



Public Education and Engagement Strategy

Achievements & Challenges

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Deployment of marine renewables, such as wave energy, has the potential to evoke **opposition** – in many cases leading to social mobilisation objecting to, and **obstructing the realisation** of, specific deployments.



Current strategies for education and public engagement are **not successful** – they are **top-down, unidirectional** and arguably **non-responsive** to local specificities.


There is a **knowledge and skills gap** concerning how to meaningfully and effectively engage the public on marine renewables. This needs to be addressed in order to **increase the acceptability** (and thereby the acceptance) of proposed marine renewable energy deployments.

Framing education and public engagement

Normative: the idea that projects should involve those individuals who have a stake in the decision.

Substantive: a belief that involving the public will improve the decision-making quality by incorporating diverse knowledge.

Instrumental: used as a tool to achieve a specific goal, including e.g., increase acceptance, or foster trust.



SaveWAVE has worked to develop and trial an effective framework for education and public engagement in the MRE context.

Initial step was to develop a better understanding of societal response to wave energy through a systematic literature review and a structured media analysis.

Source of opposition include:

- Conflicts with existing uses, threat to current jobs (economic)
- Impact to local communities and traditions (social)
- Impact to ecosystem components, noise (environment)



The next step comprised a **critical review of selected EPE programmes** associated with marine energy test site and infrastructure deployments.

Information on selected case studies was gathered through a literature view and interviews of key informants.

The methods used for EPE in each of the cases were analysed, key challenges faced by such programmes identified, and best practices documented. The developed knowledge fed into the development of a framework for EPE

- Wave Hub
- OWC Mutriku
- Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters
- Biscay Marine Energy Platform
- SEM-REV test site
- Aguçadoura test site

Lessons ...

- Importance of **early engagement** of all stakeholders
- Engaging **key informants** and local **thought-leaders** is vital.
- Both **informal and formal communications** have a role to play in building trust.
- The way in which the **project is framed** is important (*e.g.*, can increase place-related distinctiveness)
- **Design flexibility** is an important determinant of the social acceptability.
- **Hiring local population** can be an important factor for increasing trust.

Dunphy, N.P., (2023). Towards increased social acceptability of marine renewable energy. In *Proceedings of the European Wave and Tidal Energy Conference* (Vol. 15).

Dunphy, N.P., Velasco-Herrejon, P., Lennon, B. (2021). *Deliverable 7.1 Review of education and public engagement programmes*. Corporate deliverable of the SafeWAVE Project co-funded by European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)



Next we undertook identification & characterisation of societal stakeholders.

This involved both a review of what constitutes ‘stakeholders’ and a characterisation of the societal context of five test sites of interest.

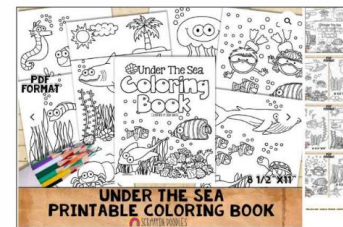
- BiMEP Test Site (ES), Mutriku WE Plant (ES), Aguçadora test site (PT), SEMREV (FR), and Galway Bay (IE)
- Site description, community overview, political context, relevant public agencies and authorities, water users, thought-leaders, other relevant actors

This characterisation informed work on an [EPE framework](#) and eventually will feed into the development of ocean literacy orientated [public engagement programmes](#)

- Informed by this earlier work and **drawing from multiple disciplines** (sociology, psychology, political science, education, *etc.*) a general approach for EPE programmes was developed.
- Informed by engagement with stakeholders, this general approach was specified as an **EPE framework** for ocean literacy and ocean energy acceptability programmes.
- The framework culminated in a **documented methodological approach** for the creation of tailored public engagement programmes for individual ocean energy projects with a focus on wave energy.



- In the next task we used the developed framework in Deliverable 7.4 create EPE programmes tailored to the specific circumstances in the communities of the project's four focal countries – France, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain.
- These programmes were designed to:
 1. Raise awareness of wave energy, energy transition and climate action through outreach, education, and training initiatives.
 2. Provide an inclusive mechanism for community and wider society stakeholders to input into the planning and realisation of ocean energy projects.



Consultation

- Virtual presence.
- Media content.
- Information campaigns.
- School programmes.
- Demonstration activities.

Collaboration

- Polls, surveys, and/or questionnaires.
- Focus group.
- Facilitated water-user forums.
- Public meetings or other similar dialogue sessions.
- Collaboration clinics.

Co-creation

- Web-learning site.
- Community education/training initiatives
- Citizen science activities.
- Summer programme.
- Open access (copyleft) material





Key elements of these developed EPE programmes were trialled and evaluated in communities in France, Ireland, Portugal & Spain.



Findings reinforce the importance of:

- Engaging early with societal stakeholders and in a meaningful manner.
- Identifying the people to act as community liaisons.
- Fostering respect and transparency and strive for both inclusivity and diversity.
- Being seen as a collaboration with (and for the community) not just a check-box exercise or a means of gathering data.



Following these four principles go a long way to the most important aspect: building, maintaining, and nurturing trust.

Guiding Principles for EPE Effectiveness

1. Reflexively planned.
2. Make a difference to the participants and their community.
3. Facilitate open and interactive spaces for learning.
4. Foster respect and transparency.
5. Strive for both inclusivity and diversity.
6. Have flexibility built into its design.
7. Seen as a collaborative partnership for the common good.
8. Encourage actionable dialogue.
9. Designed to meet measurable goals.
10. Outcome should include a co-created plan for action.

*KPIs developed in consultation
with the communities and
societal stakeholders.*



Challenges in realizing effective EPE

- Public distrust of MRE developers.
- Developers distrust of public.
- Budgetary limits
- Time constraints.
- Disinterest and apathy amongst the public
- Disparate & potentially conflicting interests of different ‘publics’.
- Lack of capacity (and capabilities).
- Loss of institutional knowledge from project-to-project
- Disinformation, misinformation and malinformation.



<https://www.safewave-project.eu/>

¡¡MANY THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!!

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