
Challenges for Public Participation? in River Basin Management & Planning

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Why Public Participation ?

- ≡ The CIS Guidance underlines the following potential benefits:
 - Increasing public awareness of environmental problems
 - Improving the quality of management plans using the knowledge, experience of different stakeholders
 - Public acceptance and commitment to the decision taken; more transparent and more creative decision making
 - Social learning and experience
- ≡ The CIS Guidance also points out the proportionality of the participation, meaning the balance between benefits and costs of arranging the participation

The Legal background

*The Aarhus Convention **grants the public rights** and imposes on public authorities' obligations regarding access to information and **public participation** as well as access to justice*

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
1998

***Article 14** of the Directive specifies that Member States shall encourage the active involvement of all interested parties in the implementation of the Directive and development of river basin management plans.*

The Water Framework Directive
1998

When to start the public involvement ?

- ≡ Generally, the public should be involved as early in the planning process as possible, in order to get the maximum benefits from the public involvement, at least, before the crucial decisions are made
- ≡ By involving the public actively and with the right timing, the authorities can learn and make use of the views, experiences and knowledge of the citizens and obtaining higher acceptance of the decisions to be made
- ≡ The authority should realise, that the consultation is not only an opportunity for the public to become involved – but also an opportunity for the authority really to use the comments from the citizens to develop better plans!

How to arrange the consultation ?

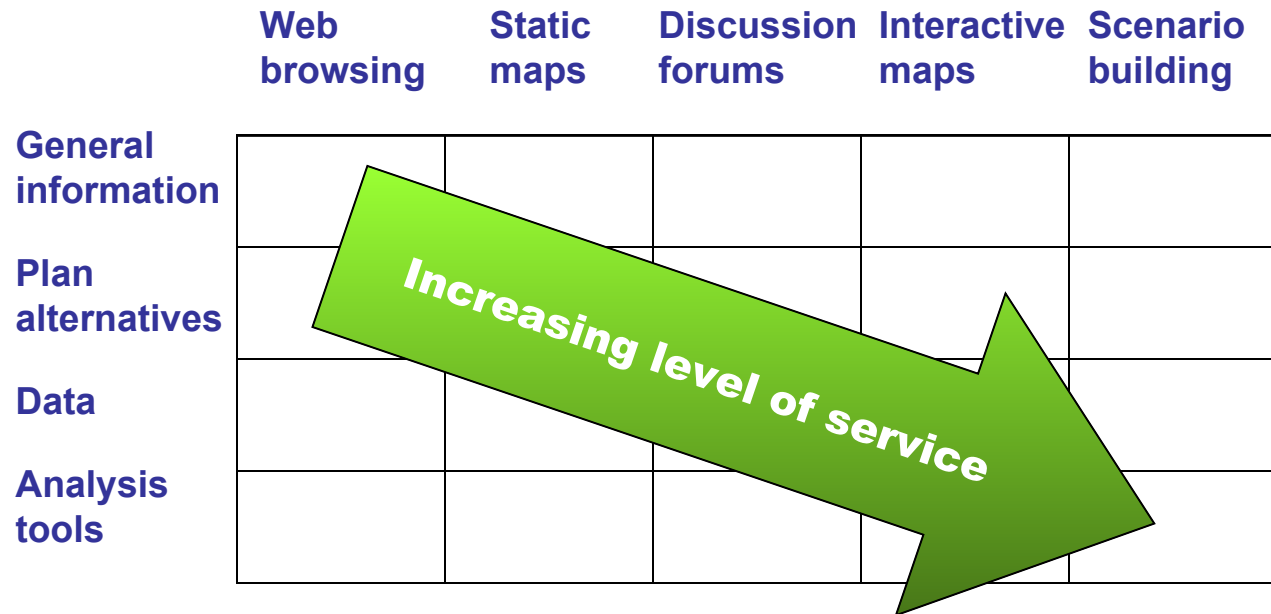
- ≡ The Internet is now used widely to inform the public as well as to having dialogues with the public through discussion forums and e-mails
 - but public meetings and newspaper discussions are still important tools in participatory processes
- ≡ Transparency and access to information are crucial for a successful participatory process
- ≡ Deciding upon the level of involvement is perhaps the most difficult issue
 - balancing social, economic and environmental factors against each other is not easy for the public – but the responsible water bodies are obliged to try !!!

Public Participation Ladders

Increasing level of participation ↑

Arnstein	Weideman & Femers	Smyth
Citizen power	Public participation in Final decisions	
	Public participation in assessing risks and recommending solutions	Online decision Support systems
Tokenism	Public participation in Defining interests, actors And determining agenda	Online opinion surveys
	Public participation in assessing risks and recommending solutions	Online discussion
Non-participation	Restricted participation	Communication barrier
	Informing the public	Online service delivery

Framework for PPGIS



Peng, 2001

Who should be involved?

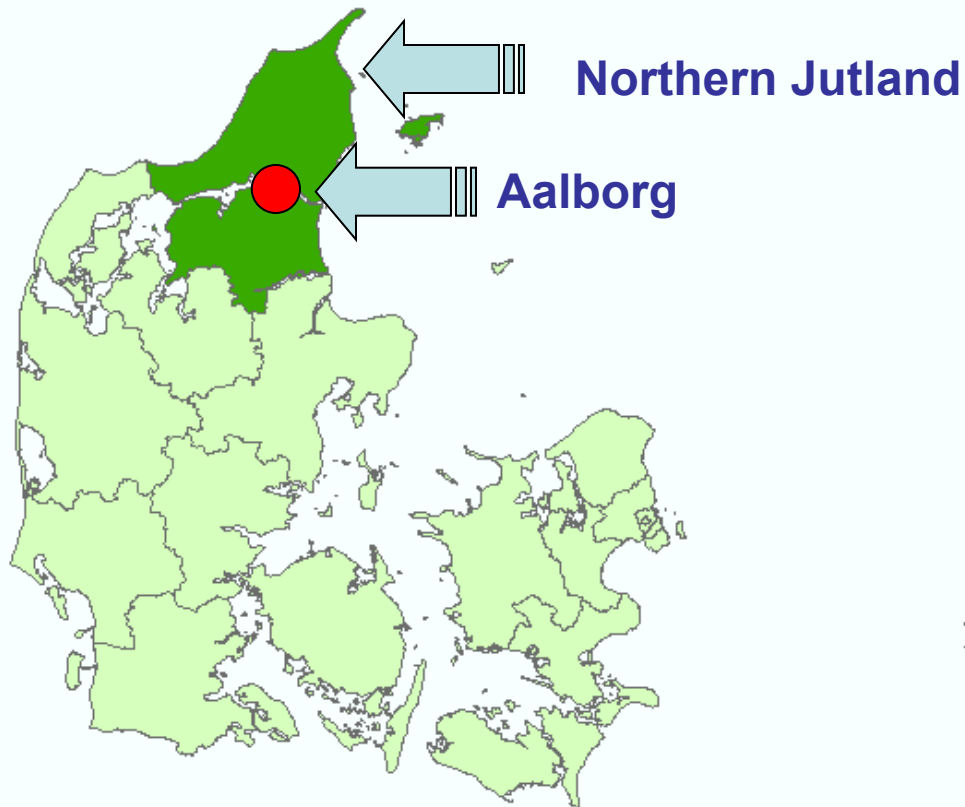
- ≡ Article 14 of the Directive uses the terms "public", "general public" and "interested parties", but it does not define those terms
- ≡ Remember to involve all stakeholders and different groups of the river basin district
- ≡ The authorities must pay special attention to groups, which are normally absent in the participatory process
- ≡ Furthermore, take into account that they might need different kinds of tools to participate

Who is the public ?

Stakeholder identification (Creighhton, 1983)

- ≡ *Proximity* - Citizens living near where a project or plan is implemented is more vulnerable than people living in at longer distances from the new project
- ≡ *Economic* - Some citizens may experience financial gain or lose dependent on their relationship to the new project
- ≡ *Use* - A new regional plan implying the construction of a motorway may limit some people's use of a resource or facility due to for example barrier effects
- ≡ *Social* - A project or policy may threaten a tradition or culture, or it may significantly alter a demographic structure of a community
- ≡ *Values* - A group may be affected only in terms of how an action relates to its values

Case Studies



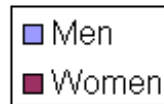
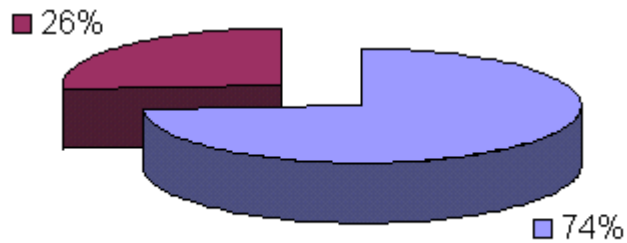
New Regional Master Plan



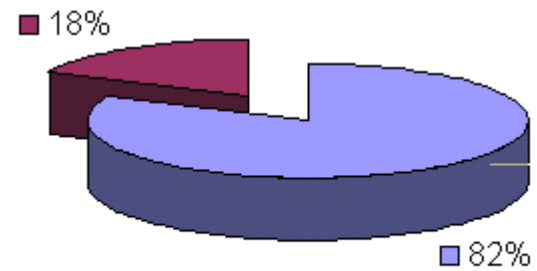
New Bridge across Limfjorden

Demography - Gender

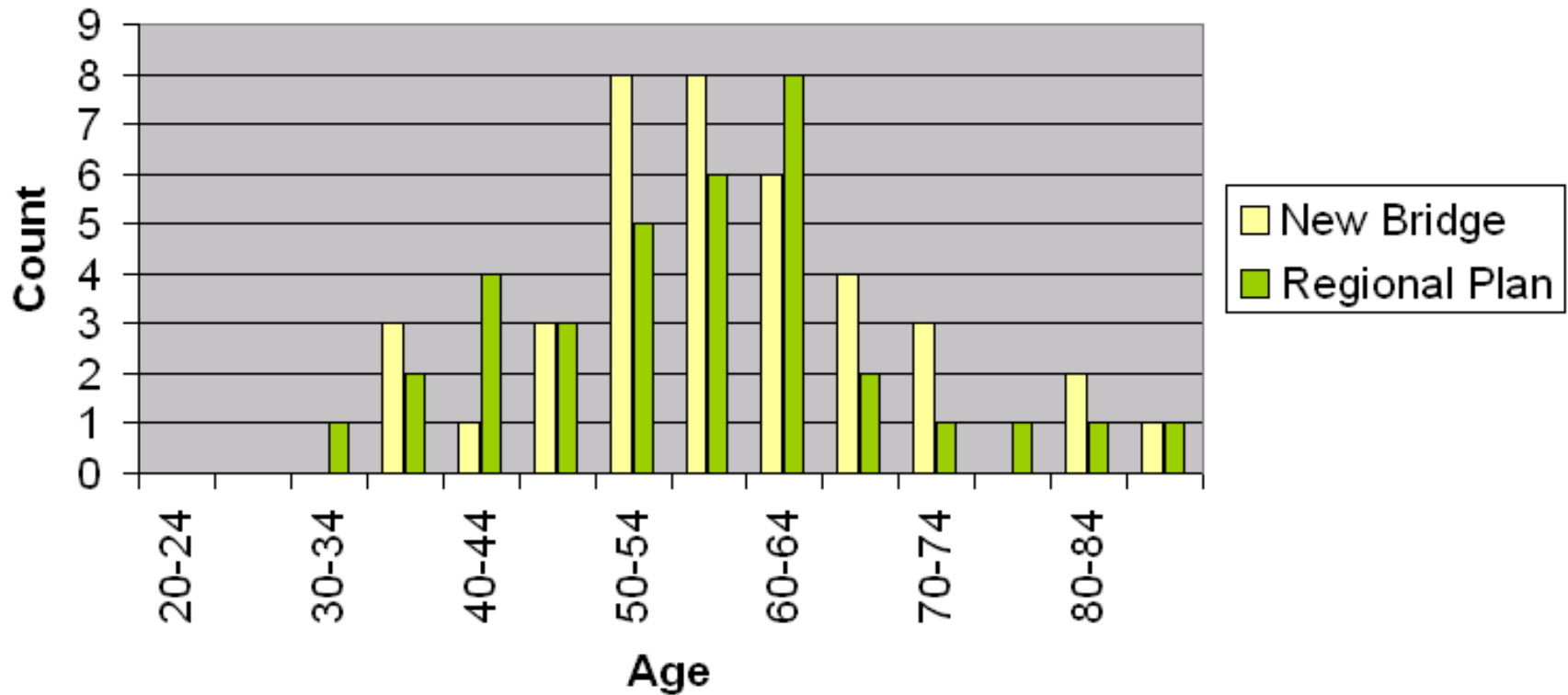
Regional Plan



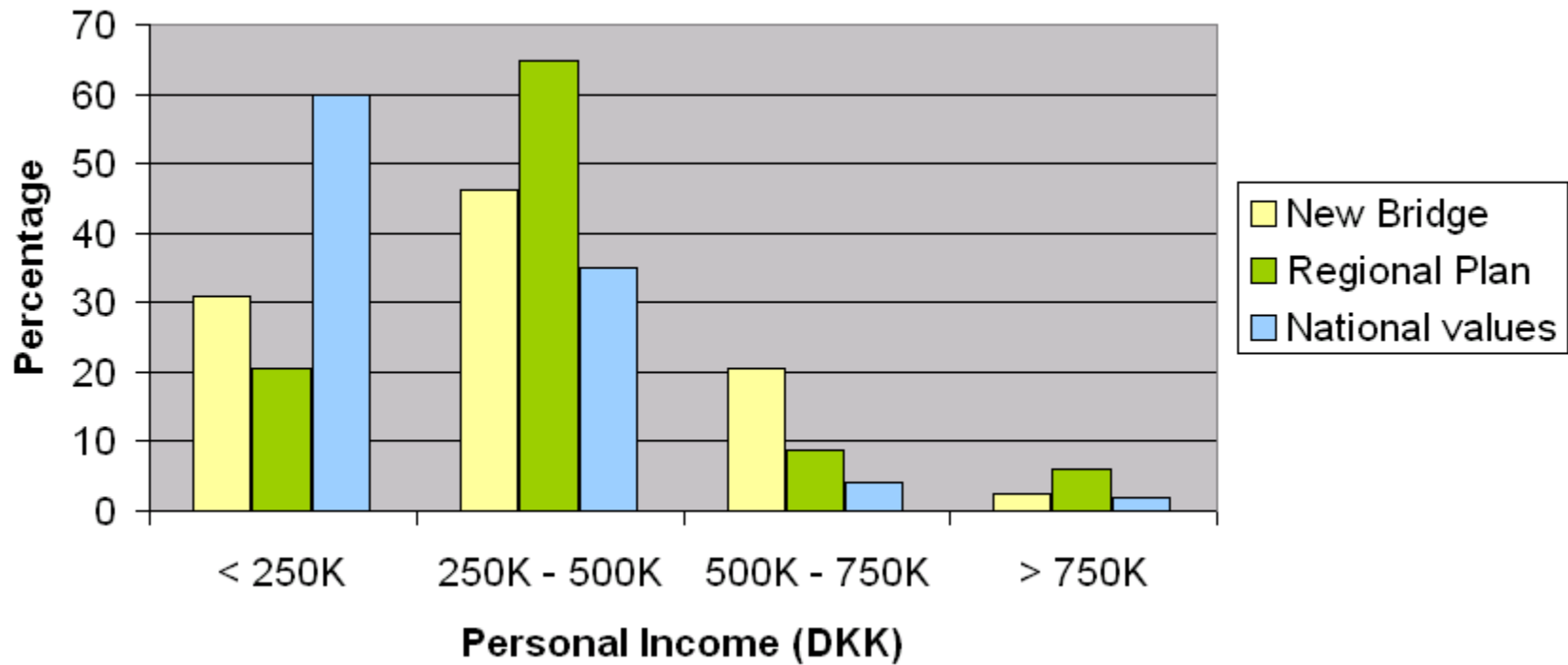
New Bridge



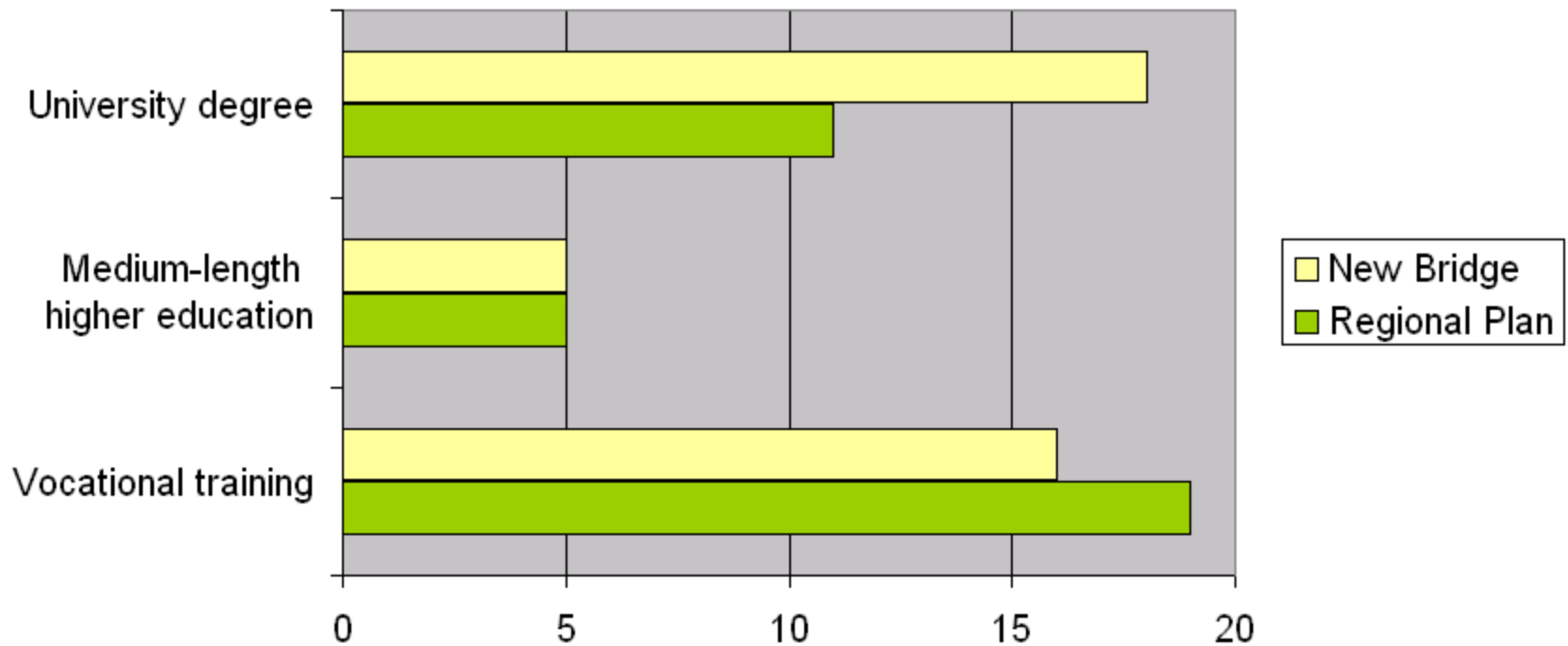
Demography - Age



Personal Income

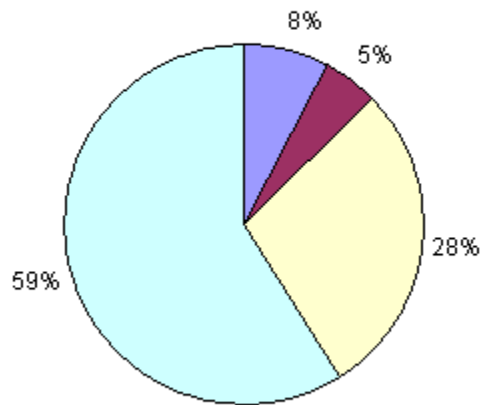


Educational background

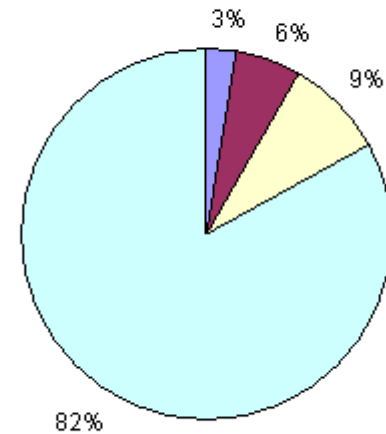


Internet experience

New Bridge



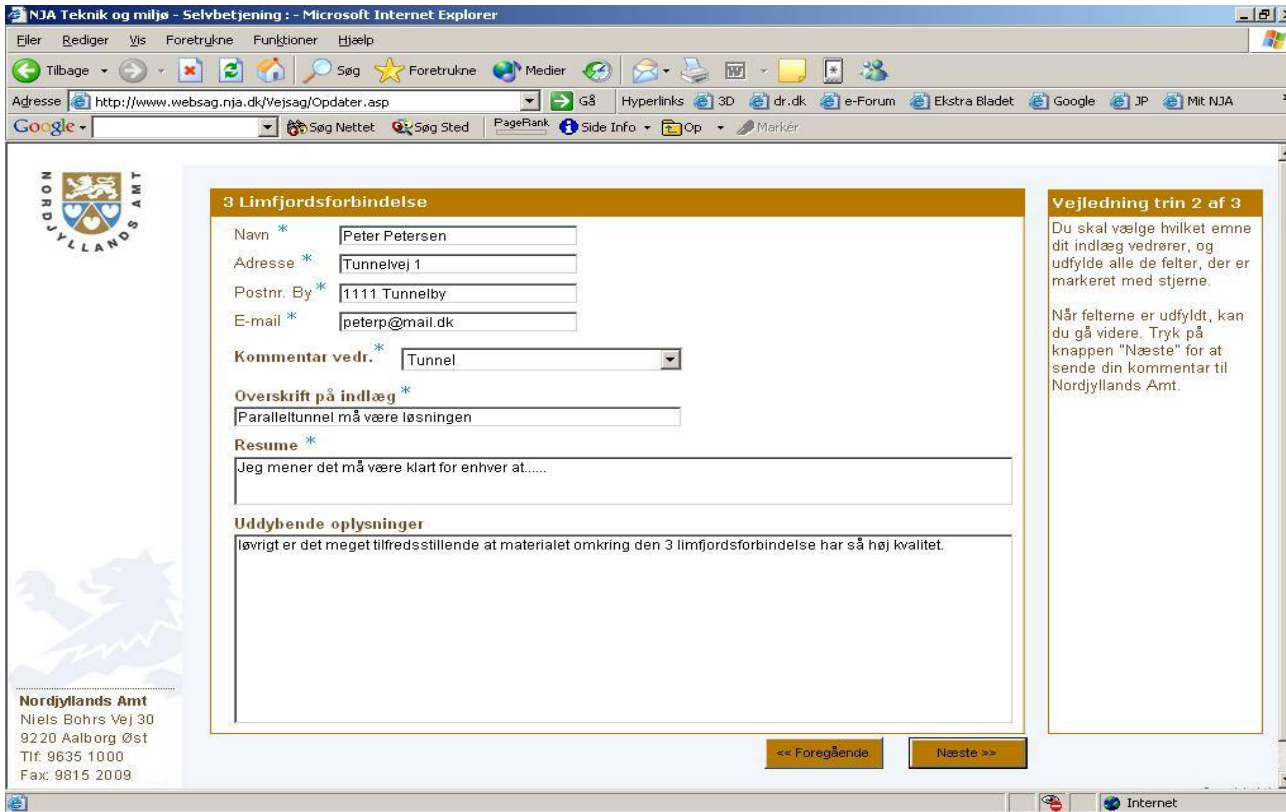
Regional Plan



Handling feedback to the citizens

- ≡ A positive participatory phase requires that the public complains and ideas are handled seriously by the decision-makers and having visible impact on policies
- ≡ The best way of ensuring this impact will be to clearly state how the results of the public involvement will be taken into consideration in the final river basin plan
- ≡ The trust between the public and the authorities can be further enhanced by explaining how the public suggestions have been adopted in the final plan
- ≡ Handling comments from the public is therefore very important

Public hearing database



NJA Teknik og miljø - Selvbetjening - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Adresse: <http://www.websag.nja.dk/Vejslag/Opdater.asp>

3 Limfjordsforbindelse

Navn *

Adresse *

Postnr. By *

E-mail *

Kommentar vedr. *

Overskrift på indlæg *

Resume *

Uddybende oplysninger

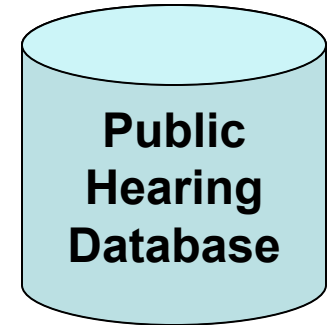
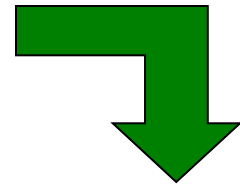
Vejledning trin 2 af 3

Du skal vælge hvilket emne dit indlæg vedrører, og udfylde alle de felter, der er markeret med stjerne.

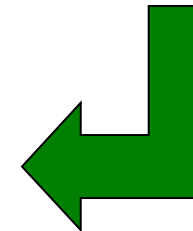
Når felterne er udfyldt, kan du gå videre. Tryk på knappen "Næste" for at sende din kommentar til Nordjyllands Amt.

<< Foregående Næste >>

Nordjyllands Amt
Niels Bohrs Vej 30
9220 Aalborg Øst
Tlf: 9635 1000
Fax: 9815 2009



Further analysis



Evaluation of the Participatory Phase

- ≡ An assessment of the participatory process during and after the consultation is essential
- ≡ It is important to realise that public participation can be carried out in many different ways depending on the current situation
- ≡ The authority must follow the process and adapt the public consultation if needed
- ≡ At the end the responsible authority must prepare a more detailed evaluation of the consultation – aiming at learning from the gathered experiences

Recommendations - 1

- ≡ *Explain detailed the reasons for the participatory process and why it is important to involve the public in river basin planning*
- ≡ *Start the public involvement as early as possible and try to find other parallel planning processes giving possibilities for mutual support*
- ≡ *The Internet is an outstanding tool for spreading information to the public, and should be an important tool in involving the public*
- ≡ *The authority must explain the scope of the public involvement and how the process will be carried out*
- ≡ *The process must be transparent and all needed information available for the public*

Recommendations - 2

- ≡ *Make use of GIS and Virtual Reality technologies to inform the public about the various alternatives*
- ≡ *The water body authority should aim at public involvement through a dual-public approach, where all citizens within a river basin district) represent one public, whereas a group of stakeholders constitutes another public*
- ≡ *Explain for the public how their feedback is handled by the authority. Set up a public hearing database for storing all comments and feedback from the public*
- ≡ *Carry out a running evaluation of the participatory phase in order to improve the process at later stages*

Concluding remarks

- ≡ Public participation plays a major role in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive
- ≡ It is generally recognised that this will be a huge challenge for the authorities of the new river basin districts
- ≡ Nevertheless, the guidelines and recommendations produced are rather vague
- ≡ We have analysed the various obstacles, which can be foreseen and have set up some recommendations, which could be helpful for river basin planners setting up public participation in practice

THANK
YOU
FOR
YOUR
ATTENTION !!!