stakeholder-engagement-through-the-power-interest-matrix/

2.2 Stakeholder engagement plan design

The methodology used in the stakeholder engagement plan design is based on a structured stakeholder engagement approach that combines stakeholder mapping, tailored engagement methods, and continuous improvement.

Stakeholders are first identified and analysed using the Mendelow power/interest matrix to determine their level of influence and interest, which guides appropriate engagement strategies. Roles and responsibilities are then clearly defined through the RACI model to ensure accountability, effective communication, and coordinated decision-making process. The RACI model is a responsibility assignment framework used to clarify roles and decision-making authority within projects, processes, or organisational activities.

Engagement activities are implemented through participatory methods such as workshops, consultations, co-creation sessions, and surveys, adapted to different stakeholder groups. Monitoring and evaluation are carried out using quantitative and qualitative indicators.

The overall process follows the PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycle to enable learning, adaptation, and long-term sustainability of results. The PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycle is a continuous improvement framework used to systematically plan, implement, evaluate, and refine processes, projects, or management practices. It provides a structured, iterative approach to problem-solving and quality management.

The TOURAL project's stakeholders' engagement plan is designed to create inclusive and collaborative frameworks that align local efforts with regional and macro-regional strategies. By fostering partnerships, enhancing skills, and promoting active participation, the project lays the groundwork for sustainable development that benefits communities and ecosystems alike. These collective efforts will ensure a resilient and thriving tourism sector, leaving a lasting positive impact on the regions and their stakeholders.

3 Identification and stakeholders's mapping

The ISO 26000 norm defines stakeholders as "an individual or group that has an interest in any decision or activity of an organization". In the context of the TOURAL project and its focus on UCCST tourism, numerous stakeholders are relevant to the project.

The importance of stakeholders and their engagement in the project can be emphasized through several points:

- **Provide Valuable Input & Expertise** ➔ Stakeholders have knowledge, experience, or insights that can improve project activities and deliverables. This leads to a multiplier effect of activities and higher quality results
- **Ensure Project Support** ➔ When stakeholders feel heard and included, they are more likely to support the project (during implementation and later sustainability of results). This leads to smoother implementation and fewer obstacles caused by resistance or misunderstandings.
- **Reduce Risks & Conflicts** ➔ The implementation of project activities requires dialogue, by understanding stakeholder needs and expectations, organizations can anticipate issues and manage them proactively.
- **Enhance Accountability & Transparency** ➔ Engaging stakeholders promotes trust. It shows that decisions are made fairly, responsibly, and with broader community or organizational interests in mind.
- **Improve Project Outcomes** ➔ Projects with strong stakeholder engagement are more likely to: stay on schedule, meet real needs, use resources efficiently, and achieve long-term success. This is because solutions are shaped with input from those who will be using or affected by them.

3.1 Stakeholder at project level

TOURAL aims to foster the sustainable development of rural areas by leveraging cultural and creative tourism as a driver of economic diversification, social cohesion, and the preservation and valorisation of cultural heritage. By promoting innovative, multi-destination and multi-dimensional tourism models, the project aligns with European policy frameworks and supports resilient local value chains. Stakeholders play a central role in achieving TOURAL's objectives, as the successful development and implementation of cultural and creative tourism depend on effective collaboration among public authorities, businesses, cultural and creative actors, academia, and civil society. These actors contribute complementary knowledge, resources, and capacities across governance, innovation, service provision, and community engagement. Systematic stakeholder mapping is therefore essential to identify key actors, understand their levels of influence and interest, and design targeted engagement strategies that enable coordinated action, strengthen cooperation, and maximise the long-term impact of TOURAL interventions.

Stakeholder of the TOURAL project can be classified into different groups.

One group consists of the project consortium partners, as Core Stakeholders. These are the *formal partners* carrying out the project activities across Europe. They contribute expertise, resources, and leadership in implementing TOURAL. The TOURAL project consortium consists of 20 partners from Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, Croatia, France, Türkiye and Ukraine.

Another important group are local stakeholders in pilot regions. The project interacts with local organisations, communities, and businesses in the pilot areas — for example through *Living Labs* and other participatory workshops.

Examples of local stakeholders in pilot regions:

- Local and regional governments and authorities
- Tourism organisations
- Cultural institutions and universities
- Civil society organisations and local associations
- Private sector tourism businesses
- Residents of rural and remote areas
- Tourism workers and micro-entrepreneurs
- Cultural heritage organisations and NGOs.

In a broader concept, it must not be forgotten either funding and policy stakeholders, such as European Commission and Horizon Europe Programme which are key stakeholders as being sources of funding. Policy stakeholders are a large group of stakeholders - from the international level to the national level, and include:

- International and intergovernmental organisations (UNWTO, UNESCO, OECD, EU, ICOMOS…)
- National governments and public authorities (Ministries of Tourism and Culture, National Tourism Boards…)

Regarding the field of activity and their contribution to shaping attitudes, data collecting and analysing important stakeholder groups are:

- Educational & Research Institutions
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) & Civil Society (WWF, Cultural heritage NGOs…)

Finally, visitors (tourists) are also key stakeholders, as they:

- They generate demand
- They influence trends
- Their behaviour affects sustainability.

Viewed through the Quadruple Helix Model[4] concept, the stakeholders of the TOURAL project encompass all segments of the helix. The Quadruple Helix is an expansion of the Triple Helix (Government–Industry–Academia) by adding Civil Society as the fourth essential actor. Civil society is crucial for sustainable tourism development by ensuring local voices shape policies, minimizing negative impacts (like overtourism), fostering unique cultural experiences, promoting accountability, and driving innovation through collaboration with government and business, ultimately creating more equitable and resilient destinations. That's consistent with recommendations of the UNESCO - that sustainable tourism should empower local communities, conserve heritage, foster peace and contribute to sustainable development, seeing it as a tool for cultural understanding and environmental stewardship, not just economic growth, to protect

[4] https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7099/8/2/48

shared heritage for future generations. It is also in accordance with the ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism (2022), which outlines core principles focused on heritage protection, broad stakeholder involvement, community rights, capacity building, climate action, and sustainable tourism management.

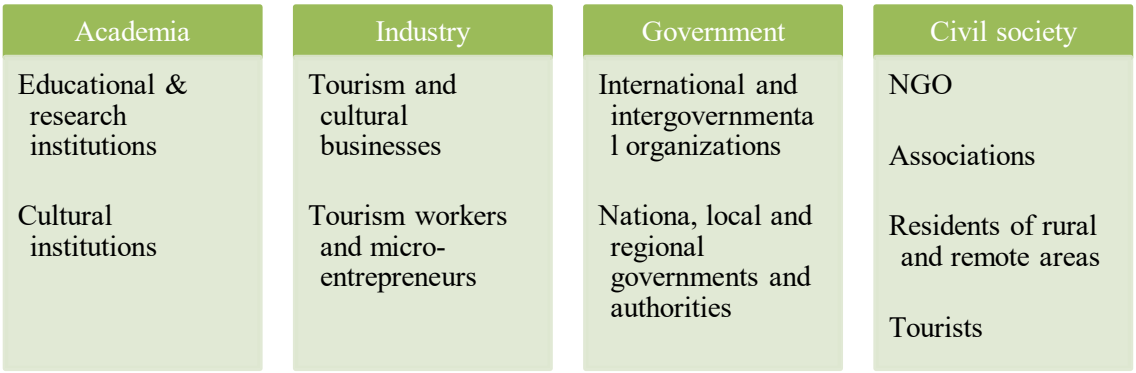


Figure 3: TOURAL's stakeholders in Quadruple Helix Model concept

The aforementioned ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism (2022) brings seven core principles focused on heritage protection that should be taken into account in the context of developing a stakeholder engagement plan:

- Principle 1: Place cultural heritage protection and conservation at the centre of responsible cultural tourism planning and management;
- Principle 2: Manage tourism at cultural heritage places through management plans informed by monitoring, carrying capacity and other planning instruments;
- Principle 3: Enhance public awareness and visitor experience through sensitive interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage;
- Principle 4: Recognize and reinforce the rights of communities, Indigenous Peoples and traditional owners by including access and engagement in participatory governance of the cultural and natural heritage commons used in tourism;
- Principle 5: Raise awareness and reinforce cooperation for cultural heritage conservation among all stakeholders involved in tourism;
- Principle 6: Increase the resilience of communities and cultural heritage through capacity development, risk assessment, strategic planning and adaptive management;
- Principle 7: Integrate climate action and sustainability measures in the management of cultural tourism and cultural heritage.

3.2 Stakeholder at pilot site level

In the stakeholder analysis, a bottom-up approach was applied, and stakeholders were mapped at the level of six pilot sites.

When looking at the stakeholder analysis, it should be taken into account that these six areas are very diverse: comparisons can be made based on the number of inhabitants (Šimuni has less than 200 inhabitants while Teramo has over 14,000 inhabitants), or for example, in the Kutsurub rural region, war conflicts are taking place due to Russia's attack on Ukraine. The diversity of pilot

areas is presented in the project Deliverable D2.2 – Policy Pathways for TOURAL Regions & Macro-Regions[5].

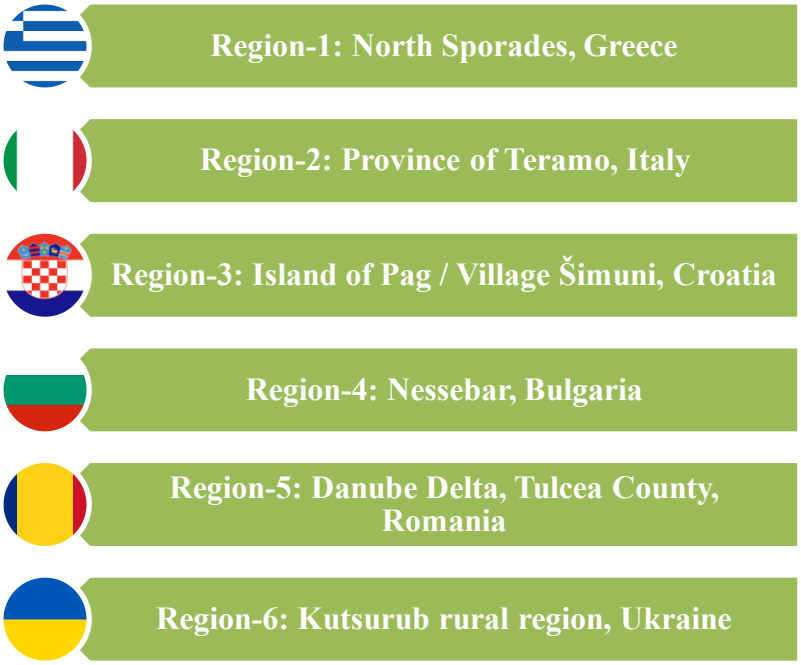


Figure 4: TOURAL pilot sites

3.3 Region-1: North Sporades, Greece

The stakeholder analysis of the pilot site in Greece was conducted separately at the level of the two islands because, although they are neighbouring islands, the tourist and cultural sectors function separately, which is also reflected in the different stakeholders.

- **Island of Skopelos**

The stakeholder landscape is diverse and includes:

- Cultural associations, local theatres, educators, and priests
- Public institutions and ministries
- Tourism actors (accommodation owners, hoteliers, and tourist offices)
- NGOs focused on welfare and stray animals
- Sports and youth associations

General overview: strong cultural and community identity, presence of local governance, and moderate institutional diversity.

A detailed list of identified stakeholders is presented in the Table 2, while their position in the context of the power/interest matrix is shown in Figure 5.

[5] https://toural-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/TOURAL_D2.2_Policy-Pathways-for-TOURAL-Regions-Macro-Regions_v2.pdf

Table 2: List of mapped stakeholders - Skopelos

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 5
Accommodation owners	1
Amateur Theatre Group of Skopelos (ETHOS)	2
Animal Welfare NGO	3
Athletic Club of Skopelos	4
Cultural Association of Glossa, Skopelos	5
Cultural Association of Neo Klima, Skopelos	6
Cultural Association of Skopelos	7
Educators	8
Ephorate of Antiquities of Magnesia, Hellenic Ministry of Culture	9
Health center	10
Hellenic Ministry of Culture	11
Hellenic Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy	12
Hoteliers	13
KAPI (Open Care Center for the Elderly)	14
Local Orthodox priests	15
Local scientists	16
Ministry of Culture	17
Municipality of Skopelos	18
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization	19
NGO PLEGMA	20
NGO Stray Care	21
Port Fund of Skopelos	22
Public-benefit foundation	23
Region of Thessaly	24
Schools	25
Schools and Erasmus and educational programs	26
Shop owners	27
Sports Association of Skopelos	28
Tourist Offices	29

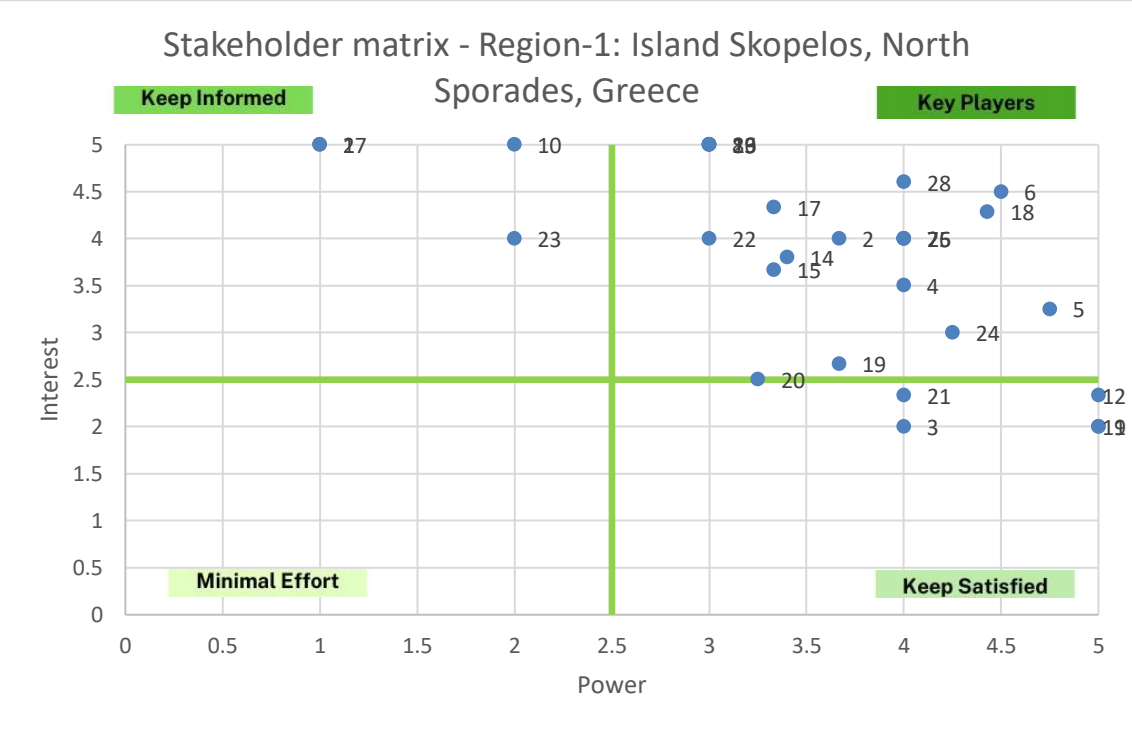


Figure 5: Stakeholders' power/interest matrix – Skopelos

- **Island of Alonissos**

Stakeholders include:

- Academia, diving agencies, tourism professionals
- Associations of fishermen, businesses, sports
- Municipality, ministries, regional authorities
- Ecology and naturalist clubs

General overview: a stronger orientation towards marine tourism, diving, environment, and small-community involvement.

A detailed list of identified stakeholders is presented in the Table 3, while their position in the context of the power/interest matrix is shown in Figure 6.

Table 3: List of mapped stakeholders - Alonissos

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 6
Academia	1
Alonissos Citizens Association	2
Amateur Fishermen's Association	3
Businessmen's etc.	4
Citizens	5
Coastal Shipping Companies-Transport Companies	6
Competent Ministries	7
Cultural and Artistic Associations	8
Diving Agencies	9
Hospitality Entrepreneurs	10

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 6
Hotels Association	11
International Academy of Classical Homeopathy	12
Local Community	13
Ministry of Tourism	14
Municipality of Alonissos	15
Naturalist Clubs	16
NGO's	17
Region of Thessaly	18
Religion-Church	19
Restaurants and Catering Services	20
Several Associations	21
Sports Clubs (e.g., sailing, diving, trekking)	22
Tour Operators and Travel Agencies	23
Tourism Professionals	24
Varius Clubs	25
Volunteers	26
Local Government	27

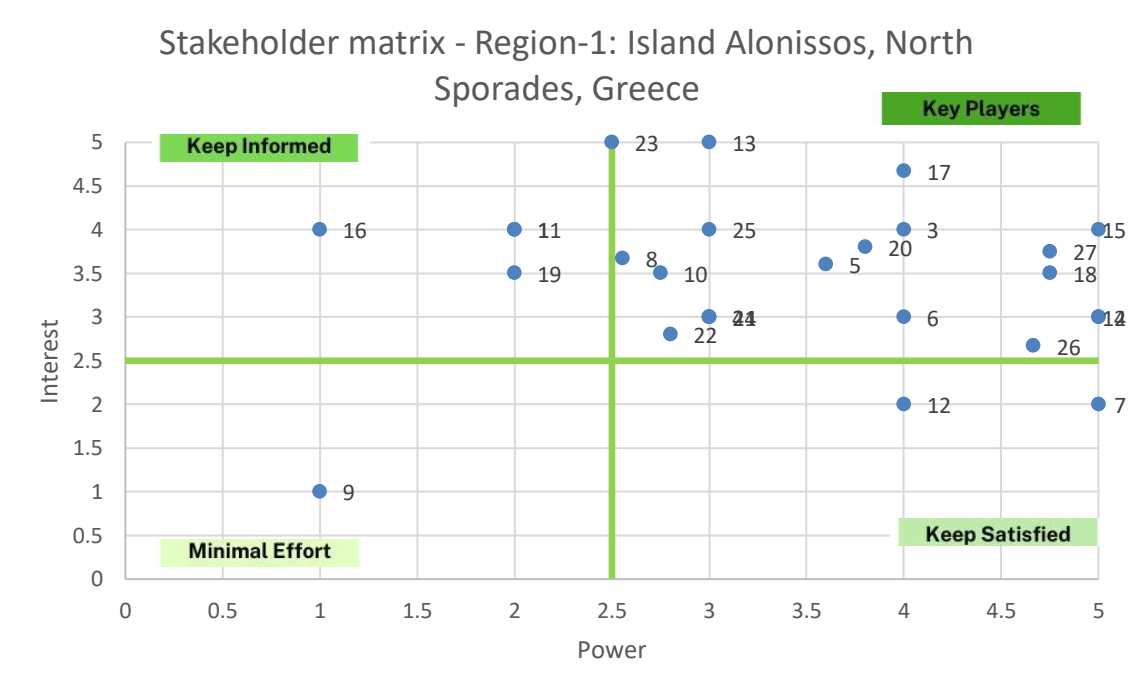


Figure 6: Stakeholders' power/interest matrix – Alonissos

3.4 Region-2: Province of Teramo, Italy

This is an example of the diverse stakeholder environment. Key groups:

- High-level regional institutions
- National and regional parks

- Industry and tourism associations (Confindustria, Federalberghi)
- Cultural & creative institutions, museums
- Universities and research centers
- SMEs, app developers, advertising agencies
- NGOs, social organizations, transport companies

General overview: a sophisticated ecosystem with strong institutional presence, multidimensional tourism actors, innovation and educational institutions, and significant cultural heritage bodies.

A detailed list of identified stakeholders is presented in the Table 4, while their position in the context of the power/interest matrix is shown in Figure 7.

Table 4: List of mapped stakeholders - Teramo

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 7
Abruzzo Region	1
Provnice of Teramo	2
Gran Sasso and Laga Mountains National Park	3
Torre del Cerrano Marine Protected Area	4
Regional Natural Reserve WWF, Oasis Calanchi di Atri	5
Public Institutions	6
Local Authorities, Municipalities, Local Councils	7
General Confederation of Italian Industry (Confindustria)	8
Federation of Italian Hotels & Tourism Associations (Federalbeghi)	9
Chamber of Commerce Gran Sasso d'Italia	10
Gran Sasso Tourist District	11
Preciso (advertising services)	12
Destination Management Companies (DMCs)	13
Hotels, Pensions and Guesthouses	14
Restaurants and Catering Services	15
Tour Guides	16
Transport Companies	17
Tour Operators and Travel Agencies	18
App Developers	19
Tourism Enterprises, Local Businesses	20
Cultural and Creative Centres	21
Centres for Older People	22
Tourism, Cultural and Trade Associations	23
University of Teramo	24
University od Studies "G. D'Annunzio" Chieti – Pescara	25
Italian Alpine Club - Section "Gran Sasso d'Italia" Teramo (CAI Teramo Section)	26
Higher Technological Institute of the Teramo Agri-food Academy (ITS Academy of Teramo)	27
National Superintendency for Underwater Cultural Heritage	28
Technical Schools, Universities, Trainining Institutions, Research Centres	29
ITACA	30
Touring Club Italiano	31

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 7
FAI - Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano (the National Trust for Italy)	32
Luzmek	33
Malvina Menegaz Foundation	34
"Friends of Music 2000" Association	35
UNPLI - National union of Pro Loco of Italy	36
Pro Loco Teramo	37
"Le Tre Porte" Social Promotion Association	38
Local Community, General Public	39
Local Action Groups (LAGs)	40
Volunteers, Social Support Associations	41
Faita Abruzzo	42
Fanesia Cooperative (Fano Adriano)	43
Alto Tordino Association	44
Public Transport Companies	45
Private Transport Companies	46
Dioceses	47
Parish Priests and Convents	48
Museums	49
Road Maintenance Companies	50
Sanita Tourist Association	51
(Govertianice) which summarizes all the stakeholders	52
Archaeological Sites	53
Municipalities	54

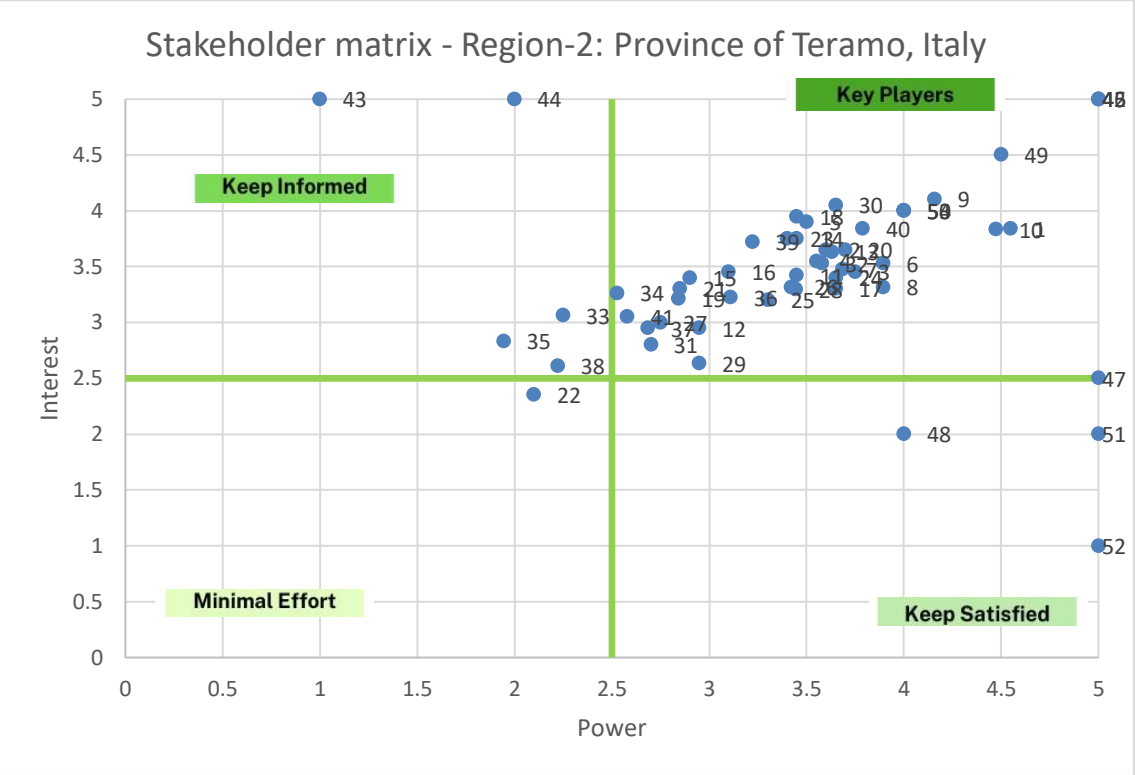


Figure 7: Stakeholders' power/interest matrix – Teramo

3.5 Region-3: Island of Pag / Village Šimuni, Croatia

List of actors includes:

- Local government (City of Pag, City of Zadar, local boards)
- Tourism boards, ministries, and development agencies
- Diving centres, marina, and camping village
- Local businesses (cheese factories, retail chains, and restaurants)
- Universities (Zadar)
- Cultural and heritage organizations

General overview: a strong tourism economy, with a strong connection to maritime heritage and food production.

A detailed list of identified stakeholders is presented in the Table 5, while their position in the context of the power/interest matrix is shown in Figure 8.

Table 5: List of mapped stakeholders - Šimuni/Pag

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 8
City of Pag	1
Tourist Board of the City of Pag	2
Tourist Board of Zadar County	3
High School Pag	4
The villagers of Šimuni	5
University of Zadar - Department of Tourism and Communication Studies	6
University of Zadar - Department of Archaeology	7

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 8
Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia	8
Zadar County	9
Foka Diving Center	10
Camping Village Šimuni	11
NGO Šimuni	12
Small Renters	13
Tourists	14
International Center for Underwater Archaeology in Zadar	15
Zadar County Development Agency ZADRA NOVA	16
Local Action Group Mentorides	17
Šimuni Local Board	18
City of Zadar	19
Agency for Rural Development of Zadar County AGRRA	20
Women's Association Pag	21
Fisheries Local Action Group Tri Mora	22
ACI Marina Šimuni	23
Villa Olea	24
Lorenco d.o.o. (chain store)	25
Pag cheese factory	26
Gligora cheese factory	27
Tavern Didova Kuća	28
Underwater Research Center Navalis	29
Institute for Maritime Heritage Ars Nautica	30
Hotel-tourism and Catering School Zadar	31
Other cultural institutions	32
Zadar County Port Authority	33
Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure	34

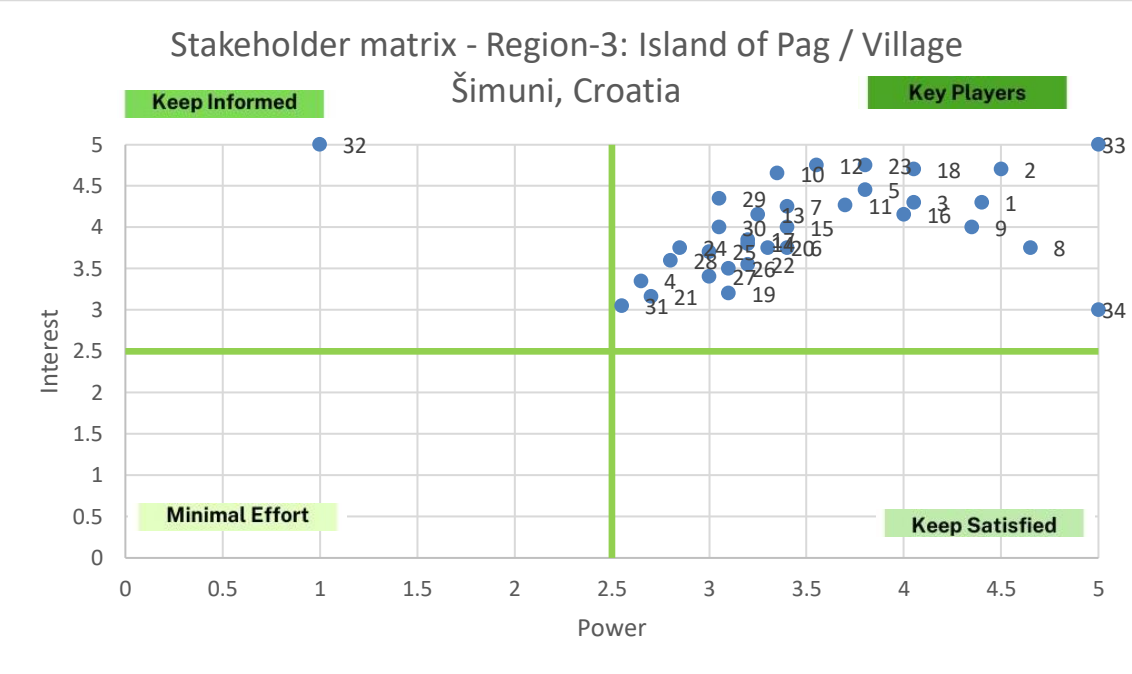


Figure 8: Stakeholders' power/interest matrix – Šimuni/Pag

3.6 Region-4: Nessebar, Bulgaria

Stakeholders list includes:

- Ministries, UNESCO, and national heritage institutes
- Local government and regional administration
- Tourism and hotel associations
- Educational institutions (vocational schools, colleges)
- Craftspeople, artisans, and silver tourism groups
- Influencers (a noteworthy addition)

General overview: a strong orientation toward heritage conservation, mass tourism, and craft/tradition preservation. The inclusion of influencers reflects modern tourism marketing strategies.

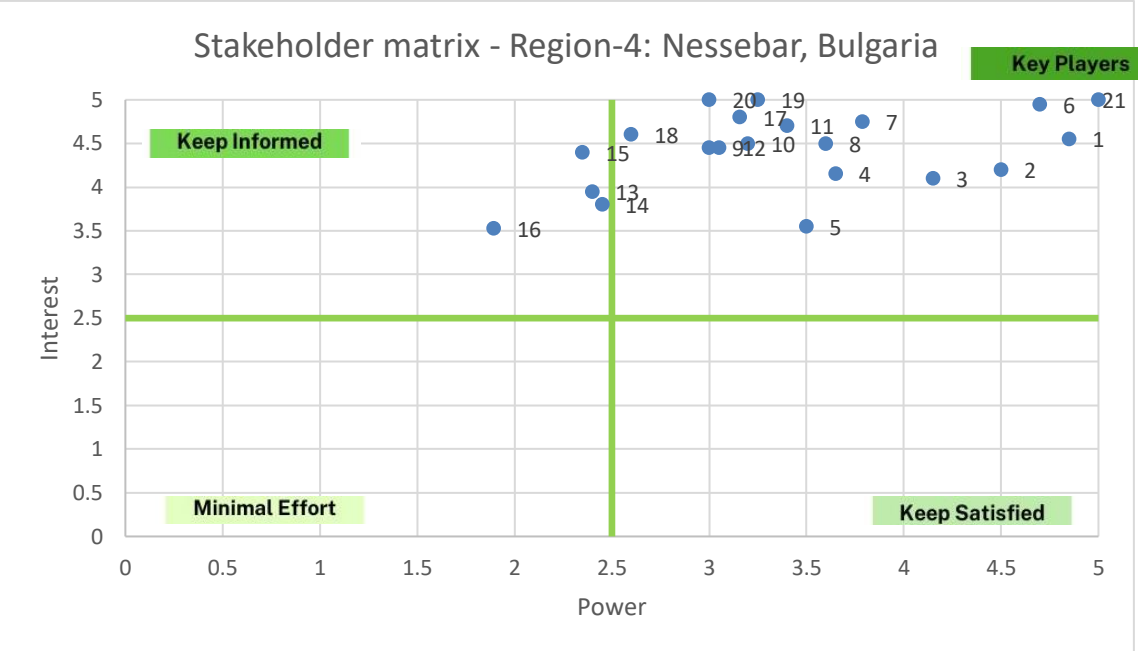
A detailed list of identified stakeholders is presented in the Table 6, while their position in the context of the power/interest matrix is shown in Figure 9.

Table 6: List of mapped stakeholders - Nessebar

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 9
Ministry of Tourism	1
Ministry of Culture	2
National Institute for Immovable Cultural Heritage	3
UNESCO	4
Burgas District Administration	5
Municipality of Nessebar	6
Ancient City of Nessebar Archaeological Museum	7
Underwater Archaeology Center	8
Bulgarian Hotel and Restaurant Association/BHRA	9

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 9
Association of the Bulgarian Touroperators and Tour Agents/ABTTA	10
Sunny Beach AD	11
Union of Hotelier – Sunny Beach	12
Ivan Vazov Vocational High School for Tourism, Sunny Beach	13
University "Prof. D-r Assen Zlatarov"- Burgas, Tourism College	14
Artisans, craftsmen and artists of traditional arts and crafts	15
Local retirement clubs and social groups linked to silver tourism	16
The local business	17
Citizens of Nessebar municipality	18
Union of Tour Guides, Burgas	19
Public Tourism Council	20
Influencers	21

Figure 9: Stakeholders' power/interest matrix – Nessebar



3.7 Region-5: Danube Delta, Tulcea County, Romania

This region shows a highly complex, multi-level environmental and tourism governance system. Stakeholders include:

- National ministries (tourism, environment, culture)
- Research institutes, and universities
- Protected area administrations
- Local authorities and LAGs
- Tourism operators, hotels, and small transport private providers
- Transport public providers
- Environmental NGOs (WWF, Greenpeace)

- Resorts and elite tourism facilities

General overview: a very environmentally sensitive region, high scientific presence, strong involvement of NGOs, and wide tourism sector representation.

A detailed list of identified stakeholders is presented in the Table 7, while their position in the context of the power/interest matrix is shown in Figure 10.

Table 7: List of mapped stakeholders - Danube Delta, Tulcea

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 10
Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism	1
Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests	2
Ministry of Culture	3
Tulcea County Council	4
National Center of Tourism Information And Promotion - Tulcea	5
DDBR Administration	6
DMO of Tulcea County (to be created)	7
National Authority for Tourism	8
Ass. for Intercomunity Development - Integrated Territorial Investments Danube Delta	9
Regional Development Agency of South-East Development Region	10
National Environment Protection Agency	11
National Environment Guard	12
Local Authorities, Municipalities, Local Councils	13
Tourism Board in Danube Delta	14
National Institute for R&D for Danube Delta	15
National Institute for Marine Research and Development ,,Grigore Antipa,, - Constanta	16
National Institute for R&D in Tourism	17
National Institute for R&D on Marine Geology and Geo-Ecology	18
National Heritage Institute	19
,,Gavrilă Simion,, Eco-Museum Research Institute – include museums and sites on Tulcea area	20
Ovidius University – Constanța	21
University of Economic Studies	22
,,Ion Mincu,, University of Architecture and Urbanism	23
University of Bucharest	24
"Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati	25
Sfantu-Gheorghe Marine and Fluvial Research Station	26
UNESCO	27
WWF Romania	28
Green Peace Romania	29
Romanian Ornithological Society	30
Ivan Patzaichin – Mila 23 Association	31
Association Danube Delta – Seaside	32
Technical Schools/Training Institutions / Research Centers	33
LAG Danube Delta	34

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 10
LAGs on Tulcea County territory	35
Local Communities	36
Association of Eco-Tourism	37
National Association of Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism	38
Ass. of Tour Operators	39
Navrom Delta (public transport entity)	40
Green Village Resort – Sfantu Gheorghe	41
Razelm Luxury Resort	42
Complex Delta	43
Esplanada Hotel	44
Lebada Luxury Resort & Spa / Crișan	45
Limanul Resort	46
Hotels, Pensions & Guesthouses	47
Restaurants & Catering Services	48
Tour Guides & Small Transport Companies	49
Tour Operators & Travel Agencies	50
Local Entrepreneurs	51
Consumers, Tourists, Visitors	52
NGOs (with activity in tourism field)	53
General Public	54

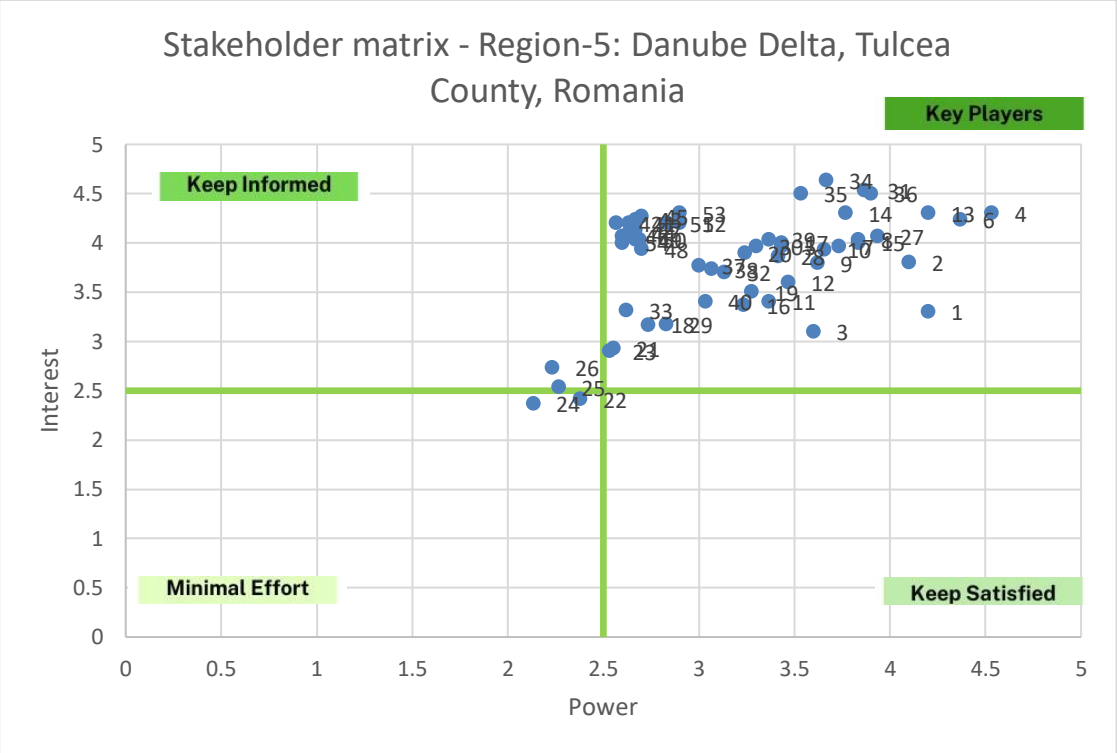


Figure 10: Stakeholders' power/interest matrix – Danube Delta, Tulcea

3.8 Region-6: Kutsurub rural region, Ukraine

Stakeholders represent:

- Educational institutions, scientific, and archaeological reserves
- Museums and cultural institutions
- Tourism companies, eco-estates, art houses
- Government authorities
- Environmental reserves and nature parks
- Media and entrepreneurial groups

General overview: an emphasis on educational tourism, archaeology, eco-tourism, and cultural entrepreneurship; the presence of military administration reflects the current geopolitical context.

A detailed list of identified stakeholders is presented in the Table 8, while their position in the context of the power/interest matrix is shown in Figure 11.

Table 8: List of mapped stakeholders - Kutsurub rural region

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 11
Municipal institution "Mykolaiv Regional Center for National-Patriotic Education, Tourism and Local History of Students" of Mykolaiv Regional Council	1
Mykolaiv Regional Institute of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education	2
Mykolaiv Regional Universal Scientific Library	3
National University of Shipbuilding (admiral Makarov)	4
National historical and archaeological reserve "Olvia" of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine	5
Department of Ecology Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University	6
Volodymyr Bahtov, art house	7
Private enterprise "Editorial office of the newspaper "Mykolaiv news"	8
Mykolaiv museum of shipbuilding and fleet	9
Ochakiv military historical museum	10
Individual entrepreneur "Filin Serhiy Vitaliyovych"	11
Touristic and travel Company "Khan-Tengri	12
Travel agency “Mandrivochka”	13
Green estate “Marine”	14
Green ethno-estate "Constellation of the Steppe"	15
Adult Learning and Education Center "South" (Taurian Painting)	16
Olvia Winery NUVO	17
Department of Tourism and Resorts of the Mykolaiv Regional Military Administration	18
Mykolaiv District Military Administration	19
Kinburn Spit Regional Landscape Park	20
Kutsurub Village Council	21
Creative union "Mykolaiv regional organization of the national union of local historian of Ukraine"	22
Municipal cultural institution "Mykolaiv regional local history museum"	23

Stakeholder list	Position at Figure 11
Public association "National tourist organization of Ukraine"	24
Shellfish factory "Almus"	25
National Nature Park Beloberezhya Svyatoslav	26
Mykolaiv Regional Business Support Center	27
Editorial office of the Mykolaiv online newspaper "Svidok.Info"	28

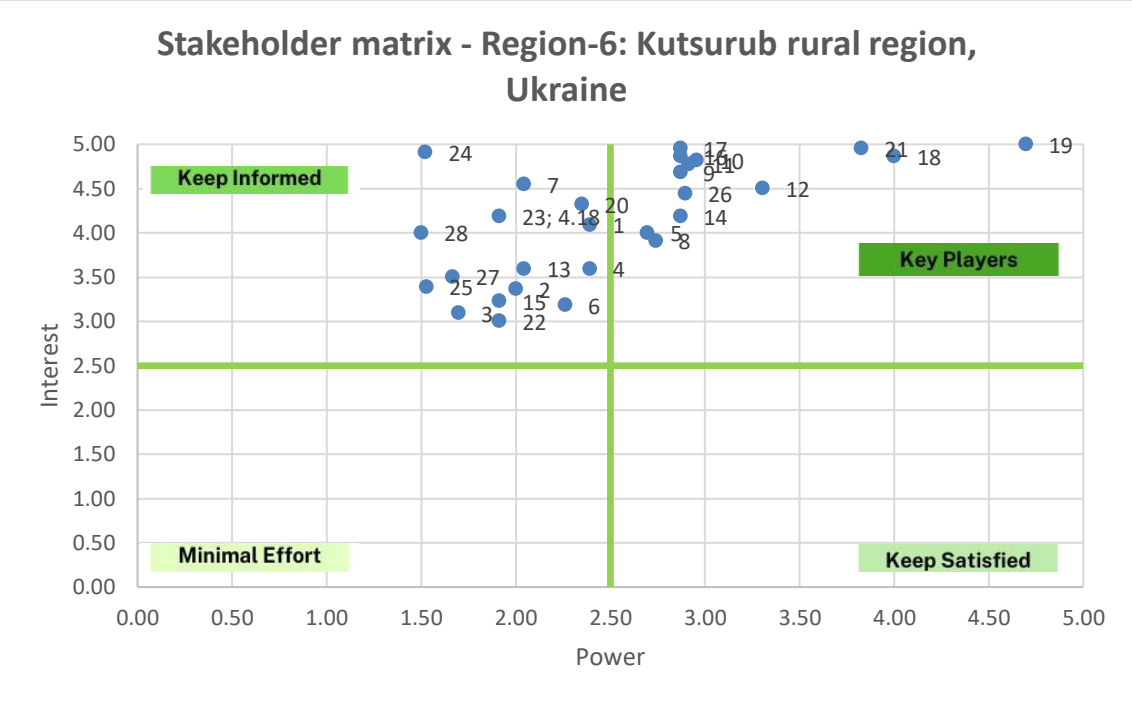


Figure 11: Stakeholders' power/interest matrix – Kutsurub rural region

At the level of all pilot sites, and consequently at the project level, a homogeneity of stakeholders and their concentration in one quadrant of the matrix is observed.

At the level of 6 pilot sites, over 240 stakeholders were identified (Figure 12), all of whom have a high level of interest, but whose power varies.

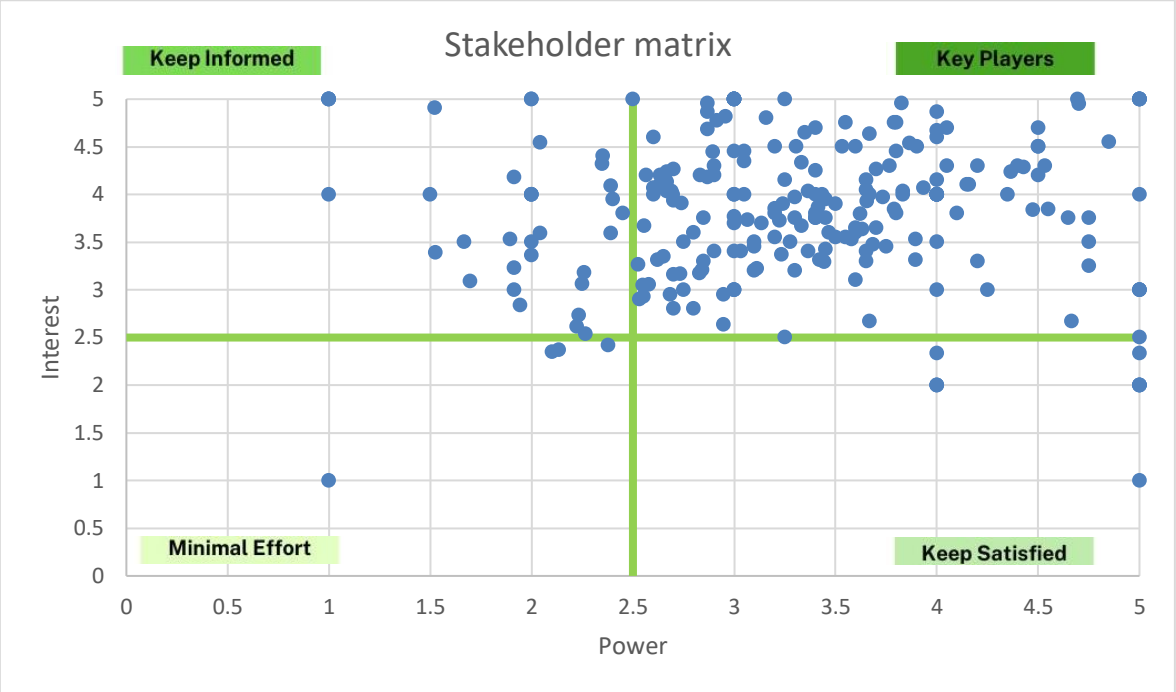


Figure 12: Stakeholders' power/interest matrix – Unified representation of stakeholders from all 6 pilot sites

4 Stakeholders' Engagement Plan

The role of the Stakeholders' Engagement Plan is to provide guidelines in the inclusion and activation of relevant stakeholders, who through their engagement increase the efficiency of the entire process - whether related to a tourist offer, cultural heritage protection or any other topic. Through stakeholder engagement, the dissemination of project activities and the sustainability of results are jointly supported and ensured.

Engagement focuses on:

- Building a shared understanding of project goals
- Supporting co-creation in tourism and heritage planning and protection
- Creating long-term sustainability
- Ensuring transparency, cultural sensitivity, and local empowerment

Figure 13: Engagement objectives

Except for analysis of stakeholders, the Mendelow power/interest matrix[6] can be used to propose guides for stakeholder engagement.

[6] https://www.professionalacademy.com/blogs/mendelows-matrix-marketing-theories/https://www.interreg-central.eu/news/enhancing-stakeholder-engagement-through-the-power-interest-matrix/

Figure 14: Mendelow matrix guides for stakeholder engagement

High Power/High Interest **Manage closely**	High Power/Low Interest **Keep satisfied**	Low Power/High Interest **Keep informed**	Low Power/Low Interest **Low priority**
These stakeholders are key players. This group should be monitored closely, and it should be ensured they are fully engaged. They are very involved with decision making and have the power to influence.	This includes stakeholders with the power but minimal interest. You should still aim to keep them satisfied as you never know when those could move to the high interest and high-power category.	This group has low influence, so they do not really have a say on business decisions, but they do have a keen interest in them. Keep them well-informed of changes and be sure to hear out their opinions and suggestions for improvements.	This group does not have the influence to impact and are not interested in doing so. This means there's no need to engage or inform this group, but you should monitor them in case their status changes.

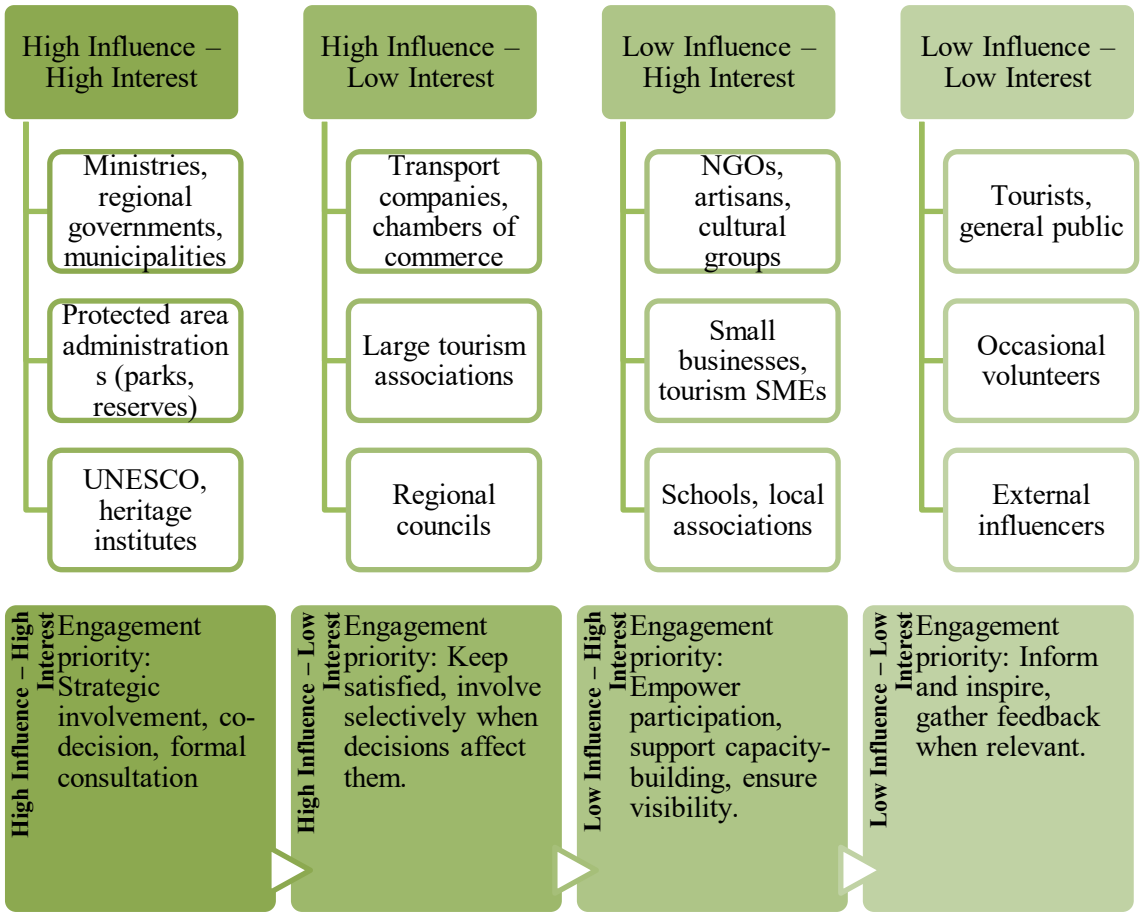


Table 9: Engagement Methods by Stakeholder Type

Stakeholder group	Engagement methods	Frequency
Public Decision-Makers (government bodies, ministries, municipalities)	Bilateral meetings, workshops, steering committees, MoUs	Quarterly
Industry (hotels, operators, travel agencies, businesses, SMEs)	Sectoral roundtables, co-design labs, surveys, business breakfasts, innovation challenges, training	Every 2–3 months
Cultural & Educational Institutions	Co-creation workshops, research collaborations, youth programs	Every semester
NGOs (environmental, cultural, animal welfare)	Thematic working groups, joint campaigns, community actions	Monthly / project phase-based
Local Communities, Associations, Residents	Focus groups, community forums, participatory mapping	Every 2 months
Tourists & General Public	Public surveys, info campaigns, digital platforms	Seasonal

The relationship between stakeholders and the roles they have is presented through the RACI model[7]. RACI is an acronym for Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed. The RACI model offers a structured framework that outlines the expectations for each stakeholder and facilitates effective communication. This framework helps ensure that all tasks and decisions are clearly assigned to the right individuals or groups, reducing ambiguity and enhancing accountability within the project team.

Table 10: RACI model[8]

Role	Clarification
R **Responsible**	Refers to the group or individual who should actively participate to accomplish a particular activity. This is the role who owns the activity and doing the work. There can be more than one Responsible doing each activity (depending on the activity), however, there should be at least one.
A **Accountable**	Refers to the group or individual who should ensure that the work is completed on time, within budget, and within the required quality standards. There can be only one accountable for each activity (final approving authority).
C **Consulted**	Refers to the groups or individuals who can provide valuable information and guidance to complete the work. They have the knowledge, skills and experience that are needed to complete the work, and their opinions should be considered before decision-making.
I **Informed**	Refers to any individual or group that needs to be notified of a decision or outcome once the work is completed. Their work and behaviour depends on the activity and might be affected by the changes in some way.

[7] https://projectmanagement.ie/blog/how-to-use-the-raci-model-for-effective-stakeholder-analysis/
[8] https://citoolkit.com/articles/raci-matrix/#:~:text=To%20overcome%20these%20challenges%2C%20the%20RACI%20model%20offers,an%20acronym%20for%20Responsible%2C%20Accountable%2C%20Consulted%2C%20and%20Informed

The RACI model brings several advantages to stakeholder management in projects[9]:

- ***Clarified Roles and Responsibilities***: The RACI model helps eliminate confusion by ensuring that everyone knows who is responsible for what. This clarity reduces the risk of tasks being neglected or duplicated.
- ***Streamlined Accountability***: By identifying the accountable person for each task, the RACI model ensures that there is a clear point of accountability and helps make it easier to track project progress and identify areas that need attention.
- ***Better Communication***: The model promotes clear communication between team members by outlining who needs to be consulted and informed. This ensures that stakeholders are kept appropriately informed and that no one is overlooked.
- ***Conflict Reduction***: By defining roles and responsibilities early on, the RACI model reduces the potential for conflicts among stakeholders. Each person's level of involvement is clear, making it easier to navigate disagreements or misunderstandings.

The first step in creating a RACI model is to define roles, i.e. stakeholders, followed by defining activities and assigning RACI roles. It is also necessary to verify the RACI model to ensure that each task has the correct roles assigned, and that there is a clear distribution of responsibilities and expectations. To be effective, the assigned roles for each activity must be clearly communicated to the relevant stakeholders.

Table 11: Simplified RACI model for TOURAL pilot sites

Activity	Project Lead	Project partners	Public decision-makers	Industry	Cultural & educational insti.	NGOs	Local Community	Tourists
Identify stakeholders	A	R	C	C	C	C	C	I
Plan engagement activities	A	R	C	C	C	C	C	I
Share project information	A R	R	I	I	I	I	I	I
Community meetings & consultations	I	A R	C	C	C	C	C	I
Workshops & co-creation sessions	C	A R	C	C	C	C	C	I
Testing pilot activities	A	R	C	C	C	C	C	C
Give feedback & suggestions	I	R	C	C	C	C	C	I
Resolve local issues & challenges	A	R	C	C	C	C	C	I
Communicate results	A	R C	I	I	I	I	I	I
Ensure long-term continuity	A	R	C	C	C	C	C	I

[9] https://projectmanagement.ie/blog/how-to-use-the-raci-model-for-effective-stakeholder-analysis/

In order to monitor the achievement of the engagement plan established trough the Mendelow matrix and the RACI model, it is necessary to set up monitoring and evaluation indicators. Desired effects can be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively:

- **Quantitative**
  - Number of stakeholders engaged per pilot site
  - Participation rate in events
  - Number of co-created outputs (routes, policies, and programmes)
  - Social media reach and communication metrics
- **Qualitative**
  - Stakeholder satisfaction surveys
  - Perceived influence on decision-making
  - Case studies of collaboration

4.1 Recommendations for pilot sites

An adaptable basis for creating a stakeholder engagement plan at the pilot site level is the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle[10].

The PDCA cycle originated from Dr. W. Edwards Deming's lecture in Japan in 1950. Today, it is a method that, with adaptation, is widely used in strategic business planning. An important segment is its continuous – cyclical – nature. When analysing and planning stakeholders' engagement, this is an important segment because the circumstances and conditions are constantly changing which affects stakeholders' availability and priorities, so their importance (power) and interest also change.

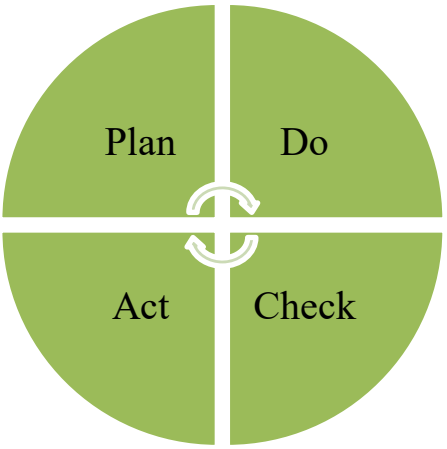


Figure 15: PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle

The basic four elements can be adapted for the needs of developing a stakeholder engagement plan.

[10] https://www.learnleansigma.com/improvement-methodology/what-is-the-pdca-cycle/

Table 12: PDCA cycle for creating a stakeholders engagement plan

Step	PLAN	DO	CHECK	ACT
Purpose	Decide *what* to do and *how* to do it.	Carry out planned activities with stakeholders.	Understand what worked and what didn't.	Use lessons learned to improve the next cycle.
Key actions	Identify and map stakeholders Analyse stakeholder needs and interests Define engagement objectives Plan workshops, meetings, consultations Assign roles (using the RACI matrix) Define indicators for success	Organise community meetings and workshops Run co-creation sessions and pilot actions Communicate project goals and progress Involve local communities, NGOs, businesses, and authorities Collect feedback during activities	Monitor participation and engagement levels Collect feedback (surveys, interviews, focus groups) Review KPIs and indicators Identify challenges, conflicts, and gaps	Adjust engagement methods Update stakeholder roles and priorities Improve communication and coordination Strengthen successful partnerships Plan next engagement cycle
Outputs	Stakeholder Engagement Plan Stakeholder lists & power/interest matrix Engagement calendar Clear roles and responsibilities	Workshops held Pilot activities implemented Active stakeholder participation Communication materials	Monitoring reports Stakeholder feedback summaries Lessons learned Updated risk assessment	Updated engagement plan Improved stakeholder relationships Stronger governance model Long-term sustainability actions

4.2 Planned outcomes of stakeholders' engagement plan

The stakeholder engagement plan for the TOURAL project is tailored to achieve meaningful and measurable outcomes across its focus regions (pilot site), supporting sustainable tourism development and fostering strong partnerships. In each location, the plan emphasizes building an inclusive network of engaged stakeholders, upskilling and reskilling stakeholders through training, and promoting macro-regional cooperation to align local efforts with broader objectives.

- ***North Sporades***

The North Sporades plan aims to increase the number of regional tourism stakeholders to **20**, up from **8**, forming a foundation for collaboration and innovative tourism strategies. Through **6 training workshops**, starting from zero, the project will train approximately **60 stakeholders**, equipping them with essential skills for sustainable tourism. Participation in **10 macro-regional cooperation actions** will further enhance stakeholder collaboration. Additionally, **6 annual community engagement campaigns**, up from **2**, will promote environmental stewardship and shared responsibility.

- ***Province of Teramo***

In the Province of Teramo, the focus is on expanding stakeholder involvement to **60**, from a baseline of **20** and conducting **4 workshops**, training **40 stakeholders** in sustainable tourism practices. Macro-regional cooperation will increase to **8 actions**, and **6 annual community campaigns** will address biodiversity protection, marine litter removal, and conservation of local wildlife.

- ***Island of Pag, Village Šimuni***

The engagement plan for the Island of Pag seeks to increase stakeholder involvement to **120**, from a baseline of **25**, and to train **150 stakeholders** through **6 workshops**. With a significant boost in macro-regional cooperation actions from **2 to 20**, the region will also develop multi-destination tourism products. Community involvement will be strengthened through **6 annual campaigns**, promoting collaboration and environmental conservation.

- ***Nessebar***

Nessebar's stakeholder plan aims to expand engagement to **120 stakeholders**, from a baseline of **25**, and to train **150 stakeholders** through **6 workshops**. With **20 macro-regional cooperation actions**, the plan focuses on aligning efforts with broader strategies. Community campaigns, increasing to **6 per year**, will address coastal cleaning, biodiversity conservation, and the protection of archaeological and cultural heritage through citizen science initiatives.

- ***Danube Delta, Tulcea County***

In the Danube Delta, the focus is on increasing stakeholder engagement to **35**, from a baseline of **5** and conducting **3 or more workshops**, training **100 stakeholders** in sustainable tourism practices. The region will participate in **5 macro-regional actions** and organize **2 annual citizen science campaigns** to encourage biodiversity protection and environmental conservation efforts.

- ***Kutsurub Rural Region***

The Kutsurub Rural Region plan aims to grow stakeholder engagement to **13**, from a baseline of five **5**, and conduct **7 workshops** to train **40 to 50 stakeholders**. Participation in **13 macro-regional cooperation actions** will align local initiatives with regional frameworks. Community campaigns will increase to **5 annually**, addressing waste sorting and environmental conservation, and promoting sustainability among stakeholders and the community.

4.3 Identification of potential challenges in stakeholder engagement and mitigation strategies

Effective stakeholder engagement is critical to the success of the TOURAL project, but it is not without its challenges. Anticipating these challenges and preparing mitigation strategies will ensure a more resilient and adaptive engagement process. Listed below are some potential challenges and strategies to address them:

- Low Stakeholder Participation

Challenge: Engaging a diverse group of stakeholders may face obstacles such as lack of interest, time constraints, or scepticism about the project's relevance to their interests.

Mitigation Strategy: Develop a targeted communication plan that highlights the benefits of participation, such as professional development opportunities, potential economic gains, and the project's alignment with their goals. Offer flexible participation options, such as virtual meetings or asynchronous feedback channels, to accommodate diverse schedules.

- Resistance to Change

Challenge: Stakeholders may resist adopting new practices or collaborating on innovative solutions due to comfort with the status quo or perceived risks to their operations.

Mitigation Strategy: Foster trust through transparency and open dialogue, ensuring stakeholders are involved in decision-making processes from the outset. Showcase case studies or pilot successes to demonstrate the tangible benefits of change and reduce perceived risks.

- Conflicting Stakeholder Interests

Challenge: Different stakeholders may have competing priorities, such as balancing economic development with environmental sustainability, which could lead to tensions or gridlock in decision-making.

Mitigation Strategy: Employ a structured facilitation approach during workshops and discussions to ensure all voices are heard and conflicting interests are mediated. Develop shared goals and win-win scenarios that align with TOURAL's overarching objectives, ensuring equitable benefits for all parties.

- Lack of Capacity or Resources

Challenge: Some stakeholders, especially smaller organizations, may lack the capacity or resources to actively engage in the project.

Mitigation Strategy: Provide support such as training or logistical help to ensure equal participation. Tailor resources and activities to the varying needs of stakeholders, ensuring inclusivity.

- Sustaining Long-Term Engagement

Challenge: Maintaining momentum and interest over the project life cycle of the project could be difficult, particularly for stakeholders who may not see immediate benefits.

Mitigation Strategy: Establish a continuous feedback loop to keep stakeholders informed of progress and impact. Celebrate milestones and achievements to sustain enthusiasm and reinforce the value of their engagement. Offer regular updates and incentives for ongoing participation.

5 Cooperation Potential

The TOURAL project demonstrates strong intra-regional and extra-regional cooperation potential, building on existing multi-level stakeholder ecosystems within each participating region.

Intra-regional cooperation refers to collaboration within the same region, among local stakeholders such as authorities, communities, businesses, NGOs, and institutions. At the intra-regional level, cooperation among public authorities, cultural and environmental institutions, tourism operators, civil society organizations, academia, and local communities enables integrated territorial development, strengthens local governance, and ensures the relevance and sustainability of project actions.

Extra-regional cooperation refers to collaboration between different regions and countries, enabling knowledge exchange and joint development across borders. At the extra-regional level, transnational cooperation facilitates the exchange of knowledge, good practices, and innovative solutions, supports the joint development of thematic tourism products and governance models, and enhances institutional capacity across regions.

Intra- and extra-regional cooperation are mutually reinforcing:

- Intra-regional cooperation ensures that actions are locally relevant and sustainable
- Extra-regional cooperation brings innovation, comparison, and scalability

Together, they strengthen governance capacity, increase project impact, and support replication and upscaling of results.

Table 13: TOURAL's stakeholder cooperation potential - main cooperation areas

Level	Cooperation areas
Intra-Regional	**Local governance & planning** Cooperation between municipalities, development agencies, and public institutions to align tourism, heritage, and environmental policies. **Tourism value chains** Collaboration between accommodation providers, tour operators, guides, artisans, and food producers to create integrated local tourism products. **Culture & heritage management** Joint actions between museums, cultural associations, archaeologists, and NGOs to protect and promote tangible and intangible heritage. **Community engagement & social inclusion** Cooperation with local communities, youth groups, elderly associations, and volunteers to ensure inclusive development. **Education & capacity building** Partnerships between schools, universities, training centers, and local actors to build skills and raise awareness.

Level	Cooperation areas
Extra-Regional	**Knowledge & experience exchange** Sharing successful models in heritage management, eco-tourism, stakeholder engagement, and governance. **Joint tourism products & routes** Development of transnational thematic routes (e.g. cultural heritage, maritime heritage, eco-tourism, silver tourism). **Research & innovation** Collaboration between universities and research institutions on sustainability, digital tools, and impact assessment. **Capacity building & peer learning** Study visits, staff exchanges, joint trainings, and mentoring between regions. **Policy alignment & advocacy** Coordinated dialogue with national and EU-level institutions to influence policy frameworks.

By combining place-based approaches with transnational learning, the project contributes to policy alignment, resilience, and innovation, in line with the objectives of Interreg territorial cooperation, Horizon Europe missions on climate, culture and inclusive societies, and IPA priorities on capacity building, regional cohesion, and sustainable development.

6 Conclusions

Deliverable **D2.4 Stakeholders' Engagement Plan (vFinal)** provides a comprehensive and operational framework for the systematic involvement of stakeholders in the TOURAL project, ensuring that project activities are inclusive, effective, and sustainable.

Building on extensive stakeholder identification and mapping across six diverse pilot regions, the deliverable demonstrates the central role of stakeholder engagement in achieving balanced and resilient tourism development within the UCCST sectors.

The application of established tools such as the Mendelow power–interest matrix, the RACI model, and the PDCA cycle enables a structured and adaptable approach to stakeholder management. This ensures that stakeholders' influence, interests, and capacities are clearly understood, roles and responsibilities are transparent, and engagement strategies can evolve in response to changing contexts and feedback.

The stakeholder mapping and analysis carried out within TOURAL reveal several concrete and policy-relevant findings. Across all six pilot sites, more than 240 stakeholders were identified, demonstrating a high overall level of interest in UCCST tourism development, while levels of power vary significantly. The Mendelow power–interest matrices show a consistent concentration of stakeholders in the *high-interest but medium-to-low power* quadrant, particularly among local communities, cultural actors, SMEs, and civil society organisations. This indicates strong local engagement potential, but also highlights structural governance gaps that limit the influence of grassroots actors on strategic decision-making. In several pilot sites, civil society stakeholders are underrepresented in high-power positions, reinforcing the need for targeted empowerment and capacity-building measures. Conversely, public authorities and policy-level actors tend to hold high power but display varying levels of interest, underlining the importance of tailored engagement strategies to ensure their sustained commitment.

These findings directly inform the Stakeholders' Engagement Plan by justifying differentiated engagement approaches, such as prioritising co-creation and consultation mechanisms for high-interest/low-power actors, while closely managing and aligning high-power stakeholders through structured governance tools. The integration of the Mendelow Matrix, RACI model, and PDCA cycle ensures that stakeholder engagement is not only inclusive but also adaptive and outcome-oriented.

As a result, Deliverable D2.4 moves beyond descriptive mapping and provides actionable guidance for strengthening stakeholder cooperation, improving governance balance, and enhancing the long-term sustainability and transferability of TOURAL outcomes.

The analysis confirms that TOURAL operates within highly diverse territorial, institutional, and socio-economic environments, requiring flexible and context-sensitive engagement approaches. Despite these differences, a common pattern emerges across pilot sites: a high level of stakeholder interest combined with varying degrees of power, underlining the importance of targeted engagement strategies to empower local actors and strengthen governance.

Furthermore, the deliverable highlights strong intra-regional and extra-regional cooperation potential, where local collaboration ensures relevance and ownership, while transnational exchange supports innovation, learning, and scalability. By linking local actions to regional, macro-regional, and EU-level frameworks, the engagement plan enhances policy alignment and long-term impact.

In conclusion, Deliverable D2.4 establishes replicable and transferable stakeholders' engagement model that underpins the successful implementation and sustainability of TOURAL outcomes.

Its effective application will depend on continuous stakeholders' participation, regular monitoring, and the ability to adapt engagement methods over time. As such, the deliverable supports current project objectives. It also provides lasting value for future initiatives in sustainable tourism and heritage-led regional development.

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8 Annex: Questionnaire – Identification of Stakeholders

Deliverable Number	D2.4	**Lead Beneficiary**	12. ZDRN
Deliverable Name	Stakeholders' Engagement Plan		
Type	R — Document, report	**Dissemination Level**	PU - Public
Due Date (month)	24	**Work Package No**	WP2

Location:	to fill
Date:	to fill

QUESTIONNAIRE

Assessment of the power and influence of tourism stakeholders in the UCCST tourism sectors at XY pilot site

Translation of the above text into the language of the location (pilot site)

UCCST: Underwater Cultural & Nature Heritage Tourism, Cultural & Creative Tourism, Cultural Science Tourism, Silver Tourism.

Instructions for participants:

On a scale of 1 to 5, circle the power and interest of each stakeholder.

Definition of:

power ➔ How much influence (power) do they have on defining development and strategies or allocation of resources

interest ➔ How interested they are in the organization or project succeeding (how interested they are in the development of UCCST tourism in XY pilot site)

Translation of the text above into the language of the location

STAKEHOLDER / *language of the location*	POWER / ***language of the location*** Smallest Largest ***language of the location***					INTEREST / ***language of the location*** Smallest Largest ***language of the location***				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Instructions for project partners (pilot site leaders): add as many rows as needed according to the number of identified stakeholders.

If you think there are stakeholders in UCCST sectors in XY pilot site, but are not listed, please list and assess them.

Translation of the above text into the language of the location.

STAKEHOLDER / *language of the location*	POWER / *language of the location* Smallest Largest *language of the location*					INTEREST / *language of the location* Smallest Largest *language of the location*				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5