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Deliverable D4.1

Project Communications Strategy and Plan

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Lead Partner:	GÉANT Association
Authors:	Paul Maurice (GÉANT)

Abstract

This deliverable describes the communications strategy and plan for the SUBMERSE project.



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Executive Summary

The [SUBMERSE] project proposes the creation of a permanent seabed infrastructure to observe the deep ocean, utilising existing telecommunication fibres so as to minimise additional operational and maintenance costs of the proposed system compared to building, deploying, operating and maintaining dedicated submarine fibre.

As SUBMERSE is a new project, it is essential to establish a consistent approach to communications to support visibility and outreach to stakeholder groups from the outset. The objectives, structure, and resources of SUBMERSE were considered in the creation of this document, which describes the communications strategy and plan for the project.

This Project Communications Strategy and Plan aims to support the objectives of the project and maximise its visibility to its stakeholders in a coordinated way. WP4 Task 1 Communications and Dissemination will work with all Work Packages/Tasks participants to develop, agree, and implement marketing communications plans and initiatives to support their objectives, developing messaging and creating engaging content to position and promote the project and its activities. Branding and design work is also included in this Task to help ensure a coordinated, consistent brand identity and look and feel for the project.

WP4 will adopt a twin-track approach involving two distinct types of messaging, informational (functional) and beneficial (impactful), to address different stakeholders with the most appropriate content, delivered through the most relevant channels.

Implementing the communications strategy, the project communication plan defines the audiences to be addressed and information to be disseminated to meet the project objectives, including stakeholders (project partners and participants, relevant research/user communities and industry stakeholders, NRENs, and the EC), messaging and content (facts and features, and benefits to stakeholders) and channels (websites, newsletters, EC channels, events and social media).

Actions identified in the plan will be tracked on an ongoing basis and measured against key performance indicators to ensure progress towards the objectives.

1 Introduction

As stated in [Deliverable D1.1](#) Project Handbook, *“The core activities of SUBMERSE [are] the development of the technical architecture of the proof of concept, to allow the consistent time stamping of the various techniques employed to extract near real time data from existing submarine telecommunications cables for research purposes over a geographically dispersed area (WP2) and exploitation of WP2 results in fostering the scientific and societal use of the DAS, SOP and SOP-OTDR data sets and higher level data products to be made available for a wide range of research communities (WP3).*

These activities are supported by a communication, dissemination, and exploitation strategy (WP4), also in charge with the development of ad-hoc training materials for users across different scientific communities, engagement of stakeholders and development of scenarios for sustainability of the system deployed on the cables infrastructure. Finally, the project relies on solid coordination (WP1) focused on delivering quality outcome while also monitoring risks and manage them at their earliest appearance.”

This document identifies the communications and disseminations objectives for the SUBMERSE project and describes methods, items of work, and processes to help meet those objectives. Its aims to provide guidance to all project partners and support ongoing planning and monitoring for Work Package 4.

The Communications Strategy for the project is covered in Section 2 below, while the Project Communications Plan is set out in Section 3. Conclusions and next steps are summarised in Section 4.

2 Project Communications Strategy

The SUBMERSE Description of Work specifies the following objectives for WP4:

- Produce quality communication material to disseminate SUBMERSE value proposition to different communities of users and raise awareness in research funders on relevance of the contribution of data collected to several scientific disciplines.
- Develop and inform an engaged community of stakeholders already active and recognised in the scientific fields concerned as well as far-reaching to those who belong to other potentially interested disciplines
- Organise sessions and workshops preferably streamlined, also considering opportunities of co-location with well-established events of the communities targeted, to maximise audiences and avoid multiple events to establish a dialogue with EOSC Portal contributors and users
- Explore options and develop scenarios for sustainability of the system deployed.
- Produce and promote ad-hoc training materials for users belonging to different fields of sciences on how to use the services developed along the project.

Specifically, WP4 Task 1 Communications and Dissemination will:

- Identify stakeholders and audiences – in close collaboration with Task 4.2 - and develop a marketing and communications plan to address these groups in a coordinated way.
- Provide an ongoing marketing communications and design service to the project and to other Work Packages/Tasks/ Participants to support their objectives.
- Develop project messaging and collateral to raise awareness of the project and support outreach activities to scientific, industrial, civil society and policy makers.
- Design and produce a project website to incorporate project messaging, to house all news content, imagery, articles, and supporting content, and to support outreach for all partners.
- Develop and manage project communications channels (including web, social media, print, events) and utilise to support the project's objectives.
- Ensure the ongoing visibility of the project and its achievements within these channels, via regular news items, articles, interviews, and event attendance.
- Develop short format videos to explain use cases generated by the activities in WP2 and WP3.
- Monitor website traffic and activity via relevant tools and processes and ensure ongoing activity for all channels to meet agreed KPIs.

The figure below shows the structure of the work in the project and how different Work Packages and Tasks will interact with each other, with WP4 supporting all Tasks with their communication and dissemination requirements (see also Section 3.5 Internal Communications).

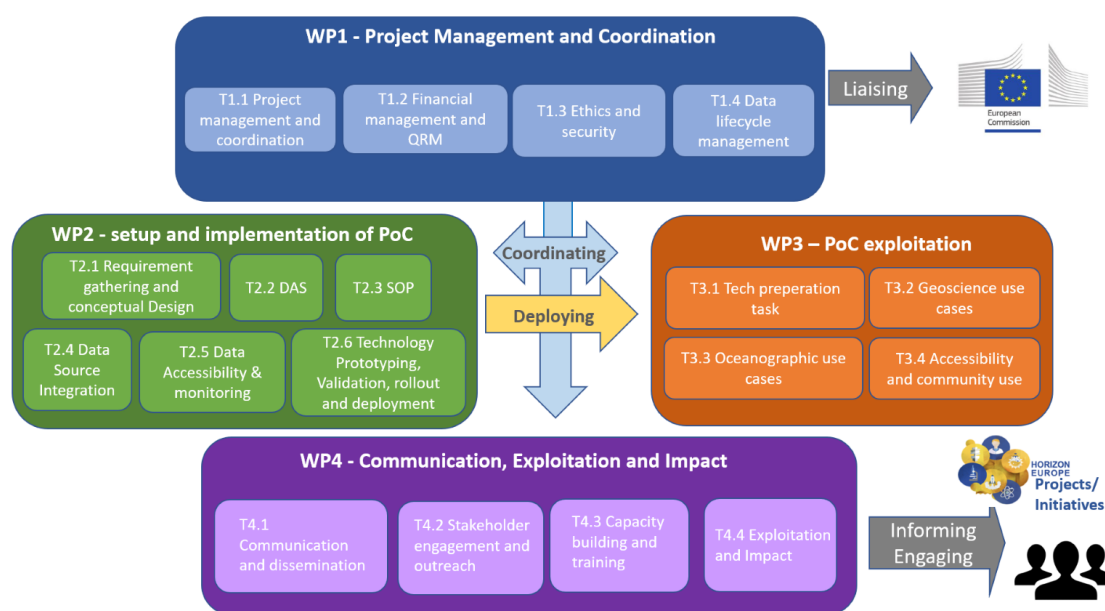


Figure 1.1: Structure of work in SUBMERSE

Informed by the above, the SUBMERSE Project Communications Strategy and Plan will therefore support the objectives of the project by enabling synergy between the Work Packages and Tasks in order to maximise its visibility to its stakeholders in a coordinated way.

The first step is thus to identify the stakeholders so that suitable ways to reach them can be defined, including creating and publishing engaging content that promotes the activities, tools, and outcomes of the project, and supporting the exploitation of results, in order to highlight the benefits of the project to the stakeholder communities. This should be delivered via integrated, measurable and collaborative channels, and third-party channels (such as conferences) where appropriate.

The project will then seek to establish, maintain, and develop relationships and collaborate with identified stakeholders and other groups to support outreach efforts, making joint use of channels and opportunities to reach audiences. This may include user communities, the European Commission, related projects, ongoing initiatives in the Research Infrastructures and e-Infrastructures area, etc.

WP4 will collaborate with WP2 and WP3 to identify opportunities to create engaging content as well as support WP1 where appropriate to enhance internal communications among the project partners. Taking the lead on the creation, editing, and publishing of marketing content, WP4 will also support WP2 and WP3 in their efforts to disseminate their results to specific categories of stakeholder audiences. This may include providing presentation materials and training and knowledge-sharing at meetings and conferences, issuing of news stories to highlight results and benefits, and producing other materials as needed.

Overall WP4 will adopt a twin-track approach involving two distinct types of messaging, informational (functional) and beneficial (impactful), to address different stakeholders with the most appropriate and engaging content, delivered through the most relevant channels.

The objectives informed by the communication strategy form the basis of the project communication plan, which is detailed in the next section.

3 Project Communications Plan

Implementing the communications strategy, the project communication plan defines the audiences to be addressed and the messaging and content to be disseminated to meet the project objectives by answering the following questions:

- Stakeholders/audiences – who is the audience, what are their characteristics, and what information do they need/want?
- Messaging and content – what type of information should be communicated and to whom?
- Channels – which channels are best suited to the communications needs?
- Monitoring – how can it be measured in terms of impact?

The success of these actions will be measured against key performance indicators – see Section 3.4.

3.1 Stakeholders/Audiences

The project has a diverse range of audiences, including:

- Project partners, Work Package Leaders, Task Leaders, and participants.
- Research/user communities:
 - National communities associated with test sites in Norway, Portugal, and Greece
 - International communities in Geo Sciences and Marine Sciences, related fields such as climate, seismology, vulcanology, oceanography, atmospheric marine interaction, etc.
- Industrial/policymakers:
 - Submarine cable community
 - Cable system service providers
 - Cable protection community and industry – e.g. submarine telecommunications
- National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) that provide connectivity to the research communities.
- European Commission relevant units in DG Connect and DG Research and Innovation.

3.2 Messaging and Content

As a new project, there is a need to create a level of interest about SUBMERSE, its goals and activities, the technology, and the people involved. This can be achieved through the creation of engaging content, delivered in an effective way, to the right audiences. This content can be grouped into two types: ‘functional’ and ‘impactful’ (twin-track approach):

- Functional – an informational approach that addresses the ‘what?’ – highlighting facts, features, and necessary information. For example, information on the technology, the equipment, and the test sites that will be of interest to partners, national communities

associated with test sites, and industrial communities such as cable system providers, etc. The most suitable channels for these audiences will include websites, media/publications relevant to those audiences, and specific conferences.

- **Impactful** – an approach that explains the ‘why?’ behind the project, highlighting the benefits to audiences such as funders and scientific communities, and including articles, interviews, success stories, videos, graphics, etc. The most suitable channels for these audiences include websites, social media, and articles, as well as selected conferences. For example, articles on how the project is benefiting a particular research community, or the value of the contribution of data collected, to several scientific disciplines. A consistent and integrated approach to messaging helps to ensure the project is correctly positioned in the minds of the stakeholders and audiences. WP4 will work closely with the whole project to develop messaging that supports the project’s objectives and is consistently applied.

Content should – wherever possible – be created in such a way that it can be easily used or adapted by project partners. This drives engagement across the project and ensures partners are in a position to publish the content on their own channels, potentially increasing reach. WP4 will engage and collaborate with all parts of the project to identify content opportunities and work with relevant participants to create and publish this content to support the project objectives.

A detailed schedule of communications and dissemination actions will be published in the [project SharePoint space](#) and updated as the project progresses.

3.3 Channels

In order to reach its various audiences and stakeholders, the project will have to use a range of different communications channels. Potential channels include:

- **Project website** (<https://submerge.eu/>): The project has published an initial version of the website which will expand and develop to incorporate new content and results as the project progresses. The website will act as a key element in the communications and dissemination strategy of the project. The website itself will be updated on a regular basis, and all project participants will contribute material to the website which will be managed and maintained by Task 4.1.
- **Partner websites and newsletters** – providing national/regional reach:
 - Partners publish newsletters and magazines, and host their own websites, which can be utilised to help expand the dissemination reach of the project for appropriate content.
 - WP4 will investigate the option of a subscriber newsletter and its frequency in the near future, during the second half of year 1.
- **EC channels** – e.g. [CORDIS](#)
- **Events:**
 - **Research community conferences:** WP4 will collaborate with other Work Packages to identify and plan for attendance at suitable conferences. For example:
 - Seismology community: IUGG; EGU; AGU; events held by the ESC
 - Technology community: DAS RCM;
 - Marine community: [LifeWatch](#)
 - Geoscience: Living Planet Symposium

- Policymakers: GEO Plenary
- **Partner conferences:** WP4 will work with project partners to identify potential conference attendance to raise awareness of the project, deliver results, etc. For example:
 - TNC24/TNC25/TNC26 [\[TNC\]](#)
 - Others to be added to the project SharePoint space and updated as the project progresses.
- **Social media** to raise awareness, engage with audiences, and drive traffic to website:
 - Twitter/X – the project has a Twitter/X presence, but given the uncertainty surrounding the platform, WP4 will investigate other suitable social media platforms.
 - Mastodon – the research community and policymakers are gradually migrating towards Mastodon as an alternative to Twitter/X (or at the very least using Mastodon as an additional platform) and the project will follow suit, establishing and growing a profile.
 - LinkedIn – WP4 will investigate the suitability of LinkedIn as an additional platform. LinkedIn offers great potential for professional networking and would help to expand the project audience.

3.4 Monitoring

The success of the communications plan will be measured against key performance indicators (KPIs). The following KPIs have been set for WP4 T1 against which to measure the effectiveness of the actions:

- Web presence: An average of >200 pageviews per month on the SUBMERSE project website.
- At least 5 articles created in each year of the SUBMERSE project.
- At least 3 explainer videos created over the duration of the SUBMERSE project.
- An average of 100 combined pageviews on each SUBMERSE article published on the SUBMERSE website and on partner websites.
- SUBMERSE featured on the websites of at least ten partners.
- Social Media: an average of >200 impressions and >5 engagements on posts related to SUBMERSE on each social media platform. Use of the #SUBMERSE hashtag will help to filter and monitor the performance of social media posts dedicated to the SUBMERSE project across platforms.

An analytics dashboard will be created to allow easy monthly reporting of the figures related to these KPIs.

3.5 Internal Communications

To support internal communications – between partners – a SUBMERSE project space has been created in Slack, with thematic sub-channels, to enable quicker and faster information sharing amongst project team members. Further supporting this, a series of internal mailing lists has been established by the project to ensure distribution of project information to partners.

These internal communication channels, together with regular Project Management Board (PMB) and Work Package (WP) meetings will facilitate the collection of information relating to communications opportunities, events, dissemination activities, materials, and publications, etc.).

4 Conclusions

As a new project, establishing the branding and setting the content and tone of messaging for SUBMERSE is particularly important to create a level of interest about the project itself, its goals and activities, the technology, and the people involved. WP4 will cover all outreach activities towards targeted communities to engage potential users, offer ad-hoc training activities and liaising with different categories of relevant stakeholders. It will also implement various tools and measures to maximise impact while also addressing exploitation and sustainability aspects.

All these aspects rely on effective communication and dissemination actions to position and promote the project and its activities, which are the purview of WP4 T1. In turn, there is a mutual dependency between the work of WP4 T1 and the stakeholder engagement carried out in WP4 T2. The main stakeholders considered for cooperation in SUBMERSE include research organisations working in the geosciences and marine sciences as well as in other related scientific fields such as climate, seismology etc., submarine cable system service provider companies, companies that could utilise produced data and national research and education networks providing connectivity to the research communities.

Tailored communications content and actions will be required to address these stakeholders both at the point of initial engagement and as they are brought on board. As such, the communications plan, based on the communications strategy that is outlined in this document, is continuously evolving. A schedule of planned communications and dissemination actions will therefore be published in the project SharePoint space as a living plan and will be updated as the project progresses and based on partner feedback.

References

[CORDIS]	https://cordis.europa.eu/
[LifeWatch]	https://www.lifewatch.eu/
[SUBMERSE]	https://submerse.eu/
[TNC]	https://tnc.geant.org/

Glossary

AGU	American Geophysical Union
DAS RCM	Distributed Acoustic Sensing (DAS) Research Coordination Network
DAS	Distributed Acoustic Sensing
EC	European Commission
EGU	European Geosciences Union
EOSC	European Open Science Cloud
ESC	European Seismological Commission
FAIR	Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse
GEO	Group on Earth Observations
IRIS	Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology
IUGG	The International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics
NREN	National Research and Education Network
OTDR	Optical time domain reflectometry
SOP	State of Polarisation
SUBMERSE	SUBMarine cables for ReSearch and Exploration Definition
T	Task
TNC	The Networking Conference, the largest and most prestigious research and education networking conference, and GÉANT's flagship event
WP	Work Package