Bridging gap between **public** & **EU Mission** ‘Restore Ocean and Waters’:

case-studies from Flanders

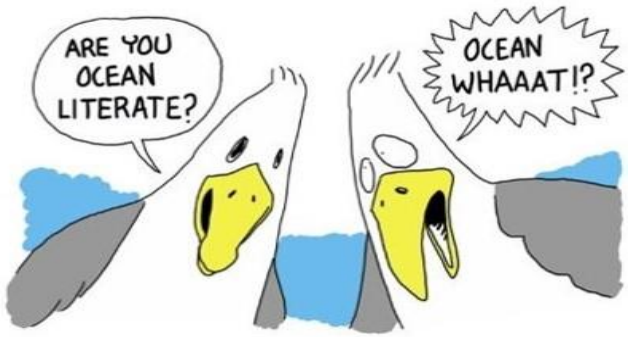
VLIZ pioneer in marine science

Jan SEYS
Spokesperson/
head scicomm
VLIZ

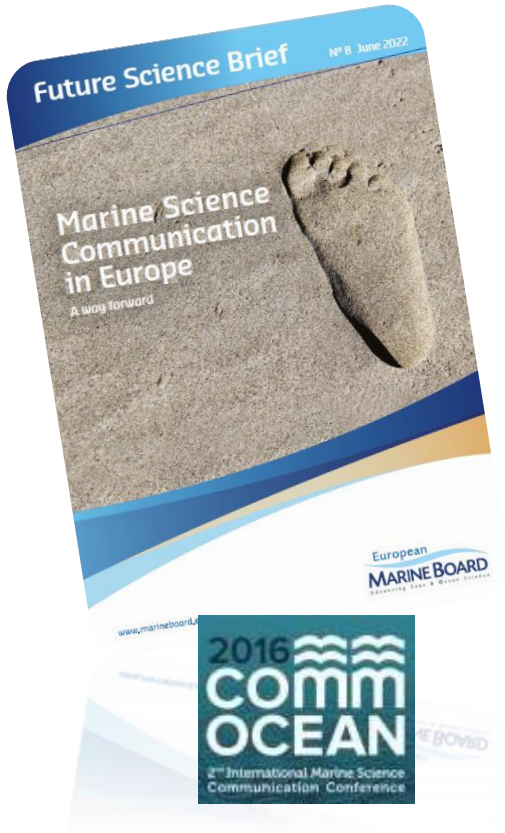
VLIZ background

Ocean Literacy

FIRST CONFERENCE ON OCEAN LITERACY IN EUROPE 12/10/2012 · BRUGES



Marine Science Communication



Horizon Europe

Baltic & North Sea Lighthouse

CARBON-NEUTRAL & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

discover

PREP4BLUE

METHODS AND TOOLS FOR MISSION OCEAN & WATERS

VLIZ

Content

Public Engagement:

- What?
- Why?
- How?

Case-studies:

(1) ‘Plastic Pirates go Europe’: *youngsters & river pollution*

(2) ‘Zeekerweten’: *festival public engagement @coast/sea*

(3) ‘SeaWatch-B’/’Big Annual Seashell Survey’:

citizen science & biodiversity on the beach

Take home messages

Public Engagement

when individuals from diverse backgrounds/expertise engage with knowledge-production and/or decision making in a collective endeavour

= Citizen participation
= Citizen engagement
= Citizen involvement
= Community engagement
= Civic engagement

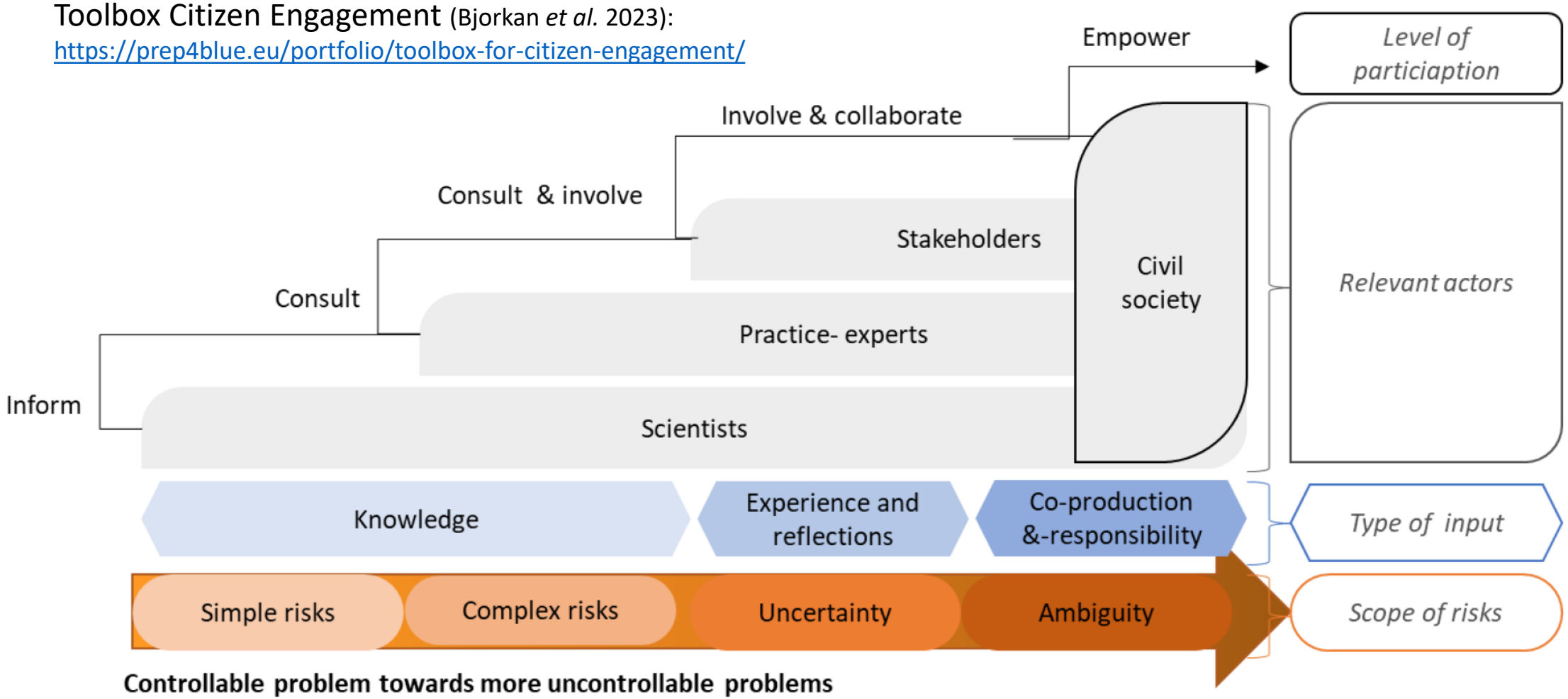
Why PE?

*"Europe can not thrive without ensuring the best possible **match** between the immense potential achievements science has to offer and the needs, values and aspirations of citizens".*

*"**Citizen science** can make science more socially relevant, accelerate and enable production of new scientific knowledge, increase public awareness about science and ownership of policy making, as well as increase the prevalence of evidence-based policy-making."*

The process (I) Level of participation

Toolbox Citizen Engagement (Bjorkan *et al.* 2023):
https://prep4blue.eu/portfolio/toolbox-for-citizen-engagement/



The process (II) 3-steps approach

Toolbox Citizen Engagement (Bjorkan *et al.* 2023):
https://prep4blue.eu/portfolio/toolbox-for-citizen-engagement/

PREPARATION

- Mapping participants
("*Who to include*")
- 'Engagement fatigue' (!)
- Building relationship/trust

IMPLEMENTATION

- Method/strategy
(cf. level of participation)
- Toolboxes online:
  - ACTION CATALOGUE (http://actioncatalogue.eu/search)
  - GAP2 Toolbox (http://gap2.eu/methodological-toolbox)

ASSESSMENT

- Purpose? Be explicit!
- Focus on outcome or on process?
- In different stages (start, during, end)

‘Plastic Pirates – GO Europe’

CASE-STUDY 1

- Citizen science
- Litter (rivers/coast)
- Schools/scientists
- °2016: DLR
- https://www.plastic-pirates.eu/

VLIZ

‘Plastic Pirates – GO Europe’

CASE-STUDY 1

2016

2021

2023

‘Plastic Pirates – GO Europe’

CASE-STUDY 1

LESSONS LEARNT

Learning by **doing** *(every river is different)*

Clear **message**/convincing storyline

Output for science & policy? Make sure to pay enough attention to **quality control** of the data

Consolidation/Europanisation & **long-term engagement**

CASE-STUDY 2

‘Zeekerweten’

- PE/CS campaign
  (~ BlueMissionBANOS)
- Healthy Ocean
- Public/science/BlEc (1200 p)
- 2022: VLIZ/Scivil/NP *et al*
  - https://www.zeekerweten.be/en
- 2024: Belgian presidency EU

‘Zeekerweten’

CASE-STUDY 2

Save the Date

1st MISSION ARENA
14-16 November 2023
Gothenburg - SE

EVENTS

BLUE MISSION BANOS

Supporting the Mission Ocean Lighthouse in the Baltic and North Sea Basins

REGIONAL FOCUS ARENA 1

NORWAY | South

SWEDEN | West-South

DENMARK | East

GERMANY | Schleswig-Holstein

VLIZ

‘Zeekerweten’

CASE-STUDY 2

LESSONS LEARNT

‘**Co-creation**’ is fancy *(but many formats top-down)*

Be **open-minded**, get **inspired** by others

Test, test, test & **evaluate**!

Strong **bias** biodiversity/species in CS (future?)

Campaigning ! (where can citizens contribute?)

Need more **scientists who communicate**
(Science Barometer)

VLIZ

’Big Seashell Survey’

[‘SeaWatch-B’]

CASE-STUDY 3

- CS program (LifeWatch)
- Shells/biodiversity (285,000 !)
- Public/government/ science (>5000 participants)
- 2018-… (6 editions)
- https://groteschelpenteldag.be

’Big Seashell Survey’

CASE-STUDY 3

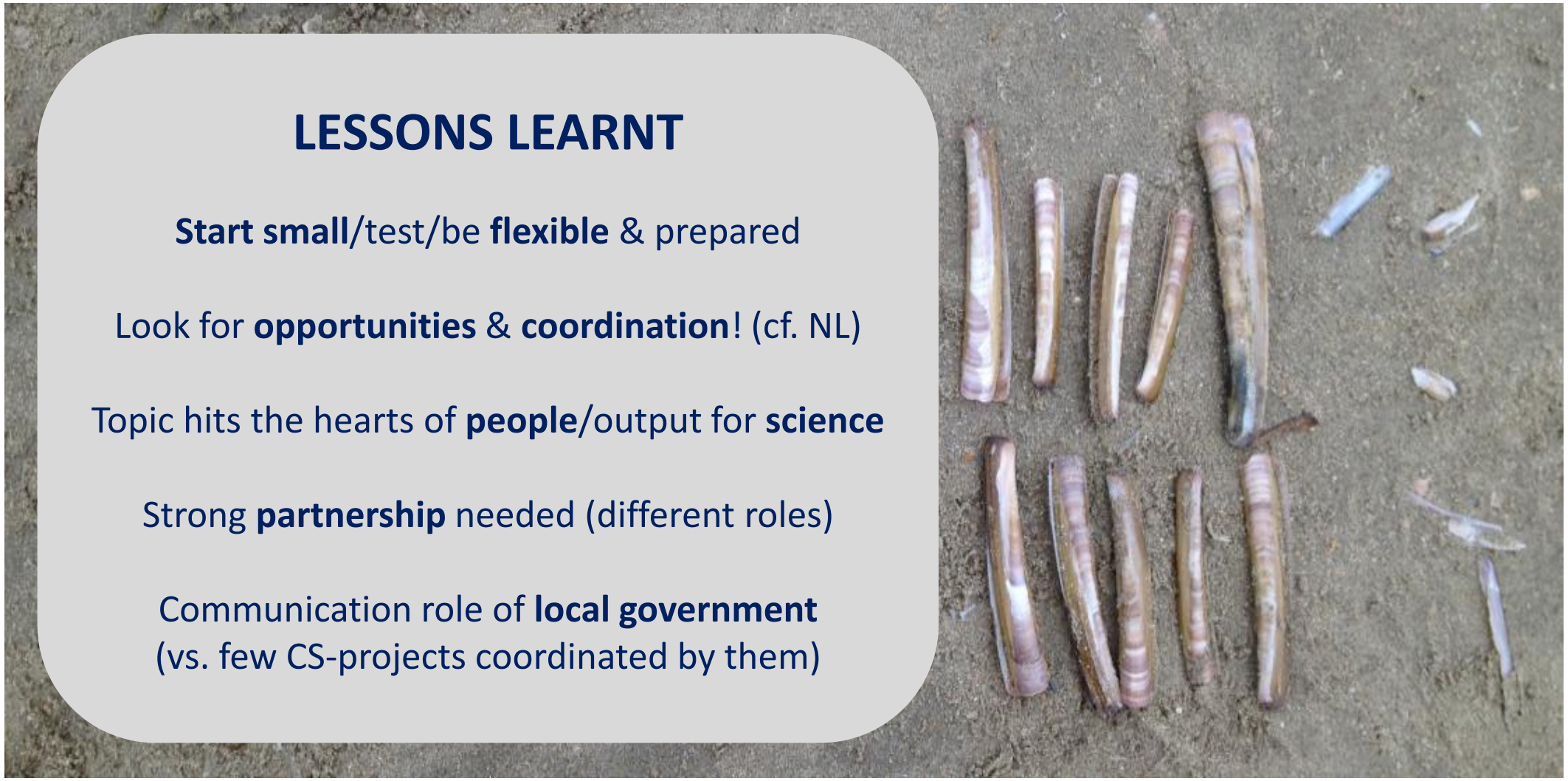
Leiden European City of Science 2022

Netherlands (2022)

N-France (2023)

’Big Seashell Survey’

CASE-STUDY 3



LESSONS LEARNT

Start small/test/be **flexible** & prepared

Look for **opportunities** & **coordination**! (cf. NL)

Topic hits the hearts of **people**/output for **science**

Strong **partnership** needed (different roles)

Communication role of **local government**
(vs. few CS-projects coordinated by them)

Creativity!

SHRIMP PEELING in RESTHOMES

‘PLASTIC MERTRAND’

‘MIRROR BUNKER’ (ART/VISUALISATION)

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP
GULL SCREETCHING

Take home messages

- Think **big**, start **small** (if needed) & learn by **doing/testing/evaluating**.
- Consider your **current situation** and goals carefully before you start *(controllable situation?).* Have a convincing **message/story**.
- Build a strong and diverse **partnership**, with the right areas of **expertise** (science, communication, organization,...)
- Be **open-minded & flexible**. Look for **win-win** situations, make work-with-work.
- Watch out for boredom and too much habit creeping in. Keep **innovating**.
- Don’t shy away from **out-of-the-box** and creative approaches.
- Demonstrate what citizens can do (‘**campaigning**’). Stimulate **scientific outreach.**

Thanks for your attention!