



TRANSCEND

Deliverable 1.2: RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

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Deliverable D1.2 – Rules of Engagement

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Executive summary

This document describes for what purpose and how we will engage various stakeholders in our research, as well as how this engagement will be organised, managed and supervised. It constitutes the rules of engagement or terms of reference for the stakeholder engagement, defines the governance bodies, and provides guidelines and shared principles that will govern the conduct of all parties involved in the inclusive research process. The rules of engagement are built on the Talanoa Dialogues, with the objective of creating and enforcing respectful and constructive exchanges throughout the entire co-creation process. These rules will ensure that our research is conducted in an ethical, responsible and professional manner.

We are committed to conducting rigorous and high-quality research that adheres to principles of ethics and research integrity outlined in the EU Horizon Europe Research and Innovation program. This includes obtaining informed consent from participants, protecting their confidentiality and privacy, and being transparent and honest about research methods and findings. Inclusive dialogue, storytelling, and serious games will be used to facilitate negotiations among stakeholders with different levels of empowerment and resources. The project also prioritizes compliance with relevant laws and regulations and responsible handling of data.

The governance structure including the roles and responsibilities of the project team, members of the knowledge networks, and the designated oversight bodies. It also covers operational management of the networks, including key strategies and best practices. This document also describes data management aspects, intellectual property rights and communication strategy of the project as far as these aspects are directly affecting the knowledge networks. All these aspects are fully explored in separate documents covering all project activities. In this document, we only describe aspects that are relevant to stakeholder engagement and knowledge networks.

The rules of engagement will be rigorously enforced to create a collaborative and inclusive research atmosphere. From the beginning, we will convey the rules of engagement clearly to all participating stakeholders. We will establish feedback mechanisms, enabling stakeholders to express concerns or propose enhancements. This ongoing communication will support the adjustment and improvement of the rules of engagement as needed, guaranteeing their efficacy and pertinence throughout the project's duration.

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1. Introduction

Our goal in the TRANSCEND project is to explore strategies and pathways to achieve comprehensive and transformative change as a response to persistent water challenges, exacerbated by climate change. To achieve this, we recognize the importance of ensuring a balanced representation and buy-in from multiple stakeholders, promoting innovation and creativity, and addressing existing inequities.

As part of our research, we aim to establish local and regional stakeholder representative panels that share common goals and remain stable throughout the implementation period. Each of our research pilot areas may have unique characteristics based on the specific local and regional challenges and the feasibility of identified solutions. However, they all share a commitment to principles and inclusive approaches towards co-creation and shared ownership of knowledge produced.

The co-creation method chosen for this project leans towards and is inspired by the Talanoa Dialogues. Talanoa stands for processes of inclusive and participatory dialogue used to build consensus and understanding among people. The Talanoa Dialogue is a framework developed by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to encourage constructive, transparent and collaborative conversations on climate change. To create a safe and inclusive space for cooperation among participants, the Talanoa Dialogue is governed by three main principles, also known as "rules". These principles are as follows:

- 1) Sharing stories, personal experiences, challenges, and successes while listening to others with empathy and respect,
- 2) Being honest and transparent about each participant's concerns, doubts and perceived limitations, while remaining committed to working together to find suitable solutions.
- 3) Creating positive outcomes for everyone by identifying solutions and opportunities and finding common grounds for action.

In our research, the Talanoa Dialogue will focus on three essential questions: identifying current state and water management challenges, defining the vision of desired destination, and determining pathways and means to achieve it. The research will involve collaborative assessments of current issues and shortcomings, imagining a more resilient and sustainable future, and formulating a roadmap to realize that future.

To promote inclusive research and accommodate diverse perspectives, we will establish knowledge networks tailored to the objectives of each pilot study research. These networks will comprise stakeholder panels featuring representatives from relevant organizations and social groups engaged in water governance within the respective governance context. Panel member selection will be grounded in an analysis of water governance regimes, stakeholder mapping, and capabilities mapping. Our goal is to cultivate a collaborative and inclusive approach to water governance that addresses the varied needs and viewpoints of all involved stakeholders.

To foster cross-pilot exchange and collaboration, we will facilitate connections between the panels. This will encourage sharing of experiences, best practices, and insights gained from each pilot context. By leveraging the knowledge and expertise of stakeholders across the different pilots, we will foster peer- and social learning which will further advance the impact of our project.

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This document outlines the principles and common rules of engagement that will guide our collaboration within and across the knowledge networks. By clearly defining these principles and rules, we provide structure and clarity to our working relationship. Establishing rules of engagement can help to minimize misunderstandings, conflicts, and unintended consequences that can result from unclear expectations or miscommunication. Additionally, it ensures that every member of the network has an equal opportunity to participate and contribute to the common efforts.

Well-defined rules of engagement will promote trust and mutual respect between individuals or groups by creating a shared understanding and framework for our collaboration. This can foster a positive and productive environment that encourages open communication, active listening, and collaborative problem-solving. Our hope is that these principles and rules will facilitate successful and rewarding project outcomes.

2. Principles

As we navigate the complex challenges of water management and strive to create positive change, we are committed to rigorous and high-quality research and innovation conduct that is informed by robust evidence grounded in transparency and integrity. We embrace the principles and guidelines permeating ethics and research integrity outlined in the EU Horizon Europe Research and Innovation program. This commitment also encompasses compliance with relevant national, international, and Union laws, such as the Charter and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as well as the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

- **Informed consent** means that all stakeholders are fully informed about the research goals and agree to participate voluntarily. The purpose of informed consent is to ensure that prior to joining the knowledge networks, all stakeholders understand the nature of the research, the risks and benefits of participation, and their rights as participants.

- **Confidentiality and privacy** are essential aspects of research ethics. We have adopted a sound ethics management plan, which among others ensure confidentiality and sensitive treatment of data. Participants' identities will be protected, and data will be stored in a secure location. The participants' privacy will be protected during the research process. This includes respecting participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality and ensuring that they are not subjected to any harm or discomfort.

The consultations will be organised under the Chatham House Rule preserving the confidentiality of the source of information discussed at a meeting. This means that participants are free to discuss and use the information that is shared during the meeting, but they are not allowed to attribute that information to specific individuals or organizations. The purpose of the rule is to encourage open and frank discussion without fear of attribution or retaliation.

- **Respect for participants, transparency and honesty** are also fundamental principles of research ethics. We will ensure that all participants are treated with respect and dignity, and no one is subjected to any harm or discomfort during the research process. This includes avoiding any behaviour that may be perceived as disrespectful or discriminatory, and ensuring that participants are treated fairly and equally.

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The stakeholders in various knowledge networks come from diverse backgrounds, including different countries and cultural contexts. We will be respectful of these differences and will listen actively to each other's perspectives. An open and constructive dialogue will foster collaboration and mutual understanding.

We will be transparent and honest about our methods, findings, and any conflicts of interest that may arise during the research process. This includes accurately reporting the results of the research, disclosing any potential conflicts of interest, and acknowledging the contributions of all individuals involved in the research.

Inclusive dialogue stimulated by co-creation processes and Talanoa Dialogue will prioritize inclusivity and creativity over efficiency and effectiveness. This is because joint knowledge co-generation involves various stakeholders who may have diverging perspectives. The success of joint knowledge production can be improved by recognizing and respecting the different perspectives of stakeholders, including their diverse knowledge and value systems. This will help appreciate the influence of contrasting contexts on knowledge formation and allow for the development of a shared understanding.

Constructive decision-making and conflict resolution processes are a key factor for a successful stakeholders' engagement, built on mutual trust across different stakeholders and researchers. This is one of the main principles of the Talanoa Dialogue where participants share stories, build empathy and trust, and make wise decisions for the collective good.

Storytelling is a collaborative process in which a group of people explore various scenarios and possibilities related to climate and policy changes and consider their potential impacts. By exploring a range of plausible ways in which the future may unfold, they can avoid relying on a single prediction and make more informed decisions. Human-water system modelling can be used to inform the co-creation of stories, providing data and insights that can help shape the narrative. This approach is particularly important in complex and uncertain systems, where traditional predictive methods may be limited.

We will use "scenathons," also known as "scenario marathons," as a social learning experiment to facilitate negotiations among stakeholder groups that have different levels of empowerment and resources. Scenathons are serious games that focus on the negotiation process, making them well-suited for the Talanoa Dialogue's serious game organization. Furthermore, scenathons are designed to simulate multiple scenarios, making them particularly suitable for exploring decision-making under conditions of deep uncertainty

- **Compliance with law and regulations** in place in the European Union, and in countries and regions in which the study pilot are situated is the foremost principle of our project. We will comply with all relevant laws, regulations, and guidelines governing research and innovation. In some cases this may include obtaining approval from a specific committee responsible for reviewing the research conducted to ensure that it meets ethical standards. We also respect and build upon existing agreements between organisations which we involve in this research as well as previous partnerships with long-standing foundations and effective stakeholder processes process. These agreements can include transboundary agreements, basin management plans, basin councils, contracts or previously established relationships that generate a dynamic between actors.

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- **Responsible handling of data** is among our core commitments. Data sharing can help to promote scientific transparency and collaboration and can lead to new discoveries and insights. We will acquire, process, and generate data that is useful for the research activities, and collect other existing or original local or regional data for the same purpose, including from the stakeholders. We will consider appropriate safeguards to protect the privacy of participants.

3. Effective Governance and Operational Management

The governance of knowledge networks defines the roles and responsibilities of the TRANSCEND project consortium members, stakeholders contributing to pilot research, and designated management bodies. It also outlines the processes for creating, managing and monitoring performance of the knowledge networks to ensure consistency and efficiency.

The members of the TRANSCEND consortium are responsible for executing the research and innovation activities in each research pilot area, with assistance from and active engagement of the knowledge network members. Each research pilot will involve one or more TRANSCEND research partners collaborating under the supervision of the research **pilot lead**.

The knowledge network established in each pilot study area will include **at least five** representatives from stakeholder organizations that have been identified as vital for the scope of the pilot. The size of the networks may vary across pilots and may change over time as research progresses and additional expertise is required.

While research pilots rely on close engagement with knowledge networks, the organization of this engagement can vary. Knowledge networks may be organized into groups, or a series of bilateral interactions may be more appropriate, depending on the scope of the research and existing institutional relations.

Individuals or institutions may participate in the network. In the former case, the designated knowledge network members will contribute to the project activities based on their best knowledge and personal views. In the latter case, the organization agrees to participate and may nominate staff members to participate in the project activities and convey the institutional views and opinions. Informed consent will be obtained and signed by all knowledge network members.

All network members, whether individuals or institutions, have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, with or without providing reasons. Similarly, if a member does not participate in project activities, they may be replaced by another expert or organization with similar or complementary expertise. All contributions made by withdrawing or disinvited members up until that point will be fully acknowledged. Should members of the knowledge network be dissatisfied with the manner in which their perspectives have been captured and integrated into research activities, they are entitled to file a complaint. Such complaints shall be directed to the research pilot lead and project coordinator for review and resolution.

The members of the knowledge network are encouraged to elect a **chair** or **network manager**, and it is preferable for this role to be rotated among members within a pre-defined time interval. Research pilot lead in collaboration with knowledge network chair will plan and organize network activities,

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including consultations, meetings, dissemination, and capacity building initiatives. They may develop engagement plans on a six-monthly or annual basis. Together, they will ensure that all stakeholders follow the rules of engagement outlined in this document and manage any potential conflicts or competition by following established guidelines.

The TRANSCEND consortium will appoint **impact champions** to monitor the performance of knowledge networks across research pilots, ensuring stakeholder recommendations are considered beyond the pilot phase. The impact champions will produce periodic reports summarizing progress, challenges, and actions taken. The impact champion team will meet online three months before and one month after each workshop.

To promote collaboration across labs, we will establish an **international network board** comprised of knowledge network chairs and research partners. The purpose of the board is to share best practices, exchange ideas, and collaborate on joint initiatives, creating a cohesive and integrated system where each network contributes to the overall success of the project.

4. Ethical considerations

We have developed a comprehensive Ethics Plan (D7.2) that considers ethics as a crucial aspect of project management, deserving of special attention and strategic importance. The plan encompasses ethical conduct, equal opportunities, and responsible research and innovation. In this section, we outline the ethical concerns that our research entails and emphasize the importance of engaging stakeholders in ethical considerations.

Our research will focus on addressing the risks associated with water, land, and climate, specifically through sustainable water management reforms. These areas of policy and practice involve ethical considerations such as social justice, sustainability, community engagement, and environmental protection. We recognize that water access is unevenly distributed, and vulnerable communities often feel the impact of water scarcity more acutely. Vulnerability can be driven or worsened by inequalities in resource, opportunity, and power distribution within society. These inequalities can stem from multiple factors, including race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. Our research will prioritize the rights of all communities, including those that are marginalized or most vulnerable, while respecting their cultural practices, beliefs, and values.

Our primary objective is to promote sustainable water use and preserve healthy ecosystems, with particular attention to marginalized and vulnerable social groups. We will involve the communities in our research process to ensure that our work aligns with their needs and concerns. Additionally, we are aware of the potential environmental impacts of water reform, and our research will prioritize the protection of the natural environment.

Engaging stakeholders in knowledge networks requires careful consideration of several aspects. Firstly, we believe in providing opportunities for stakeholders to participate in our research and contribute to important decisions that may affect them directly or indirectly. We aim to empower them through knowledge sharing, capacity building, and networking. However, we acknowledge that selecting representative stakeholders can be challenging, therefore we will conduct a comprehensive institutional mapping exercise to mitigate any potential exclusions. Secondly, we are committed to

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respecting the interests of stakeholders throughout the research process by safeguarding their privacy, confidentiality, and autonomy. We will also ensure that their perspectives and experiences are accurately reflected in our research findings. We will identify potential stakeholders from different genders, backgrounds, cultures, roles, and sectors; inviting them to participate in the research; providing them with adequate information, support, and feedback; respecting their views, preferences, and rights; and acknowledging their contributions and impacts. We will promote gender balance and diversity among the stakeholder group. This means ensuring that the stakeholder groups reflect the diversity of the population or the context of the research and that different perspectives and experiences are represented and valued. Gender balance and diversity can enhance the quality, validity, and acceptability of the research, as well as foster trust, respect, and mutual learning among the stakeholders. Finally, we will be mindful of power imbalances and take steps to address them through respectful and equitable engagement practices.

5. Data management, intellectual property rights and communication

Data is a crucial asset for research and innovation, and responsible handling is essential to maintaining stakeholder trust. We have devised a comprehensive Data Management Plan and an extensive guide on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) to outline the management and accessibility of data generated, collected, and acquired throughout the project. In this document, we focus on data management aspects directly related to knowledge network management.

We will obtain data from various sources, including global or regional data services, and generate data through our research and research tool applications. This data will be made accessible to knowledge networks and broader stakeholders in easily accessible repositories and formats, as well as in comprehensible forms for use. Some data will be co-produced with knowledge networks or collected to reflect their perspectives. Network members may also contribute their data to the research.

To avoid ethical and privacy concerns, we will only collect data necessary for our research objectives. Knowledge networks will be informed about the collected data, its purpose, and usage. Data protection will be ensured through appropriate security measures to prevent unauthorized access, use, or disclosure. We will adhere to ethical practices and relevant laws and regulations, ensuring no discrimination against individuals or groups. Data retention will be limited to the duration necessary to fulfil our objectives, after which it will be securely deleted or anonymized. We acknowledge stakeholders' rights to access, correct, and request deletion of their data and will accommodate such requests promptly.

A Plan for Dissemination, Exploitation, and Communication activities (PDEC) has been developed and will be updated regularly to include accounts and plans for activities involving knowledge networks. Our communication tools and channels will be customized according to network priorities and may include consultative and deliberative meetings, newsletters, webinars, or ad hoc information campaigns. Core reports and deliverables will feature plain language summaries accessible to the broader public in pilot areas.

6. Conclusions

Throughout the project implementation, the aforementioned rules of engagement will be meticulously applied to foster a collaborative and inclusive research environment. These rules underpin respectful and constructive interactions among stakeholders, embracing diverse perspectives and addressing various needs.

From the outset, we will communicate the rules of engagement unambiguously to all involved stakeholders. Feedback mechanisms will be instituted, allowing stakeholders to voice concerns or suggest improvements. This continuous dialogue will facilitate the adaptation and refinement of the rules of engagement as necessary, ensuring their effectiveness and relevance throughout the project's lifecycle.

By consistently applying and diligently managing the rules of engagement, our objective is to cultivate a transparent, inclusive, and ethical atmosphere that promotes collaboration, innovation, and successful project outcomes.