



**Supporting stakeholder groups in each member state
established**

Milestone 13

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ESMERALDA

Enhancing ecosystem services mapping

for policy and decision making

<http://www.esmeralda-project.eu/>



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Summary

Milestone 13 reports on the national stakeholder identification and the integration in the ecosystem service (ES) mapping and assessment process in each EU member state. Milestone 7 (on stakeholder identification) and Milestone 10 (on an engagement plan for collaboration, networking and synergies) have preceded Milestone 13, which sets the timeline for the establishment of supporting stakeholder groups in EU countries. This process started when the project identified potential national stakeholders who were listed in the country fact sheets (Milestones 8-9, Deliverables 2.1 and 2.2). Evidently an important role is foreseen for the ES MERALDA project partners with respect to supporting the development of national networks with stakeholders that can support the implementation of MAES. The first project workshop in Riga, Latvia, 13-16 October 2015, provided a platform to enhance contacts between the project partners and national stakeholders. Project partners and stakeholders from respective countries were placed in the same groups to work and discuss together during the break-out sessions, which formed the main way of working. **These groups of countries' representatives from policy/Action 5 authorities, science and practice form the offset for the country-wise support groups.** The longer-term target is to develop active national communities of practice for sharing knowledge and expertise in the field of ES mapping and assessment activities.

1. Purpose of support groups

ESMERALDA assists the European Commission in Action 5 of the EU biodiversity strategy (Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services MAES) by coordinating ES mapping and assessment related work and by providing support to member states. This requires staying in close contact with the national stakeholders who are responsible for implementing Action 5 (ministry officials, for example) or who can provide technical assistance at national level (researchers). The connection between stakeholders and project partners is maintained through a functional collaboration network consisting of support groups in each EU member state. The support groups act as channels through which information can easily flow in both directions, allowing a process of dialogue and knowledge co-creation. They can help in evaluating the project Deliverables before they are submitted and have an essential role in providing important information for the development of useful supporting actions, whether they are related to training, capacity-building, learning mechanisms, guideline documents, online question / answer mechanisms or policy implementation, for example. The existence of support groups allows that stakeholders in the member states can be quickly reached, which also ensures the timely achievement of the ambitious goals of Action 5.

2. Identification of members for the support groups

The support groups, established per country, are expected to facilitate networking among the MAES stakeholders. Identification of key stakeholders of MAES activities in member states was started right at the beginning of the ES MERALDA project. The process has been described in the Milestone 7 report. Stakeholder information is subject to frequent changes and therefore it needs constant up-dating. The stakeholder network table on the ES MERALDA project's internal communication platform (in WP2 folder) is the right place to look for most recent information.

The ES MERALDA project network and contacts cover all EU member states (Table 1). A project amendment is in process in order to enlarge the consortium to include states that are not yet project

members (such as Ireland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Greece, Cyprus, Croatia, Lithuania, Estonia as well as Norway and Israel)..

Table 1. EU member states and project partners in their respective support groups. (States marked with * are not ESMERALDA members yet and not all contacts are confirmed yet).

EU member state	ESMERALDA partner institute	Contact person of the partner institute in the support group
Austria	Paris-Lodron University Salzburg PLUS	Hermann Klug
Belgium	Flemish Institute for Technological Research VITO	Inge Liekens
Bulgaria	Bulgarian Academy of Sciences NIGGG BAS	Stoyan Nedkov
Croatia*	Croatian Agency for Environment and Nature – CAEN	Tamara Kirin
Cyprus*	Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment	Marina Xenophontos, Eleni Stylianopoulou
Czech Republic	Global Change Research Centre CVGZ	Eva Streberová
Denmark	University of Copenhagen UCPH	Erling Andersen
Estonia*	Estonian University of Life Sciences	Kalev Sepp
Finland	Finnish Environment Institute SYKE	Petteri Vihervaara, Leena Kopperoinen
France	Institute for Environmental & Agricultural Science & Research IRSTEA	Philip Roche
Germany	Christian Albrechts University Kiel CAU	Benjamin Burkhard
Greece*	University of Patras, Department of Environmental and Natural Resources Management	Panagiotis Dimopoulos
Hungary	Hungarian Academy of Sciences MTA OK	Bálint Czuz
Ireland*	National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	Gemma Weir
Italy	University of Trento UNITN	Davide Geneletti
Latvia	Baltic Environmental Forum BEF	Anda Ruskule
Lithuania*	Environmental Protection Agency	Vytautas Naruševičius
Luxembourg*	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure, Department of Environment	Nora Elvinger
Malta	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology MCAST	Mario Balzan
Netherlands	Foundation for Sustainable Development FSD	Sara Mulder
Poland	University of Poznan UPOZ	Andrzej Mizgajski
Portugal	Instituto Superior Técnico IST	Cristina Marta-Pedroso
Romania	University of Bucharest UB	Constantin Cazacu
Slovakia*	Ministry of Environment, Department for Nature and Landscape Protection	Rastislav Rybanič
Slovenia*	Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning	Branka Tavzes
Spain	University of Madrid UAM	Fernando Santos Martin
Sweden	Naturvårdsverket SEPA	Hannah Östergård
United Kingdom	WCMC	Claire Brown

3. Working modes of support groups: From support groups to communities of practise

There is a need for capacity-building in all EU member states in order to create a community of practise in Europe that will contribute to improve and use the knowledge and evidence which is collected under the MAES process. In some countries and regions, such communities are already active, while in other countries the support groups identified by ESMERALDA may initiate or contribute to networking activities. This process takes time and in case of support by ESMERALDA there is no 'one size fits all' approach.

ESMERALDA will therefore endorse existing networks and communities of practise on ecosystem services or help create new national networks based on the support groups. Table 2 lists the existing networks which are relevant for MAES / ESMERALDA. Table 2 needs to be updated throughout the project.

The empty cells in Table 2 do not necessarily mean that there are no networking activities in the respective countries. The information available in the country fact sheets suggests that indeed in most countries stakeholders from research, policy and practise are actively engaged in the MAES process. This is evidenced by the support groups which may develop into more permanent networks.

Table 2. Existing national networks (to be updated during the ESMERALDA project).

EU member state	Network	Comment
Austria	National ESP network*	
Belgium	BEES	The Belgian Ecosystem Services community is set up as a community of practice and works in close collaboration with the WG MAES. BEES forms the Belgian ESP and MAES working group. BEES and the working group MAES organized together the MAES delivery workshop (15-16/12/2015) in Brussels. No further action of ESMERALDA is needed besides following the activities.
Bulgaria	National ESP network	The development of a national ESP network is ongoing. Specific attention will go to MAES and ESMERALDA. Stoyan Nedkov is one of the initiators and partner in ESMERALDA. ESMERALDA to support this network (e.g. help organise kick off meeting with the attendance of MAES representatives).
Croatia	No information	
Cyprus	National ESP network	The development of a national ESP network is going on. ESMERALDA to get in contact with the proposers of this network to establish collaboration and to ensure MAES in part of the objectives.
Czech Republic	No network*	

Denmark	In the process of establishing one*	In the process of establishing a network that involves researchers, public and private agencies as well as consultancies.
Estonia	National MAES working group	Development of a national MAES network has been initiated.
Finland	National MAES network	Building of a national MAES network has been kicked off. Petteri Vihervaara coordinates the network building and Leena Kopperoinen is a member of the group, both ESERALDA researchers. Developing the network to a national ESP network is under consideration.
France	EFESE	The EFESE project (a national ecosystem assessment in France) creates perfect conditions for setting up a stakeholder community.
Germany	National MAES working group	A working group on MAES in Germany has been created within the ESP-DE network (Christian Albert of Leibniz Universität Hannover and ESERALDA coordinator Benjamin Burkhard are in the lead of the working group). ESERALDA to follow these activities and exchange information and knowledge.
Greece	National MAES network*	
Hungary	National MAES network*	In the process of establishing the network
Ireland	Irish forum on natural capital	This initiative explicitly mentions as objective in its terms of reference: <i>To build research that supports the implementation of European initiatives including MAES and ESERALDA as a decision-making tool in Ireland.</i> ESERALDA to endorse this activity by giving support whenever and wherever appropriate.
Italy	MAES working group (but inactive), Other initiatives pending	There was a first MAES meeting in Italy early 2014 but since then the group has not reconvened. ESERALDA to stimulate networking activities in Italy, potentially an Italian ESP network.
Latvia		In the process of establishing a network. There are a group of experts involved in the MAES process and project teams of two LIFE projects related to the issue.
Lithuania	No information	
Luxembourg	National MAES network*	
Malta	No information	
Netherlands	Several initiatives	A community of practise on ecosystem services is in development. MAES is implemented at national level. A community exists around the National Atlas of Natural Capital
Poland	National ESP network	There is an ESP network at national level which organised an annual symposium (ECOSERV), which presents state of the art research on mapping and assessment. ESERALDA partners are in the lead of this network.
Portugal	Several initiatives	APES (Portuguese branch of IALE Europe) and potentially a national ESP network by the ESERALDA partner.

		Contribution of ESMERALDA to the APEP workshop on ecosystem services research. Presentation of ESMERALDA was given in the kick off meeting of MAES Portugal (11 December 2015).
Romania	No information	
Slovakia	National ESP network, national MAES network*	
Slovenia	No information	
Spain	National Ecosystem Assessment, National ESP network	A working group on MAES in Spain will be officially created in October 2016 as part of the Spanish National Ecosystem Assessment and in collaboration with the Spanish ESP network. ESMERALDA will support and follow these activities and will be used to connect with other similar national networks.
Sweden	No information	
United Kingdom	Several initiatives: ESCOM, Natural capital initiative	The UK is at the forefront of networking activities on natural capital, ecosystem services and biodiversity. No support seems to be needed from ESMERALDA. The Britain's exit from the EU will influence the connection between the country's stakeholders and ESMERALDA.

*Information updated based on the survey

4. Support group survey

To understand better how the support groups can be organised, we sent out a Webropol survey to stakeholders in each EU country. We enquired about the composition (desired participants), working modes and tasks, and means of communication of the support groups as well as ESMERALDA's role as a mediator and facilitator. The latest updated stakeholder network information was used to send out 309 individual invitations. By the time the survey closed, 24 people from 15 countries had responded. The response rate was (typically) low but those who responded are considered as key people in MAES related activities in the countries and thus are important people to listen to. Responses were received from the following countries:

- Three responses from: Estonia and Slovakia
- Two responses from: Belgium, Denmark, Latvia, Luxemburg and Netherlands
- One response from: Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Poland and United Kingdom, Spain.

4.1. Composition of the support groups

The survey started by questioning the ideal composition of the support groups (Figure 1). Most of the respondents identified ministries and scientists as the two most important groups to be included to the support groups. When asked to specify, especially representatives of Ministry of Environment (or

similar) were named. In terms of scientists a range of scientists from different universities and research institutes were mentioned. Over half of the respondents wanted to see authorities in the support groups and the names mentioned included representatives of national agencies (research institutes, environmental boards and agencies, nature conservation/protection bodies) as well as regional authorities (provincial and regional governments' environmental and planning offices / departments).

Less than half of the respondents voted for having practitioners and politicians in the support groups. Practitioners named in the survey included representatives of NGOs, planners and managers of natural resources and land use, farmers, consultants and companies. In terms of politicians, the respondents mentioned especially those related to environmental and agricultural policy making. Respondents who chose the option other named especially NGOs, conservation agencies, consultants, members of national steering group and the wider community interested in biodiversity and ecosystem issues.

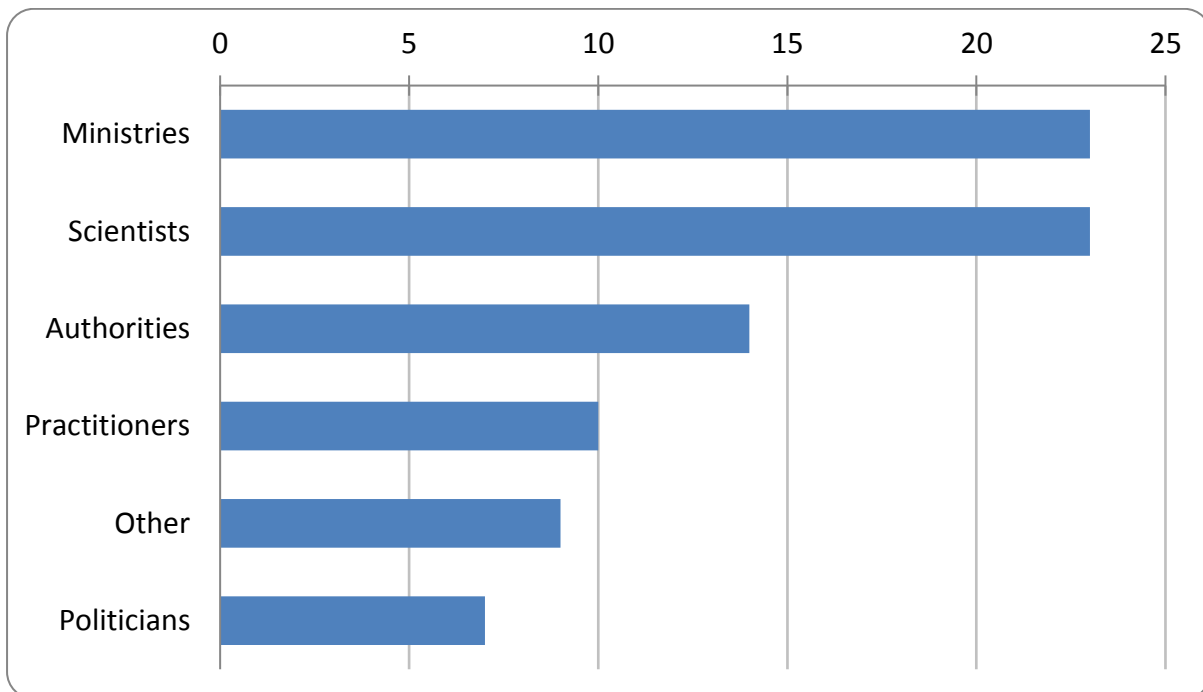


Figure 1. Desired participants of the support groups (N=24).

4.2. Tasks of support groups

The support groups act as links between the ESMERALDA project and the MAES action related stakeholders in each country. The respondents were, thus, asked in which ways the support group / community of practice could best help achieve the Biodiversity Strategy's Action 5 targets of ecosystem service mapping and assessment (Figure 2). Most of the respondents suggested that providing guidelines for the mapping and assessment of ecosystem services should be one of the main tasks of the support groups. In addition to this, over half of the respondents wanted the support groups to provide information on suitable methods and help in mapping activities by answering to country-specific questions in mapping and assessment.

Half of the respondents considered identification of relevant stakeholders as an important task for support groups. Similarly, roughly half of the respondents wanted the support groups to help in policy implementation and provide communication materials on ecosystem services and their assessment and mapping in the local language(s). Ten respondents thought that the support groups could be used to support the ESMERALDA project in evaluating and improving the project deliverables and outcomes.

The least selected options included arranging training and establishing an online question mechanism. Those respondents who chose training emphasized awareness raising. Several respondents specified that especially useful would be training for decision makers and practitioners on the importance of ES and how ES can be taken into account. In addition, the respondents called for training on data analysis and interpretation. Those who chose the option “in some other way” specified that the support groups should facilitate networking, help finding political support for MAES actions and initiate national and regional ecosystem service assessments. One of the respondents criticized the question to be outdated as in her country because the focus is already in the operationalization between science and end-users.

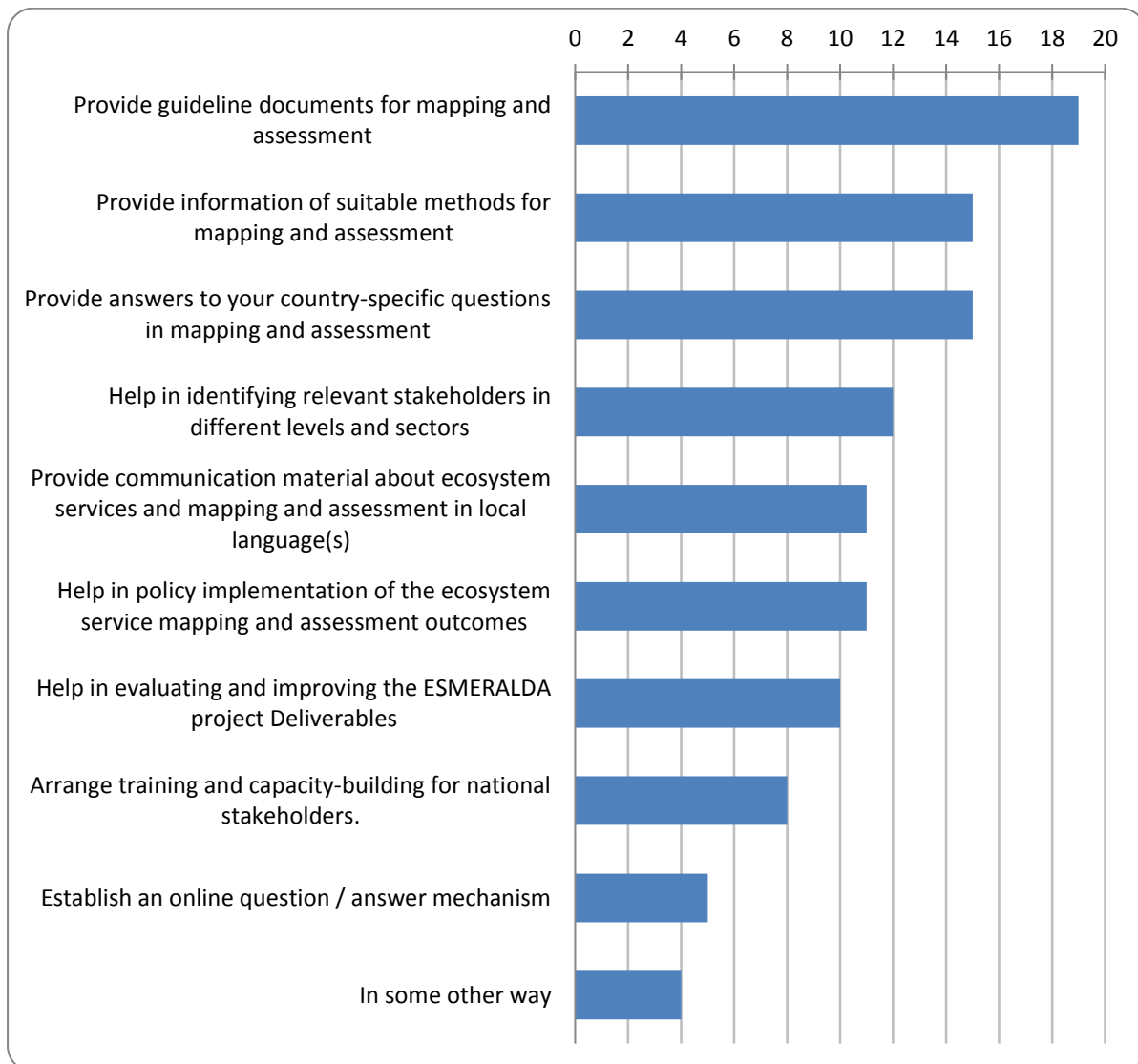


Figure 2. Preferred tasks of support groups (N=24).

4.3. Means of communication

The respondents were almost unanimous in their preferences for the means of communication of the support groups (Figure 3). Most respondents wanted the support groups to arrange regular face-to-face meetings bringing together the range of stakeholder and facilitate networking. Digital newsletter was chosen by roughly a half of the respondents and only a couple of respondents would prefer online communication such as discussion groups or online meetings. Other means of communication suggested by the respondents included e-mails and existing mailing lists, helpdesk, focussed workshops on selected topics and reports of articles.

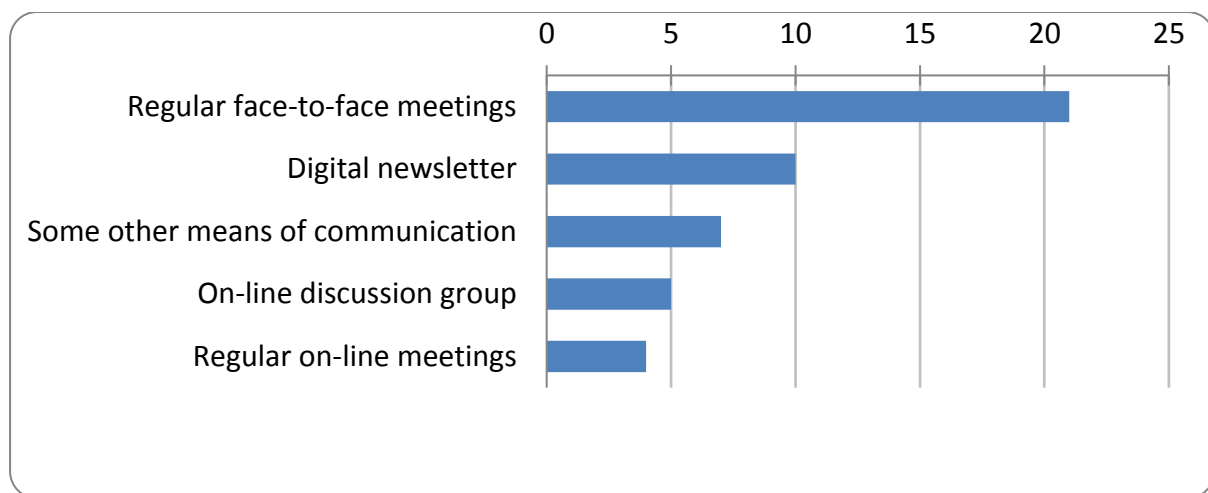


Figure 3. Preferred means of communication of the support groups (N=24).

In respect of face-to-face meetings and seminars the survey included further questions on where the meetings should take place and how often they should be arranged. Eleven of the respondents replied that they would prefer the meetings to rotate based on where the support group members and member organisations are located. Nine respondents preferred the capital of the country as the best place for the meetings. Only one respondent would choose the location based on where the ESMERALDA partner organisation is located. In respect of the desired interval, the respondents would like the meetings to be held at least twice a year (16 respondents). The respondents suggested that the interval should be flexible and dependent on the topic and state of mapping and assessment work.

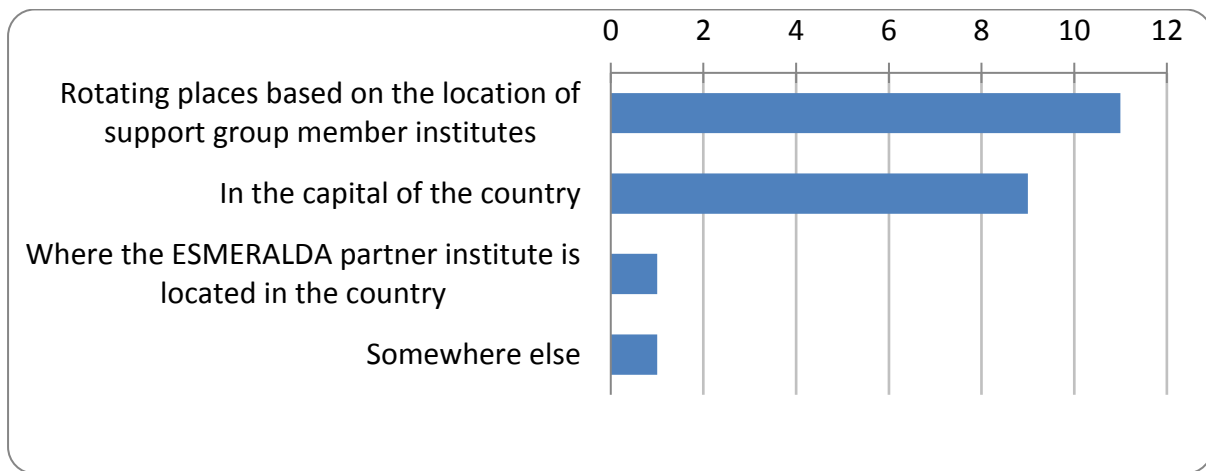


Figure 4. Preferred location of face-to-face meetings (N=24).

4.4. ESMERALDA’s role

The results of the survey support the role of ESMERALDA as a mediator between the support groups of the different countries. Most of the respondents (19) wanted ESMERALDA to help in making a contact with other countries support groups / communities of practice. However, five respondents answered that they did not need help from ESMERALDA. In terms of preferred ways of getting in touch with other countries, for most of the respondents the best option was to arrange knowledge sharing sessions as side events in ecosystem service-related scientific and practical events and seminars. More direct facilitation between countries was preferred by half of the respondents. As other types of ways the respondents suggested digital collaboration platforms and making lists of national contacts publicly available.

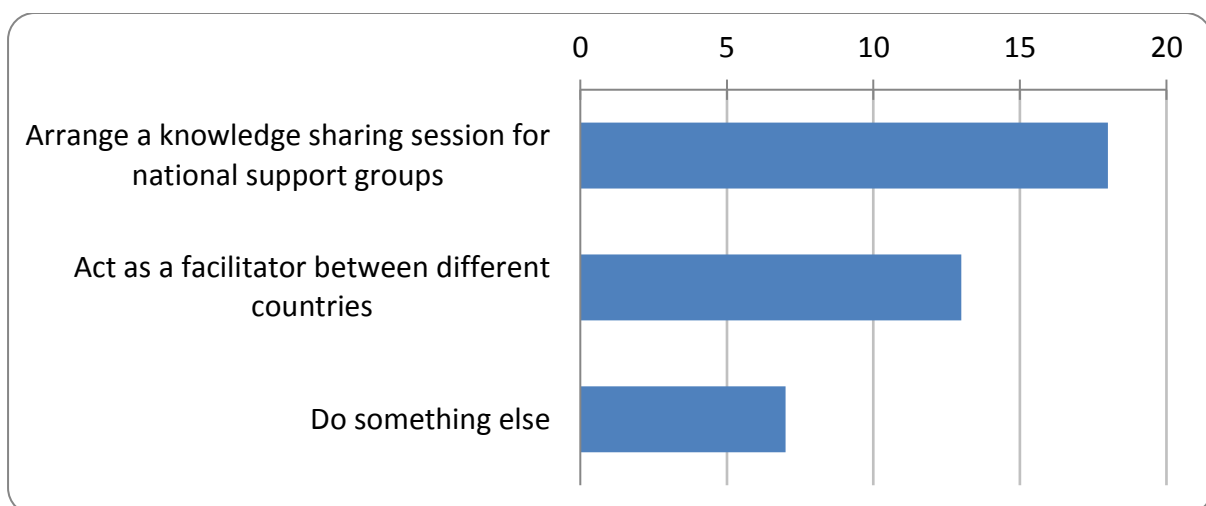


Figure 5. How ESMERALDA can help countries to get in contact with each other (N=24).

4.5. Survey respondents' willingness to take an active role

In the final section of the survey the respondents were asked to elaborate on their own personal role in the support group. When asked if the respondent him-/herself was willing to take an active role in the national support group and as a link between the group and ESMERALDA, half of the respondents agreed and half declined (12 respondents each). The high number of "yes" responses indicates that despite the small response rate, the survey was probably answered by key national MAES contacts.

Those who answered "yes" were further enquired to specify what kind of role they would like to take. Most of the respondents preferred acting as a link between ESMERALDA and the support group (Figure 6). Six respondents were willing to take the role of a facilitator of face-to-face meetings by offering a meeting place. Less desired was the role of a coordinator of the support group, editor of a newsletter and translator of ESMERALDA project materials into national language(s). One respondent was willing to offer technical support in the national MAES process.

Those who answered "no" were, in turn, asked for recommendations of suitable people who could take an active role in the support group. Suggestions received ranged from representatives of ministries responsible for MAES work to people active in the already existing networks. However, as one respondent summarised will and interest is not always enough: *"...funding is a critical issue. Lots of people would like to do lots of things to support the MAES process but are funded to do other activities."*

In the very last question all the respondents were asked if they had special requirements for the person to be chosen as the contact person. Although almost all respondents did not want to set any requirements a couple of respondents emphasised that the person would need to be active, well connected and well trained.

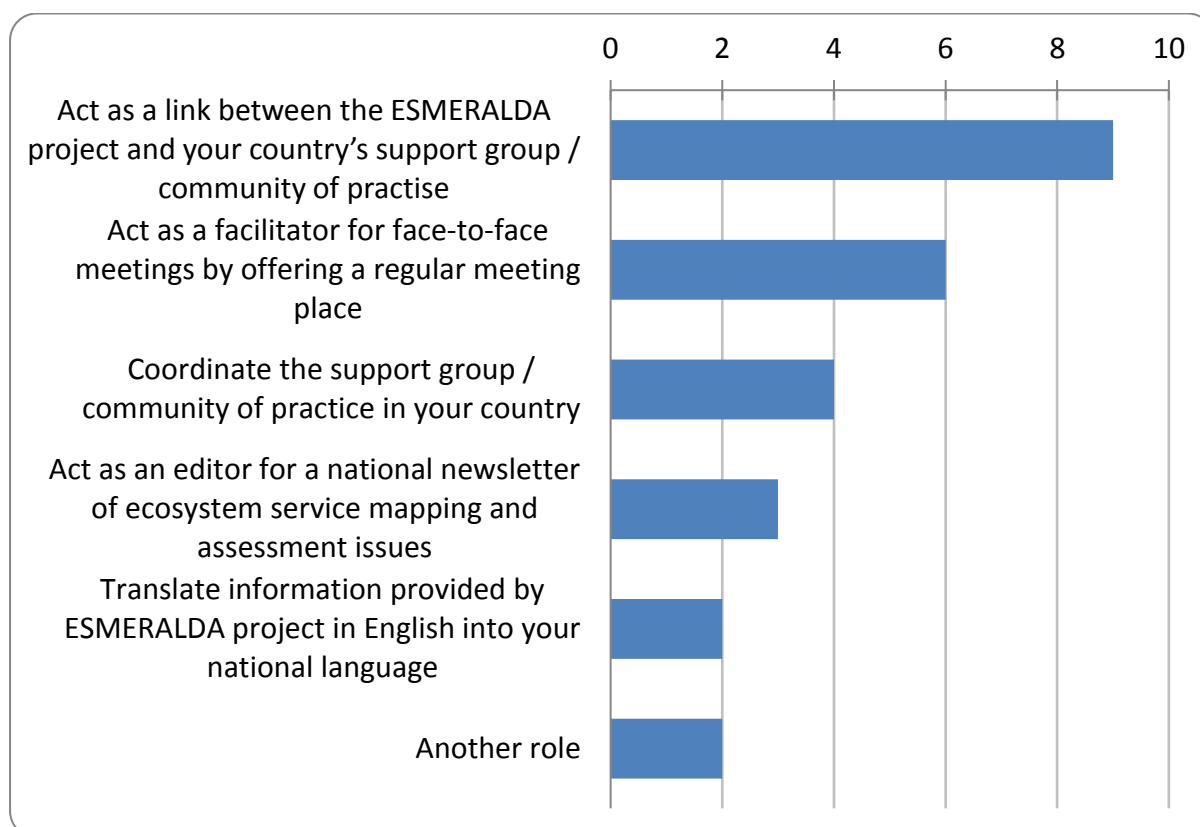


Figure 6. Respondents' preferences for their own role in the support group (N=13).

4.6. Some conclusions of the survey results

The survey was sent out to a total of 309 persons out of which only 24 answered in due time. No answer was received from 9 countries. Although those who answered represent the key national contact points in MAES work and ESMERALDA, the results should be rather considered as interim than final. Moreover, with a lot of initiatives currently being launched in many countries and support groups being established continued updating of the survey results will be needed throughout the ESMERALDA project. In particular, besides scientists and government officials, the opinions and ideas of policy-makers, practitioners, NGOs and other stakeholders should be equally taken into consideration.

Although the results would be considered as interim, few important conclusions can be drawn based on them. Firstly, considering the function and composition of the groups, the respondents seem to mostly want the support groups to facilitate national cooperation between ministries in charge of MAES and scientists working on ES mapping and assessment. Although awareness raising among practitioners and policy-makers are in general emphasised, the coordination and power over support groups are considered to be best controlled by those already aware of MAES and ecosystem service issues. This is also reflected in the preferred tasks of support groups that currently emphasise national support in mapping and assessment, rather than policy implementation or awareness raising.

Secondly, the results confirm the need of ESMERALDA to function as a facilitator and link between different countries and their respective networks and support groups. Similarly, the results emphasise

the need for national face-to-face meetings and knowledge sharing sessions between countries instead of mere online and internet based communication. Hence, the results suggest that where possible ESMERALDA could take an active role also in facilitating face-to-face networking, not necessarily by organising meetings itself, but encouraging actors to do that themselves and making details of national contacts publicly available.

5. Next steps

The following, step-wise approach is suggested for the project to help create national networks:

1. Draft a short plan for network development based on the interest of ESMERALDA partners and national stakeholders and the potential for success. In addition, ESP can act as facilitator.
2. Implementation: where needed and appropriate help draft the terms of reference and help set up a kick-off network meeting.

Establishing new networks does not follow a set of rigorous, top down enforced rules. ESMERALDA partners are invited and motivated to create national initiatives which can help implement MAES and enhance national, regional or local ownership and legitimacy of the MAES process. National networks can profit from other related initiatives on biodiversity, ecosystem services, green infrastructure, nature-based solutions or natural capital. Leading ESMERALDA researchers (coordinators, WP and task leaders) can also play a broker role by presenting the project and suggest motivated researchers to set up a network structure. In this case, please report this to WP2.

6. Acknowledgements

We thank all who responded to the survey. The information provided is very useful for the ESMERALDA project's support actions to EU member states.