



D5.2 Plan for Exploitation and Dissemination of Results (PEDR) Update 1

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Summary

This document presents the first update of the Plan for the Exploitation and Dissemination of Results (PEDR) for SpongeBoost. Building on the original plan submitted in June 2024 (Month 6) as D5.1, this updated version reflects the progress made in communication, dissemination, and exploitation (CDE) activities during the first 18 months of the project. It also adjusts the initial strategy to align with the project's current needs, ongoing stakeholder engagement, and evolving impact priorities.

This deliverable updates the strategic direction of the CDE approach based on consortium feedback, lessons learned, and practical developments. It outlines current priorities, revised implementation plans, and key performance indicators (KPIs) for monitoring progress. In doing so, it provides a comprehensive framework for the second stage of the project.

Further updates of the PEDR will be submitted as D5.3 (Month 34) and D5.4 (Month 48), with each revision aimed at reinforcing the relevance, accessibility, and practical use of the project's results, while supporting their long-term uptake beyond the lifetime of SpongeBoost.

List of Abbreviations

CDE	Communication, Dissemination, Exploitation
EU	European Union
M	Month
KER	Key Exploitable Result
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
PEDR	Plan for Exploitation and Dissemination of Results
NBS	Nature-Based Solutions
WP	Work Package
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisations

1. Introduction

SpongeBoost supports the implementation and upscaling of sponge functions in European landscapes to improve water retention, reduce flood and drought risks, and strengthen ecosystem resilience. These objectives contribute directly to the European Green Deal by promoting practical, cost-effective, nature-based solutions for landscape management. The project works across multiple scales, from local demonstration sites to the pan-European level, compiling and applying knowledge through participatory approaches.



To ensure its outcomes reach and benefit all relevant actors, SpongeBoost implements a dedicated Communication, Dissemination, and Exploitation (CDE) strategy under Work Package 5 (WP5), led by Pensoft. The Plan for the Exploitation and Dissemination of Results (PEDR), first delivered in the early phase of the project, set the foundation for these activities. It established the core objectives, target audiences, and tools for reaching stakeholders and enhancing the project’s visibility and uptake.

This deliverable presents the first update of the PEDR, reflecting on activities carried out during the initial 18 months of the project (M1-M18). It evaluates achievements and lessons learned, identifies areas for improvement, and outlines the CDE roadmap for the second stage of the project (M19-M34). As the project moves from introduction to implementation and consolidation, this document ensures that CDE efforts remain aligned with project goals, responsive to stakeholder needs, and strategically positioned for long-term impact.

1.1 Stakeholders

SpongeBoost’s communication, dissemination, and exploitation strategy remains anchored in the stakeholder groups identified during the early stages of the project. These include:

- A – Academia (researchers and research institutions);
- P – Policy makers and regulators;
- R – Restoration community;
- L – Local stakeholders (civil society, administration and government);
- WL – Water and Land managers;
- S – Society (citizens and media).

This structure, informed by the project’s Description of Action and a consortium-wide survey conducted in the first year, continues to guide the project’s outreach activities. As the stakeholder categories remain relevant, no changes have been made at this stage. For the purposes of this deliverable, the corresponding key messages have been revised as follows:

Table 1. SpongeBoost previously identified stakeholder groups and updated messages.

Stakeholder groups	Identified subgroups	Key messages
Scientific community (individual scientists, restoration practitioners, research-performing organisations, research societies or networks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universidade Santiago de Compostela, • Universidade da Coruña, • Universidade de Vigo, • Universidad de Zaragoza; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SpongeBoost will provide a standardised framework and empirical data for assessing the effectiveness of nature-based solutions (NBS). - Scientific engagement is critical to ensure rigorous evaluation, interdisciplinary exchange, and



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEDEX Rede Portuguesa de Restauro Ecológico CIIMAR, • CIBIO-InBIO 	<p>uptake of research in applied restoration strategies.</p> <p>- The project facilitates collaboration and knowledge sharing to advance ecosystem service modelling and support evidence-based restoration.</p>
Regional, National and European administrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission, • River Basin Management Commissions • Ministry of Climate (Estonia) • Czech Ministry of Environment • Ministerio de Transición Ecológica y el Reto Demográfico; • Fundación Biodiversidad <p>The list of national and regional administrations is very extensive and includes more than 50 groups from each partner country.</p>	<p>- SpongeBoost is to contribute practical evidence on the multi-benefit potential of sponge landscapes for climate adaptation, biodiversity protection, and water management.</p> <p>- Outputs are aligned with EU policy goals and support the integration of NBS into legislative and funding frameworks.</p> <p>- Collaborative governance and exchange of innovative approaches are essential for scaling sponge functions across European territories.</p>
Water and land managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Board (Estonia) • Confederación Hidrográfica del Ebro; • Confederación Hidrográfica del Miño-Sil; • Augas de Galicia (Demarcación Galicia Costa) • Councils, private owners, public and private companies 	<p>- Sponge systems offer effective measures for mitigating floods and droughts, improving water quality, and enhancing ecosystem resilience.</p> <p>- Project outcomes will assist in overcoming jurisdictional and operational barriers between institutions, enabling more coherent water-land management.</p> <p>- Field-tested approaches and tools are being developed to support implementation at basin and municipal levels.</p>
Forest managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RMK (State Forest Management Centre) Estonia 	<p>- Forested wetlands play a strategic role in maintaining sponge functions</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizon project Coevolvers CHEbro; • CHMiño-Sil; • Xunta de Galicia; • Gobierno de Aragón • Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development - DGADR (central service of the State's direct administration), private owners, Cooperative societies 	<p>and supporting landscape-level climate adaptation.</p> <p>- SpongeBoost supports nature-based forestry practices that promote water retention, habitat conservation, and multifunctional land use.</p> <p>- Results inform policy integration and sustainable forest management planning across diverse ecosystems.</p>
Farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of Private Farming of the CR Mancomunidades de ganaderos; • Asociación agraria de Galicia; • Asociación Nacional de Criadores de Ganado-Vacuno • Private owners, • Cooperative societies 	<p>- Wetland restoration and sponge practices can contribute to agricultural resilience, particularly through improved water regulation and soil health.</p> <p>- Project insights support the co-design of locally adapted NBS that align with farming goals and climate adaptation strategies.</p> <p>- The agricultural sector is positioned as a key actor in delivering ecological restoration at scale.</p>
NGOs (e.g. farmer and conservation) and IGOs (e.g. GBIF, IUCN, IPBES)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELF (Estonian Nature Fund) Association of Private Farming of the CR; • Czech Landscape and Garden Society; • Czech green building council SPEA, Quercus 	<p>- SpongeBoost provides data, tools, and narratives to reinforce advocacy for ecosystem restoration and sustainable development.</p> <p>- Evidence from case studies supports policy dialogues and awareness-raising campaigns on the value of wetlands.</p> <p>- Project collaboration fosters synergies among civil society, science, and policy arenas.</p>



<p>Local, National and EU policy-makers and decision-makers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberecký region • Ministerio de Transición Ecológica y Reto Demográfico; • Xunta de Galicia; • Gobierno de Aragón; • Generalitat de Catalunya; • Gobierno de Navarra; • Gobierno de la Rioja 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restoring sponge functions contributes directly to achieving biodiversity, climate adaptation, and water policy targets under the EU Green Deal and Nature Restoration Law. - SpongeBoost offers replicable models and evidence to inform decision-making processes and develop integrated land-use strategies. - Strategic partnerships between local, national, and EU authorities are central to long-term implementation success.
<p>Media & general public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ekolist.cz Efe Verde; • Ballena Blanca; • Revista Quercus; • Diario de Navarra; • El País; • Europa Press; • LaSexta; • RTVE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SpongeBoost highlights practical solutions for addressing floods and droughts while protecting ecosystems and communities. - Public communication materials emphasise science-based restoration and counter misinformation about nature-based solutions. - The project encourages engagement through storytelling, events, and visual content accessible via public channels.
<p>Civil society</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asafre; • Grupo de afectados por desbordamiento del Ebro en Alfocea; • Plataforma afectados por las inundaciones en Reinos • Local movements or associations for environmental protection, education, recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empowering local communities to engage in wetland restoration fosters resilience, biodiversity conservation, and public awareness. - SpongeBoost supports participatory approaches and bottom-up contributions to environmental policy and planning. - Community-led action is recognised as a key driver of sustainable land and water stewardship.



Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Institutions • European Investment Bank 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sponge-based restoration offers investable solutions with measurable ecological and socio-economic benefits. - SpongeBoost delivers insights to support environmental risk mitigation and long-term returns for climate adaptation finance. - Data and tools from the project facilitate the assessment of impact investment opportunities in nature-based solutions.
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1.2 Key Exploitable Results

SpongeBoost places strong emphasis on its Pathways to Impact, with Key Exploitable Results (KERs) forming a cornerstone of its communication, dissemination, and exploitation strategy. These KERs reflect the project’s core scientific and practical contributions, each tailored to address real-world needs in climate adaptation, ecological restoration, and policy innovation.

The identification and communication of these results are essential for ensuring uptake by relevant stakeholders, including policymakers, land and water managers, restoration professionals, researchers, and local actors. As the project evolves, the KERs and their potential applications will be continuously refined in alignment with project progress, stakeholder engagement, and feedback.

The table below outlines the main KERs identified during the first implementation phase, along with their corresponding user groups.

Table 2. SpongeBoost Key Exploitable Results (KERs) and their potential users.

Result	Potential Users
State-of-the-art knowledge collation on sponge function for climate change adaptation: sponge potential, multifunctional benefits and best practice approaches and innovative solutions	Academia Policymakers and regulators Restoration community Water and Land managers



Result	Potential Users
Prototyped methodology for post-restoration monitoring	Policymakers and regulators Academia Local stakeholders
Innovative approaches to assess the sponge potential under climate change	Academia Restoration community Water and Land managers
Recommendation for policy-makers to support strengthening the enabling policy environment for improving the sponge function of landscapes as a mean of climate change adaptation	Policymakers and regulators Local stakeholders
Prototype roadmap for supporting and implementing innovative solutions to improve the sponge functioning of landscape	Restoration community Water and Land managers Local stakeholders Policymakers and regulators Academia
Topical collection on sponge functioning of landscapes and as a nature-based solution to adapt to climate change as an expansion to a topical collection on the restoration of wetlands in the journal Nature Conservation as reusable, openly accessible, citable publications and knowledgebase that can be continuously be updated by the whole restoration community well beyond the project's lifetime	Academia Restoration community Water and Land managers Policymakers and regulators Local stakeholders

2. Communication and Dissemination

2.1 Communication

Communication is one of the three main pillars of SpongeBoost's impact strategy. In the context of EU-funded research, communication refers to the process of translating project activities and results into accessible, engaging formats for a broad audience ranging from policymakers and practitioners to the media and general public. It plays a critical role in raising awareness, building trust, and creating visibility beyond the research community.

For SpongeBoost, communication acts as a catalyst for dialogue and engagement, ensuring that the project's concepts, achievements, and innovations are clearly conveyed to external audiences. In this context, communication also enhances and complements dissemination and exploitation. It lays the groundwork for stakeholder uptake by making complex information



approachable and by using formats that are tailored to different user groups. The project's communication efforts combine traditional tools, such as newsletters, press releases, and events, with creative storytelling and social media outreach, ensuring messages are relatable, inclusive, and far-reaching.

By effectively framing its results and key messages, SpongeBoost ensures its findings are not only visible but also positioned to inform policy, inspire action, and foster long-term change.

2.2 Dissemination

In the context of EU-funded research, dissemination refers to the strategic process of sharing project results with audiences that can use or benefit from them, such as researchers, policymakers, public authorities, industry stakeholders, and civil society. Unlike communication, which aims to raise awareness and build visibility, dissemination focuses on delivering knowledge and tools in a format that enables adoption, replication, or further development.

SpongeBoost's dissemination strategy is rooted in the principle of open access and co-development. It ensures that all relevant results are made publicly available, with long-term accessibility beyond the duration of the project. Dissemination begins as soon as relevant outputs emerge and continues well past the end of the project to sustain and extend its impact.

2.3 Exploitation

Exploitation in EU-funded projects focuses on ensuring that the results of the research do not remain theoretical but are translated into practical value. This value may take many forms, informing better policies, enabling innovative practices, supporting climate adaptation, or generating new knowledge and tools for broader use.

In SpongeBoost, exploitation is viewed as a bridge between knowledge generation and real-world impact. While many outputs are still emerging, the foundations for future exploitation have already been established during the first project phase. These include the identification of initial Key Exploitable Results (KERs), stakeholder mapping across different sectors and geographies, and aligning the project's work with overarching EU policy frameworks such as the EU Green Deal, Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, and the Nature Restoration Law.

As the project enters a more mature phase, exploitation will shift toward the delivery of tailored outputs such as policy briefs, decision-support tools, factsheets, and guidelines. These will be packaged and promoted through targeted actions, including knowledge transfer events, joint activities with sister projects, and open-access publication strategies.



2.4 Summary of CDE activities

2.4.1 Website

The SpongeBoost website, officially launched in July 2024 (M7), acts as a central hub and living repository for all project-related content. It features dedicated sections for project outputs, a recent addition to the website includes a dedicated section to the SpongeBoost Comic Book, available in nine languages. To maximise visibility and accessibility, the website is continuously enhanced throughout the project.

2.4.2 Social media accounts

Social media platforms were established early in the project and include LinkedIn, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). Following decreasing user trust on X, the project expanded its presence to Bluesky in February 2025. SpongeBoost also launched a YouTube channel, which currently hosts an introductory video and the 2024 project highlights video, with additional content planned to launch in the next phase.

2.4.3 Promotional materials

Promotional materials such as stickers, brochures, posters, and a roll-up banner were produced and distributed at conferences and events. These materials support dissemination by providing visually consistent, branded tools that communicate key project messages to diverse audiences. In addition, a QR sticker was developed to link directly to SpongeBoost's Linktree profile, which consolidates essential project resources, including the website, social media accounts, the Zenodo repository, and other communication assets for easy access and broad outreach.

2.4.4 Innovative Communications

A defining feature of SpongeBoost's creative strategy is the development of a visual narrative around a fictional character called "Spongy", the SpongeBoost personalised character. Introduced at the end of Year 1, Spongy personifies the core ideas of sponge landscapes and nature-based solutions. This character serves as a communication tool to simplify complex ecological concepts and foster emotional engagement with diverse audiences from policymakers to school children.

Spongy made its first appearance in the SpongeBoost Comic Book, which was created to present the project's mission through an accessible, story-driven format. The comic was officially launched during a hybrid workshop held on 13 March 2025 in Berlin, titled "Sponge.Power.Climate. – Innovatively Communicating Sponge Landscapes as Nature-Based Solutions," hosted by project partner Environmental Action Germany (DUH). The



event not only introduced the comic book but also featured a storytelling workshop that encouraged audience participation and fostered knowledge co-creation. The comic is available in both digital and print formats and has been uploaded to Zenodo to ensure open access. The first edition, translated into nine languages, is freely available on Zenodo and via the SpongeBoost website. Its launch was supported by a dedicated press release, targeted social media campaign, and promotional materials. Future editions will continue to expand this visual storytelling strategy, offering multilingual and multi-format content to maximise reach and engagement.

Another notable outcome of this creative approach was the launch of the "SpongeBooster of the Year" award. The award was developed to celebrate excellence in implementing sponge landscape solutions. The first project winner, Planar e.V., was selected for its outstanding floodplain restoration work along the Diemel River. The award was presented during a dedicated ceremony in June 2025, accompanied by a field visit and widely covered across media and social channels. The award will remain an annual feature, contributing to the visibility, recognition, and replication of impactful sponge-related initiatives.

2.4.5 Electronic media

The bi-annual SpongeBoost newsletter, distributed via MailerLite, serves as a foundational communication tool for sharing project updates and engaging the broader community. Three issues were released during the first 18 months. However, its current format was identified as less effective in capturing audience interest. As a result, a revised strategy was introduced to enhance the newsletter's impact by making the content more visually engaging and focusing on notable project highlights to better resonate with readers.

To boost visibility and celebrate milestones, three press releases were published and distributed through EurekAlert!, AlphaGalileo, and WIT News. These included the official launch of the project, the comic book release, and the SpongeBooster of the Year award.

SpongeBoost received additional media coverage through a widely viewed interview with project coordinator Mathias Scholz by Deutsche Welle News, which surpassed 300,000 views. DW also profiled the project in a feature article on river restoration efforts in Germany. Pensoft contributed to outreach through a dedicated blog post, introducing the project. And in May 2024, UFZ issued a press release via its institutional platform, which highlighted a project in the Leipzig area showcasing successful urban floodplain restoration and emphasised that, as part of the EU-funded SpongeBoost initiative, the critical sponge functions of wetlands would be further analysed across the region and beyond.

2.4.6 Open science

SpongeBoost adheres to open access principles and uses platforms such as Zenodo to archive project outputs, including the comic book and a dataset, produced by partner. The project also



plans to contribute to peer-reviewed publications under open-access models, with submissions expected to the Restoration of Wetlands collection in the Nature Conservation journal. Scientific publishing will intensify during the next stage as more project results become available.

2.4.7 Events

For the period of 18 months, SpongeBoost participated in over 30 conferences, workshops, and stakeholder events across Europe. These included international scientific conferences such as the Society for Ecological Restoration Europe Conference, the 5th ESP Conference, and the XIII International Conference of the Spanish Climatology Association. National visibility was ensured through appearances at high-profile events such as the Deutscher Naturschutztag and the Policy Coherence for Biodiversity and Climate conference.

SpongeBoost was showcased through oral presentations, poster sessions, panel discussions, and exhibition booths. Project partners also actively contributed to clustering events with sister projects like Climate_CRICES and MERLIN, and presented at targeted stakeholder and training sessions including university lectures and public webinars.

The "SpongeBooster of the Year" field trip award was a central highlight of the first project period. Organised in collaboration with WP3 and WP4, the award combined recognition, stakeholder engagement, and field demonstration. The ceremony and field trip drew participation from NGOs, local government, researchers, and community groups, and received significant media coverage.

The project's consistent presence across different platforms and thematic areas, from nature-based solutions to flood resilience, climate adaptation, and ecological economics, has helped increase recognition among research, governance, and practitioner communities.

3. Evaluation (M6-M18)

Table 3. SpongeBoost Key Performance Indicators covering Stage 1 of the project development.

Tools and Channels	Type of CED activity	Target group	Target KPIs M1-M18	Achieved result for M1-M18
SpongeBoost Website	C & D	All	No. visits >3,000, Average session duration >120s, Returning visitors	No. visits >8,000, Average session duration 190s, Returning visitors 20%; Distribution: 45 countries from EU & beyond



Tools and Channels	Type of CED activity	Target group	Target KPIs M1-M18	Achieved result for M1-M18
			>30%; Distribution: EU & beyond	
Social media networks (LinkedIn, X, Instagram)	C & D	All	Posts>1/week; re-tweets/reposts (X/LinkedIn) >1/week; followers/subscribers & “likes” >+100; >50 000 impressions	Total posts and reposts: 163; followers/ subscribers & “likes” >; 4,980 impressions (X), 13,000 (LinkedIn), 5,500 (Instagram)
Promotional materials	C	All	3 materials produced; >600 downloads from the website; utilised at 10 events	5 promotional materials produced; 100 downloads from the website; Disseminated at 13 events
Video	C & D	A, R, P, L, WL	2 videos produced; ≥ 100 views/video	2 videos produced; 300 views for both
Coordinated press releases	C & D	All	≥ 2 press releases issued during the project; no. of downloads/visits >1500/press release	3 press releases issued during this period >15,000 views for all
Newsletters	C & D	All	4 newsletters; no. of subscribers + 50/year, no. of opens >50%	3 newsletters for this period; 75 subscribers; 62% no. of opens
Scientific publications	D	A, R	Number of peer-reviewed publications > 3	None have been published yet
Presentations at policy-related, practitioner and scientific events and conferences	D	A, P, R	>10 international & national events where the project was presented	30+ events where the project was presented
Guidelines for practitioners	D & E	R, L	3 guidelines for practitioners published on the project website	N/A for this stage of the project



Tools and Channels	Type of CED activity	Target group	Target KPIs M1-M18	Achieved result for M1-M18
Joint activities with sister project/s	C & D	All	>3 activities completed	3 activities completed
Joint workshops & webinars with sister and other projects	D & E	All	N/A for this stage of the project	N/A for this stage of the project
Policy briefs	D & E	All	N/A for this stage of the project	N/A for this stage of the project
Training activities & tutorial materials	D & E	All	N/A for this stage of the project	N/A for this stage of the project
Living Labs	D & E	R, L	N/A for this stage of the project	N/A for this stage of the project
Mid-term and final conference	C & D & E	A, P, R, WL	N/A for this stage of the period	N/A for this stage of the project

To inform the evaluation of communication, dissemination, and exploitation (CDE) activities carried out in the first reporting period (M1-M18), a dedicated Communication Session was held during the 2025 Annual Meeting. This internal workshop brought together all work packages to reflect on progress, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Discussions were structured across several thematic groups, addressing internal coordination tools, content generation, newsletter and social media strategy, and future creative outputs, including the second edition of the SpongeBoost Comic Book. Feedback gathered during this session directly supported the interpretation of performance against the project's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), ensuring that the evaluation reflects both quantitative outcomes and qualitative insights.

As detailed in the KPI table, the performance of CDE activities during the first reporting period has been mixed, with some tools exceeding expectations while others remain below target and in need of improvement. The project website has performed strongly, surpassing its initial target with over 8,000 visits and engagement from users across 45 countries. However, other key channels require strategic adjustments. While social media activity has



remained consistent, overall impressions and engagement levels have been significantly below anticipated figures, particularly on X and Instagram. This highlights the need for improved content planning, more coordinated partner contributions, and platform-specific strategies. Promotional materials have been successfully produced and used at 13 events, yet download numbers from the website remain low, suggesting limited digital reach. The coordinated press releases performed well in terms of visibility, with over 15,000 views, yet more consistent use of media channels and translation into partner languages could enhance their impact. The newsletter has shown promise, with solid open rates and a small but growing subscriber base, although it still falls short of the annual growth targets set. Notably, no scientific publications were submitted in the first phase, underscoring a delay in the exploitation of research outputs. On the positive side, dissemination through events and conferences has been a clear strength, with over 30 project-related presentations conducted across multiple countries.

The Communication Session, held at the 2025 Annual Meeting, confirmed that continued optimisation is needed in areas such as content collection from partners, clearer internal guidance, and enhanced cross-WP collaboration. These insights, together with the KPI results, have shaped the revised implementation plan for M19-M34 and informed the updated strategic direction outlined in this document.

4. Social media strategy

SpongeBoost maintains an active presence on LinkedIn, Instagram, Bluesky, and YouTube. These platforms have enabled the project to amplify key milestones, promote multimedia materials such as the Comic Book, and showcase developments at case study sites. While X (formerly Twitter) was initially part of the project's social media mix, due to the platform's significant decline in user base and engagement across the research and environmental sectors, SpongeBoost will most likely phase out its use of X during the next implementation period. Future communication efforts will focus on channels with higher relevance and engagement potential among the project's core audiences.

Visual storytelling will remain a cornerstone of SpongeBoost's communication strategy. In the next phase, a wider range of video formats will be introduced, including partner interviews, thematic explainers, and drone footage showcasing the case study areas. These visual materials are designed to convey the project's impact in an engaging and accessible way. All videos will be published on the SpongeBoost YouTube channel, integrated into the project website, and actively disseminated through the project's social media platforms to maximise reach and visibility.

To guide and organise content output, the project has adopted a structured editorial calendar aligned with international awareness days, restoration seasons, and major project milestones. This calendar supports the coordination of campaign activity across partners and helps deliver timely, thematic updates that resonate with specific stakeholder groups.



To ensure coherence and impact, social media activities are framed around thematic campaigns, each tailored to specific content goals and target groups. These campaigns are planned in coordination with project milestones and are tracked through an internal editorial calendar. One campaign was implemented and concluded during the project's first phase (M1-M18), with others continuing or launching during the next implementation phase (M19–M34):

Table 4. SpongeBoost's planned social media campaigns for the first stage of the project duration.

Name	Hashtag	Description	Status
Meet the SpongeBoost institutions campaign	#SpongeBoostPartners	This campaign has already been completed. It aimed to introduce the 10 partner organisations and some essential information about them.	Completed
Meet the project campaign	#SpongeBoostFacts	This campaign presents the key facts about SpongeBoost in order for stakeholders to get to know the project.	Planned for Stage 2
Meet the people behind the project campaign	#SpongeBoostFaces	The campaign introduces project members and their individual expertise.	Video interviews have been taken at AGM 1 and are currently under development
Previous Research campaign	#PreviousResearchofSpongeBoosters	This campaign showcases relevant research conducted by partners prior to the beginning of SpongeBoost.	Ongoing, will continue in Stage 2.
Case Studies campaign	#SpongeBoostSites	This campaign highlights the project's case study areas.	Posponed for Stage 2.
Sponge Booster of the month	#SpongeBoosterofthemonth	This campaign will introduce partners and showcase the people, projects, and stories behind the recipients across the project's various channels. This campaign shall begin at an earlier project stage and will encompass over the whole project duration.	Ongoing campaign.



In the next phase, social media efforts will become more strategic and content-driven, with an emphasis on field-based narratives, user-generated content from partners, and more interactive formats. Visual communication will be further enhanced through the integration of short explainer videos, animated graphics, and campaign-specific branding, that will now include *Spongy*.

Through these coordinated efforts, *SpongeBoost* will aim to leverage social media better as a key vehicle for amplifying its voice, building a strong following base, and driving the uptake of its findings.

5. Implementation Plan

As *SpongeBoost* enters its Unfolding phase (M19-M34), the focus of its Communication, Dissemination, and Exploitation (CDE) strategy evolves from initial awareness-raising toward activating deeper stakeholder engagement, promoting preliminary results, and laying the groundwork for long-term impact.

This phase marks a transition in project maturity, characterised by the emergence of concrete outputs, such as field demonstrations, early scientific publications, visual content, and practice-oriented materials. The emphasis now shifts to enabling uptake, facilitating knowledge exchange, and strengthening the network of stakeholders established during the first phase.

Building on the foundation developed in the Introduction phase (M1-M18), this updated implementation plan incorporates internal feedback, insights from consortium partners, and lessons learned to optimise efforts across all work packages.

5.1 Priorities for the Unfolding stage (M19-M34)

5.1.1 *Deepen stakeholder engagement*

One of the main objectives during the Unfolding phase is to strengthen and deepen relationships established during the initial stage. Stakeholders introduced to the project between M1-M18 will now be invited to engage in more participatory formats. This includes co-creation workshops, on-site demonstrations, storytelling events, and field visits tailored to specific thematic areas such as floodplain restoration, sponge agriculture, and community resilience.

To support these engagements, tailored materials, such as factsheets, explainer videos, and translated into local languages guidance documents, will be produced to ensure accessibility and context relevance. The “*SpongeBooster of the Year*” campaign will also serve as an anchor for continued stakeholder recognition and grassroots engagement.



This approach responds directly to feedback from project partners, who highlighted the importance of participatory communication formats and cross-sectoral visibility. In particular, the session underlined the need for better integration of stakeholder voices and more accessible content formats.

5.1.2 Disseminate emerging outputs media accounts

As early outputs emerge, SpongeBoost will increase its use of targeted dissemination through multiple formats. Scientific findings, technical insights, and case study areas progress will be communicated in ways that suit the information needs and capacities of each stakeholder group. News items, policy summaries, videos, and blog-style narratives will be prioritised to reach not just experts, but a wider public and institutional audience.

5.1.3 Facilitate knowledge exchange

The project's visibility within the restoration, climate adaptation, and water resilience communities will be amplified through increased participation in national and international conferences, EU-level events, and specialist policy fora. Presentation of interim findings, methods, and innovations will help build credibility and invite cross-pollination of knowledge between SpongeBoost and other initiatives.

5.1.4 Advance policy and practice uptake

Another objective of this phase is to begin bridging the gap between research and application. Initial steps toward exploitation will include the development of policy briefs, recommendations, and practical tools tailored to specific governance levels and environmental contexts. These materials will be co-developed where possible, ensuring they are relevant and actionable.

5.1.5 Synergies

SpongeBoost will dive deeper in co-organising continue joint activities and coordinating closely with sister projects and relevant networks, such as MERLIN, REST-COAST, WaterLANDS, ALFAwetlands, and the SpongeScapes and SpongeWorks projects. Joint communication actions, co-hosted webinars, and aligned publications will help integrate project findings into shared EU missions.

5.1.6 Long-term impact

Finally, this period will lay the groundwork for the legacy of the project. The project will continue refining its core messaging, adapting communication formats for specific end-user groups, and preparing key results for future exploitation. This includes identifying long-term hosting options for outputs (e.g. repositories, open-access archives) and framing the project's legacy in terms of replicability, transferability, and integration into EU restoration agendas.



To ensure the effectiveness of the CDE activities throughout the Unfolding phase, a revised set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) has been developed specifically for M19-M34. These KPIs reflect the project's expanded ambitions and provide measurable benchmarks for engagement, dissemination, and uptake.

Table 5. SpongeBoost Key Performance Indicators covering Stage 2 of the project development.

Tools and Channels	Type of CED activity	Target group	Target KPIs M19-M34
SpongeBoost Website	C & D	All	News items: ≥ 50 Total visits ≥ 12000 ; Actions/visit ≥ 3
Social media networks (LinkedIn, X, Instagram)	C & D	All	Total Posts: ≥ 200 ; Total Reposts: ≥ 150 ; New followers: ≥ 150 ; Interactions/post: ≥ 5 ; Website traffic: ≥ 700
Promotional materials	C	All	10 materials produced; ≥ 300 materials distributed; disseminated at ≥ 20 events
Video	C & D	A, R, P, L, WL	10 videos produced; ≥ 100 views/video
Coordinated press releases	C & D	All	≥ 2 press releases issued; no. of downloads/visits > 1500 /press release
Newsletters	C & D	All	4 newsletters; no. of subscribers + 50/year, no. of opens $> 50\%$
Scientific publications	D	A, R	Number of peer-reviewed publications ≥ 2
Presentations at policy-related, practitioner and scientific events and conferences	D	A, P, R	> 30 international & national events where the project was presented



Tools and Channels	Type of CED activity	Target group	Target KPIs M19-M34
Guidelines for practitioners	D & E	R, L	3 guidelines for practitioners published on the project website
Joint activities with sister project/s	C & D	All	≥ 5 activities completed
Joint workshops & webinars with sister and other projects	D & E	All	≥ 2 joint webinars or workshops with relevant projects
Policy briefs	D & E	All	≥ 2 policy briefs developed
Training activities & tutorial materials	D & E	All	≥ 5 training activities conducted; and/or tutorial materials prepared
Living Labs	D & E	R, L	≥ 2 Living Labs organised
Mid-term and final conference	C & D & E	A, P, R, WL	Preparations for the Mid-term Science Café will begin during this stage, with the session taking place at M24 of the project.

6. Outlook

As SpongeBoost advances into the second half of its project timeline, the foundations laid during the Introduction phase (M1-M18) provide a strong springboard for increased visibility, engagement, and uptake. The Unfolding phase presents an opportunity to showcase emerging results, deepen collaborations with stakeholders, and begin positioning the project as a reference point in the European nature-based solutions landscape.

The updated PEDR not only reaffirms the project's commitment to strategic Communication, Dissemination, and Exploitation (CDE) but also introduces a more tailored, audience-specific



approach. By integrating creative formats, such as comic books, short videos, and storytelling workshops, with technical tools like factsheets, scientific outputs, and co-designed policy briefs, SpongeBoost will ensure its messages resonate across diverse sectors and communities.

Looking ahead, emphasis will be placed on ensuring that results are not only shared but applied. Activities planned for the coming 18 months will support stakeholder co-creation, promote cross-project collaboration at the EU level, and prepare key outcomes for long-term sustainability and integration into policy and practice. Updated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will guide the continuous monitoring of progress and inform adaptive improvements where needed.

7. References

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