Stakeholder mapping and engagement

SEM

Servizzi Ewropej f'Malta

01 Introduction

Projects can be defined as a sequence of tasks completed to reach a specific outcome. By this definition, projects comprise a number of planned activities and internal tasks.

When applying for EU funds for a project, applicants are asked to map out the stakeholders for individual planned activities, including tailoring project promotion activities for such target groups.

During project implementation, participating organisations must ensure they reach the relevant stakeholders mentioned at application stage.

The next few pages provide useful tips to identify relevant target groups and stakeholders.

The Project's Audience 02

'Target groups' and 'stakeholders' form part of the project's audience:

- Target groups

Project target groups are those individuals and/ or organisations being targeted by the project (its objectives, activities and outcomes). Target groups should be invited to participate in the relevant project activities and have direct involvement in the project.

- Stakeholders

'Stakeholders' is a broader term which encompasses not only the project's target groups but individuals and/ or organisations to which the project (its objectives, activities and outcomes) can be of benefit. Stakeholders can be invited to participate in the relevant project activities and can also be targeted in project dissemination activities, such as promotion of the project through social media, final conferences and other outreach activities.

Since the term 'stakeholders' also comprises the 'target groups', this document will make reference to 'stakeholder mapping' encompassing both groups.

TIP 01

Understanding the distinction between stakeholders and target groups will allow for more accurate stakeholder mapping, including identifying the best outreach methods and the frequency of such outreach.

03 The Necessity for Proper Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder mapping involves both the identification of (i) relevant stakeholders and (ii) the best methods to reach stakeholders and to formulate risk mitigation plans in case it proves difficult to engage stakeholders in the project.

Stakeholder mapping must be carried out for each and every planned project activity. Typically, in EU funding application forms, applicants are already asked to define the project target groups and stakeholders and how they will be roped into the project. Although it is important to undertake stakeholder mapping at project development stage, periodic analysis of the stakeholder map during the project is still advisable. During project implementation, participating organisations have a clearer view of the needs on the ground. Therefore, periodic and up-to-date stakeholder mapping will improve the effectiveness of the project activities.

Depending on the scale and objectives of a particular project, there might be a variety of relevant stakeholders for each planned activity. Stakeholder mapping will help to narrow down the best outreach methods for each group of stakeholders. For example, the below actions need to be targeted to the correct audience and promoted/disseminated through the most appropriate channels:

- Invitations to planned project activities
- Promotion of the project (also known as 'dissemination' within the context of EU funded projects)
- Evaluation of project results and outcomes

Proper stakeholder mapping will promote better attendance and participation during planned activities, more relevant feedback during evaluation, and more impactful promotion of the project and its results.

Furthermore, stakeholder mapping is a useful tool in risk mitigation. During project management, participating organisations should be actively assessing risks which might compromise successful implementation of their project. It is important to mitigate such risks and address them if they materialise such as the risk of running over budget, incurring delays which compromise timely conclusion of the project, and not receiving the required cooperation from target groups to achieve project objectives.

Proper stakeholder mapping will also determine the influence and level of involvement different stakeholders should have during the project e.g. policy-makers should be actively roped in for projects which seek to influence policy change in a particular sector. The involvement of umbrella organisations can also be useful. For instance, if all sport organisations within a particular discipline are identified as stakeholders, the respective federations at national and EU level might be roped in to share the project results. If the project activities foresee research or needs analysis, such associate partners can also promote a link to an online survey which can be filled in by the project target group.

TIP 02

Knowing which stakeholders are relevant to the project improves budget planning at application stage (for example by calculating the costs of outreach methods needed or the indicative number of persons which should be budgeted for). Delays during project implementation can be minimised by knowing which stakeholders will need to be roped in at which stages of the project and contacting them well in advance.

Stakeholder Mapping: Different Methodologies 04

When mapping the project's audience, a distinction should be made between target groups to be directly involved in activities and the wider stakeholders to be targeted indirectly.

Target groups will be invited to participate actively within one or more project events. Stakeholders should be reached through broader outreach methods which are tailored to their needs. Further information on tailoring outreach methods is provided in the next section.

An important aspect of stakeholder mapping is determining the level of importance they hold to the project and therefore the level of involvement and frequency of communication needed. This is typically done by determining the level of influence and the interest they have in relation to the project. The lower the level of influence and interest, the less frequent the need for communication and the less involvement is required. The higher the level of influence and interest, the higher the frequency and level of involvement needed.

Keep satisfied	Manage closely
Keep completely informed, through regular contact and request their feedback	Request stakeholder feedback and utilise it in decision-making for the project
Monitor stakeholders and maintain periodic contact	Anticipate and meet needs, through frequent contact
Monitor	Keep informed

Influence

Interest

For simple projects, such as short projects and/ or those without a large number of planned activities, a more basic template can be used. The visual representation of a stakeholder map in this case can be varied. Depending on the preference of the participating organisations, the stakeholders can be written down in a list, mapped on a chart, listed in an organigram format or other presentation method. An assessment of the level of involvement and frequency of communication should still be undertaken but can be more easily determined and might not need to be mapped out to the same extent as for more complex projects.

In the next few pages are examples of such visual representations.

List format (example)

1. Launch Event

1.1 Representatives from the line ministry

1.2 Representatives from the Department of Industrial and Economic Relations

1.3 All registered social partners

2. Focus groups

2.1 Members of trade unions

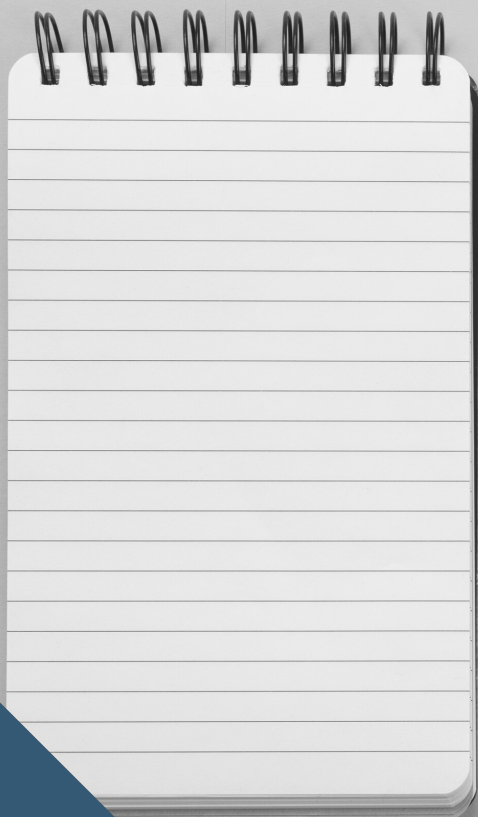2.2 Members of employers' organisations

3. Final conference

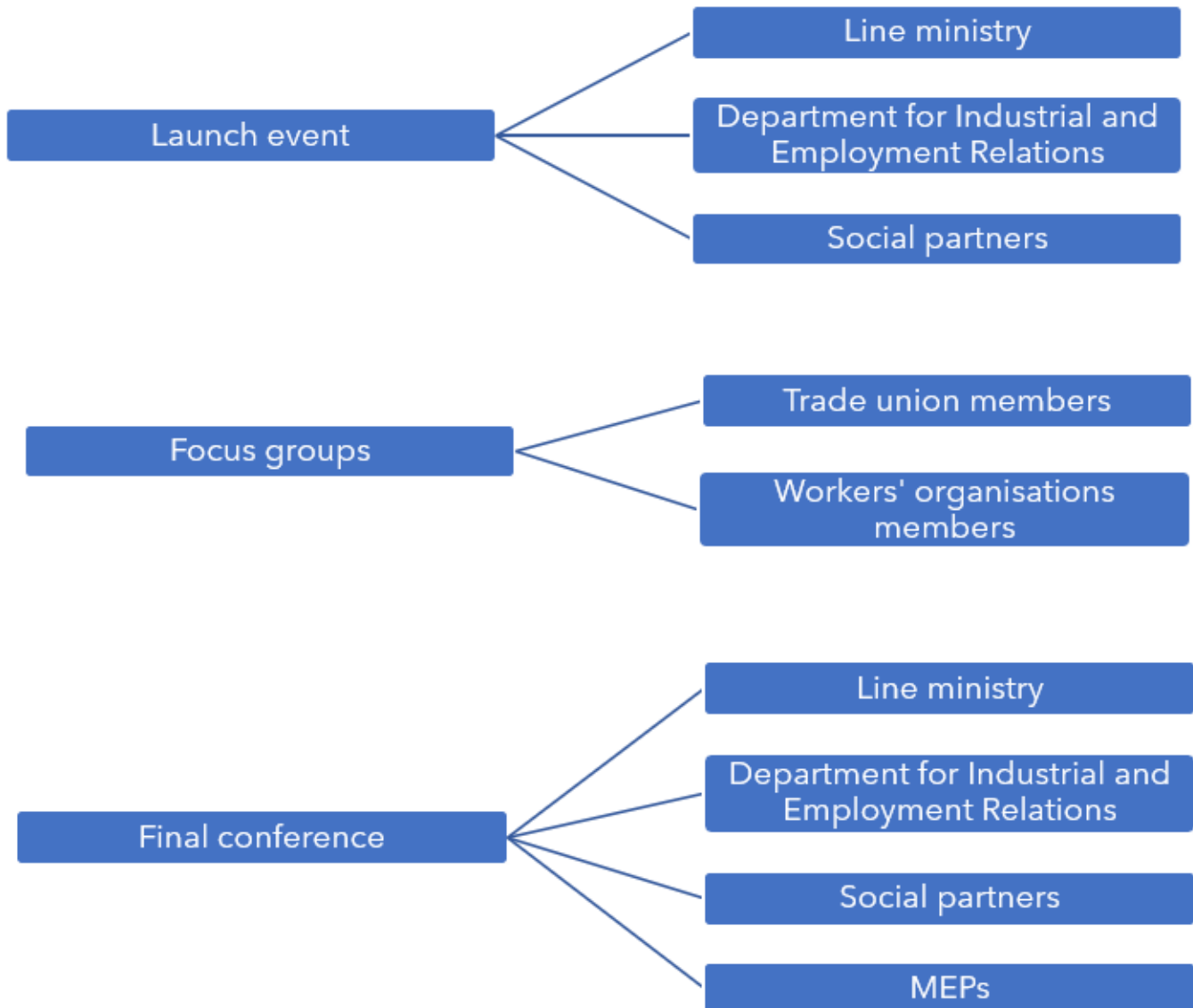3.1 Representatives from the line ministry

3.2 Representatives from the Department of Industrial and Economic Relations

3.3 All registered social partners

3.4 MEPs

Organigram (example)

Launch event
- Line ministry
- Department for Industrial and Employment Relations
- Social partners

Focus groups
- Trade union members
- Workers' organisations members

Final conference
- Line ministry
- Department for Industrial and Employment Relations
- Social partners
- MEPs

Effective use of stakeholder mapping 06

Tailoring Content

Once identified, the project's audience needs to be reached through a tailored methodology. Stakeholder mapping makes clearer which entities should be invited to which project events. Alongside the project timeline, this also makes it easier to map out when communication with different members of the project audience should be established.

Stakeholder Needs

Knowing the demographics of the project audience is key to selecting appropriate methods of reaching out to them. Younger demographics tend to prefer online methods of outreach such as websites and social media. Older demographics might prefer printed materials such as leaflets or newspaper articles. Whereas younger demographics prefer online events, older demographics might appreciate in-person activities more.

Accessibility of transport is another consideration which should be made – youths below driving age, foreigners and senior citizens are more likely to use public transportation whereas the remaining demographics will likely need parking facilities to be able to attend in-person events. Persons with mobility issues will need accessible venues and if targeting persons within a particular area, local events would be preferable to increase participation. The timing of activities and events (both the duration and time of day they are held) will also vary from one target group to another. Volunteers will likely be available outside of office hours, whereas professionals would prefer activities held during office hours. Similarly, calendar events and opening hours should be taken into consideration; school representatives will likely not be available during holiday periods and certain target groups/stakeholders may work reduced hours during summertime. Shutdown periods during Christmastime or summertime will also need to be taken into consideration. Where foreign partners are invited, similar periods throughout the calendar year in their country should be taken into account for joint events.

Financial Resources

The methodology for communicating with the project audience should be planned around their needs. Cost-effectiveness should be an important consideration. To reach the general public, billboards and social media are both useful tools however the difference in price between them is considerable. The project budget available will therefore influence the outreach methods which should be included in the project.

Financial considerations are important since EU grants are typically not increased during project implementation. This means that additional stakeholders/target groups identified during the project can only be reached within the resources already allocated to the project, or, through the participating organisations' own financial resources.

Since Malta has two official languages, selecting the appropriate language(s) for outreach methods is also instrumental in effectively reaching the intended audience. In the case of projects which have third country nationals as part of their audience, being aware of their respective native languages will be important. At application stage there should be proper budgeting for translation and/ or interpretation costs and developing materials in the correct target languages. This should also serve to boost their participation and improve communication with such stakeholder/target groups. To this end, as mentioned earlier, stakeholder mapping should be carried out at application stage to properly plan for such expenses. Nonetheless, during project implementation, participating organisations can undertake additional stakeholder mapping to identify the best methods to reach out to the identified stakeholders/target groups.

Identifying Outreach Methods

Social media has become one of the most useful outreach method because it allows for analytics on clicks, shares, comments and persons reached. Within all projects, but especially those receiving EU funding, it is important to be able to quantify and evaluate project success. Being able to account for the reach of promotional activities and evaluating the success of how the EU grant was spent will be useful when reporting on project progress and achievements to the fund operator. Social media, websites and promotional adverts all allow for analytics to be gathered, making them ideal communication methods to be used in EU funded projects.

Online events can also be considered for certain project activities. Online sessions should be kept short – between one or two hours – to avoid lack of engagement. In the case of activities which need more than two hours, such as training seminars, networking activities and hands-on workshops, in-person activities are preferable.

Stakeholder mapping will help event organisers to determine the ideal format and timing for events. This allows for more targeted planning and a more efficient use of resources, particularly financial resources.

06 Impact on project's EU added value through stakeholder involvement

EU funded projects vary widely in scope and reach but typically all projects should have what is known as an EU added value, which can be described as relevance at an EU level. This can include sharing project results to relevant stakeholders, sharing promotional content or evaluation tools (e.g., questionnaires) to a wider audience than the participating organisations have access to.

Organisations which have access to a wide range of stakeholders can provide a positive impact on the EU added value aspect of a project as they can promote project results and other information e.g., research findings to more stakeholders than the participating organisations have the capacity to reach. Moreover, umbrella organisations such as associations and federations (either at national or EU level) as well as decision-makers can also improve a project's EU added value. EU funded projects can include the involvement of decision-makers either to discuss their interest in being presented the project findings or in collaborating to promote the project and its results.

Proper stakeholder mapping will make it easier to identify such organisations/decision makers that can be roped into the project and the level of involvement which should be sought.

TIP 03

It is good practice to rope in decision-makers or representatives from decision-making entities within projects aiming at undertaking consultations on policies or legislation or when projects are exploring innovative methodologies in a particular sector. This includes projects which involve piloting such new approaches to test their effectiveness e.g., a project piloting new methodologies in youth work involving the relevant parliamentary secretariat or ministry as an associate partner.

Conclusion 07

Proper stakeholder mapping increases the effectiveness and relevance of project activities. Although important at the stage when applying for EU funding, more in-depth stakeholder mapping should also be undertaken during the implementation of projects to identify the frequency of involvement of stakeholders and which channels are most effective with different stakeholders.

By tailoring activities to the needs of the identified project audience there can be more targeted outreach and planning, widening the impact of the project in question. Stakeholder mapping also makes it easier to identify potential project risks and to allocate resources more efficiently to the project in question.

For other useful resources on the implementation of EU funded projects, please visit the SEM website.

SEM

Servizzi Ewropej f'Malta

🌐 sem.gov.mt

✉ info.sem@gov.mt

📞 +356 2779 7300

📍 280, Republic Street, Valletta VLT1112, Malta