

SHERPA
Rural Science-Society-Policy
Interfaces

PRACTICE ABSTRACT

Engaging the hard-to-reach groups in Greece



AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS
ΓΕΩΠΟΝΙΚΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ

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The MAP of South Aegean in Greece is coordinated by the team of Athens University of Agriculture and it operated at regional level.

The main lessons learnt and recommendations for engaging actors that are more difficult to reach or who are not 'the usual suspects' in engaging with traditional rural development actors, are presented below.

In the context of the MAP activities, the most difficult group of stakeholders to reach were the policy-makers, due to their busy schedules, but also the elderly community members who are less familiar with digital technology. As all interactions of the MAP were done online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this created additional challenges in engaging some less connected actors.

Therefore, it is recommended to create different opportunities for engagement, e.g., interviews, informal conversations, surveys, group discussions, allowing everybody to contribute and adapting the means of communication (meetings, telephone, online) to the preferences of the actors.

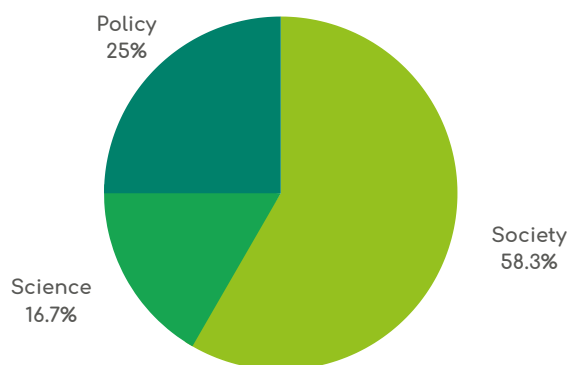
It is also important to take the necessary time to build relations and trust and take an exploratory approach in early stages. Sharing information material with potential members has helped to enhance the understanding of the SHERPA project, its context and the role of MAPs. Additionally, presenting the main findings of the desk research was useful to boost engagements, as well as selecting topics for discussion which were of interest to the members, creating an attractive dialogue and adding value for them.

A key factor is to keep people engaged and motivated, manage expectations, show progress and ensure the results are correctly considered.

MAP South Aegean
Location South Aegean, Greece
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More info https://rural-interfaces.eu/maps/greece-south-aegean/



MAP membership





ABOUT THE MAP

The Multi-Actor Platform of South Aegean is a regional platform consisting of representatives of farmer and agri-organisations, business, universities, civil society and members of the regional government. The organisation responsible for the MAP is the Agricultural University of Athens.

The region of South Aegean is characterised by its traditional economy, low levels of education, high degree of unemployment and depopulation. Due to the insular nature of the region, the large number of islands (a total of 79 islands of which 48 are inhabited), there are serious disparities in the development of the different islands. The economy of the region is heavily dependent on tourism, as 62% of the work force is employed in the tertiary sector.



OBJECTIVES

The activities of this MAP are designed to achieve the following specific objectives:

- Promote innovation and digital transformation: propose sustainable strategies for the adoption of modern technologies and innovative practices and support activities which could create a framework (legal, organisational, natural resources, physical facilities, digital, funding, etc.) for achieving a large number of innovation initiatives.
- Foster socio-economic rural development: tailor environmentally friendly interventions exploiting research, technology and innovation achievements, focusing on the strengths of the region (renewable energy resources).
- Upgrade of businesses, facilities and services to attract investments: design actions for strengthening the entrepreneurship support structures, the resilience of the businesses, as well as the partnerships between them.



MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The South Aegean MAP launched a process of identifying and investigating the main drivers and challenges related to growth and development in the region through a number of activities. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided to host online meetings (through Skype) and divide MAP members into three sub-groups for a better management and moderation of the online discussions.

The analysis results together with the findings of the desk research were used for the development of the South Aegean region's [MAP Discussion Paper](#). In a second stage, actions involved the launch of a questionnaire to the MAP members, containing the key points derived from the online discussion analysis. The desk research findings; the results of the online discussion analysis and the survey fed into the first draft of the MAP Position paper. In a third stage, this first draft of the MAP Position Paper was sent to the MAP members prior to the consensus meeting. The final result, the [MAP Position Paper](#) of the South Aegean region, fed into the SHERPA Position Paper.



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