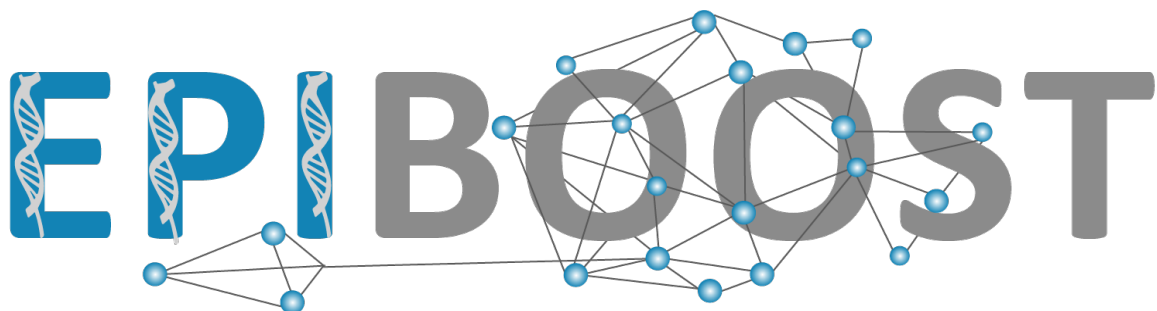




Deliverable D8 (D5.4)



**EPIBOOST
BOOSTing excellence in environmental
EPIgenetics (GA n. 101078991)**

**By
CSIC**



28 April 2023



Deliverable D8 (D5.4): Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication plan

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Work package (WP)	WP5 Dissemination, Communication and Exploitation (DE&C)
Deliverable	D8 (D5.4)
Lead beneficiary	CSIC
Deliverable type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> R (document, report) <input type="checkbox"/> DEC (websites, patent filings, videos,...) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: ORDP (open research data pilot)
Dissemination level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PU (public) <input type="checkbox"/> CO (confidential, only members of consortium and European Commission))
Estimated delivery deadline	M6 (21/03/2023)
Actual delivery deadline	28/04/2023
Version	1.0
Reviewed by	Joana Pereira, Laia Navarro
Accepted by	
Comments	

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1. About this document

The present document aims to draft the preliminary strategy of EPIBOOST to define the goals, identify the most efficient means and set a detailed plan for the implementation of Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication (DEC) activities. To this end, the DEC plan sets out the objectives, tools, materials, and channels to be exploited to effectively spread EPIBOOST activities, achievements and tangible results to targeted audiences, also becoming the cornerstone for the successful policy uptake of EPIBOOST actions.

This document is delivered at an early stage of the project (M7) to offer guidance through the first communication and engagement activities. The document represents the first draft of the EPIBOOST DEC plan that to be considered as a living document periodically evaluated and reviewed at M12, M24, M30. We foresee that the content enclosed in this report will increase dramatically in the second year (M24) and third year (M30) when the DEC Plan will be revised and expanded.

This is a public document will be distributed to all EPIBOOST partners for their use and submitted to European Commission as an EPIBOOST deliverable D5.4.

2. Overview of the DEC plan for the EPIBOOST project

2.1 Definition of communication, dissemination and exploitation

Communication and dissemination (outreach) support the EPIBOOST project in a deeper understanding of the outputs that the project provides to the interested stakeholders, scientific community, and students, and in raising awareness of the project's scientific and societal relevance.

According to the [Horizon Europe guidelines](#), **communication** promotes and informs the project actions and results; **dissemination** makes these results public for others to use; and **exploitation** makes concrete use of these results for commercial, societal and political purposes. In the specific case of EPIBOOST, communication refers to the relationship between the project and stakeholders, whereas dissemination refers to the spreading of research and its results, together with training activities involving the project partners or open for external participation.

Furthermore, under Horizon Europe, beneficiaries have the legal obligation to engage in communication, dissemination, and exploitation activities. A brief description of why communication, dissemination, and exploitation matter and what are the main differences is presented in Table 1.

	Communication	Dissemination	Exploitation
Definition	Promote, inform and communicate EPIBOOST and its results	Ensure the availability of the results for others to use	Make concrete use of these results (commercial, societal or political objectives)
Goal	Highlight the impact and benefits of EPIBOOST	Transfer knowledge and make the results available for use and facilitate their uptake	Effectively use project results, turning them into concrete value and impact for society
Examples	Website Social media Newsletter Videos	Scientific publications Science-policy interface papers	Societal activities Policy briefs Good practices guide

	Printed materials Press releases Scientific conferences Fairs	Training, workshops, summer schools, seminars, webinars, courses Datasets	
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Table 1. Description of communication, dissemination and exploitation tailored to the EPIBOOST project.

2.2 The basics of EPIBOOST communication strategy

2.2.1 Logotype and applications

The creation of the logotype is the main tool for the project's visual identity. Not only the EPIBOOST logo (Figure 1) reflects the topic of environmental **EPI**genetics, but also the capacitation of the widening partner (UAVR) for developing excellent research that will be **BOOST**ed by the two advanced partners (UGent and CSIC). The whole Consortium and the workflow strategy are represented by a network of dots, leveraged by the interaction between the first three on the left, portraying the three partner institutions. By this logo, EPIBOOST depicts the benefits of collaborative work and shared expertise to tackle current and future challenges in the field within the European Research Area.

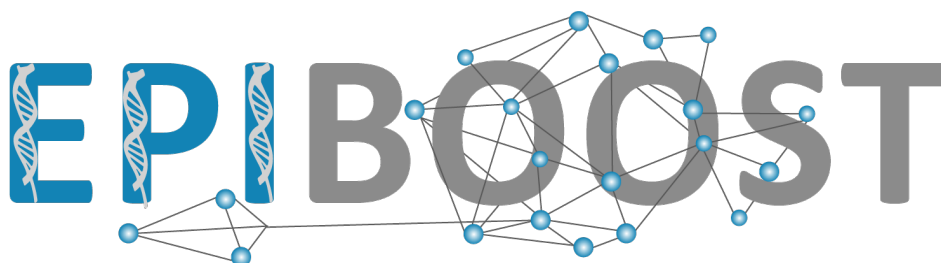


Figure 1. Logo of the EPIBOOST project.

2.2.2 Visual identity manual

The Visual identity manual includes the basic guidelines that create a coherent project-based identity of the project. On the one hand, a 6-colour palette is described. The EPIBOOST main colours are blue and grey, which are in harmony with the logo. The official type font of the project is Verdana Pro, which should be used in any kind of document, template and communication items.

The document is available online at the EPIBOOST Intranet, openly accessible to all partners.

2.2.3 The key messages of EPIBOOST

The main message of EPIBOOST is "**Excellence in epigenetics**", which is the short version of the full name of the project. The message helps to promote its main objective in a simple and direct way. Also, this message can be easily adapted to a hashtag form (#ExcellenceInEpigenetics), which is useful to create the EPIBOOST community through social media (see section 3.2.2 of the present document).

Another key message is "**Epigenetics for environmental risk assessment**", as this is one of the main objectives of the project: the incorporation of epigenomics into regulatory environmental protection frameworks in the EU.

Finally, the message “**Understanding the response of aquatic organisms to pollution**” captures the scientific base ground of the project: the assessment of how DNA-methylation and gene expression in phytoplankton, zooplankton, and fish respond to environmental stressors (metal, toxin and antibiotic).

3. EPIBOOST plan for external communication and dissemination

The main objectives of the communication strategy are:

- Make the EPIBOOST project known to the European research and student community
- Engage with the young students to participate in the projects’ trainings and summer schools
- Disseminate the main events and results related to the project
- Increase the visibility of the teams that lead the project
- Reinforce the scientific excellence in the field of epigenetics
- Coordinate actions and presence in networks between project partners

3.1 EPIBOOST stakeholder map

Based on the stakeholder identification developed in **D5.2/D4 - Maps of stakeholders and the network**, the EPIBOOST Consortium identified six categories of stakeholders:

1. Early-career researchers

Early-career researchers engaged in PhD programmes offered by the Consortium partners or associated higher education institutions and broadly at the EU level, as well as junior post-doc researchers

2. EU Twinning Community

This category includes Consortium science managers and science managers of sister Twinning projects (projects that were funded within the same Horizon Europe call as EPIBOOST). These stakeholders can benefit from different training activities developed within the project, especially in the hands-on training opportunity provided by the intended collaborative elaboration of the good practices guide on Widening-Twinning projects.

3. Scientific Community

Not only this stakeholder category is formed by the EPIBOOST researchers, but also researchers that are external to the Consortium affiliated to EU and international institutions, regardless of their career position.

4. Policy makers and regulators

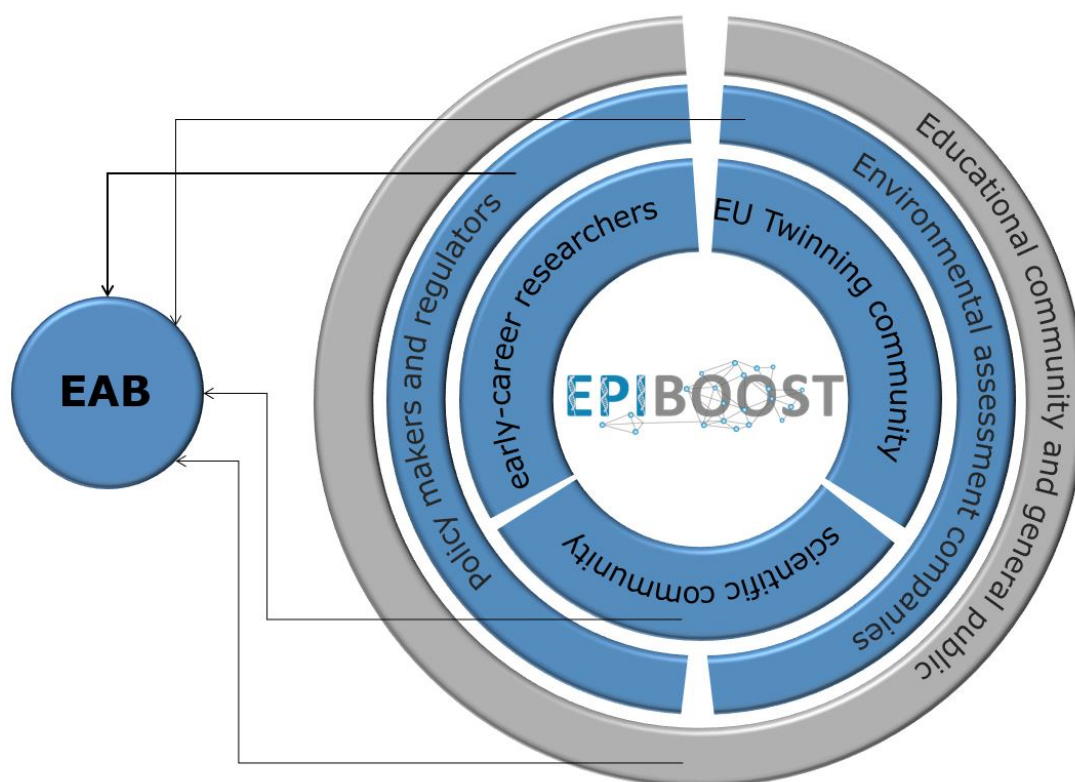
As one of the main objectives of EPIBOOST is to include epigenetic biomarkers in environmental risk assessment and environmental protection policies, this category fits naturally within the scope of the stakeholder mapping. The mining of contacts will be focused on OECD, EFSA, ECHA, and EEA.

5. Private sector

This category is seen as one of the end-users of EPIBOOST, as it is made of private companies dedicated to environmental assessments or large companies that integrate environmental risk assessment in the field of molecular ecotoxicology.

6. Society

This category is composed of two groups: the educational community (both teachers and students from secondary or high school) and the general public.



3.2 EPIBOOST external communication and channel tools

3.2.1 Website

EPIBOOST progress, outcomes, and impacts are key information to be delivered in an efficient way to the diversity of stakeholders explained in the previous section of the present document.

The development of EPIBOOST website aims to:

- Facilitate access to knowledge sharing of project outputs
- Facilitate the successful dissemination of the project outputs
- Boost networking and reaching new potential stakeholders

In order to do so, the webpage was created to ensure a user-friendly experience, developing an appealing layout and guaranteeing a safe navigation.

EPIBOOST website is available at <https://epiboost.web.ua.pt/> and a dedicated deliverable was elaborated, where further details can be found (**D5.1/D3 – Project website**).

3.2.2 Social media

EPIBOOST uses two social media channels (Twitter: @EPIBOOST22 and Instagram: @epiboost) to broaden the dissemination scope of their activities to stakeholders and the general public. Even though EPIBOOST was also planned to be present in ResearchGate, this platform no longer supports projects, so pages are rather for Researchers only ([link](#)). On March 31, 2023, ResearchGate retired the Projects feature and removed all projects from the site. Hence, EPIBOOST is and will be present on social media via Twitter and Instagram.

To ensure a coherent, effective, and continuous activity of EPIBOOST via social media, it has been developed an **EPIBOOST social media strategy**, which contains the basic rules regarding the identity of the project, periodicity, language, tagging, hashtags and examples of copies. The document is openly available for the Consortium on the EPIBOOST Intranet.

Twitter is mostly used for official communications, whereas Instagram addresses more specifically the young scientific community and shows the daily life of the project.

To ensure the project's own identity, the dissemination on networks should always include #EPIBOOST and, whenever possible, @/#HorizonEU and @REA_research will be tagged or mentioned via #. When the publication is from one of the partner institutions, the rest of the institutions will be mentioned whenever relevant and possible. In addition, the project's own creatives will incorporate the EPIBOOST brand (logo and colour palette).

Opportunities to publish new content will be sought, at least, once a month, and in no case should more than two months go by without announcing any activity or progress in the project.

- Twitter posts should be published, at least, twice per month.
- Instagram posts should be published, at least, twice per month.
- Instagram stories should be published, at least, once per week.

Regarding the language of social media, priority will be given to English, but local languages, such as Portuguese, Flemish, Spanish and Catalan could be also used in some posts (especially Instagram posts) when desired.

3.2.3 Newsletter

During its lifetime the project will develop and send newsletters every 6 months summarizing EPIBOOST main achievements (activities, results, and information produced). The newsletter will be drafted in direct, journalistic language, and sent to targeted stakeholders and European professional audience by all partners and it is available for download in the 'Activities and Outputs' section of the website. The Newsletter will be edited every 6 months, and the first edition was sent in April 2023, six months after starting the project.

3.2.4 Scientific & technical publications

The results from the EPIBOOST project will be published in national and international scientific journals and other channels for the dissemination of the project to specialized audiences. Academic theses (PhD, MSc and Graduation) are expected as well as the final outcome of the effort invested by the partners in the training of early-career researchers that can then support the field in the future. Large datasets are naturally relevant outputs in a project such as EPIBOOST, where epigenomic and genomic data will be produced following planned experimental approaches that can be exploited via reuse by the research community, as well as by other stakeholders. Details can be found in the EPIBOOST Data Management Plan (D5.4/D7 – Data Management Plan).

3.2.5 Outreach materials

To maximise the arrival of the EPIBOOST messages and objectives to all stakeholders, several outreach materials will be designed.

Printed materials:

- Two brochures: one addressed to policy makers and regulators (in printed format) and another one addressed to early-careers scientists (online and printed formats)
- A flyer in A5 format with the basics of the project
- Three roll-ups have already been designed as promotional items to be displayed in workshops and meetings

Adaptation to other formats is possible, so these dissemination materials will be tailored according to the evolution of needs of the project.

In addition, a model for a pipette holder made with 3-D printing is available in the shared dissemination folder to all partners.

Videos:

Videos are considered as a key visual format to engage with the EPIBOOST community and announce the main activities planned during the project. Three types of videos are planned by EPIBOOST:

1. Training videos
The contents will be related to the hands-on training foreseen in the project
2. Short videos
These videos will be created at the beginning and end of the project (project presentation and legacy)
The 1-minute presentation video has already been published and can be seen on the website and social media ([link](#)). The legacy video will be longer (around 3 minutes), as it will contain the main results and outcomes of EPIBOOST, together with some interviews to the coordinators and participants.
3. Short videos translating the concept of epigenetics and its relevance in environmental protection to non-scientists

3.3 Activity-specific strategies

3.3.1 Training opportunities

Given the nature of EPIBOOST project and its objectives, the project organizes courses, summer schools, workshops, seminars, webinars and other type of training opportunities as a way to boost scientific excellence in the field of epigenetics.

Advanced courses will be organised once per year at UAVR targeting early-career researchers, especially PhD students of the coordinator and partner institutions, and short-courses are planned once per year as well embedded in European Conferences, focussing on the same audience, but covering a broader scale at the EU level. Workshops directed to infrastructure capacitation at the coordinator are also planned, namely addressing sequencing and animal housing and experimentation facilities. As well, workshops are planned to improve the Consortium science management support to the efficient tackling EU Horizon Europe environment funding challenges and opportunities. Seminars and webinars embedded in annual

project meetings will be open to audiences external to the Consortium, serving both as tools to disseminate the scientific results of the project and as training resources, especially for early-career researchers willing to know more about environmental epigenetics research and its integration in environmental risk assessment.

3.3.2 Workshops and meetings

These specific meetings will be focused on targeting policy makers and regulators because of their medium-to-high level of impact in EPIBOOST. This is a major ambition within the Consortium and EPIBOOST was designed to provide support to such ambition. Policy makers and regulators are knowledge end-users. The workshops and meetings organised with them can capitalize on the project research results for regulation development, ultimately driving changes in policy making trends.

Regarding the environmental assessment companies, EPIBOOST acknowledges that they must make the transition from more traditional approaches into approaches rendering them capable of delivering successfully when molecular information becomes needed for compliance with regulation. Despite this evident driver, EPIBOOST is aware that the aforementioned need for transition is yet poorly assumed by many environmental assessment companies in the EU, hence the interest of these stakeholders in the project was rated conscientiously as being of a medium range. Workshops and meetings will be key to contribute to make this transition successful.

3.3.3 Educational events

Different activities, ranging from sessions in science communication events to demonstrations in fairs, expositions or knowledge-transfer events, will be implemented in EPIBOOST, addressing related stakeholders for a broader dissemination of the project and its general outcomes.

To ensure the effective and successful delivery of tailored messages to the stakeholders, EPIBOOST will make use of the most relevant channels and tools for each specific stakeholder. A list of the selected channels and their relevance for targeted audiences for the EPIBOOST framework is presented in Table 2.

	Early-career researchers	EU Twinning Community	Scientific Community	Policy makers and regulators	Private sector	Society
Website	Medium	High	Medium	High	High	High
Social media	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High
Newsletter	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low
Scientific & technical publications	High	Medium	High	High	Medium	Low
Outreach materials	High	Medium	High	High	Medium	High
Training opportunities	High	Medium	High	Medium	Low	Low
Workshops and meetings	High	Medium	High	High	High	Low
Educational events	High	Low	High	Low	Low	High

Table 2. EPIBOOST dissemination and communication channels and impact on stakeholders

4. EPIBOOST plan for internal communication

In order to successfully achieve the goals set for external communication, a functional strategy is needed to effectively coordinate the information flow within the EPIBOOST Consortium. The internal organization and management of information flow ensures the efficient implementation of actions and information transfer, engagement with the project partners, and promotion of EPIBOOST solutions to users, stakeholders and target audiences.

What are the goals of internal communication?

- Increase involvement and engagement among EPIBOOST actors.
- Keep EPIBOOST partners connected and informed.
- Build and share a common understanding of the EPIBOOST goals, vision and mission.
- Develop a sense of community between involved parties.
- Inform about ongoing/future activities.

How is internal communication implemented?

- By collecting and distributing information from and to EPIBOOST partners.
- By providing tools and means to represent EPIBOOST in a uniform and cohesive manner and maximize workflow efficiency.
- By preparing together tailored and consistent messages to the different external target audiences.
- By adopting tools to strengthen and maximize efficiency in internal communication and workflows.
- By defining guidelines for communication, dissemination and exploitation activities and initiatives.

Who is involved in internal communication?

The CSIC Communication Department supports UAVR in the leadership of EPIBOOST communications by coordinating the activities and involving all interested parties. Anyone involved in the EPIBOOST project is engaged in internal communication. In particular, partners' representatives and EPIBOOST Consortium are responsible to distribute and emphasize the internal communication guidelines to their own team members.

4.1 Internal communication and channel tools

4.1.1 Email

Despite classical, the email is a powerful efficient and effective communication tool when used wisely and following the best good practice guidelines in email creation both regarding content and respect for the recipient's agenda (see **D5.2/D4 - Maps of stakeholders and the network**).

EPIBOOST has an own email address (cesam-epiboost@ua.pt), which is used to interact with several identified stakeholders, yet the purpose of the communication as well as message contents will be appropriately tuned to the characteristics of each audience. Institutional mailing-lists, contacts provided by the Research Executive Agency, contacts gathered throughout the project activities and contacts given access to the project by the participant institutions and team members will be used.

4.1.2 Virtual and online meetings

Videoconferences as well as face-to-face meetings are major channels to evaluate and manage the progress of the project. Regular meetings of with the WP leaders and groups are already planned. They will be also key for fostering the interaction with stakeholders.

5. Monitoring impacts of the EPIBOOST DEC plan

As illustrated in Table 3, a feedback loop evaluates the impacts and success of the implemented communication and engagement activities over time, in a continuous and systematic approach.

An assessment framework is a necessary and integral part of a well-managed project implementation, notably for

- evaluating the efficacy of the DEC plan (WP5) and the strategy for stakeholder management (WP6)
- identify and address any issue in communication and dissemination activities
- implementing additional tasks to close any gaps

In this section, the key performance indicators (KPIs) are presented: these will be applied to evaluate the initial expected outcomes with the intermediate results. The current DEC plan will be updated by each reporting period applying all necessary revisions to improve and maximize the extent of the DEC plan.

Communication tool	KPI	Value	Means of verification
Website	Nº visits	10000	Google Analytics
	Nº of unique IPs	3000	
	Nº downloads of available material	200	
Social media - Twitter	Nº of posts/month	2	Twitter Analytics
	Engagement	400	
Social media - Instagram	Nº of posts/month	2	Instagram Insights
	Nº of stories/month	4	
	Engagement	400	
Newsletter	Nº of newsletters		Copies of the newsletter
Scientific & technical publications	Nº of scientific papers and technical publications		List of briefs and papers
Outreach – printed materials	Nº brochure printed	300	Printed copies
	Nº flyers	300	
Outreach - videos	Nº views	100	Videos available online
Training opportunities	Nº events		Event held Registration list Photos Minutes
	Nº of registered participants		
Workshops and meetings	Nº events		Event held Registration list Photos Minutes
	Nº of registered participants		

Table 3. EPIBOOST Communication and dissemination monitoring strategy

EPIBOOST has received funding as a Coordination and Support Action from the European Union under Horizon Europe (Grant no. 101078991). Views and opinions expressed in the present Data Management Plan are however those of the authors and the EPIBOOST Consortium in general only and do not necessarily reflect those of the EU or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the EU nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

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Annex: Templates for recording communication and dissemination activities

The templates are available online at the EPIBOOST Intranet, under the **EPIBOOST – Dissemination dossier** section. There is one specific working document to record the communication activities and another document for the dissemination activities, both openly accessible to the partners for recording their communication and dissemination actions.