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Stakeholders' expectations on connectivity research for water and land management addressed by a survey in the collaborative EU-COST Connecteur network

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Transfer of knowledge across the science-society interface is essential for both, ethical and economic reasons, and inevitable for successful climate change adaptation and integrated management of sustainable, resilient landscapes. The transdisciplinary research of connectivity (which is the degree to which a system facilitates the movement of matter and energy through itself. It is an emergent property of the system state, Connecteur web resources,2015) has the potential to supply monitoring, modelling and management tools to land and water managers in order to reach these goals. The research of water and sediment connectivity has received significant and increasing scientific attention across the entire realm of the environmental disciplines, and the COST Action ES 1306 Connecteur facilitates the multi-sectorial collaboration in connectivity research at EU level. In order to appropriately address the transfer of the cutting edge research developments of the Connecteur network, the collaborative research project on stakeholders' perception of connectivity was conducted by the Working Group 5 "Transition of connectivity research towards sustainable land and water management". The questionnaire survey on stakeholder perception was conducted by volunteering scientist involved in the Connecteur network together from 19 European countries. Together 84 stakeholders from all mayor sectors in water and land management were asked about the main challenges of their work, their understanding of connectivity, the desired areas of cooperation with connectivity science, and the best tools for transferring knowledge. The results showed differences between different stakeholders groups in the way they percept and work with connectivity, as well as their requirement of knowledge transfers. While farmers, and (in lower extend) the agricultural administration officers articulated no, or little need for connectivity management, the majority of stakeholders involved in land and water management found it important. The need of scientist involvement in educational activities (targeting farmers), provision of training in newly developed easily usable tools (models or maps) based on existing data and training in this tools (for land and water management) were, together with freely available data, the most frequently expressed desired way of communication. The results of the study help to improve the research pathways of all working groups of COST Action ES 1306 Connecteur, and to identify the important way of transfer of the connectivity science to all relevant stakeholders. The project was supported by COST-STSM-ES1306-011215-063624.
Connecteur web resources (2015) http://connecteur.info/wiki/connectivity-wiki/, 07.01.2016