



Beyond the management and dissemination of projects' results: stakeholders involvement and project co-design

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Nowadays scientists are asked to undertake innovative and participative approaches in communicating the results of researches carried out within the various funding programs. In particular, Workpackages of Dissemination and Exploitation of results are considered mandatory at the European level helping the Project Management find innovative knowledge transfer strategies and enhance the project outcomes and impact.

In this context, the involvement of stakeholders or users in research projects won a well-defined role and recent trends, in some cases, push to co-design research projects involving a pool of stakeholders or users in them from its first steps. Horizon 2020, the new EU Framework Programme for Innovation and Community financing system (2014-2020), moves clearly in this direction.

CNR has an extensive experience in this kind of activity, both at the national and the international level and, in some cases, involve users and analyse their expectations using qualitative and quantitative surveys thus recognizing the role of users as research co-actors. Often products and services derived from research lack of attractiveness among enterprises, the Public Administrations and citizens, are due to the lack of an appropriate knowledge and consideration of the needs and requirements of such users.

This paper intends to illustrate a case study where the analysis of the needs and requirements of the users were included in a specific Workpackage collaborating so both with the Project management and the Workpackage of Dissemination. The analysis were conducted within an ongoing project at CNR, i.e. Space4Agri (S4A): Development of Innovative Methodologies Aerospace Earth Observation in Support of the Sector agriculture in Lombardy. The main purpose of S4A is to contribute to the development of tools to improve the ability of the regional system in the planning and management of the agricultural sector Lombard, combining three domains that is scientific and technical areas, namely the remote observations from satellite, aircraft technologies for UAVs and Internet technologies 2.0 for smart exchange of data.

The methodology for collecting user requirements was recursive. Once identified target users, their "external needs" were investigated through qualitative tools such as semi - structured interviews. Thanks to the information provided by respondents subsequent deeper interviews were conducted from which additional requirements, such as further case studies and other beneficiaries were derived. During the process, also a second category of requirements, called "internal" emerged, derived from the mutual interactions between the domains of the project. The collection of requirements took more iterations, the results of which were summarized showing the expected contributions, products and by-products from stakeholders; starting from these elements each domain of the project reconstructed its state of the art in order to set methods and plan a work flow in a manner as close as possible to the needs of regional partners.

The methodological issues involved both external and internal factors and stripped the complexity involved in the analysis of user needs in multi-domain, highlighting critical issues and operational difficulties but also providing interesting ideas for future developments.