

Q&A log from 15 July 2026

SpongeBoost webinar: Turning evidence into action for sponge landscapes

What quantitative data do you include in the database? eg VWB? ha of interventions? How do you "score" interventions and projects on effects?

- We included a short description in the database for each project, which makes findability easier for the users. Where there are quantitative data, we included that as well. Mainly, it provides access to existing databases. We see many differences between the existing databases: how much data is available for each project and how it is presented. It would be interesting, though, to analyse all the existing information from those databases and present it in an organised way. We hope to be able to do that in the future.

How do you plan to keep the database up to date? How do you plan to maintain the site in the long term?

- The basic updates (ensuring the website is functioning) will be done in the future. But we are aware that (hopefully) many Sponge projects will be implemented in the years and decades to follow. We will look for new opportunities to update the website's content periodically to ensure it reflects the current state of knowledge at any given time.

Did you have any specific audience in mind when preparing the comics? And how are the comics actually used? Do you follow up on that?

- We wanted to reach as broad an audience as possible. We know that they're handed out at events, used by schools, and also taken along as little giveaways during conversations with politicians. Interested people also read them from time to time when they come across them. We generally receive very positive feedback from our professional networks as well.

Can you please explain a bit more about what the sponge facility actually is - or will be soon? Is it a Commission expert working group or an EEA or JRC task?

- This was an action that was included in the EU water resilience strategy to develop a sponge facility. There was an initial consultation on this quite early on following the launch of the WRS, but it's not clear yet what the scope will be. It could be like a repository of information on sponge measures, a community of practice. People have been proposing ideas to the commission about what it could do beyond this r. It's DG ENV that's in the lead of this action, and we expect that it will be advanced via the Water Resilience Stakeholder Forum launching in September.

Do you expect anything from the Commission guidance on climate-resilient landscapes that the Commission is publishing this summer?

- Wetlands, together with WWF and EEB, submitted a paper to DG CLIMA highlighting that the public consultation on the Integrated Framework on Climate Resilience did not include nature-based solutions or how they would be promoted. We raised this as a major concern and discussed it with DG CLIMA. As it currently stands, the framework is expected to require better climate risk assessments but will not promote specific solutions like nature-based solutions or sponge measures or guide Member States on implementation. In our paper, we proposed adopting **sponge targets**, inspired by Flanders' Blue Deal, where catchment-specific sponge targets are used nationwide to reduce flood and drought risks. While we do not expect the Commission to include such measures in the proposal, we plan to continue advocating for them during the co-decision process at the European level.

With the Water Framework Directive (WFD) currently under revision and the Environmental Omnibus expected to introduce changes, how does the SpongeBoost policy brief address these developments? The draft National Restoration Plans under the Nature Restoration Regulation are expected in September, although they may not all be made public.

- The river basin management planning process for the next cycle still goes on, so we want to encourage high ambition, and member states too, because I think sponge solutions are solving some of these major challenges we're seeing in Europe: the flood and drought, and fires.

Does Spongy exist as a life-sized mascot, and is there a budget to take Spongy and the sponge landscape message to international events, such as the upcoming Rio Convention COPs? Given the global relevance of the sponge approach and the EU's influence on international water, climate and nature policy, could this help promote the concept beyond Europe?

- The character is available as open-access (CC-licensed) illustrations that anyone can print and use at events. The project has previously displayed 30 cm cut-outs of Spongy at conferences alongside roll-ups and exhibition stands. Those interested can contact the team to receive high-quality illustrations for printing and use at their own events.