Participatory Experiences In The Pegaso Project

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Public participation is widely recognized as a necessary tool to ensure a successful implementation of environmental strategies and plans. In order to ensure good governance, provide and gain useful information, mitigate conflicts, and understanding the needs of local population, participation is essential. Accordingly, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), dealing with contrasting perspectives and interests in coastal areas, needs to embed participation as a pillar of the development and implementation of its strategy. As other environmental policies, ICZM requires different participation processes according to the aim, the available tools, the process phase and the level of involvement, interest and knowledge of stakeholders. The FP7 PEGASO project (People for Ecosystem-based Governance in Assessing Sustainable development of Ocean and coast) considers participation as a cross-cutting issue relevant for the implementation of the principles of the ICZM Protocol in the Mediterranean and Black Sea countries. Participation is considered necessary also in the development of the needed tools for coastal management, and in the capacity building process. Within the PEGASO project ten "Collaborative Application SitES" (CASES) were identified in order to represent different scales, coastal issues, expertise and experiences. During the project, each CASE had the opportunity to apply and adapt different participation methods in order to better answer to their specific characteristics and needs as well as to bridge the gap between science and decision makers. The paper describes the development of the participation capacity building process within the project and its implementation in the CASEs. Furthermore, the description of the CASEs activities allows to draw attention to the relevant experiences made and lessons learned regarding the effectiveness of participation in the ICZM process as well as on its contribution in bridging the gap between science and decision-makers.