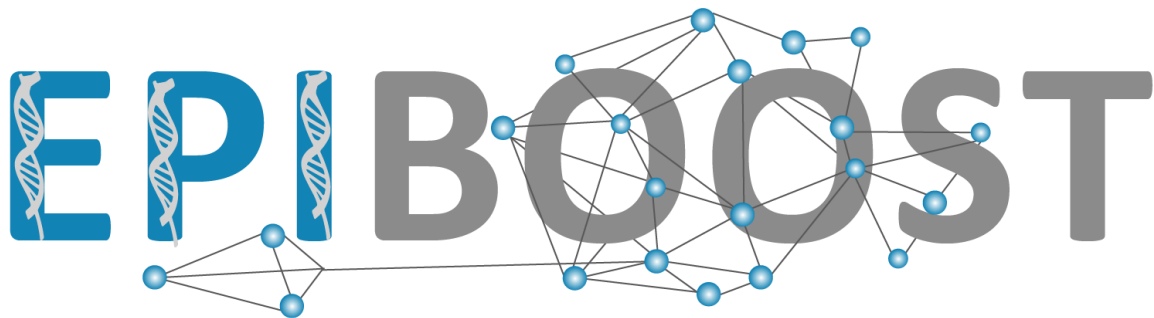# Deliverable D3
(D5.1)

EPIBOOST
BOOSting excellence in environmental EPIgenetics
(GA n. 101078991)

by
UAVR

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Deliverable D3 (D5.1): Project website

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Work package (WP)	WP5 Dissemination, Communication and Exploitation (DE&C)
Deliverable	D3 (D5.1)
Lead beneficiary	Abbreviated as in GA
Deliverable type	
	■ DEC (website)
Dissemination level	
	■ PU (public)
Estimated delivery deadline	M4 (31/01/2023)
Actual delivery deadline	31/01/2023
Version	1.0
Reviewed by	Jana Asselman (UGent) and Alicia Arroyo (CSIC)

Table of Contents

1. About this document

The present document is a brief report describing the EPIBOOST website, namely the framework and backbone of the website, which is a major channel for communication and dissemination of the project. To have a consistent image and identity across platforms, the already fixed visual identity of the project was followed in the development of the website for easy recall and association of the project image. This deliverable provides an overview of its structure, as well as the relevant technical details on the software used and the rationales behind the building of the different sections, when applicable. Although examples of different sections and highlights on particular aspects are given throughout the document, the website is available online for a detailed inspection through the URL https://epiboost.web.ua.pt.

Starting with a brief introduction explaining the context and major goal of the EPIBOOST website, as well as the principles followed for its design and development, the document then describes the work done so far and the current status of the website. This includes brief notes on the context and the purpose, the technical aspects underlying the design and development of the website, followed by the description of its structure along with a summary of the type of contents that are covered in each section. A final section is included that concerns the current status of the website and future investment in terms of further development and management.

2. Introduction

The EPIBOOST website was developed under the general goal of gaining a modern and user-friendly web-based platform showcasing the project itself, its activities and outputs, working as an umbrella or a major hub anchoring the dissemination and communication strategy. As such, the present deliverable is part of the EPIBOOST Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication strategy (see Deliverables 5.3 and 5.6), collecting information from all project work packages and carefully addressing all aspects that could ensure that the necessary information was available for the engagement of the identified stakeholders, according to the strategies described at stakeholders map document (Deliverable 5.2).

For systematically delivery in this context, a structured list of specific practical objectives was established and used to reason the design and guide the building of the EPIBOOST website (Figure 1). The website allows a user-friendly experience to users, with obvious (i.e., as typically expected in project websites) sections regardless of the type of user visiting. A clean and appealing layout is aimed to capture and keep for longer the attention of visitors, while complying with the project visual identity so that the immediate, effortless recognition of all project resources (including the website itself) and outputs can be made by stakeholders and spontaneous visitors. The layout and structure of the website ensure an intuitive navigation, with clear paths to sections where specific information of interest can be found for all users, favouring an efficient dissemination of the project outputs. Besides ensuring a logical path for sections showcasing the project outputs, knowledge sharing easiness was aimed, by logical archiving reusable documents and facilitating direct download. Finally, and mirroring the EPIBOOST objectives, a major aim of the website is to boost the network of the Consortium by increasing the chances of reaching new (or more) stakeholders. For that, contacts between website users and the Consortium should be facilitated, yet ensuring the safety of the web environment and in particular data protection from third parties.
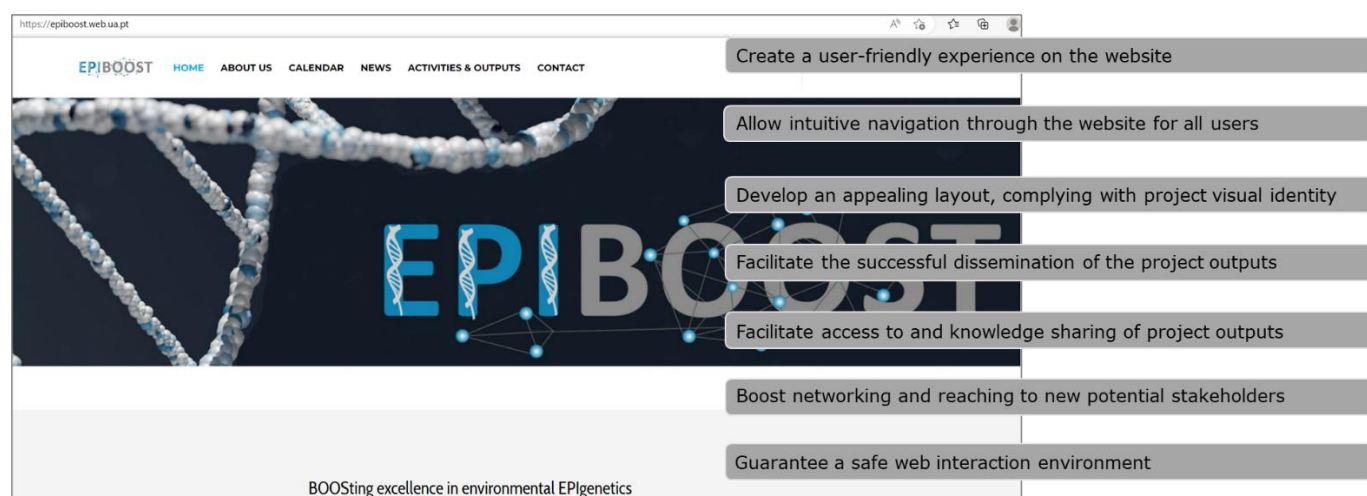
Figure 1. Major aims that guided the EPIBOOST website development.

3. Website design and development

The website has been developed for the EPIBOOST project as a major hub supporting the dissemination, exploitation and communication strategy (https://epiboost.web.ua.pt). Unlike other foreseen forms of interaction with stakeholder and to the broader audiences, the EPIBOOST website is understood by the Consortium as a truly dynamic, always accessible resource that will be constantly updated with additional resources, news and updates about the project. An efficient integration with the EPIBOOST social network platforms (Twitter and Instagram) is ensured by direct access via page header widget availability, but also more specifically via posts pages used for the news.

The project website presents EPIBOOST main goals, the members of the Consortium, the events calendar, and the developed and foreseen activities. It will be continuously fed with new relevant information regarding the project's progress considering both scientific outputs and training opportunities/outputs, as well as dissemination and communication activities. Following the philosophy of the Action (call HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ACCESS-03-01 for Coordination and Support Actions (CSA)), training opportunities and outputs are particularly highlighted in the EPIBOOST website. Also, an open channel (via contact form) that can be used by visitors to access the scientific coordinators and the team directly upon interest in gaining access to specialized information and/or discussion.

3.1 Technical aspects of the website implementation

The EPIBOOST website is hosted in the Data Centre of the University of Aveiro (UAVR), on the basis of a secure private cloud infrastructure managed by the institutional information and communication technologies service (https://www.ua.pt/en/stic/page/11642). This constrained institutionally the domain name used for the website, yet other options would not be compliant with the UAVR institutional policy concerning own projects, thereby hampering future support if needed. The Project website is based on the Wordpress Content Management System (v. 6.0). The WPBakery page builder

5

and the WordPress Gutenberg editor were used for layout and content development. Server configurations are as follows:

• Web server – Microsoft-IIS/7.5

• PHP version – 7.3.25

• Database server type/version – MariaDB/10.6.10

The website design was developed to meet the already established project visual identity (colour palette consistent with the logo colouring as developed by the CSIC communication team) with a strong attention to keep an appealing and clean layout. The Blade (v. 3.3.9; Greatives Team) theme for WordPress was used considering its flexibility and simplicity features complying easily with this rationale. Light backgrounds were used unless specific highlights to denote different sections within each page were the standard approach; the headers either reflect the page content or linking to the colours (blue-grey) and logo of the project. Non-serif fonts were used, both in headers and in body text, to facilitate readability; whenever large pieces of text were used, lighter colours (and accordion features when possible) were applied to allow headings highlight and to avoid an immediate identification of a time-demanding reading, while keeping all the information for interested reader. Dynamism was ensured by a controlled use of sliding areas and animation of page headings and blocks, while visual elements were typically kept static, but allowed to pop-up for a more detailed inspection.

Considering the existent level of expertise and know-how within the Coordinator institution, the website was developed and implemented in-house. Besides the institutional support provided by the UAVR information and communication technologies service, direct support was provided by Luís Carvalheiro, who is the corresponding pivot at CESAM, the main research centre hosting EPIBOOST in UAVR. Joana Pereira (CESAM, UAVR), the EPIBOOST scientific coordinator, and David Oliveira (DigiMedia, UAVR), complementing the implementation team, in particular designing, developing and producing the first contents for the website.

4. Website structure

The EPIBOOST website was developed as an informational website, so that it can act as a living resource where information about the project, its activities and its outcomes could be conveyed efficiently. Therefore, the website includes long form content in separate, well-identified webpages that compile information on typical sections expected in project websites. This allows the visitors to easily find what they are looking for without exaggerated scroll-down to mine information in the middle of many different topics. In order to keep the identity and provide easy access to navigation among different sections, the same top header and footer was kept in all webpages. In the top header, the logo and a direct horizontal menu (no hierarchised sub-menus) for access to the different webpages is provided, as well as the links to EPIBOOST social networks. The footer comprises the funding acknowledgement and disclaimer, along with the latest news (widget-based) and the main EPIBOOST contact (e-mail address).

Six static webpages are hence integrant part of the EPIBOOST website as summarised in Table 1 and detailed further in section 5 concerning the contents.

Table 1. General structure of the EPIBOOST website, with the different webpages and brief notes on the contents collected in each.

WEBPAGES	CONTENT
Home	Welcome page, collecting the description of the project, its specific objectives and work packages with reference to the implementation timeline
About us	Presentation of the Coordinators and advanced partner institutions, as well as the members of each team
Calendar	Events list organized monthly
News	Post page collecting the news of the project, which can directly feed social networks of the user
Activities and outputs	Project activities that are open to external participants, along with project outputs and public deliverables
Contact	Contact form, allowing the visitors to directly contact the EPIBOOST team for discussion or simply for inclusion in dissemination mailing lists

4. Website content

The website content is obviously consistent with the Description of the Action as set in the signed Grant Agreement, and most of the webpages are meant to be updated as the project progresses in implementation timeline. All the content is provided exclusively in English. The following sections illustrate the contents of each webpage currently (January 2023) through a brief description, complemented with screenshots.

4.1 Home

This is the welcome page of the EPIBOOST website. It is a long content page where visitors can scroll down to know the project (Figure 2). At the top of the page there is an overall description of the project, illustrated by an alluvial chart that demonstrates the complementarity between the partners. The structure of the project follows, with a brief description of work packages using accordion features to prevent text overload, rendering available the project graphical abstract. A dynamic view of the work packages progress is provided and finally links to the webpages presenting the team and the contact form are provided attractively and complementarily to the top heading menu.
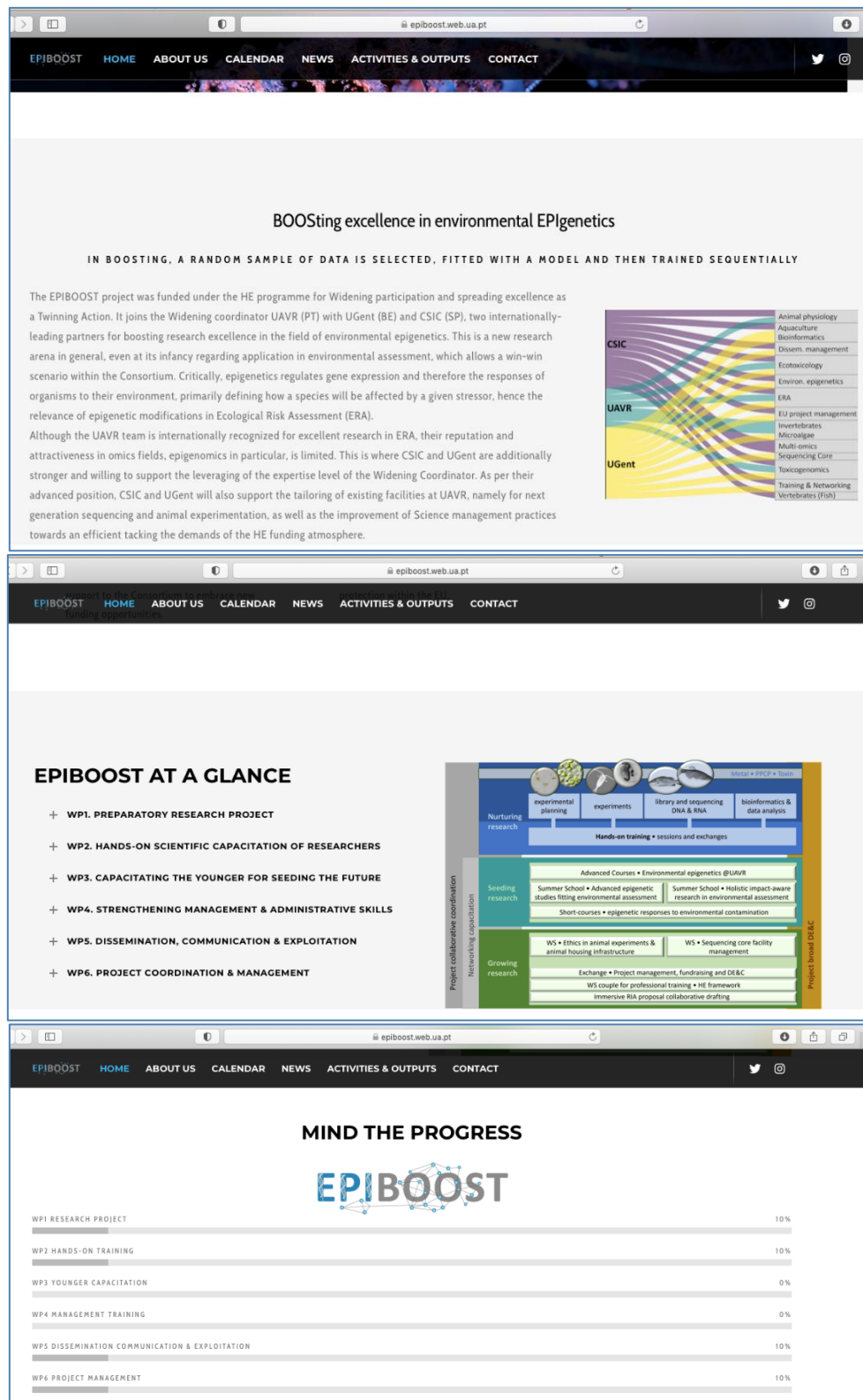
Figure 2. Sequential (from panel top to panel bottom) screenshots collected from the EPIBOOST homepage.

4.2 About us

The "About us" webpage bears a first section where the partner institutions are presented with linked logos. Then, a second section presents visually the team, starting with the scientific coordinators and then showing every team member per partner (linked to professional URL), their position and internal affiliation coordinators. Figure 3 illustrates these two sections of the webpage.
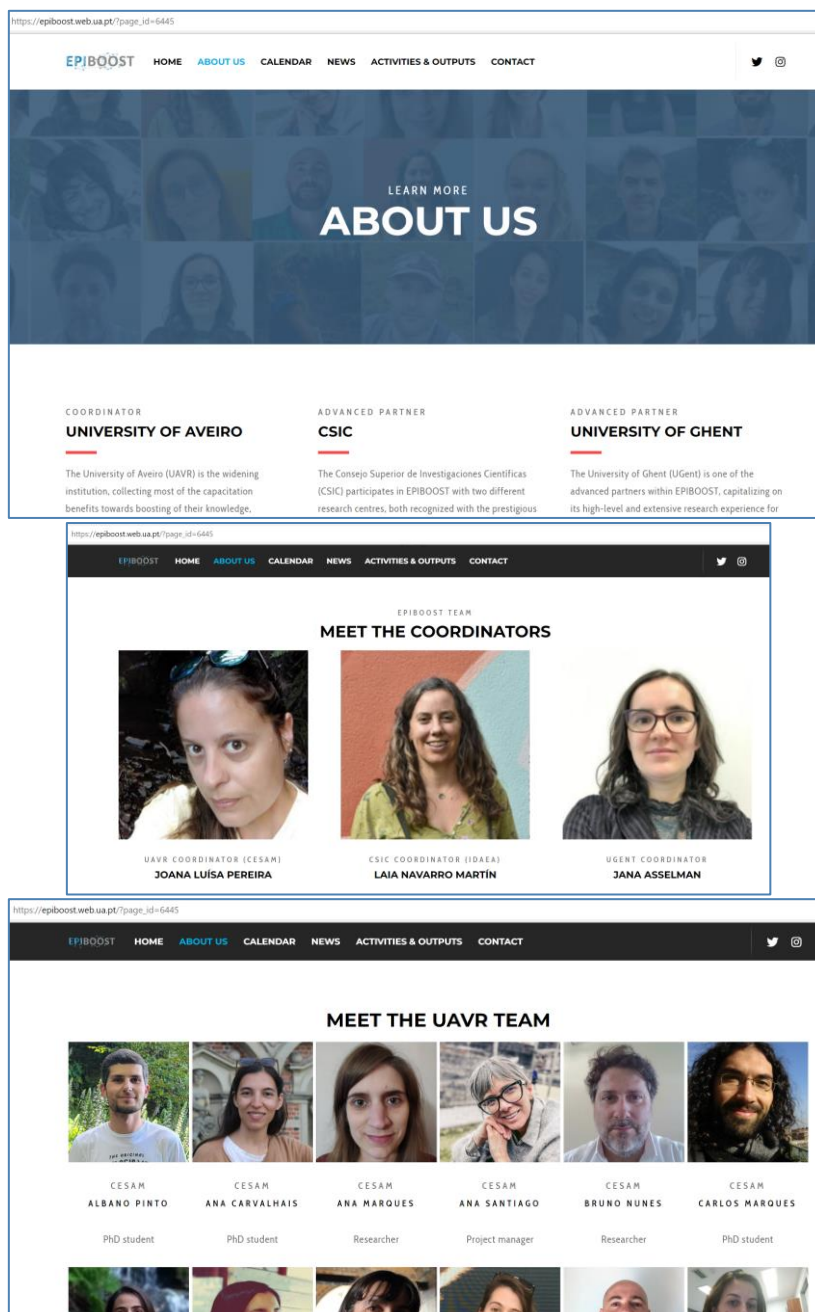

Figure 3. Sequential (from panel top to panel bottom) screenshots collected from the EPIBOOST "About us" webpage.

4.3 Calendar

The Calendar webpage provides a monthly-organised list of events (EventON plugin for WordPress by AshanJay Designs) implemented through the EPIBOOST timeline. Besides the summary box immediately available, pop-up features allow to access to the details of each event, including but not limited to organizers, specific webpage, location and Google calendar integration (Figure 4).
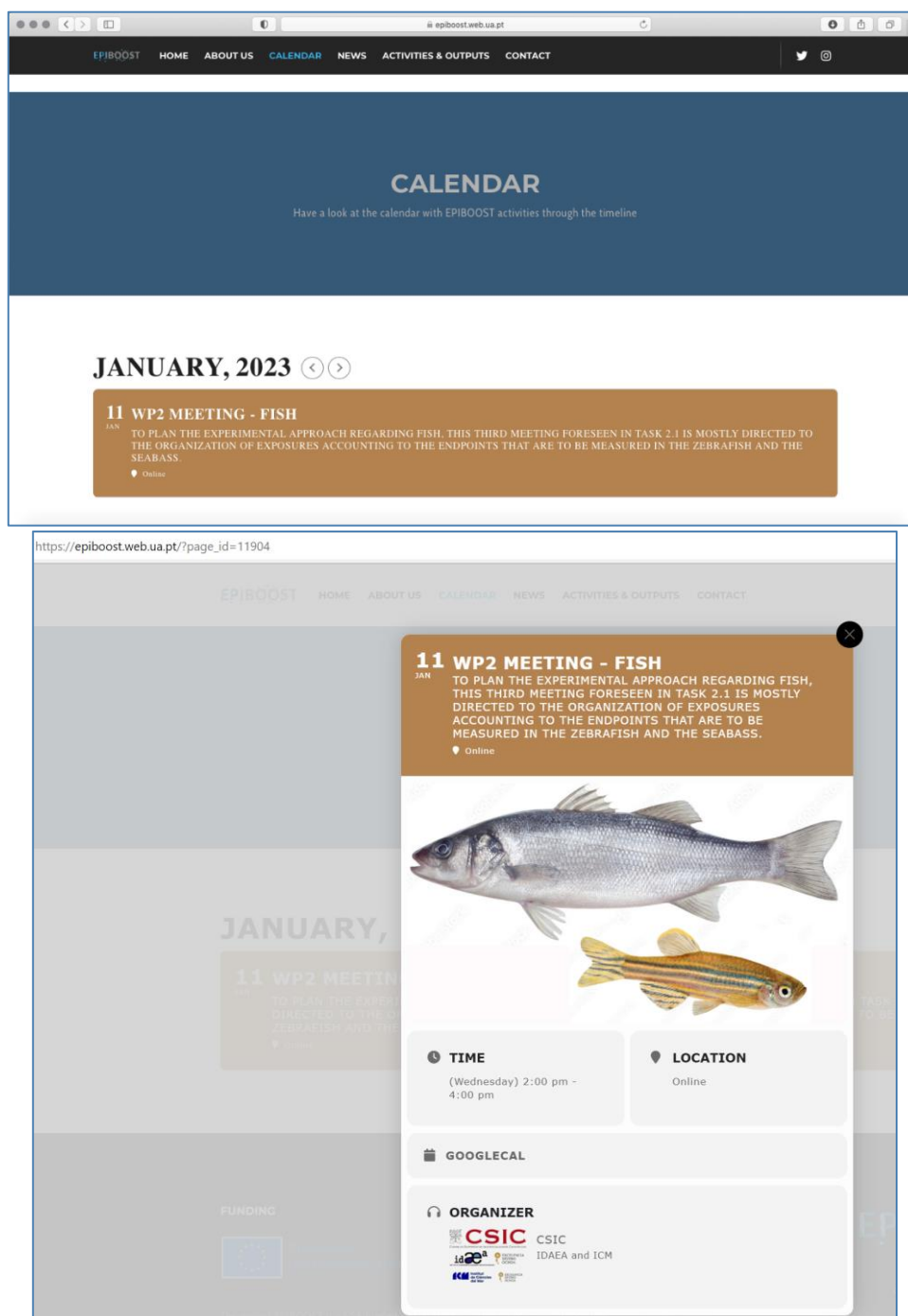

Figure 4. From top to bottom, the general view of the EPIBOOST Calendar webpage, concerning January 2023, and the pop-up window showing the details of the corresponding event.

4.4 News

A blog block was used to build the "News" webpage, using an uncategorized layout presenting news excerpts ordered by date and allowing access to the full post (text and image) upon clicking on a provided "read more" button (top panel in Figure 5). The full news content (bottom panel in Figure 5) is added interaction with the visitor social networks (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn), promoting the easy, spontaneous sharing of EPIBOOST news.
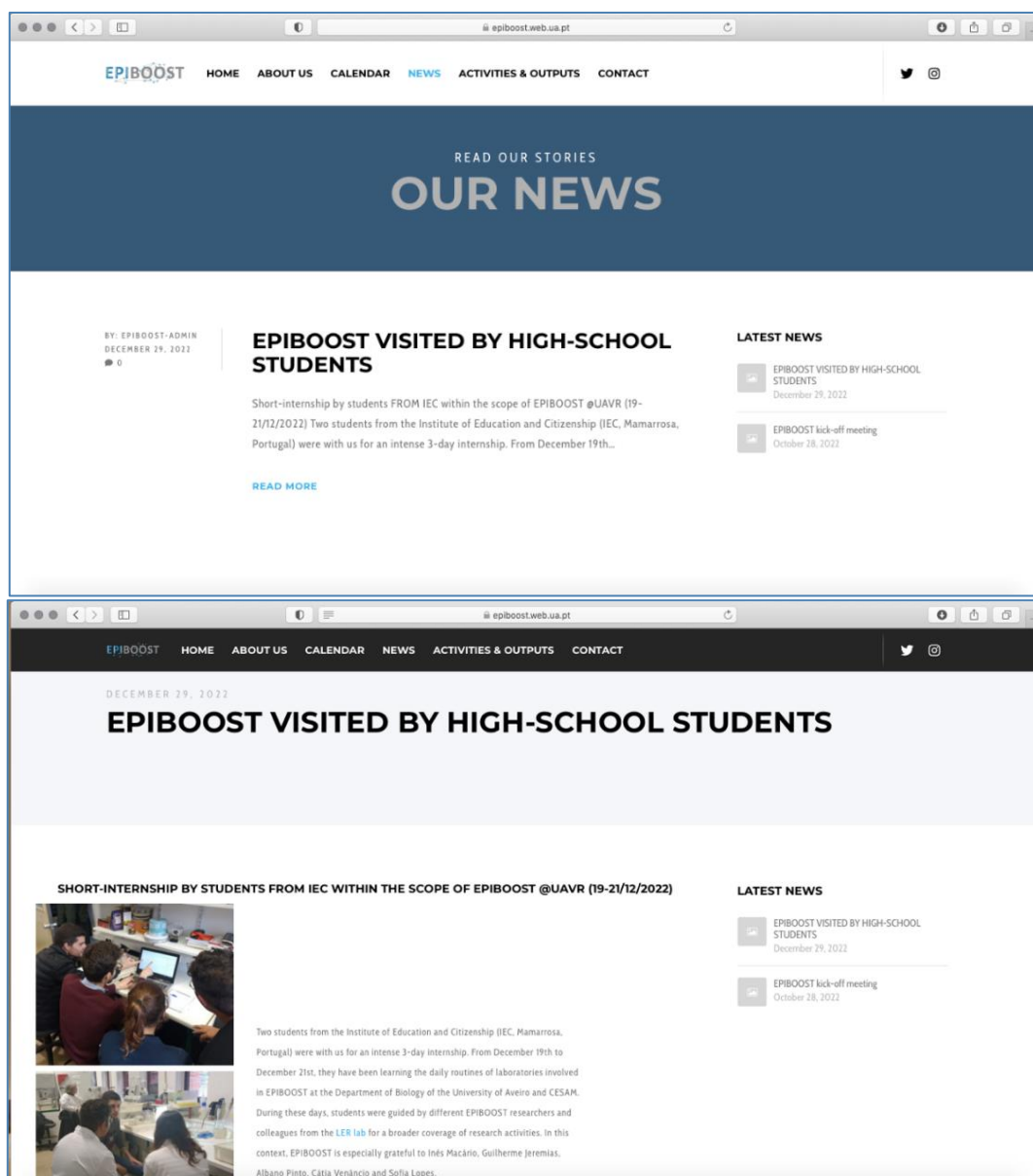

Figure 5. From top to bottom, the excerpts page for the EPIBOOST news and an example of the general aspect of the full page for a given news post.

4.5 Activities and outputs

This webpage collects information on EPIBOOST activities and outputs using an organised layout that groups the items by type: training events; scientific documents; conference participation and networking activities; miscellaneous outputs, including newsletters, videos and educational activities; and public deliverables (top panel in Figure 6). By clicking to find more about a given type of information of interest, the visitor is directed to a new page, where the items are explored further and all necessary links for more information or actions required are provided (bottom panel in Figure 6).
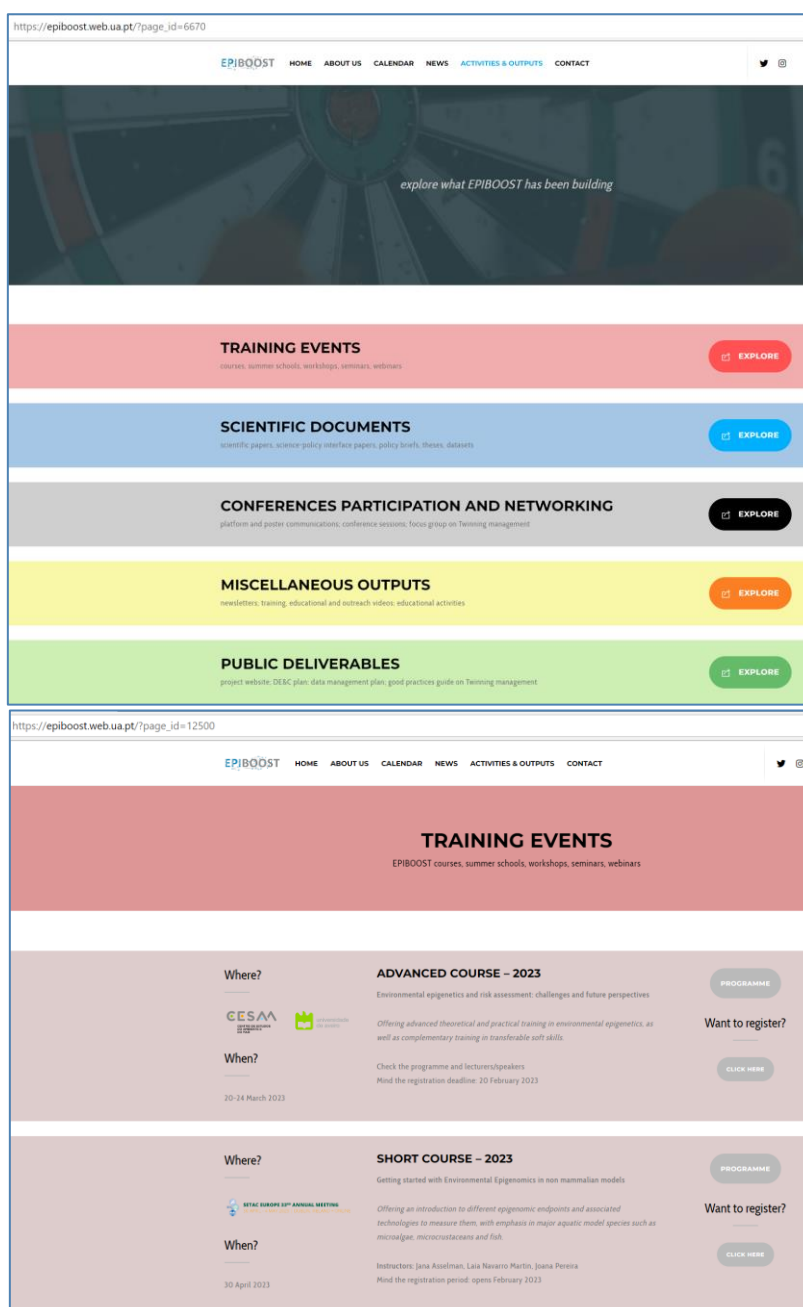

Figure 6. From top to bottom, the webpage grouping the activities and outputs of the project, with button-click-based access to the webpages detailing on each type of activities/outputs.

4.6 Contact

As a major element, this webpage provides a contact form that consists of an opportunity for interested stakeholders to reach out to the project coordinator team (Figure 7). The input required is the name and email address, then the subject and the corresponding message. The form applies to a range of interaction intents: the interested visitors can contact regarding participation in EPIBOOST activities, discuss or clarify on a topic within the scope of the project directly with experts of the Consortium or, importantly, simply express their interest in receiving news of the project via email. This last possibility deliberately replaces the typical "subscribe newsletter" popup found in many websites. Such option prevents immediate subscription without a proper viewing of the contents and interest reasoning, which often leads to downstream action requirements to unsubscribe. Also, it provides a straightforward way of ensuring that the distribution of information about the project is truly accepted and well received by the contacting person/entity. On the other hand, it allows to avoid the creation of lists of contacts for dissemination that contain a high level of heterogeneity in terms of interest in the project, hence rendering the dissemination and communication efforts more efficient.

Still within this webpage, the detailed contacts of the partners are provided, including post address and map-based geographic location of the institutes involved.

Figure 7. Screenshot showing the main element of the "Contact" webpage.

5. Current website status and future management

After a relatively long period of development during which a maintenance mode plugin was used (WordPress Maintenance plugin by WebFactory Ltd.), the EPIBOOST website become public on the 17 January. The current structure and contents are provided in the sections above, but the website was reasoned and designed to be used throughout the EPIBOOST timeline, and beyond, as defined by the project Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication plan. In order to efficiently meet these

purposes, keeping the website updated throughout its activity period is required and deemed continuous attention by the website managers. An easy-to-use edition platform (WordPress added straightforward visual editors/page builders; see section 3.1) and the simplified structure/layout of the different webpages were selected accordingly. This also facilitates the participation of all partners and team members within each partner in content building. Given the secure hosting solution adopted for the EPIBOOST website (see section 3.1), only the UAVR team has administration and edition permissions, while the partners will be constantly encouraged to feed up the different webpages requiring update or addition of content.

After this initial development stage towards rendering the EPIBOOST website publicly available as soon as possible in a complete form, there are issues to be optimised, and attention will be given to them in the short term. One concerns Search Engine Optimization (SEO), i.e. consideration of available strategies and techniques towards improving the ranking of a website and its content in search engines, rendering it discoverable by a wider range of web visitors. Current checks (Seobility SEO checker; https://www.seobility.net/en/seocheck/) resulted in SEO scores of about 60%, indicating that there is scope for improvement in several aspects, especially concerning: the internal link structure that has dynamic parameters, anchor text shortage and anchor text redundancy issues; server slow performance relating mostly with CSS and JavaScript files being loaded in some webpages; external factors such as the lack of Facebook shares of the website or the still short availability of backlinks. Another aspect that will be optimised in some webpages or webpage sections is mobile responsiveness, allowing a better visiting experience in these platforms. Finally, the improvement of the website accessibility by visitors with disabilities will be given due attention. At present, checking in this context (AChecker Web Accessibility Checker; https://achecker.achecks.ca/checker/index.php) highlighted that improvement is needed regarding different aspects, e.g.: providing text alternatives for non-text content; title, header and/or label addition in some elements; occasional text size improvement and header nesting consistency.