Stakeholder Co-creation and Mobilization Charter

Deliverable 5.4

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Abstract	This deliverable presents a brief overview of the CrossGov's approach to co-creation and engagement of stakeholders, implementations steps, outputs, and tools. It also focuses on the Stakeholder Mobilization and Co-building Charter to be signed by CrossGov partners and external stakeholders.
Keywords	Stakeholder mobilization, co-creation

Table of contents

Table of contents 2

Introduction 3

Co-creation in the context of CrossGov: terms and definitions 4

Principles for co-creation in CrossGov 5

Methodology and implementation steps 5

Expected outputs of co-creation 8

Frequency and formats of the co-creation processes in CrossGov 9

Tools supporting co-creation and engagement processes 9

Stakeholder Mobilization Charter with external stakeholders 10

Literature 12

Annex I: Template for Mobilization Charter for stakeholders 13

Annex II. Stakeholder Forum - what could it be? 14

Introduction

Stakeholder mobilization and co-creation is a **central principle** transversally applied to all Work Packages (WP) and tasks carried out **in CrossGov**. Its application will ensure that research results, policy recommendations and products which support the wider dissemination of project results (e.g. the interactive roadmap and the blueprint to strengthen the Science-Policy-Society (SPS) interface of WP4) are robust, relevant and fit-for-purpose to support policymaking.

Experiences in different EU research projects illustrate that applying the principle can be challenging. This can result *inter alia* from insufficient expertise and capacity and too limited resources (time) allocated to the sound application of the principle. It can result from different understandings of what the principles imply for researchers implementing research activities or different views on the scientific value of stakeholder processes and the knowledge they generate.

In order to **achieve a common view of the researchers of CrossGov** on **stakeholder engagement** and **co-creation** in CrossGov, the work has started from the very beginning of the project. The main principles and approach for it were already laid out in the Deliverables 5.2 (Stakeholder list) and 5.3 (one-page Stakeholder mobilization charter).

This deliverable presents further advanced approach (after literature review and internal workshop with research partners) that CrossGov will be following for the stakeholder engagement and co-creation.

In this deliverable we focus on the brief overview of the terms and definitions and principles (p. 4) and shortly briefly present the approach which will guide the co-creation (p.5), showing links between different processes and steps of the process of the 'co-creation in CrossGov' as well as expected outputs (p.8) and frequency and the different formats of stakeholder engagement we will use for co-creation (included in the forthcoming internal operational guidance). The deliverable further describes the tools which will be used to support the stakeholder co-creation process in CrossGov (p.9)

The deliverable concludes with a section on the **Stakeholder Mobilization Charter for "external use"**, signed (or confirmed) by partners AND external stakeholders mobilised in CrossGov research activities carried out under WP1 to WP4, in particular under the WP3 case studies (p.10 and annex I).

Based on the concept and tools presented in this deliverable, CrossGov is developing an internal 'operational guidance' for its researchers, WP1, 2 and 3, with detailed step by step explanation (including examples of tools, templates, best practices) on how to engage stakeholders at each step, including tracking and monitoring and evaluation of the added value. This guidance will be shared with the research partners by end of March 2023 and training will be organized on how to use specific tool, such as stakeholder database, mobilization charters in the work of the case studies.

Co-creation in the context of CrossGov: terms and definitions

There are many definitions of stakeholder engagement and co-creation. In CrossGov we define the **stakeholders** as members of the policy making and policy implementation community in the relevant marine policy areas. They are public and private actors, institutions and groups involved in both law and policy formulation, as well as application and implementation, from the EU and regional to national and sub-national levels of governance.

Under **co-creation** we mean a process of integrating stakeholders in all stages of project design, development and dissemination. In the frame of Crossgov, the stakeholders are involved in the identification of challenges and opportunities related to coherence and cross-compliance. This ensures that orientations are informed by the relevant actors and authorities involved in implementation and policy design. Secondly, the stakeholders are involved in the co-creation ofinnovative proposals and roadmaps to enhance cross-compliance in diverse policy and geographic areas within Europe.

Another important term, which we will be using is **Living Labs (LL).** The European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL)[1] defines LLs as "user-centered, open innovation ecosystems based on a systematic user co-creation approach, integrating research and innovation processes in real-life communities and settings". Furthermore, ENoLL argues that LLs act as "intermediaries between citizens, research organizations, companies, cities and regions for joint value co-creation, rapid prototyping or validation to scale up innovation and businesses." In addition, LL approach to co-creation develops the iterative **process** of experimenting and learning from year to year (Evans et al., 2015). The operationalization of LL methods and tools is something that will be elaborated in the forthcoming internal operational guidance.

Through the co-creation process, a relationship based on trust is built with stakeholders. The co-creation process begins by establishing this trust by working together from the very start. The stakeholders are involved in the **design** of the research activities, starting with the **co-development of research questions**. Then they are involved in **identifying challenges** due to their experience and competencies in the field. Participating in this co-creation process allows the participants to feel that their concerns are considered and leads to more willingness to participate in the research and decision-making process.

To develop a sound approach to stakeholder mobilization and co-building in CrossGov, we have undertaken a literature review of different approaches/tools (including literature on LL) and collected partners' experiences. These were presented and discussed at two, internal workshops (December 2, 2022 and January 10, 2023 with a significant representation of CrossGov partners being present). After co-creation workshops and revision of the methodologies and tools, the approach presented in the JRC (2022) report became the building base for stakeholder mobilization in CrossGov.

[1] www.enoll.org

Principles for co-creation in CrossGov

After discussions and exchange of thoughts in the two internal workshops, the project partners agreed to adopt the JRC (2022) principles for co-creation in CrossGov :

- **Clarity of scope and purpose** - The boundaries and the intention of the entire research process, including the project workshop(s), must be identified and clearly determined. It should be ensured that decisions relevant to the previously specified research needs are enabled, along with the commonly defined and shared goals.
- **Focus on outcome and transparency -** Expectations and expected outcomes must be defined early to ensure optimal results. The outcomes and the entire research process need to be transparent to whomever it might concern by using appropriate visual techniques and communication.
- **Inclusiveness and representativeness** –To ensure an ideal development of collective intelligence, as well as the legitimacy of the process, the appropriate participants should be selected in terms of individual expertise, representation of all the relevant stakeholder groups and diversity of perspective[2]. The parties concerned with the targeted policy context should have their knowledge valued and the mandate to shape decisions through the entire process while simultaneously building trust among each other to create agency for transformation.
- **High-quality tailored process** - The design of the participatory elements has to be closely adapted to the specific needs and constraints of the process it serves. In particular, while the selected formats should be based on experience and draw on well-established methods, the overall process must be closely tailored to suit the identified needs. (To ensure good outcomes, the participatory moments must be prepared with care and executed professionally.)
- **Systemic perspective** - The process must help the participants to develop an 'out-of the- box' understanding of the issues at stake. This is essential for understanding the positioning and dependency of the discussed topics on external factors, connecting the parts to the whole, avoiding 'tunnel thinking' and building coherence of actions. Developing a holistic, systemic perspective ensures the robustness of the outcomes.

These principles reflect the philosophy and nature of the co-creation and mobilization in CrossCov. These principles were at the basis of the Mobilization Charter for CrossGov Researchers (See Deliverable 5.3).

Methodology and implementation steps

Extensive literature review was carried out under task 5.1 on general co-creation and engagement frameworks and tools (including Brower et al 2015, Cvitanovic and Hobday, 2016, 2018, JRC 2022), multi-actors platforms (Nesheim et al 2021, Brower 2016), as well as marine and policy specific literature (Mauser et al. 2013; Ramirez-Monsalve and Van Tatenhove, 2020, Pope and al. 2019). Living Labs (LL) approach and its toolkits (ENoLL) was also studied, as it is based on an iterative process for co-creation and learning with users, which allows to evaluate and adapt the results/recommendations from year to year.

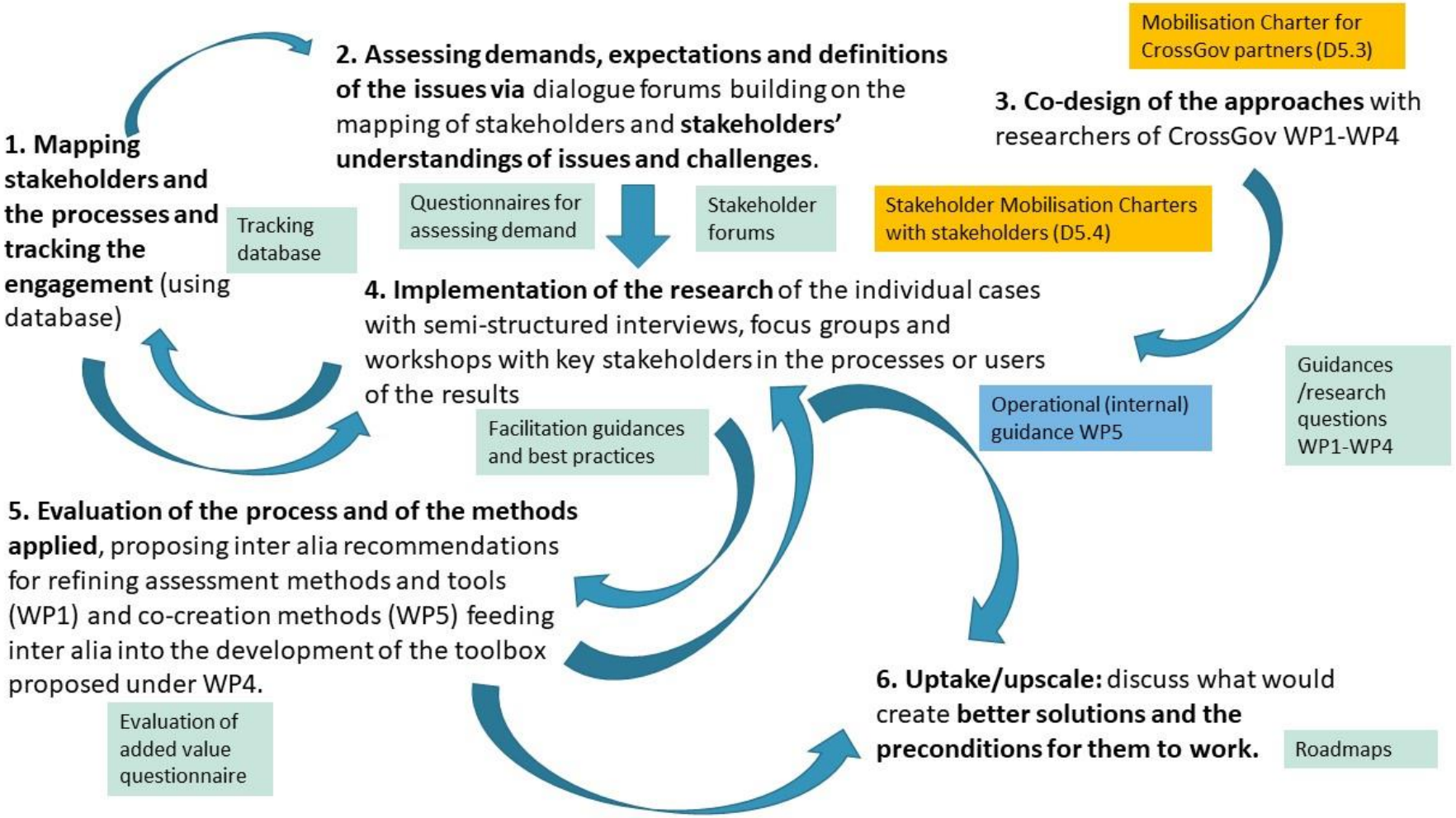
[2] A suggested process will be included in the Internal operational guidance

Project partners' experiences with different frameworks and tools for stakeholder engagement in different projects were collected and analyzed as well. After this analysis we propose to have the following **three step approach to co-creation in CrossGov**:

1. **(Before) Co-design** - Definition of the issues, mapping and co-design of approaches to be followed in WP1 -WP4
1. **(During) Exploration and Implementation** - research in case studies (WP3)
2. (**After) Evaluation and Validation** (including conclusions, added value) and recommendations for uptake/upscale (WP4)

Following this approach, we propose the following **key steps to implement the co-creation approach** in CrossGov (diagram 1 below on the next page):

Diagram 1. Co-creation approach in CrossGov and its steps



To properly mobilize stakeholders, they should be involved in the three phases (see part 1, 3 steps framework of Crossgov) of the project design. Stakeholder mobilization does not only imply to incorporate their concerns into the planning/process, it means for them to participate in each step of the process (Cvitanovic, 2016).

Following from the diagram 1, we translate the different steps and put them in the proposed framework of co-creation of CrossGov below:

Table 1. Implementation steps of co-creation in CrossGov framework

BEFORE	1. **Mapping stakeholders:** initial identification of the stakeholders have been done in the proposal stage as well as in the deliverable 5.2 – Stakeholder list. This list is to be revisited by each case study (following instructions and toolkits presented in the internal operational guidance and case study guidance) and recorded into the stakeholder database. 2. **Assessing demands and definitions of the issues via** dialogue forums building on the mapping of stakeholders and **stakeholders' understandings of issues and challenges**. These will be used to focus CrossGov research with more specific research questions and hypotheses on mechanisms that contribute to policy integration delivering the GD objectives. Stakeholders' expectations to the co-creation process will be used to streamline participatory processes in and between cases.
DURING	3. **Co-design of the approaches** with researchers of CrossGov WP1-WP4 - the internal operational guidance will include detailed step by step explanation (including examples of tools, templates, best practices) on how to engage stakeholders at each step, including tracking and monitoring and evaluation of the added value 4. **Implementation of the research** of the individual cases. Methods will primarily be examination of documents from planning and policy processes under study and semi-structured interviews with key participants in the processes or users of the results. Cross-case comparisons of similarities and differences between the individual cases in regard to policy integration, explanations of which mechanisms explain these, and conclusions on barriers and enablers for better policy integration. Researchers' results will be vetted by stakeholders in workshops or focus groups.
AFTER	5. **Evaluation of the process and of the methods applied**, proposing inter alia recommendations for refining assessment methods and tools (WP1) and co-creation methods (WP5) feeding inter alia into the development of the toolbox proposed under WP4. 6. **Uptake/upscale:** a second step of dialogues will discuss what would create **better solutions and the preconditions for them to work.**

Expected outputs of co-creation

As can be seen in the diagram and table above, we will engage stakeholders in different phases and steps with the following outputs which we foresee from this co-creation and engagement:

- First, within Crossgov products delivered, co-creation processes will be implemented throughout the different WPs :

- **the assessment framework under WP1** – co-created with experts and users that are applying similar frameworks and will apply it in the future**,**
- based on evaluation of the process and the methods applied, proposing inter alia recommendations for refining assessment methods and tools (WP1) and co-creation methods (WP5), feeding inter alia into the **development of the toolbox proposed under WP4.**

- On a level of case study:
  - **Overarching research questions** across case studies WP3 with case study leaders and stakeholders; Specific case research questions will be refined with the stakeholders.
  - **Cross-case comparisons of similarities and differences** between the individual cases regarding policy integration, explanations of the mechanisms, and **conclusions on barriers and enablers for better policy integration**
  - P**olicy recommendations in the case studies under WP3** – co-developed with relevant stakeholders targeted by these recommendations and in charge of their application,
  - **Co-creation of the training material under WP5** – co-developed with "trainers" - project partners who would be implementing co-creation in the WPs and case studies of the CrossGov.

Frequency and formats of the co-creation processes in CrossGov

The **frequency of interaction with stakeholders** for co-creation activities will depend on the specific organization of each project task and case study. In any case, it will take into account the issue of stakeholder fatigue, and it will be designed to reduce stakeholders' time and efforts to a minimum.

During all three phases (BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER) (see Table 1) the researchers of CrossGov will use different **formats** to engage with the stakeholders, using communication by email, phone, online, hybrid and in-person events (such as questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, workshops, observations, dialogue forums with key participants in the processes or users of the results).

Detailed guidance on use of these formats, including facilitation is being developed and will be presented to project partners in the '**operational guidance'** internal document. All of the interactions with the stakeholders will be tracked and monitored with the help of the **stakeholder database** (Deliverable 5.2). These activities and their formats will be streamlined and aligned with the guidances from WP1, WP2, and WP3 case studies.

Tools supporting co-creation and engagement processes

Implementation steps of the co-creation and engagement process identified in Diagram 1 and Table 1, will be supported by several tools/documents/processes:

- An "**internal operational guidance on stakeholder mobilization**" to support research activities carried out under WP1, WP2, WP3 and WP4. This internal document, explains the logic and the process of working with the stakeholders at

different project moments. This guidance illustrates methods and tools to mobilize stakeholders and **facilitation techniques**. It includes, among others, guides to construct surveys and tips to organize interviews, as well as other practices from existing guides and toolkits that will help operationalize each of the five co-creation principles. It includes also the description of **tools** that can be **applied to monitor and evaluate the added** and relevance of individual stakeholder events and the entire co-building process - for CrossGov researchers and all stakeholders involved.

- A **stakeholder tracking database** (or stakeholder list – see Deliverable D5.2) that will help monitor the stakeholders mobilized (who, when, how and with which outcomes/implications) in all activities carried out under CrossGov. The tracking tool will facilitate interactions between CrossGov partners and stakeholders, avoiding duplication and fostering synergies. The prototype of the database has been created and is currently being tested by the project partners.
- **Stakeholder Forum**: A soft virtual community (setup and managed under Task 5.2) connected to CrossGov's research activities via its regular or ad-hoc (seizing opportunities) contributions to thinking and knowledge creation will ensure that all CrossGov events are linked to the co-creation process and organization of stakeholders. Participants in the community will not go through any application process but just express interest in/register for knowledge-sharing events and workshops, as well as decide to provide written contributions that become part of the public good and are accessible to all (for more details on the first proposed ideas of the Forum, see Annex II).
- **Mobilization Charters:** Two mobilization and co-creation charters, ensuring the commitment of partners (a template Charter document was already presented in D5.3) and external stakeholders (see details below, and annex I) to the co-building processes of CrossGov.

Stakeholder Mobilization Charter with external stakeholders

While the research partners committed to principles that will ensure inclusiveness and co-creation in the stakeholder processes (D5.3) and agree to map/track/monitor stakeholder activities in the database (D5.2), it is crucial to get the commitment of the stakeholders themselves and mutual understanding and commitment between researchers and stakeholders. For this purpose, this deliverable focuses on a "reciprocal" **Mobilization Charter**, which has also been developed as a one-page document/template outlining key commitments and rules to be followed throughout the project by CrossGov partners and external stakeholders. The draft text of the Charter is presented in Annex I of this deliverable. The charter is divided into two parts: what the researchers of CrossGov are committed to and what the stakeholder is coming to do during the project's timeline.

Diagram 1 proposes that both Stakeholder Mobilization Charters are co-developed early in the process. The charter for external stakeholders is to be signed by those at the beginning of the process after the first contacts have been made and interest is confirmed. The text of the charter template can then be individually adapted (to the needs of a case study/stakeholder's role). It will then be signed by the CrossGov partner carrying out the task (or the respective WP lead) on one side and the stakeholder concerned on the other. This confirmation will be done either with an electronic signature or by email.

The charter also mentions the informed consent, which has to be given by research participants separately to the signature of the Mobilization Charter, as this is a requirement for respecting the ethical principles and IPR framework under HE projects (Informed consent form, Annex to D6.2 Strategy for addressing Ethics and the IP). Moreover, the charter references the data protection management in CrossGov and how the project deals with GDPR-related data.

This short document, outlining the approach and the process of stakeholder engagement and co-creation foreseen in CrossGov, will be introduced to the stakeholder before signing the Charter. This document will be complemented by an infographic (designed by ACTeon) where the expected involvement of the stakeholders and added value for them will be already outlined. This document will be shared with all partners (together with the charter template) before the first contact with the stakeholders is made.

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Annex I: Template for Mobilization Charter for stakeholders

Through the present document, I acknowledge the importance of the stakeholder processes developed in the CrossGov project.
As a CrossGov partner, I commit to the following:

- Explain the process/approach to the participants/stakeholders
- Involve and inform on time in advance about activities planned
- Clarify any questions that may arise
- When scheduling activities, I try to minimise stakeholder fatigue
- Respect the timing allocated to the activities
- Keep all the private data and exchanges confidential (under GDPR rules)
- Share and validate the results with the stakeholder before making them public

As a stakeholder, I commit that to the best of my availability, I will :

- Take part in the activities proposed by CrossGov partner
- Join the Stakeholder Forum and its activities
- Respect rules/ deadlines set by the CrossGov partner
- Notify CrossGov partner in time if not available and make efforts to reschedule
- Participate in the collective exercises for co-building
- Respect the opinions of others
- Share information about CrossGov in my networks
- Disseminate key results and outputs for broader reach and upscaling

As a stakeholder, the frequency of engagement, the formats and outputs were clearly explained to me by the CrossGov project partner (researcher) who approached me.
Both parties agree to engage in the process for the duration of the CrossGov project (31.08.2025). They will, if necessary, adapt the approach to our engagement to the specific needs of the particular case study, policy analysis and development, possibly with further ad-hoc activities.
Moreover, both parties are aware of the data management principles and application of the GDPR framework, as was the project's strategy for Ethics and IP. The stakeholder as a research participant has also given informed consent in case deemed necessary.

Date, place
Name, organisation, and signature of CrossGov representative

_____

Date, place
Name, organisation and signature of the stakeholder

_____

Annex II. Stakeholder Forum - what could it be?

Context

The CrossGov proposes to setup a **CrossGov Stakeholder Forum** or *CrossGov's policy making community* which strong involvement in tasks and activities (scenarios, assessment of coherence, identification of barriers and opportunities for cross-compliance, development of road maps…) will ensure **co-creation** and **inclusiveness**. **Co-creation** relates to the process and mechanisms set up for mobilizing Forum's members into the project knowledge creation activities. **Inclusiveness** refers to "who should be in" and with which role. The proposal Stakeholder Forum is expected to be broad, *encompassing all relevant entities and policy institutions involved in the process of decision-making, policymaking, and planning at multiple levels ranging from international to local*. The proposal further specifies that a gender balance will be ensured in the Stakeholder Forum with *some institutions and actors having already expressed interest in… joining the Stakeholder Forum*.

What the CrossGov's Stakeholder Forum could be?

There could be different ways to organize a CrossGov's Stakeholder Forum, including (examples):

- An **institutionalized Forum** with recognized members and a membership application process, a specific governance, a digital tool providing functionalities required for the community to share, discuss and co-develop its own initiatives and dedicated communication (including branding). Such a Forum could have individual working groups, its own events and communication, with the CrossGov consortium playing the role of the Forum's secretariat;
- A **soft virtual community** connected to CrossGov's research activities via its regular or *adhoc* (seizing opportunities) contributions to thinking and knowledge creation. It could be supported by digital platform aimed at storing, "recording" and keeping track of activities and results/outcomes. Participants in the community will not go through any application process, but just express interest in/register to knowledge sharing events and workshops as well as decide to provide written contributions that become part of the public good and are accessible to all.

In light with its ambition and the resources available, we propose that the CrossGov's Stakeholder Forum is a **fully virtual and ad-hoc platform that connects CrossGov to policy and stakeholder processes/initiatives** that are central to CrossGov's knowledge, results and dissemination/exploitation. In particular:

- **EU policy implementation** support processes that
    - Steer and accompany the implementation and revision of key framework policies relevant to CrossGov at the European scale, in particular
        - EC: the Common Implementation Strategy **(CIS)** for the MSFD and WFD, as well as the Member State Expert Group (MSEG) on MSP, the EU Biodiversity Platform, … for agriculture and fisheries
        - EP: Fisheries, ENVI and agriculture Committee
    - Bring together a wide range of stakeholder representatives relevant to Blue Economy (forthcoming **Blue Economy Forum**) or ocean literacy (**EU4Ocean**)
    - **P**lay a role of coordinating and strengthening spatial coherence and synergies at regional scales, including:
    - Regional Sea Conventions (HELCOM, OSPAR, UNEP MAP RAC, Black Sea Commission)

  - Regional Fisheries Management Organisations for the Mediterranean (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, hosted at FAO) and the
- **EU knowledge and innovation**, in particular
  - The **Mission Ocean** process and activities and its different **Lighthouses** that aim at guiding and consolidating the uptake of innovation to real life applications. There is one EU wide and 4 Lighthouse (Baltic/North seas, Atlantic & Arctic, Mediterranean, Danube) processes mobilizing a wide range of stakeholders around specific thematic areas;
  - The European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Water, the EIP-AGRI addressing food from the sea or the European Aquaculture Innovation and Technology Platform
- **Civil society and economic sectors**
  - Key EU representatives of **sectors** that are central to the assessment of policy coherence and cross-compliance, in particular: Agriculture - COPA-COGEACA; Energy - Ocean Energy Europe; Fisheries & aquaculture- Europeche, the European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO) and LIFE (small fishers) and the Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)
  - Key EU environmental **civil society organisations** that are active in the field of ocean conservation: Oceana, Seas at Risk, ClientEarth, Bloom, Birdlife Europe, Surfrider, WWF, Ocean and Climate platform
  - Key networks of local authorities, e.g. Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions/CPMR, ICLEI…

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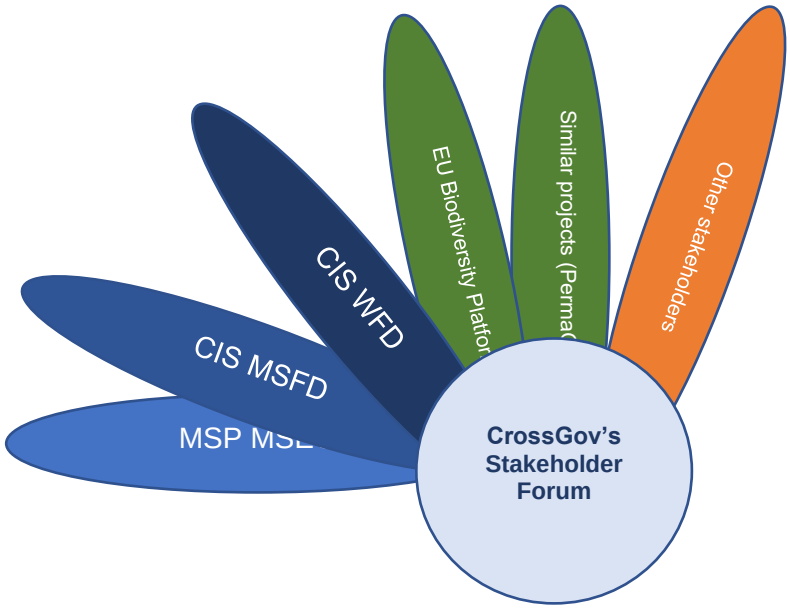

Which activities proposed for the CrossGov's Stakeholder Forum?

The moderation of the CrossGov Stakeholder Forum and the interaction between CrossGov partners and members of the different communities will take the form of:

- Develop **surveys** (online, semi-structured) for members of these communities – collecting demand, assessment demands and challenges;
- Make **presentations** of CrossGov objectives, methods, results at key meetings, workshops and conferences organized under these processes/by these different communities – for collecting feedbacks and consolidating knowledge and results- - note that this is directly connected to Task 5.4 (key events and milestones of individual processes - that could be opportunities for presenting results/co-working with small groups of representatives;
- **Co-organise workshops** or **focus groups** mobilizing representatives/members of individual communities or from la l communities for presenting (CrossGov in general, preliminary results), consolidating, co-developing (road map…)…
- **Develop targeted communication** – content/narratives, format

A CrossGov page on the web will be dedicated to the Stakeholder Forum, providing access to all material collected and produced within the SF activities and moderation.

Note that it will not be always the same representative from a given policy process, platform of coalition participating in CrossGov interface events and interactions. However, all debates and discussions will be reported and stored for easy tracking.