

POLICY BRIEF

N°5, October 2017

The ResponSEable project

ResponSEable is a Horizon 2020 project on Ocean Literacy, which aims at supporting the emergence of an effective and dynamic European ocean knowledge system that contributes to raising awareness on everybody's (individual and collective, direct and indirect) responsibility and interest in a healthy and sustainable ocean. It has a regional focus in all European regional seas: the Baltic, Black, Mediterranean, North seas and the Atlantic ocean.

On board are experts from fifteen countries, representing various organizations, including researchers with expertise in marine sciences, environmental policy and communication, social-economic tools, artists, and multi-media.

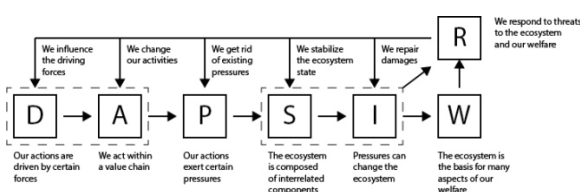
Trim your sails to the wind!

Focus of this policy brief: how is knowledge communicated?

The human-ocean relationship is not a one-sided relationship that only harms the ocean and benefits people. It is a **movement between complex human needs and a complex environment, which ultimately affects both**. ResponSEable uses a common framework - DAPSI(W)R, which has been described in the previous policy briefs to classify existing knowledge about drivers, actors/activities, pressures, state, impact (welfare) and response in 6 chosen ocean key stories. In this policy brief we will discuss about how the existing knowledge is being communicated.

In order to analyse existing media communications about human –ocean relations, we have matched them against the DAPSI(W)R Framework. Picture below shows how elements of DAPSI(w)R are translated into the key types of communication messages.

The communicated messages often use different combinations of elements of the DAPSI(w)R framework to tell us about the problem or to inspire us to make the change.



Communication narratives

When analyzing different varieties of communicated messages against DAPSI (w) R we arrived to the conclusion that there are several types of communication messages—or **communication narratives**. These narrative figures show various combinations of different type of information that they provide on each of the elements of DAPSI (w) R.

Depending on their combination, narrative figures potentially lead to different effects in the mind of the receiver of information.

ResponSEable identified the following 7 main narratives figures:

1. We are to blame for the degradation of the ecosystem

This narrative figure highlights certain environmental impacts in the ecosystem as well as pressures and pressure exerting activities. Still, driving forces behind activities are not emphasized, therefore these activities appear arbitrary. Also, this narrative figure does not provide actual or potential responses to the problem. It purely raises awareness for the issue, without contextual explanations or potential responses.

2. We are affected by certain pressure exerting activities

This narrative figure, focusing on activities, pressures and welfare aspects, leaves out driving forces, the relations between ecosystem components as well as potential responses. Like the above narrative figure,

this one also raises awareness for a problem, without contextual explanations or potential responses. In contrast to the narrative figure above, it accuses certain activities or actors of harming welfare.

3. We create problems in the ecosystem that affect us

This narrative figure connects the relationship from activities up to welfare aspects without breaking the causality. As it still lacks a description of actual or potential responses to the problem, as well as the driving forces behind the activities, it stays in the realm of awareness raising, even though concrete responses could be available.

4. We reflect the harm that has already been done

It does not matter if environmental impacts or welfare impacts are emphasized. This narrative leaves out the whole chain of human influence from driving forces to exerted pressure. As the human influence is absent in the narrative, these responses are more or less incapable in terms of solving the problem. They have to focus on social and cognitive responses that demand for more information on the causes of reflected problems.

5. We care about the harm that has already been done

Responses highlighted by this kind of narratives are meant to work actively to heal the ecosystem as a way of caring for nature without mentioning our own interest, it focuses on responses to changes in the ecosystem, and pressures that cause these changes.

6. We can control problematic activities

Control over activities that are problematic, without further explanations given, activities are not seen in a societal context as their driving forces are not mentioned.

7. We need a fundamental societal change

Responsibility is shifted towards more abstract driving forces that cannot be easily controlled. These narratives call for a change of consumption patterns regarding fish or energy, instead of trying to regulate or control the activities.

It is not possible to say that one narrative figure is better or more effective than the other, however, not all narrative figures are useful to target the relevant group.

How to choose the right narratives to address the specific audience, which will be effective?

The answer seems to be on three conditions:

1. *Is the target group the same group that has to change its behavior and be more responsible and ocean literate to improve the human-ocean relationship? Or is the target group an intermediate group that needs to increase its ocean literacy to put pressure on the group that must change its concrete behavior?*

2. *What are the appropriate possible responses towards specific challenges for the environment and human welfare, i.e. the right behavior change. Which component of the DAPSI(W) framework do they target?*

3. *Are the appropriate responses known to the target group?*

How do different groups communicate with each other?

The flow of information between senders and receivers is complex and multi-faceted in many key stories and target countries. Different information is sent from a large number of senders to as many recipients.

Individual actors are likely to take a big part in mobilizing other groups to react to a marine or environmental problem, including other individuals. In their function as individuals they are less likely to inform other groups on complex issues, but may pass information on to other individuals. Also, Individual actors play a key role in expressing continuity aspects with each other, as well as other groups.

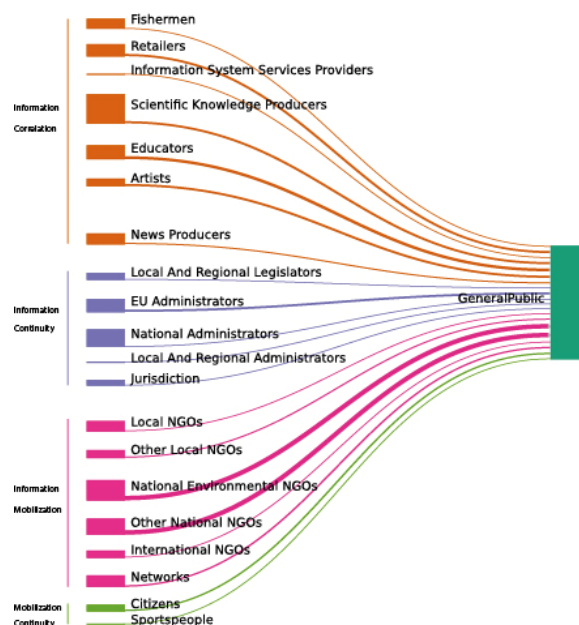
Social actors usually play an important role in informing other actors from all spheres on marine or environmental challenges, as well as in explaining relevant issues. They also play a role in mobilizing individuals and other social actors.

Regulative actors inform others and maintain or forge a common cultural practice between all groups.

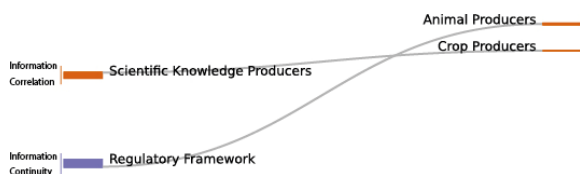
Professional actors inform others on their practices and new developments. They also support the maintenance of development of professional practices.

Example below shows the information flow between the general public and other actors in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.

KS Sustainable Fisheries / Target Group General Public (PT)



In contrast to the findings of the fisheries case, the information flows on eutrophication in Latvia shows a different picture. Here, the information flow towards crop and animal producers are limited to information from only two actor groups



Not one communication targeting one group of actors, but a multitude of communications targeting different societal roles of people is needed to support a societal discourse that ultimately leads to a behavior change in society.

Knowledge and motivation

Knowledge on the impacts of problematic activities, environmental or welfare impacts, is a good start to find some motivation to change one's own behavior. But motivation can also be drawn from a sense of beauty of an intact ecosystem that can only be created by a certain degree of understanding. Finally, the feeling of a common value set with society or even a part of society is motivational. Such feelings can in fact be supported by the face of a celebrity on campaigning material or by awareness raising materials that are shared by friends on social media.

Communications towards professionals in the key stories barely touch the challenges for the ecosystem, but are **limited to activities, exerted pressures and regulative, technological and economic responses**.

As citizens and consumers, the public in general are the receivers of more diffuse information and knowledge through random sources on social media and television, a wide spread discourse on different aspects of the human-ocean relationship from a broad variety of societal transmitters is to be seen as more effective than narrow and streamlined communications.

Below are the **main gaps found in the communicated knowledge and target groups**:

Microplastic in Cosmetics: The key story is **lowly covered in terms of different target groups, the variety of messages**, and in terms of content, but bears a high value to illustrate the human-ocean relationship. Therefore, it would be beneficial to support an expansion of the thematic focus on all areas of concern, including the **value chain of cosmetic production, the interrelationship or ecosystem components, political, economic and social responses**.

Sustainable Fisheries: The key story is highly covered in terms of different target groups and the variety of messages. The coverage of content varies between different countries and target groups.

Focusing on consumption related messages is not recommended as these are mostly covered by existing resources and campaigns. **Retailers and especially retailers** that are willing to support sustainable fisheries **might be targeted** to deepen their understanding of ecological relationships and economic challenges.

Marine Renewable Energy: The key story is highly covered in terms of different target groups. The variety of messages varies in different countries, especially regarding the public in general. **The coverage of content is low, especially on the ecosystem state components, welfare and responses**. A broad increase of the understanding of relations between the technology and ecosystem components, the potential impacts also in regard to other ecosystem components and stories might be useful. Also, a clear systemized view on **responses of the public, citizens and consumers can be supported**.

Agriculture and Eutrophication: The key story is lowly covered in terms of different target groups, the variety of messages, and in terms of the content. The effect of the pressure eutrophication is barely explained, the actual ecosystem effects as well as welfare effects are not explained. The key story has a **huge potential** to broaden the understanding of the relation between a globalized economic segment and a local environmental feature, the Baltic Sea, with its complex ecological relations. A broad increase of the **understanding of relations between the globalized segment of the economy and ecosystem components, the impacts on the environment and welfare aspects is recommended**. A clear and systemized view on the **responsibilities of citizens and consumers can be supported**.

Ballast Water and Invasive Species: The key story is **highly covered in terms of different target groups**. The variety of messages is relatively low. The coverage of content is activity and pressure focused, also welfare aspects are covered. **Responses are limited to regulative and economic aspects. Social responses are absent**. The key story has the potential to connect a highly-globalized segment of the economy to very local environmental and welfare impacts. Local information campaign connecting the two dimensions would be a welcome step to bridge a very distant pressure exerting activity with the local environment of people near to the sea.

Analysis and classification of types of knowledge that need to be communicated to increase ocean literacy in Europe showed that a move beyond the classic 'scientific' ocean literacy principles as developed in the USA is needed. In order to support a behavior change in Europe we must move towards **responsible ocean literacy, which includes knowledge on individual, social and political responsibility as well as reflections, emotions and actions in addition to the environmental and economic knowledge**.

Follow our journey with the next policy briefs

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