

Overall Reflection

The initial stakeholder engagement in this project demonstrated that meaningful participation is not a single event but an evolving process that blends **inclusivity, clarity, trust, and adaptability**. For future initiatives, embedding engagement as an **iterative co-creation mechanism** will be essential to building ownership, legitimacy, and long-term impact.

Lessons Learned

The initial engagement phase provided valuable insights into how to design and manage stakeholder interactions in complex, multi-actor European projects. One key lesson was the importance of early and inclusive stakeholder mapping, ensuring the participation of diverse actors — from policymakers and researchers to civil society and private sector representatives — to strengthen the legitimacy and applicability of outcomes. Successful engagement depends on clear and tailored communication, using language, channels, and formats adapted to different audiences to foster genuine participation and mutual understanding.

The process also underlined that trust and transparency are critical foundations for collaboration. Stakeholders engage more actively when they clearly see how their input contributes to decisions and when feedback loops are maintained throughout the project. At the same time, it became evident that balancing diversity with focus is essential: while broad participation enriches perspectives, discussions must remain structured and goal-oriented to generate concrete results.

Another important takeaway concerns the need for a structured and replicable methodology. Defining clear steps for identifying, classifying, and prioritizing stakeholders allows for consistency across cases and facilitates future reuse of the approach. Moreover, the experience highlighted the growing relevance of digital and hybrid engagement tools, which can expand outreach and inclusivity, though they should be complemented by in-person interactions to sustain depth and relational trust.

Internally, effective engagement requires strong coordination among consortium partners, clarity of roles, and regular communication to align messages and manage expectations. Finally, the process demonstrated the value of continuous monitoring and learning, documenting what works and adjusting strategies dynamically to improve participation quality over time.

For the website

Lessons from this step directly inform subsequent co-design, testing, and capacity-building activities, ensuring that EMERGE remains grounded in stakeholder needs.

- Participation: combining plenary presentations with small groups discussions helps balance participation and encourages quieter voices.
- Communication: presenting tool concepts through practical examples avoids overly technical discussions and fosters relevance.

- Inclusiveness: additional targeted sessions are often necessary to involve stakeholders who face time, language or connectivity barriers.
- Expectation management: clarifying what EMERGE tools can deliver in the short vs- long term is essential to maintain trust and alignment.