



Bridging the gap between policy and knowledge  
on biodiversity in Europe

## Method 5 Expert consultation

### Summary of method

The consultation of a designated set of experts, either individually or in a group, to gather judgement, evaluation or opinion. This can use online consultation, in-person meetings, individual interviews, written consultation or group meetings.

There are no formal reporting requirements. Martin *et al.* (2012) suggest four aspects of an expert elicitation exercise that ought to be reported because they are required to determine its comprehensiveness and effectiveness: study design and context, elicitation design, elicitation method, and elicitation output.

Slocum (2003) provides detailed guidance on setting up an expert panel who produce a report, which can be an appropriate form of expert consultation for complex or technical issues.

### Key references

Martin TG *et al.* (2012) Eliciting expert knowledge in conservation science. *Conservation Biology* 26, 29-38. Available from:  
[http://caestuaries.opennrm.org/assets/25c6ecae38d70f4c1075fee788e0155b/application/pdf/O611\\_Martin\\_etal.pdf](http://caestuaries.opennrm.org/assets/25c6ecae38d70f4c1075fee788e0155b/application/pdf/O611_Martin_etal.pdf)

Slocum N (2003) Participatory Methods Toolkit. A practitioner's manual. United Nations University, King Baudouin Foundation and the Flemish Institute for Science and Technology Assessment. Available from:  
[http://archive.unu.edu/hq/library/Collection/PDF\\_files/CRIS/PMT.pdf](http://archive.unu.edu/hq/library/Collection/PDF_files/CRIS/PMT.pdf) Accessed 02/01/2019.

### Examples of application

Turnhout *et al.* (2003) describe the use of multiple expert consultation to devise ecological targets for the Wadden Sea.

Turnhout E, Hisschemöller M and Eijsackers H (2008). Science in Wadden Sea policy: from accommodation to advocacy. *Environmental science & policy* 11(3), 227-239.





## Expert consultation

Cost	Expenses and compensation of the work time for experts (1 hour–1 day), staff costs for organising meetings, summarising discussions, writing synthesis (up to 1 week FTE)
Time required	Can be completed in 1 week to 1 month. However a formal expert panel could take longer to deliver its report
Repeatability	Moderate (lower if different individual experts consulted)
Transparency	Moderate. Can be increased by publishing expert names, justification of selection of the experts (why some were not consulted), conflict of interest declarations, procedure of consultation, statements by the experts and results (how the results were interpreted)
Risk of bias	High
Scale (or level of detail)	Any scale, but coarse resolution
Capacity for participation	Moderate and dependent on how the experts are asked to provide their information. For example, individual phone conversation are less participatory than statements in a public hearing process
Data demand	Good overview of expertise/experts in the field needed for adequate selection; can depends on experts access on data
Types of knowledge	All: Scientific, technical, opinion-based, indigenous and local knowledge (if ILK knowledge holders are the 'experts'); explicit and tacit
Types of output	Written and oral statements, reports, can include minority opinions, recommendations
Specific expertise required	Adequate selection of experts (including self-selection biases), facilitation and moderation skills, ability to handle conflicting expert views

## Strengths

Rapid access to knowledge  
Can incorporate all types of knowledge  
Low cost

## Weaknesses

Not systematic or comprehensive  
No documentation of the evidence or studies used  
Subject to bias from individual (self-selected) experts with strong unsubstantiated opinions

