



## D3.2

# Training Modules and Report on the Implementation of the WP3 Event

30/09/2025



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## PART I: TRAINING MODULES

### 1.1 Introduction to the Training Program

This document provides a detailed account of the Training of Trainers (ToT) on participatory governance, organised within the framework of the AQUATIK·EU Project and held in Thiene (Italy) on 10–11 September 2025. Conceived as a strategic capacity-building initiative, the training was designed to equip local authorities, civil society organisations and partner representatives with the knowledge, skills and practical tools needed to meaningfully involve citizens and stakeholders in decision-making processes related to the preservation and sustainable management of aquatic heritage. Its purpose is twofold: to describe the content, structure, and outcomes of the training, and to provide a practical reference for replicating the experience in other local contexts. By offering clear guidance, tested methodologies and actionable recommendations, it aims to support the integration of participatory approaches into policy-making, ensuring that governance processes are inclusive, transparent, and community-driven.

### 1.2 Training Program Objectives

The Training of Trainers was designed as a practical learning experience to help participants improve their skills in planning and leading participatory processes for the governance of aquatic heritage. Instead of focusing on general concepts, the programme provided concrete knowledge, practical methods and planning tools. It was built around three main objectives:

- **Mapping the Role of Civic Engagement in Local Governance**  
This part looked at why citizen involvement is important in public decision-making. Participants discussed how participatory approaches can make institutions more responsive, strengthen democracy and support local policy development.
- **Deploying Participatory Tools for Dialogue and Mediation**  
Through practical exercises, participants were introduced to different facilitation techniques and formats for engagement. The aim was to learn how to manage discussions with different groups, encourage inclusive dialogue and deal with complex situations in governance.
- **Designing and Operationalizing Engagement Strategies**  
The last part focused on turning ideas into action. Participants learned how to design engagement processes by considering key factors such as timing,

stakeholder involvement and available resources, to make sure initiatives are sustainable, inclusive and effective.

Together, these three parts gave participants a clear and practical basis to move from theory to action and to integrate participatory governance into the wider protection and promotion of aquatic heritage.

## 1.3 Training Structure and Methodology

The Training of Trainers combined short theoretical sessions with interactive exercises, group discussions and peer-to-peer exchange. This mix of theory and practice was key to the effectiveness of the programme, as it allowed participants to immediately test and apply the tools and methods presented. By working together and sharing experiences, participants gained a stronger understanding of participatory approaches and learned how to adapt them to different local contexts.

### 1.3.1 Foundational Concepts: Setting the Framework for Citizen Engagement

Before looking at specific participatory tools, the Training of Trainers started with some common concepts about citizen engagement in democratic systems. In many cases, democracy is mainly seen in its representative form, where people vote for officials who then take decisions on their behalf. This model is essential, but it often limits civic involvement to election periods, leaving little space for citizens to directly shape policies or decisions.

Participatory democracy, on the other hand, opens more opportunities for citizens to contribute. It invites people to play an active role in public life, promotes shared responsibility and helps build trust between institutions and communities. This is especially important in the field of aquatic heritage, where local knowledge, values and priorities are crucial for creating solutions that are sustainable and adapted to the local context.

To introduce this shift, the training presented two main reference points: the **4 levels of participation** and the **9 principles of democratic engagement**, both based on the Council of Europe's *Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation*<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Code of good practice for civil participation in the decision- making process, issued by the Council of Europe, has been drafted by the Conference of INGOs following the recommendation 2007/14 of the Committee of the Ministers of the Council of Europe.

### 1.3.1.1 The 4 Levels of Participation

The ToT presented four different ways in which citizens and public authorities can work together. These levels are not a hierarchy but should be chosen depending on the situation.

- **Information**

Citizens receive clear, balanced, and accessible information to understand issues, processes, and decisions. This is the foundation of any participatory process. Municipalities can enhance this level by publishing council agendas online, using plain language in public notices and ensuring information is available in multiple formats.

- **Consultation**

Authorities actively seek input from citizens to better understand community needs and perspectives. While decision-making power remains with the institution, transparency in both collecting and using feedback is essential. Examples include public hearings, surveys, focus groups, or advisory bodies such as youth councils and environmental committees.

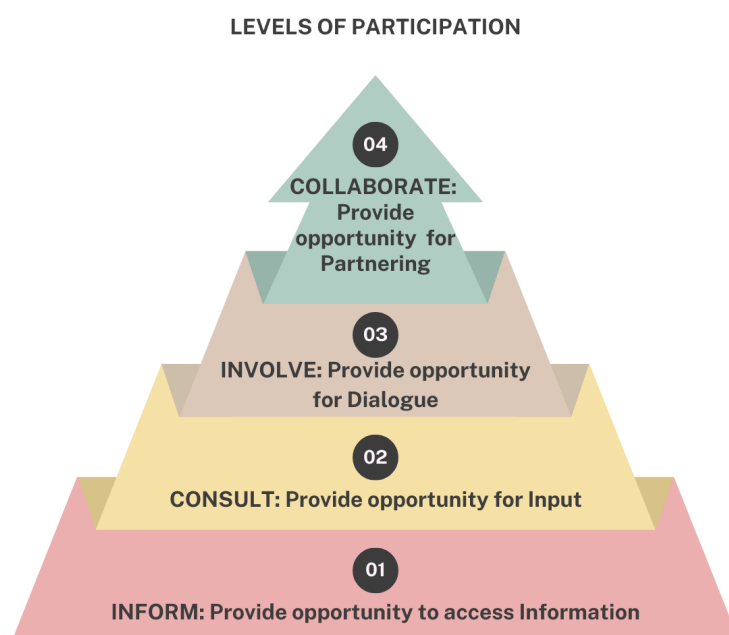
- **Involvement (or Dialogue)**

A sustained two-way exchange between citizens and public authorities fosters mutual understanding, co-learning, and trust. This level often involves regular meetings, workshops, and collaborative sessions. During the training, participants examined cases where municipalities and NGOs jointly addressed water heritage challenges over extended periods.

- **Collaboration (or Partnership)**

The highest level of engagement involves shared responsibility and co-management. Citizens and authorities work together to design, implement, and oversee policies, services, or long-term projects. In the context of aquatic heritage, this might include joint restoration initiatives or co-organized educational programs. Effective partnerships require clearly defined roles, formal agreements, and a foundation of trust.

These levels were illustrated through practical examples drawn from European and local experiences, helping participants reflect on how to adapt engagement strategies to their own contexts, taking into account the diversity of stakeholders, the readiness of institutions, and the complexity of the issues.



### 1.3.1.2 The 9 Principles of Democratic Participation

To ensure that participatory processes are not only inclusive but also credible and impactful, the training introduced nine guiding principles which serve as ethical and operational benchmarks for designing engagement strategies that reflect democratic values and community diversity.

- **Transparency**

Clear, accurate, and timely information is the foundation of any credible participatory process. Citizens must understand the purpose of engagement, how their input will be considered, and who holds final decision-making authority. Transparency sets realistic expectations, prevents misunderstandings, and creates the conditions for trust to grow.

- **Trust**

Effective participation depends on mutual trust between citizens and institutions. Trust is built gradually through honest communication, responsiveness to concerns, and a demonstrated commitment to maintaining engagement beyond isolated initiatives. Without trust, even well-designed processes risk being perceived as symbolic or insincere.

- **Accountability**

Public authorities must clearly explain how citizen input has influenced decisions. This feedback loop validates the participatory process and reinforces its legitimacy. Equally, citizens should be aware of the roles and

limits of all actors involved, ensuring that responsibilities are clearly defined.

- **Inclusiveness and Equality**

Participation must be open to all, guaranteeing equal opportunities regardless of gender, age, socio-economic background, or ability. Special attention should be given to marginalized or underrepresented groups, whose voices are often overlooked. Inclusiveness strengthens the legitimacy of decisions and ensures they reflect the full diversity of the community.

- **Accessibility**

Engagement opportunities should be easy to access—physically, digitally, and linguistically. Removing barriers related to location, technology, language, or format ensures that participation is genuinely open to all who wish to contribute.

- **Respect for Diversity**

Diverse perspectives, experiences, and forms of knowledge enrich participatory processes. Respecting diversity means recognizing these differences as strengths, ensuring all contributions are heard and considered, and fostering an environment where constructive dialogue can flourish.

- **Deliberation**

Participation should go beyond collecting opinions to create space for meaningful dialogue and reflection. Deliberation allows participants to exchange views, consider evidence, and explore options before reaching conclusions—building shared understanding and, where possible, consensus.

- **Empowerment**

Citizens must have the capacity, confidence, and resources to engage fully. This includes access to relevant information, opportunities to develop skills and support mechanisms that enable informed and constructive participation. Empowerment ensures that engagement is not only open but also effective.

- **Sustainability**

Participation should be embedded in a long-term democratic culture, not treated as a one-off event. Sustainable engagement requires ongoing structures, processes, and relationships that keep citizens involved over time, making participation a regular and valued part of governance.

By using these principles as a base, participants built a common understanding of what meaningful and fair engagement means. This gave them the ground to explore participatory techniques suited to their own contexts and goals, making sure that future initiatives are not only well planned but also inclusive, trusted and democratic.



### 1.3.2 Practical Methodologies and Participatory Techniques:

To translate conceptual frameworks into actionable strategies, the training introduced a set of practical methodologies designed to support inclusive and context-sensitive engagement. These tools enable facilitators to navigate complexity, mobilize diverse actors, and tailor participation processes to the realities of aquatic heritage governance.

#### 1.3.2.1 The Stakeholders Analysis Matrix

The Stakeholders Analysis Matrix is a strategic diagnostic tool used to map and assess the ecosystem of actors surrounding a specific issue. Rather than relying on assumptions or pre-existing networks, this method encourages a systematic exploration of who is involved, what they need, and how they relate to one another—revealing both opportunities and potential friction points.

During the training, participants applied the matrix to real-world challenges, populating it with stakeholders relevant to their local contexts. This exercise fostered a broader and more nuanced understanding of the landscape, helping participants identify gaps in knowledge, uncover unexpected allies, and anticipate tensions that could affect future engagement. The matrix is particularly effective for:

- **Identifying overlooked stakeholders** – including actors who may not be immediately visible but whose involvement could be pivotal.
- **Understanding relational dynamics** – clarifying each stakeholder's connection to the issue, their influence, and their potential role in driving change.
- **Spotting strategic synergies** – revealing shared interests that can form the basis for collaboration.
- **Anticipating conflicting priorities** – enabling facilitators to design engagement strategies that are sensitive to divergent needs.

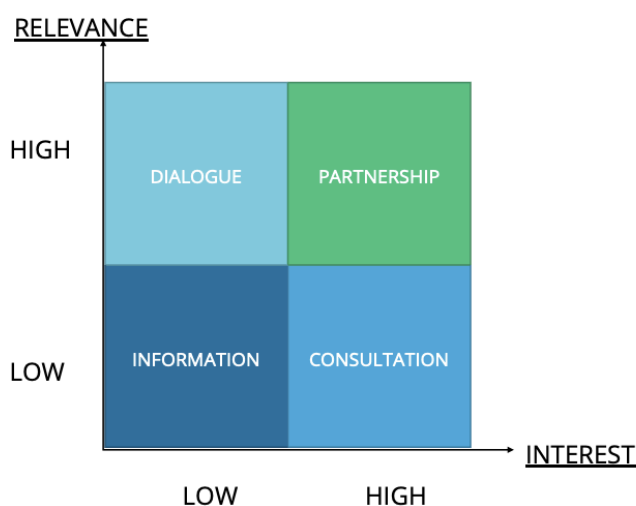
Although not a participatory method per se, the Stakeholders Analysis Matrix is a critical preparatory step. It ensures that participatory processes are inclusive from the outset and that all relevant perspectives are considered in the design phase. The matrix typically takes the form of a table, with each row representing a stakeholder and columns addressing key dimensions:

- **Identity and characteristics**  
Who are they? What type of organization or group do they represent? What is their role in the community or sector?

- **Interests and relevance**  
How are they affected by the issue? What stakes do they hold?
- **Capacity and motivation**  
What resources, influence, or incentives do they have to contribute to change?
- **Engagement opportunities**  
What actions can be taken to address their needs and leverage their potential?

Once the matrix is completed, a complementary step involves plotting stakeholders on a two-axis diagram based on:

- **Relevance** – their capacity to influence the issue.



- **Interest** – their motivation to engage.

By combining qualitative insights from the matrix with this strategic mapping, facilitators can prioritize actions, allocate resources effectively, and design tailored participation pathways that maximize impact and sustainability.

### 1.3.2.2 The World Café

During the training, the World Café method was presented as a practical tool to encourage inclusive dialogue and to collect ideas on complex issues. It is based on the idea that informal conversations can bring out valuable knowledge and create meaningful connections.

The method creates a relaxed but structured space where participants can share different points of view and build common understandings together. Instead of formal

presentations, the World Café uses small rotating group discussions, each focused on a guiding question or theme. These questions can be set by the organisers in advance or co-created with participants at the start of the session.

Participants sit at tables, each dedicated to one question. After a set amount of time, they move to a new table, bringing with them the ideas from their previous discussion. In this way, each round builds on the last, helping ideas grow and spread across groups. The process encourages the exchange of insights, develops shared understanding, and supports the group in moving toward common priorities.

To make the setting welcoming and creative, tables are equipped with paper, pens and refreshments. A facilitator at each table helps keep the discussion inclusive, focused and well-documented.

In the context of aquatic heritage preservation, the World Café was applied to three thematic areas: **identity and value**, **challenges and problems**, and **participation and governance**.

- At the [first table](#), participants reflected on the role of water heritage in shaping local identity. Examples from Mostar, Gondomar, Treviso, and Sassinoro illustrated how rivers and waterways have historically influenced settlement patterns, economic development, and cultural memory. From the Neretva River's centrality to Mostar's history and symbolism, to the Douro's impact on Gondomar's fishing traditions, and the Sile and Botteniga rivers' role in powering Treviso's mills and shaping its urban landscape, water emerged as a defining element of place and community. Participants also discussed strategies for reconnecting citizens with overlooked aquatic heritage, emphasizing the importance of digital engagement through social media and the need for early education on water conservation and sustainability.
- The [second table](#) focused on the challenges facing water heritage sites. Discussions revealed a range of issues, including pollution, ageing infrastructure, climate change, and urban pressure. In Mostar, waste accumulation along the Neretva River threatens both ecological balance and cultural value. In Portugal, outdated water systems compromise reliability and safety. Treviso faces multiple threats, from rising water levels and erosion to overtourism and loss of traditional restoration skills. Sassinoro contends with pollution from sewage and agricultural runoff. Participants also examined the impact of urbanization on inland and remote water ecosystems, identifying increased flood risk, reduced groundwater recharge, and uneven resource distribution as key concerns. These challenges are often exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure and growing demand, underscoring the need for integrated and adaptive management approaches.

- The [third table](#) explored how local communities can be more actively involved in water governance. Participants agreed that meaningful engagement requires both structured opportunities and a culture of collaboration. Strategies discussed included the creation of community platforms for dialogue, educational programs to build awareness and capacity, and partnerships with grassroots organizations to bridge institutions and residents. Emphasis was placed on transparent communication, trust-building, and the incorporation of local knowledge into decision-making processes. When asked which participatory methods could best strengthen awareness and action, participants highlighted the importance of collaborative stakeholder engagement, facilitated group processes for dialogue and priority setting, and creative, multimodal approaches to data collection and interpretation. They also stressed the need for action-oriented participation, where ideas are translated into concrete measures and policy change.

Overall, the World Café turned out to be a very effective method to bring out different perspectives, build mutual understanding, and develop solutions adapted to local contexts. Its informal but structured format allowed participants to go beyond simple consultation and move toward real collaboration, creating a basis for more inclusive and responsive water heritage governance.

### 1.3.2.3 The Open Space Technology

Open Space Technology (OST) was presented during the training as a flexible and participant-led methodology, ideal for situations marked by complexity, urgency, and differing opinions. Unlike traditional approaches with fixed agendas, OST invites participants to shape both the topics and the flow of discussion, ensuring that conversations address what matters most to them. This bottom-up dynamic creates strong ownership and makes the outcomes more relevant and actionable.

The process is built on the idea of self-organization: when people are free to engage where they feel most motivated, dialogue becomes more meaningful. At the start of an OST session, participants propose topics, define the schedule, and select spaces for discussion. They can then join, leave, or move between groups as they wish, following the “*law of two feet*,” which encourages them to contribute where they add value or learn something new. This fluidity keeps the energy high and ensures authentic participation. Facilitators help document the discussions and bring everyone back together at the end to summarize insights and identify possible next steps.

OST is guided by four simple but powerful principles: whoever comes is the right people; whatever happens is the only thing that could have; when it starts is the right time; and when it’s over, it’s over. These rules help participants accept the open

nature of the method and focus on the quality of interaction rather than rigid outputs.

By enabling spontaneous, participant-driven dialogue, OST transforms engagement into a dynamic process of co-creation. It generates diverse ideas, strengthens networks, and supports long-term collaboration, making it a valuable tool for participatory governance in complex contexts.

## 1.4 Training Outcomes and Impact

The Training of Trainers in Thiene successfully met its main goals: strengthening participants' skills to design and lead participatory processes, promoting meaningful cross-border exchange, and giving local actors practical tools to engage communities in protecting and enhancing aquatic heritage.

Feedback collected during the training showed high satisfaction with both the content and facilitation. Participants especially valued the mix of theory and hands-on practice, and the chance to test methods in a collaborative and supportive environment. The tools were seen as relevant to local challenges, confirming that the approaches can be adapted to different territorial and institutional contexts.

Several participants said they plan to use the Stakeholder Analysis Matrix and World Café methods in upcoming community initiatives, recognizing their potential to encourage inclusive dialogue and strategic planning. Others highlighted Open Space Technology as a valuable tool for future public consultations, particularly in complex situations with diverse viewpoints.

The active involvement of all partner organizations was key to the training's success, ensuring that each participant left ready to apply participatory governance principles in their territory. Importantly, the training also started a cascade effect: by preparing participants to become facilitators themselves, it laid the foundation for spreading these practices beyond the immediate partnership.

Next steps will include sharing training materials, providing support for local application of the methods, and integrating lessons learned into future project activities. These actions will help maintain continuity, strengthen local ownership, and support the overall mission of promoting inclusive, community-driven management of Europe's aquatic heritage.

## PART II: REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WP3 EVENT

### 2.1 Introduction to the report

This second part of the document provides a detailed report of the WP3 training event held in Thiene, offering a clear overview of its implementation.

While Part I focused on the training's concepts and methods, this section looks at the event from a reporting perspective, documenting how it unfolded, who took part, and what results were achieved.

The event was organised within the AQUATIK·EU project to strengthen the skills of partners and stakeholders in using participatory methods for the protection and sustainable management of aquatic heritage.

The event brought together representatives from partner organisations to share experiences, learn practical tools, and co-develop strategies suited to their local contexts. The training was highly interactive, combining short theoretical inputs with hands-on exercises. Its goal was to ensure that participants not only understood the methods presented but also felt confident in applying and adapting them in their own territories.

The activities took place over two days. The first day was dedicated to the **Training of Trainers**, where participants explored participatory approaches and methodologies useful for engaging local communities, both in theory and in practice through interactive workshops. The second day focused on the **partner meeting**, reviewing the current status of project activities and deliverables, and planning the next steps, particularly WP4, which involves implementing local initiatives using participatory methods and promoting active citizen engagement.

### 2.2 Event Description

The event took place over two days, from 10 to 11 September 2025.

- The *first day* was dedicated to the introduction and practical application of participatory methodologies, including the Stakeholders Analysis Matrix, the World Café and the Open Space Technology. These sessions combined short theoretical inputs with interactive exercises, giving participants the chance to try

the tools in a collaborative setting and reflect on how they could be adapted to local contexts.

<b>DAY 1 - Wednesday September 10 2025</b>			
<b>Time</b>		<b>Activity</b>	<b>Type</b>
9.30-9.45	15'	Partners arrival and registration	
9.45-10.15	30'	Warm up Activity	
10.15-11.00	45'	ToT on Participatory Democracy Introduction. Training 1: Level 1 (Information) + Stakeholder Analysis and Framework	ToT
11.00-11.30	30'	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
11.30-13.00	90'	Training 2: Level 2 (Consultation) + World Café methodology	ToT
13.00-14.30	90'	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Villa Fabris</i>
14.30-16.30	120'	Training 3: Level 3 (Dialogue) and Level 4 (Partnership) + Open space technology methodology	ToT
16.30-16.50	20'	<i>Break</i>	ToT
16.50-17.20	30'	Activity's Debriefing	ToT
17.20-17.30	10'	Conclusion of the training	ToT
19.30		<i>Dinner (covered by ALDA)</i>	<i>Osteria del Conte</i>

- The *second day* was dedicated to project coordination and strategic planning. Partners discussed the current status of AQUATIK-EU work packages, shared updates, identified synergies, and aligned next steps. This helped ensure that the participatory principles introduced during the training would be applied consistently across all activities.

<b>DAY 2 - Thursday September 11 2025</b>			
<b>Time</b>		<b>Title</b>	<b>Type</b>
09.30-09.45	15'	Opening of the day	In presence
09.45-10.30	45'	AQUATIK-EU project general overview and deliverables' status	Partner Meeting
10.30-11.00	30'	Toolkit presentation + Q&A	Partner Meeting
11.00-11.30	30'	<i>Coffee break</i>	
11.30-12.45	75'	WP4 overview + Group activity (Action plan for the WP4 events)	Partner Meeting
12.45-13.00	15'	Report to the plenary	Partner Meeting
13.00-14.30	90'	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Villa Fabris</i>
14.30-15.00	30'	WP5 Overview (FONS Mallorqui)	Partner Meeting
15.00-15.30	30'	Next Steps	Partner Meeting
15.30-16.00	15'	Q&A + Conclusions + Evaluation	Partner Meeting

By combining methodological training with project coordination, the event worked both as a learning platform and as a space to strengthen planning and collaboration for the coming months.

## **2.3 Attendance: Participation and Stakeholder Engagement**

- Number of attendees: 19
- Type of audience: project partners
- Number of male participants: 4
- Number of female participants: 15
- Number of “non-binary” participants: 0
- Number of countries: 3 (Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Portugal)

The training was attended by 19 participants from three countries: Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Portugal. All were project partners directly involved in local participatory activities. The group included 15 women and 4 men, reflecting the strong presence of women in civic engagement and heritage roles.

Participants were actively engaged in both practical exercises and strategic discussions. Their contributions, drawn from experiences in urban water management and rural heritage preservation, highlighted the versatility of the tools in different contexts. Group dynamics were constructive and collaborative, with informal interactions helping to build trust and strengthen networks, underlining the value of in-person meetings in transnational projects.

## **2.4 Conclusions**

The WP3 training successfully met its dual goals: improving methodological skills and supporting strategic coordination among partners. Participants not only learned the tools but also discussed how to adapt them to local contexts, deepening their understanding of both strengths and limitations.

Key lessons included the importance of flexibility in facilitation, the need to adapt tools to different civic cultures, and using informal dialogue to access community knowledge. Participants noted that effective engagement requires time, trust-building, and attention to local context - elements that will guide the design of future activities.

Several partners plan to use the Stakeholder Analysis Matrix and World Café in upcoming community projects, while Open Space Technology was seen as particularly useful for complex or contested public consultations. The training also created a cascade effect: participants are now ready to transfer knowledge within their organizations, multiplying the impact of the initiative.

Next steps include sharing training materials, providing mentoring for local applications, and integrating feedback into future project activities. Partners are also exploring



opportunities to replicate the training at regional level, reaching more stakeholders and strengthening the project's legacy.

In conclusion, the WP3 event not only reached its main goals but also opened the way for longer-term impact. By putting participatory governance at the heart of AQUATIK-EU, the project is well placed to promote inclusive and community-led management of Europe's aquatic heritage.