



TRANSCEND

Deliverable 6.3: First exploitation, dissemination and communication report

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Executive summary

This report reviews the dissemination and communication activities implemented during the initial 18 months of the project, following the strategies outlined in the Plan for Dissemination and Exploitation including Communication activities (PDEC). It highlights efforts across various communication channels and the effectiveness of these strategies in achieving project goals.

- The project has produced and distributed key **dissemination materials**, which include a leaflet translated into pilots' languages, two newsletters, a promotional project video, and five policy briefs. These materials articulate the project's objectives and progress clearly and engagingly.
- **Stakeholders' workshops** (July – October 2023) have been held across the eight pilot studies, which are critical in fostering direct engagement and feedback from stakeholders. These workshops are instrumental in both disseminating information and gathering stakeholder insights to refine project strategies (*Section 3.2*).
- The inaugural **international Webstival** (December 2023) served as a capstone event, successfully bringing together diverse project partners and stakeholders. Despite challenges with scheduling across different time zones, the event managed to facilitate meaningful exchanges and discussions (*Section 3.3*).
- Two side events were organized in conjunction with major Mediterranean water science policy events: the **Mediterranean Water Forum** in Tunis (February 2024) and the **Union for Mediterranean** (UfM) Water Directors' Meeting in Lisbon (June 2024). The first side event focused on transformative water resources management and smart, resilient solutions, while the second event addressed the digital transformation for the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus (*Section 3.4*).
- The team participated in numerous **conferences and scientific forums** enhanced the project's visibility within the academic and industrial communities (*Section 3.5*). These activities also extend to staff exchanges, which are vital for knowledge transfer and networking.

The experiences and outcomes from these activities underscore the importance of adaptive communication strategies to address diverse stakeholder needs effectively. The report suggests that while initial strategies have laid a robust foundation, there is room for enhancing engagement through more personalized communication approaches, such as targeted invitations and strategic use of social media to reach broader audiences. Enhanced stakeholder engagement and optimized communication strategies are recommended to ensure that the project continues to meet its objectives effectively in its subsequent phases.

Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Communication strategy and channels.....	2
2.1	Talanoa Dialogue	2
2.2	In person and online communication	3
2.3	Virtual forum.....	4
2.4	Social media communication strategy	5
3	Communication and Dissemination activities in the first reporting period.....	8
3.1	Dissemination package	8
3.1.1	Leaflets.....	8
3.1.2	Newsletters	9
3.1.3	Project video	9
3.1.4	Policy briefs.....	9
3.2	Local stakeholder workshops.....	10
3.2.1	Design and planning	10
3.2.2	Caplina-Mauri-Desaguadero River Basin	11
3.2.3	Reno River Basin	13
3.2.4	Nitra River Basin.....	15
3.2.5	Mahanadi River Basin	16
3.2.6	Jucar River Basin	17
3.2.7	Orontes River Basin	19
3.2.8	Tympaki River Basin	21
3.3	Webstivals	22
3.4	Co-organised science policy events.....	26
3.4.1	Mediterranean Water Forum, February 2024	26
3.4.2	Union for Mediterranean consultation workshop on digital transformation, June 2024	27
3.5	Other events.....	28
3.6	Publications.....	30
3.7	Staff exchanges	31
3.8	Other outreach activities and informative publications.....	31
4	Lessons learned and Recommendations for Improvement.....	31
5	Annexes.....	34
5.1	Mediterranean Water Forum, February 2024	34
5.2	UfM consultative workshop, Lisbon, June 2024.....	35

List of Figures

Figure 1 Steps of the content strategy	5
Figure 2 Editorial action plan.....	6
Figure 3 Colour codes of the project	7
Figure 4 Graphical design of the project leaflet.....	8
Figure 5 Graphical design of the newsletter	9
Figure 6 Agenda of the Transcend 2023 webstival	24

List of Tables

Table 1 Co-creation stages in the Talanoa Dialogue	3
Table 2 List of local and international workshops and their objectives.	11
Table 3 First round of local workshops.....	11

1 Introduction

TRANSCEND aims to identify and catalyse the adoption of **Transformational Adaptation Policies** (TAP) addressing water scarcity. These policies will leverage innovative allocation systems and economic instruments that are robust and adaptable to uncertainty and change while promoting equitable and sustainable economic growth and welfare. To achieve this goal, TRANSCEND has established an ecosystem of innovation comprising knowledge networks, an actionable modelling suite, and an accounting and monitoring toolbox. The knowledge networks platform enhances community and expert involvement through stakeholder engagement and knowledge sharing. The actionable modelling suite integrates interdisciplinary socio-ecological science and ensemble forecasting to inform the design of TAP. The accounting and monitoring toolbox provides tools to support the practical implementation and enforcement of TAP.

The innovation ecosystem is applied across seven pilot laboratories: the Júcar River Basin (Spain), the Reno River Basin (Italy), the Tympaki River Basin (Greece), the Nitra River Basin (Slovakia), the Caplina-Mauri-Desaguadero River Basin (Peru, Chile, and Bolivia), the Orontes River Basin (Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey), and the Mahanadi River Basin (Indian states of Chhattisgarh & Odisha). Within the demonstration pilots, the project team initiated a series of evidence-based policy dialogues involving more than 160 organisations - agents of transformation. These dialogues are set to inform water resources strategies at various governance levels, catalysing robust and systemic transformations toward resilience in the face of water scarcity and climate change.

Work Package 6 (WP6) is dedicated to promoting the dissemination, communication, and exploitation activities of the project. Previously, WP6 developed the Plan for the Dissemination and Exploitation including Communication activities (PDEC, D6.1¹). This plan established guidelines, set time schedules, and detailed the project's communication and dissemination activities. Another previous result includes the Data Management Plan (DMP, D6.2) which outlines the procedures for handling project data.

This report (deliverable **D6.3**) summarizes the activities undertaken during the **first 18 months** of the project. It includes a review of the main communication and dissemination actions and provides an overview of how the project's objectives have been shared with stakeholders and the broader community. **Section 2** elaborates on the communication strategies and channels used thus far and compares between the initial objectives and the results achieved. This analysis addresses the effectiveness of these communication efforts. **Section 3**, which is the core of the report, recaps the dissemination materials produced, including a leaflet, two newsletters, a project promotional video, and five policy briefs. It also describes the first round of local workshops conducted in the seven pilot labs, lists other outreach activities, scientific

¹ TRANSCEND, 2023. Deliverable 6.1 - Detailed and revised PDEC and IPR strategy

publications, and staff exchanges that have been pivotal in enhancing project visibility and knowledge sharing, and describes the first international webstival held in December 2023. **Section 4** is dedicated to key lessons learned from these activities and a set of recommendations for future improvements, ensuring the project's ongoing success and adaptability.

2 Communication strategy and channels

Properly designed communication is intended to support both the dissemination and exploitation of our research results and contribute to achieving the expected outcomes & impacts of the project. TRANSCEND communication channels have been designed to aptly respond to the challenge posed by mobility restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

2.1 Talanoa Dialogue

Online and in-person communications are strategically managed to foster ongoing dialogue among stakeholders, facilitating collective assessment, consensus building, and the eventual adoption of robust Transformational Adaptation Policies (TAP) to address water scarcity under climate change in the living labs. Stakeholders from both public and private sectors within these labs are identified and actively engaged using the Talanoa Dialogue approach. Renowned within the climate community, the UNFCCC's Talanoa Dialogue annually attracts high-level representatives from national, regional, and local governments, industry, civil society organizations, and receives extensive media coverage globally. The Talanoa Dialogue has proven to be an effective and impactful platform for presenting and evaluating transformative actions, offering potential solutions and insights into challenges faced by entities worldwide.

The UNFCCC's Talanoa Dialogue² fosters the sharing of ideas, skills, and experiences through storytelling, aiming to build trust and deepen knowledge among participants by promoting empathy, understanding, and constructive, respectful debate. Criticism and blame are contrary to the principles of mutual respect and trust essential to the Talanoa approach. During these dialogues, stakeholders address three critical questions: "Where are we now?" "Where do we want to go?" and "How do we get there?" (UNFCCC, 2018).

In TRANSCEND, these questions are tackled using a robust co-creation strategy (WP2) that relies on well-designed knowledge networks (WP1). Co-creation involves all relevant stakeholders—including scientists—in research, deliberation, and implementation processes, ensuring consensus at every phase. This ranges from designing credible scenarios to the effective implementation of transformational adaptation strategies.

² UNFCCC, 2018. Talanoa Dialogue Platform [[WWW](#) Document]. Talanoa Dialogue

The co-creation process in TRANSCEND is structured into five stages spread across four tasks of WP2:

- Co-design of scenarios and Transformational Adaptation Policies (TAP).
- Co-development of modelling efforts and exploration of monitoring tools to identify stakeholder priorities and technical solutions.
- Co-evaluation of TAP to assess its effectiveness and feasibility.
- Co-identification of robust TAP strategies that are adaptable and resilient.
- Co-implementation of selected TAP to ensure practical and impactful application.

This structured approach ensures that each step of the project is collaborative, integrating diverse insights and fostering a shared commitment to achieving sustainable adaptation outcomes.

Table 1 Co-creation stages and their contribution to answer the three questions in the Talanoa Dialogue

Where are we now?	Where do we want to go?	How do we get there?
1a) Co-design credible scenarios	1b) Co-design credible targets for TAP	2) Co-design of relevant TAP 4) Co-evaluation of TAP, combining mechanistic modelling outputs with heuristics and inductive reasoning so to identify strengths and vulnerabilities 5) Co-identification of the robust TAP with the highest potential 6) Co-implementation of the selected TAP
3) Co-development of the modelling framework (including the use of stakeholders' own hydrologic models)		

By following the principles of the Talanoa Dialogue, the stakeholder engagement in the first round of workshop was able to initiate a productive and beneficial co-creation process in all the seven living labs, beginning with the collective and shared recognition of challenges and gaps. The other steps of the co-creation process shown in the table above will be tackled in the next workshops.

2.2 In person and online communication

In person communication is preferred, wherever possible, during local and international workshops, training events, and outreach events. Compared to online meetings, in-person interactions offer numerous benefits: they allow for the use of body language, reduce misunderstandings, enhance discipline and concentration, foster social exchanges, strengthen bonds among participants, catalyse networking, and promote a healthy team culture. These benefits are only partially replicable in online environments. Online communication is conceived to be the default during webstivals, webinars and foresight and technical meetings with limited content and participants, to save time and other resources. Online communication can also be adopted where in person interaction in workshops, training and outreach events is

not possible for some or all participants, including due to mobility restrictions. Major stakeholder engagement activities, including workshops and training events, are equipped with virtual interfaces to support both in-person and remote participation, ensuring fluid communication. Events like the first international Webstival are extensively promoted, broadcast live, recorded, and added to the digital library. This strategy keeps all participants in knowledge networks informed of lab progress and activities, enhancing transparency and building trust among members. Effective virtual engagement techniques and tools are employed to maximize the potential of online communication, ensuring continuous and active interaction and knowledge sharing. Using Forum channels and platforms, tools for deep listening and media monitoring are applied to finely tune communication products. This involves actively listening to online conversations, understanding media landscapes, auditing stakeholder engagement and digital lobbying to map engagement dynamics, and refining online engagement strategies to strengthen stakeholder support for TRANSCEND methods and outcomes. These functions cannot or can only be partly achieved through in person communication. The upshot is a comprehensive communication strategy that combines the strengths of online and in person communication, and aptly addresses obstacles to in person communication, towards a successful science-policy engagement and co-creation process.

Beyond the conventional approach that uses online communication as an “information clearing-house” or “info-point”, **online communication** is used also as a tool to actively engage, discuss, build consensus, take decisions and coordinate actions in labs. Online communication is centralised and managed through the **Virtual Forum**, the communication hub of TRANSCEND, which encompasses all channels of communication in the project, including live online access to workshops and events.

2.3 Virtual forum

The Forum is articulated through a [website](#) that is accessible also from cell phones, thus having a performance comparable to that of an app. The Forum features professional design and communication standards that ensure ease-of-access and ease-of-use. The Forum has been designed in a way that is appealing to a diversity of users, guiding the different audiences to products of their interest. The website provides live online access to project workshops, meetings and training, short news, repository of project results (digital library), access to social media, and a blog that stages interviews, opinion articles and policy briefs. The Forum will employ state-of-the-art web services including interface to Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube. The Virtual Forum aptly complements and underpins, and where necessary substitutes, in person communication. Together with the website, **social media** represent an essential part of the Virtual Forum, being a tool that allows to reach a wide audience in a flexible way, diversifying contents and messages, connecting TRANSCEND partners among each other and with the project’s stakeholders. During the first months of the project, ARPAE,

WP6 lead partner, opened a TRANSCEND profile for Instagram, X (ex-Twitter), Facebook and YouTube.

2.4 Social media communication strategy

At the core of a good content strategy lies the ability to distil complex scientific concepts and findings into clear, accessible narratives. This involves breaking down intricate research data and theories into simpler, understandable pieces without oversimplifying the science.

At its essence, a good content strategy for a scientific project is about distilling complex concepts and findings into digestible, engaging narratives. It's about translating the language of science into language that resonates with both fellow researchers and the public, bridging the gap between academia and society at large. Beyond clarity, designing engaging content means crafting stories that capture the imagination and interest of the audience, making scientific discoveries relatable and relevant. This is very much about turning data and observations into compelling stories that stick with the reader. A significant challenge in science communication is the translation of technical jargon into everyday language. Effective content strategy involves rephrasing scientific terminology into simpler words that resonate with both fellow researchers and the public. The goal of a content strategy in science is to bridge the gap between academia and society. This requires content that not only informs but also inspires action and discussion among a broader audience, enhancing public understanding and appreciation of scientific endeavours. In today's digital age, incorporating various media forms (like videos, infographics, podcasts) can greatly enhance the accessibility and appeal of scientific content. Visual and auditory elements can help illustrate complex ideas more effectively than text alone. In the early stages of the project implementation, the plan consisted in collecting information about the seven river basins, location and the possible existence of their websites and social profiles. This research made it possible to further connect with project partners and initial dissemination of the project on online platforms. Within this framework, a custom-made **strategy** was developed as shown in Figure1.



Figure 1 Steps of the content strategy

Content strategy and editorial plan are closely related components of a broader content management approach, although they serve different purposes. In fact, the first one sets the direction and goals for content efforts, while the second outlines the specific actions and timelines needed to execute that strategy effectively.

An **editorial plan** is a strategic document that outlines the content strategy and direction for a publication, website or other media platform. It typically includes details such as the target audience, content objectives, topics to be covered, publishing schedule and distribution channels. The plan serves as a roadmap for content creators, to stay focused on producing relevant and engaging material that aligns with the overall goals of the publication or platform. It also includes guidelines for tone, style, and branding to ensure consistency across all content. It is important to underline that crafting an editorial plan for social media involves outlining a strategic approach to content creation, curation, and distribution across various social media platforms. For all the reasons listed, an adequate and clear designed approach for the TRANSCEND project has been outlined. Below is the editorial plan, featuring several key actions:

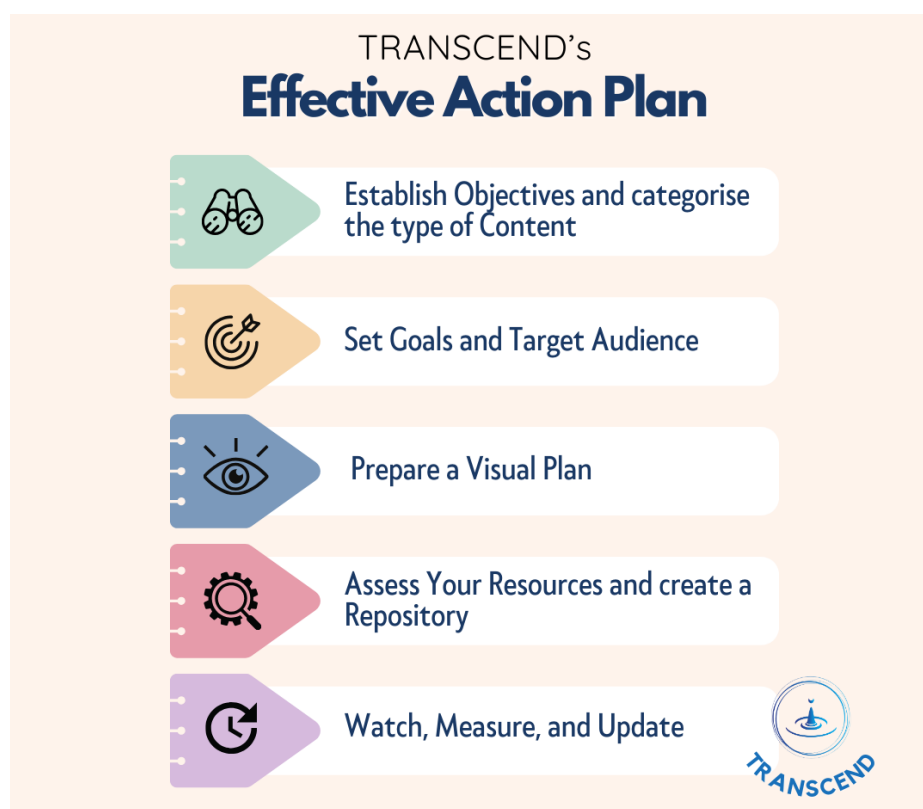


Figure 2 Editorial action plan

Moreover, an evaluation of all the social media platforms was made. It is common knowledge that among them, Instagram and X (ex-Twitter) are the most popular and effective platforms to reach and engage a wider audience. In this way a priority was made. Nevertheless, brush-created materials are disseminated for each platform.

Based on the project's logo, a **colour palette** and **graphic elements** were defined. The association among them is listed below:

- shades of blue (primary colour) representing the element of water -> waves and water drops,
- light brown almost towards cream, representing the dry soil -> cracked ground -> drought,
- yellow: primary colour in contrast with blue, to highlight certain elements.

This was the result of considering TRANSCEND's objectives, its logo and the context in which it falls in.

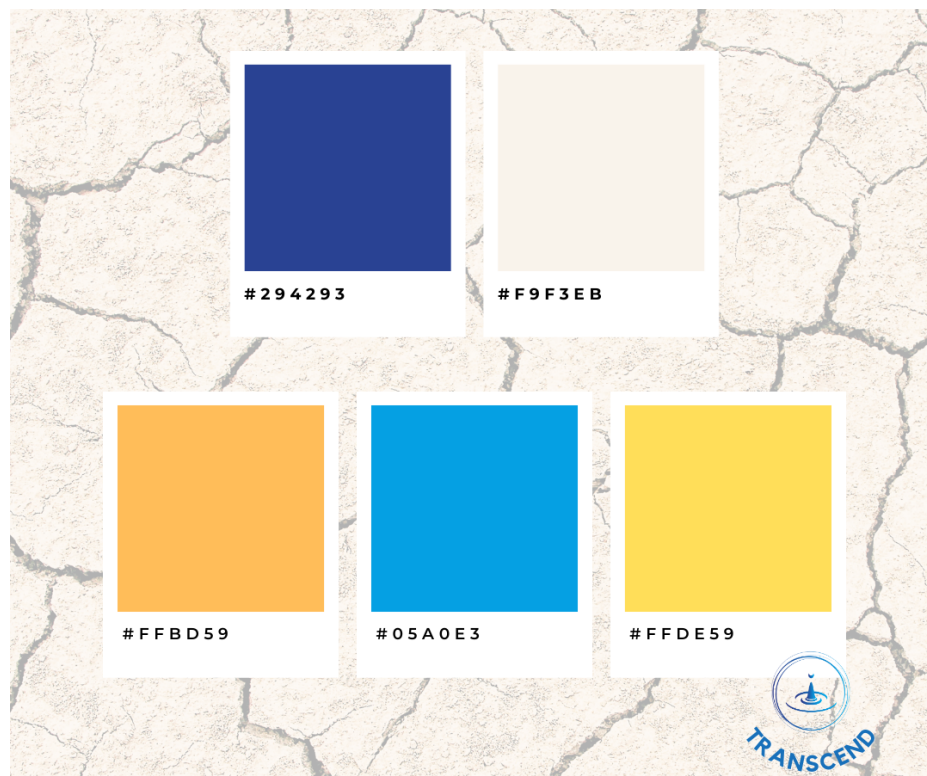


Figure 3 Colour codes of the project

In summary, the use of a well-defined colour palette and of graphics and visually appealing elements is essential for creating visually captivating, cohesive and effective designs to best convey the messages and attract the attention of a mixed audience. Playing with these elements is of paramount importance to achieve communication goals of harmony, consistency, cohesion, accessibility and readability, and finally, evoking desired emotional impact and responses. From the standpoint of actual content, the plan has been to share official project events and materials combined with important international days and possible side events, all aligned and with reference to TRANSCEND's themes and ideals.

3 Communication and Dissemination activities in the first reporting period

3.1 Dissemination package

The dissemination package is a collection of materials and resources designed to communicate the key messages, findings, and progress made to a broad audience. It includes a variety of formats such as leaflets, newsletters, policy briefs, videos, and other media aimed at engaging stakeholders, policymakers, the public, and other interested parties. The purpose of a dissemination package is to ensure that the project's goals and results are widely understood. Our initial dissemination package included several key components: a leaflet explaining the business imperative of considering TAP in stakeholders' operations and decision-making processes, biannual newsletters to keep stakeholders updated on project progress, and policy briefs summarizing the major deliverables for specific audiences.

3.1.1 Leaflets

The project leaflet, created as the first dissemination activity, serves as a key tool to briefly present the project and highlight its main points clearly and effectively. The leaflet includes the project logo, a brief introduction, the motivation and objectives, a visual display of the seven living labs. Written in English, the leaflet was first distributed online in April 2023 and later translated into the languages spoken in the seven river basins. Each lab leader shared it with stakeholders and interested parties. Although the leaflet is a static dissemination tool, describing the goals and purpose of TRANSCEND without plans for revision, it is essential for communication. It acts as the project's "business card," providing an effective and direct overview that helps reach the audience and ensures the project consortium has a common and shared way to present TRANSCEND.



Figure 4 Graphical design of the project leaflet

3.1.2 Newsletters

Newsletters are an important communication tool, enabling project team to reach stakeholders, decision-makers, and other relevant parties. To keep the audience informed without overwhelming them, the newsletters are produced every six months. The first newsletter was written in English, published online, and shared among partners June 2023. Lab leaders then translated it into their respective languages for more effective dissemination. The first newsletter provided a brief project overview, updated the audience on early steps such as the start-up meeting in Salamanca, shared initial results, and announced the upcoming local workshop. The second newsletter, sent around months January 2024, summarized the first round of local workshops, recapped the first online Webstival in December 2023, and highlighted other knowledge-sharing activities from the previous months.



Figure 5 Graphical design of the newsletter

3.1.3 Project video

A [video](#) that introduces the project, and its goals was made and released in July 2023. The video is brief and gives similar information as the leaflet, but in a format that can be used in situations where the leaflet would not work well. The YouTube channel started with the video launch. Later, this content was also posted on all the other online platforms.

3.1.4 Policy briefs



The TRANSCEND Consortium wrote five policy briefs (PBs) to communicate the main points of the project to stakeholders and decision makers in living labs. These briefs cover six deliverables (the first brief combines two deliverables):

- PB1: Stakeholder mapping by project laboratories and Rules of engagement.
- PB2: Methods and models for assessing policy performance under deep uncertainty.
- PB3: Monitoring & enforcement.
- PB4: Socio-economic scenarios by lab.
- PB5: Governance, policy and financial mechanisms for TAP adoption and upscaling.

The five policy briefs were extracted from the executive summaries of the deliverables mentioned above and were collected in a single document, published on the project website. As they represent an essential means of sharing the position of the

consortium on the key aspects of the project, the documents were translated in the languages of each living lab and published in turn online.

3.2 Local stakeholder workshops

Pilot workshops are a key part of the project's regional workflow, enabling stakeholder engagement and innovative co-development. Each regional pilot will hold four annual workshops, each with clear objectives and timing integrated into the implementation plan.

3.2.1 Design and planning

TRANSCEND uses a co-creation process where stakeholders and scientists meet annually in four local workshops for each living lab and two international workshops for all labs (Venice, January 2025 and Valencia in July 2026). Table 2 outlines the goals and tentative timing of these workshops. Workshops 2, 3, 4, and 5 will include scenathons, combining scientific modelling with knowledge sharing and decision-making to increase transparency, trust, and promote TAP use. Second international workshop is set to evaluate outputs and plans, enhancing legacy and upscaling actions, including creating inspiration labs. Policy briefs are released ahead of the workshops to inform stakeholders on project progress and key information. The initial round of local workshops (Table 3) was conducted in each living lab, from July until October

2023, except for the workshop in Jucar basin which was held in Jan 2024. Their main scope was to identify the main management challenges, and modelling and monitoring needs.

Table 2 List of local and international workshops and their objectives.

Workshop	Scope and objectives	Month
1 st local workshop	Scene setting and momentum building; identifying research gaps, challenges, and uncertainties; exploratory co-design	Aug 2023
2 nd local workshop	Sensemaking and co-evaluation; revising TAP, scenarios, and the modelling suite (iterative stock-taking process)	Jul 2024
3 rd local workshop	Sensemaking and exploratory co-identification; revising TAP and scenarios, introducing new iterations	Jun 2025
4 th local workshop	Presenting detailed modelling results in sensemaking and co-identification; planning for co-implementation of selected TAP	Dec 2025
1 st international workshop	Sensemaking, cross-fertilization; collective identification of gaps and challenges, and TAP with high potential	Jan 2025
2 nd international workshop	Collective assessment of outputs and co-implementation plans; barriers and reform options for upscaling and legacy	Jul 2026

Table 3 First round of local workshops

Pilot basin	Venue	Date	# attendees
Nitra River Basin	Banská Bystrica, Slovakia	July 20, 2023	26
Reno River Basin	Bologna, Italy	July 24, 2023	26
Tympaki River Basin	Zaros, Crete	September 26, 2023	40
Orontes River Basin	Hermel, Lebanon	September 26, 2023	42
Caplina-Mauri-Desaguadero River Basin	La Paz, Bolivia	October 5, 2023	25
Mahanadi River Basin	Odisha and Chhattisgarh, India	October 18-19, 2023	17
Jucar River Basin	Albacete and Valencia, Spain	January 11-12, 2024	14

3.2.2 Caplina-Mauri-Desaguadero River Basin

Objective	To identify problems, modelling and monitoring gaps
Living Lab name	Titicaca Lake, Desaguadero River, Poopo Lake (TDP)
Place	Bolivia, Peru [La Paz, Bolivia]
# of participants	25
Date(s)	October 5, 2023

Summary of the activities

Welcome from authorities of Peru and Bolivia. The organisation of the workshop was coordinated by the Binational Authority of Titicaca Lake, Desaguadero, Mauri and Poopo Basins (ALT), who notified both ministries of foreign affairs about the workshop, consequently both entities appointed correspondent authorities. Since there are some diplomatic agendas behind the analysis of the transboundary water resources of the study area, it was of great interest to

understand the scope of the project and the possibilities to move forward some technical evaluations local stakeholders are interested in.

Introduction of Stakeholders. Each participant was asked to introduce him/herself and the entity/institution represented. This was very important for the stakeholder mapping. In total 13 stakeholders gathered in the initial workshop, 54% from Bolivia and 46% from Peru, which is an important and even representation of each country of the transboundary study area.

Problem Identification. A work methodology for the identification of problems in the transboundary area was developed, based on group discussions (four groups in the workshop) and geographical maps to locate places, scale, interaction and type of problem. The main resource for the discussion was a guided identification of problems and a GIS map of the transboundary area; this allowed to link issues to their geographical locations.

Common identification of problems

Problem 1. The sub basins surrounding Lake Titicaca (Ilave, Ramis, Ayaviri, Suches) is characterised by challenges on the water quality problem related to two specific sources, the first in relation of mining activities at the Noreast subbasin, the second related to the critical water quality of Titicaca Lake due to the water sewages of cities like Puno, Copacabana, Desaguadero and especially El Alto. There is a lack of both Peruvian and Bolivian policies to treat these water returns because of not regulated growth of the cities and the rapid transition from rural to urban land.

Problem 2. The sub basin around the upper site at the west southern part of TDP system (Mauri, Lauca) is characterised by challenges because of climate changes and the increase of the severity of events such as droughts and floods and their extremely dangerous effects.

Problem 3. The sub basins located in the region of the Bolivian flatlands surrounding the Desaguadero River and Lake Poopo face severe environmental pressure; the absence of regulation and exact knowledge of the scale of water use are pending tasks in monitoring issues and data necessary to know the proportionality of the impacts and their sources.

Modelling gaps

Modelling gap 1. Integral Modelling gap. The first challenge in terms of modelling is the lack of comprehensive models of the entire system with data from both countries, especially for water balance.

Modelling gap 2. Lack of hydro economic models, in a scenario where actors would strongly need economic tools that allow them to efficiently regulate users and support them in case of climate emergency such as drought.

Modelling gap 3. Lack of water quality models, which has relevance in the appropriate sizing of treatment for wastewater.

Monitoring systems and data gaps

Monitoring Priority 1. Lack of data of water use, particularly the total value of the volume of water measured for agricultural, mining or domestic use.

Monitoring Priority 2. Lack of water quality data, essential to implement measures against the already present and visible environmental deterioration.

Monitoring Priority 3. Monitoring gap on the economic implications of water use, as well as policies for its regulation on the different economic sectors that use this resource.

3.2.3 Reno River Basin

Objective	To identify problems, modelling and monitoring gaps
Living Lab name	Reno River Basin
Place	Emilia-Romagna Region Headquarters Tower, Bologna, Italy
# of participants	26
Date	July 24, 2023

Summary of the activities

Welcome and introduction. The day opened with greetings from Giuseppe Bortone, general director of *ARPAE Emilia-Romagna*, giving information about the project overview and its importance and correlation with the Reno River Basin. It was pointed out how *TRANSCEND* will have a major impact on our case study, reflecting on the year 2023 and extreme events that affected the Emilia-Romagna region, especially flood phenomena, and water shortage. The speech concluded with this premise, stressing that uncertainty poses a major challenge for those who must design adaptive models, planning, and programs and it is something that needs to be addressed through projects like this one aimed at supporting the path to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Then, Dionisio Pérez-Blanco, associate professor at the University of Salamanca (*USAL*) and project leader, introduced the *TRANSCEND* project. Next, Selena Ziccardi from the Po River District Basin Authority (*AdB Po*), remotely connected, presented the Climax Po strategic integrated LIFE project, which focuses on similar issues as *TRANSCEND* and with which it will be important to network. Afterwards, specific interventions related to the conduct of the workshop led by the event organisers and project partners: Jaroslav Mysiak from the Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (*CMCC*) explained the objectives and operation of the workshop, and finally, Cinzia Alessandrini (*Arpae, Climate Observatory*) presented the case study of the project, the Reno River Basin, and introduced the main topics of the workshop discussions, particularly modelling and monitoring. With these presentations, the aim of the workshop was explained, emphasizing the participation of all stakeholders through the creation of a welcoming and collaborative atmosphere.

Round table. In the second part of the meeting, organisers and participants animated a panel discussion with the aim of sharing their own perspectives and perceptions and focusing on gaps and challenges to be addressed within the project. From the fruitful participation of all invitees, in the room and remotely, it emerged that a great part is only end-users of model

outputs climatological, meteorological, hydrological, agronomic, and only a few employs socio-economic without having their own. They underlined that these are essential tools for supporting their decision-making processes. Despite the good performance of the models currently in use, some shortcomings have been identified that partially or entirely affect the stakeholder decisions.

Wrap-up and next steps. The session was held with a discussion on the main criticalities, problem and scenario formulation, and identification of potential TAPs. A series of major points emerged ranging from issues related to modelling, socio-economic data, transparency and accessibility to data, monitoring tools and so on. The round table concluded with a questionnaire, whereby participants were asked to answer some questions to validate the information presented in Deliverable D5.1. However, this failed due to display errors and was sent to recipients later but obtained weak participation.

Common identification of problems

Problem 1. Lack of time, manpower and technical abilities for the stakeholders that use the modelling results but are not able to directly simulate the hydrological/hydraulic aspects of the basin.

Problem 2. Lack of sufficiently precise data to obtain an accurate water balance in the river basin.

Problem 3. Need for closer collaboration between the scientific community, institutions, and stakeholders in order to increase the accuracy of the hydrological/hydraulic models

Modelling gaps

Model gap 1. Socio-economic model. Socio-economic data is essential for the decision-making processes, by public institutions, in the following areas: legislation, planning, programming and licensing.

Model gap 2. Model calibration. The Reno River basin is a highly anthropized territory with a complex artificial and strongly interconnected system. A better use of the existing data would enable a better calibration of the models and therefore a more accurate use, based on more realistic and detailed scenarios.

Model gap 3. Quality and accessibility of data, concerning 3 topics: need for higher transparency during technical tables in order to ensure a more operational decision-making process and the creation of protocols; necessity for sharing input data, possibly hindered by conflicts of interests; need for a major effort in model validation through higher-quality observed data.

Monitoring Systems and Data

Monitoring Priority 1. Monitoring tools for scarcity. Historically, in the Reno River basin, monitoring has always been calibrated on abundance, for Civil Protection purposes; therefore, for correct monitoring and for planning purposes, it would be necessary to have tools calibrated on scarcity.

Monitoring Priority 2. Improvement of data concerning water use, mainly related to withdrawals and releases (including return flows) to improve the description of the water balance.

Monitoring Priority 3. Quality monitoring. Developing a more precise quality monitoring system would enable a better comprehension of the basin conditions and better management of its waters, also considering that along the river many factors, such as changes in discharge, evapotranspiration, releases, withdrawals etc. affect the water quality.

3.2.4 Nitra River Basin

Objective	To identify problems, modelling and monitoring gaps
Living Lab name	Nitra river basin
Place	SAŽP headquarters, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia
# of participants	26
Date(s)	July 20, 2023

Summary of the activities

Welcome and introduction of TRANSCEND (SAŽP)

The first part of the workshop was dedicated to the introduction of the project by SAŽP, followed by a video recorded by Dionisio Perez-Blanco (USAL), with insights, details and aims of the project, and a speech by [Jaroslav Mysiak](#) (CMCC) to engage and inspire the stakeholders.

Then, space was left to all participants and institutions to present themselves without a specific structure.

Group discussions

In this block, the roadmap for the project and for adopting TAPs in the living lab was presented. Participants were then split into 3 groups; 1st group discussing the monitoring of the water resources moderated by Radoslav Povazan, 2nd group to discuss use of models in water management moderated by Jaroslav Mysiak, and the 3rd group discussing the monitoring for 30 mins and modelling for 15 mins moderated by Róbert Blasko. Specific questions were presented to stimulate the discussion.

Field trip

The second day of the workshop was dedicated to a field trip in the Upper Nitra area.

Common identification of problems

Problem 1. Conflicting policies and bureaucracy of the impact assessment processes, for example in the case of the wetlands and the lack of agreement between the mining law and the nature protection law.

Problem 2. The financial support foreseen to support the imminent process of closing of the mines and phasing out the coal power plant is set in a way that prevents them from applying for the funds. There is high uncertainty on the economical consequences of the closure of the mines.

Problem 3. Lack of prioritisation of water users, which makes it more difficult for the authorities to decide which water users will be granted permits in times of scarcity. Modelling gaps

Modelling gaps

Model gap 1. Although some models are used by stakeholders, mainly for floods, models to represent specific critical aspects are missing, together with capacities and competent staff to systematically use them.

Model gap 2. The barrier for using models and modelling outputs are mainly: lack of finances, capacities, competent experts, and also time.

Model gap 3. For the mining company, it would be useful to have some kind of model to predict the progress of mines' flooding. The drainage system is, by large part, unregulated, which represents a large uncertainty regarding how fast the mines will be flooded. This may have consequences for the water outflow from the mines feeding some of the wetlands.

Monitoring Systems and Data

Monitoring Priority 1. Hydrological monitoring network is, in general, insufficient and needs to be denser and more balanced in all the basin, with an implementation in the areas with the highest mining activity. Financial constraints are foreseen for groundwater monitoring after the closure of mines.

Monitoring Priority 2. It is widely agreed that the water withdrawal monitoring system is not objective in general and there are cases when the water users set their devices incorrectly. Except for the Horná Nitra region, which has a good monitoring system, the withdrawals are mainly reported only once a year. Another issue is that the water users pay for the permitted amount rather than the actual amount withdrawn, often applying for more water than the amounts they need and use. Illegal/unaccounted withdrawals are an issue as well and the law enforcement is insufficient. In summary, there is a need for a unified methodology for granting permits and for water withdrawal reporting.

Monitoring Priority 3. Data should be available and accessible for all the stakeholders.

3.2.5 Mahanadi River Basin

Objective	To identify problems, modelling and monitoring gaps
Living Lab name	Mahanadi River Basin
Place	Odisha and Chhattisgarh, INDIA
# of participants	17
Date (s)	October 18-19, 2023

Summary of the activities

Institute for Resource Analysis and Policy, member of the 'TRANSCEND' consortium, with the support of UKRI funding, conducted a one and half day Stakeholder Consultation on Mahanadi River Basin, i.e., on 18th and 19th October, 2023, at Hotel Mayura, in Raipur,

Chhattisgarh, India. The objectives of the workshop were 1) To share with the stakeholders the 'state of the art' knowledge and information of the basin's water resources, degree of water development and the institutions involved in water resources development, water supply and water resources management; 2) Share information on the types of water uses and water management problems existing in the basin; 3) Feedback from the stakeholders; and 4) To sought the valuable opinions on what could be done to improve basin-wide water management, particularly strategies for resolving the inter-state and inter-sectoral water allocation issues. The stakeholders included geologists from the state offices of the Central Groundwater Board, Engineers from the Central Water Commission (CWC), Director of Department of Fisheries, CEO of Chhattisgarh state watershed management body, consortium of NGOs working on the projects related to Mahanadi River Basin. A total of 17 participants from Chhattisgarh and Odisha state attended the Consultation Workshop.

Common identification of problems

Problem 1. Water availability and use is not conceived at the basin level as a whole.

Problem 2. There is no common consensus between the two states (Chhattisgarh and Odisha) with respect to data sharing and understanding about the Mahanadi River Basin Management.

Problem 3. Odisha stakeholders are under the opinion of building more structures in the downstream as well.

Modelling gaps

Model gap 1. Extending the WEAP model for the entire basin area, covering Odisha.

Model gap 2. Integrating the model with a sound groundwater flow model so as to understand the impacts of intensive or modified groundwater use on the lean season flows.

Model gap 3. Carrying out economic evaluation of the water management alternatives identified to deal with floods and droughts so as to choose the cost effective water management alternatives.

Monitoring Systems and Data

Monitoring Priority 1. Number of monitoring points at strategic locations may be automated. In case of ground water availability, it is always overestimated. However, in the case of surface water this problem did not arise.

Monitoring Priority 2. It is understood from the discussions with stakeholders that fixing limits to the usage of water would bring positive impacts, especially in case of surface water.

Monitoring Priority 3. Water regulating authority should be formed within the existing departments.

3.2.6 Jucar River Basin

Objective	To identify problems, modelling and monitoring gaps
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Living Lab name	Jucar River Basin
Place	Albacete (Castilla – La Mancha) and Valencia (Comunitat Valenciana)
# of participants	14
Date(s)	11/01/2024 - 12/01/2024

Summary of the activities

We worked with the GoNEXUS project, which also studies the Jucar River basin and in which UPV is a partner, to co-identify challenges in the area. We found two issues with their associated stakeholders, trade-offs, policies and possible synergies/solutions.

Common identification of problems

Problem 1. Climate change may reduce water availability in the area, affecting all the economic activities there. The current adaptation options may have harmful side effects, so alternative synergies/solutions were found.

- Change to less water-demanding crops (by farmers choice or by law instruments – incentives, CAP),
- Combination of solar panels and irrigation modernisation (in areas in which it could be implemented), wastewater reuse or desalination,
- Building renewable energy sources not depending on water to reduce the dependency on water-generated energy,
- Change the operation of the dams to better reconcile environmental needs with economic uses,
- Use economic instruments (water markets, water prices, crop insurance) to change the current water use towards a more sustainable one,
- Implement climate-sensitive reservoir operation (depending on seasonal forecasts, climate change scenarios, etc.).

The existing models for the Jucar River can calculate water allocations, energy generation, farmers' incomes and environmental habitat, but they can only optimise the economic uses (not the environmental condition). To evaluate the trade-offs between the WEFÉ nexus and optimise their management, a multi-objective algorithm is needed, which is planned in the project and has previous experience from UPV. For this matter, 12 stakeholders have participated.

Problem 1. The second problem is about water quality. More than half of the surface water bodies and almost half of the groundwater bodies will not meet the good status by 2027 that the Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires. This means that to improve the Jucar river's environmental status according to the WFD, the river's operation and the water taken by uses that consume water from both surface and groundwater need to change (and/or use other water sources). The current adaptation strategies don't work well, and different solutions were suggested:

- Change to less water-demanding crops (by farmers choice or by law instruments – incentives, CAP),
- Combination of solar panels and irrigation modernisation (in areas in which it could be implemented), wastewater reuse or desalination,
- Building renewable energy sources not depending on water to reduce the dependency on water-generated energy,
- Change the operation of the dams to better reconcile environmental needs with economic uses,
- Use economic instruments (water markets, water prices, crop insurance) to change the current water use towards a more sustainable one,
- Implement climate-sensitive reservoir operation (depending on seasonal forecasts, climate change scenarios, etc.)

For this issue, the same modelling considerations previously mentioned can be considered valid. 11 Stakeholders were identified.

3.2.7 Orontes River Basin

Objective	To identify problems, modelling and monitoring gaps
Living Lab name	Orontes Living Lab
Place	Hermel, Lazord Hotel and Restaurant
# of participants	42
Date(s)	September 26, 2023

Summary of the activities

Welcoming and introduction. In the opening and introduction, stakeholders were encouraged to get to know Dr. Hadi Jaafar and his team, and their roles and contributions. Then, Dr. Jaafar started the workshop with a presentation that explained the TRANSCEND project's goals, the workshop's goals and outcomes, and the climate change effects on the Orontes River Basin and the need for adaptation. After talking about the challenges, participants shared their practical experience on the difficulties they face in their work.

Discussion and Q&A: Main problems and challenges faced in the basin. Stakeholders were encouraged to raise questions and initiate discussions. Afterward, focus groups conferred together to produce a list of "problems and challenges faced in the basin". Each focus group shared their list among the other groups for open discussion. This approach encouraged active participation, allowing for collective collaboration among stakeholders to identify challenges. The challenges addressed in this section were not only those encountered by stakeholders, but also included institutional and structural obstacles arising in attempts to shift the status quo. Hence, they reflect potential challenges that can be faced when adopting transformational adaptation policies in the future.

Survey. Stakeholders filled out a survey assessing the potential challenges of adopting transformational adaptation policies (TAPs). The survey served as a structured method to gather knowledge and observations from stakeholders.

Discussion: Monitoring and proposing solutions. Focus groups were formed to evaluate monitoring of water use in the basin, proposing urgent solutions. Stakeholders participated in discussions on monitoring and collaboratively suggested solutions.

Closure of workshop. The workshop concluded with a summary of the proposed solutions, where key points were recapped. Lunch was served and informal discussions and networking continued.

Common identification of problems

Problem 1. The primary issue facing the Orontes River is water pollution, mainly in the form of chicken intestines used as fish feed and waste from restaurants and cafes along the riverbanks; a landfill located near the main spring in Baalbek area contaminates the groundwater, compounding the pollution issue. The impacts of pollution do not only affect the economic sector, but also tourism, household use, and downstream countries like Syria and Turkey.

Problem 2. Access to water is a significant problem with inadequate physical access being a major concern. The existing water network, managed by the municipality, supplies drinking water to households. However, not all residences have access to water, and those that do may face insufficient supply due to the growing population. Additionally, agricultural projects rely on pumping groundwater through wells due to the absence of infrastructure for surface irrigation usage. The long-pending Assi Dam Project, delayed by various factors, could reduce these issues through providing water for irrigation and household use.

Problem 3. Stakeholders voiced their dissatisfaction with the abundance of development and research projects in the region, noting the limited positive impact on both their livelihoods and the basin. Another issue with previous research and development projects is the scattering of efforts and lack of collaboration among projects which is inefficient and wastes a lot of resources, in order to address structural needs to avoid repetition of efforts. Additionally, stakeholders shed light on corruption in the non-governmental sector, due to misuse of funds in inefficient projects.

Modelling gaps

Most stakeholders are not modellers or model users; hence modelling needs in this workshop were not identified.

Monitoring Systems and Data

Monitoring Priority 1. Creation of a river authority for Asi River like the one that exists for Litani River. This authority will oversee water management and planning, and land use in the river basin. It will enhance coordination by streamlining the planning process in the river basin and

replacing the authority of the different and conflicting ministries. It will also serve as a hub for all research and development projects to improve coordination and efficiency among the various initiatives.

Monitoring Priority 2. To ensure effective monitoring and access, law enforcement must be involved. A critical decision needs to be taken to enact the laws in line with the establishment of infrastructure to guarantee impartial and equitable distribution of water resources for households and farmers. This involves distinguishing farmers' water quotas for irrigation purposes from those assigned for household use, safeguarding the river pathway and its plants and animals, as well as the welfare of those who rely on it.

Monitoring Priority 3. Management of wells and well digging. The Lebanese Syrian deal on sharing the water of the Orontes River limits the drilling of new wells in the Lebanese part of the basin. However, this legal limit is not followed, and new unauthorised wells are still being drilled. This is due to lack of law enforcement, inadequate water network infrastructure for household users, and the lack of irrigation infrastructure for farming. Water well management is essential to avoid overuse, especially with the future effects of climate change on water availability in the region.

3.2.8 Tympaki River Basin

Objective	To identify problems, modelling and monitoring gaps
Living Lab name	Tympaki river basin
Place	Hotel IDI, Zaros Crete
# of participants	40
Date(s)	September 26, 2023

Summary of the activities

The day began with welcome and opening remarks from Xylouris Nikolaos, Vice Regional Governor of Environment / Region of Crete; Choudetsanaki – Giakoumaki Eirini, Vice Regional Governor of Primary Sector / Region of Crete; and Alexakis Georgios, Commissioned Regional Consultant on European and International Affairs / Region of Crete. Then, Dr. Marinos Kritsotakis and Dr. Maggie Kosida presented the TRANSCEND project and Tympaki living lab. The rest of the day focused on group discussions and surveys that yielded relevant results. The living LAB methodology followed the Scenathons guidelines, which were developed by TRANSCEND, to implement the robust Transformational Adaptation Policies (TAP). In line with the knowledge network methodology promoted by TRANSCEND, the lab leaders have selected four groups of key stakeholders in the Tympaki basin with high influence and interest.

In the meeting, forty-four key stakeholders of the Tympaki river basin took part, and were divided into four groups ("tables of discussion") in relation of the water usage:

- a) Farmers (agricultural use)

- b) Municipality executives (domestic and touristic supply)
- c) Environmentalist (ecological flow, protection of water etc.)
- d) Decision-Making executives

Scientists from two agencies helped all groups. Each group had a moderator who led the discussion and filled out the Validation Form. Some politicians from the Regional Government of Crete also joined the workshop, including the Vice Regional Governors of Environment and Primary Sector and the Regional Consultant on European and International Affairs. After each group's discussion, the moderator shared the results in a plenary session and a lively debate among stakeholders followed. The main results of the meeting concerned the main obstacles to Transformational Adaptation Policies (TAP) in Tympaki river basin, according to the local key experts.

- For regulatory barriers, all key stakeholders strongly agree that the strict rules, the reused water by others downstream, the water rights tied to land, and the water rights that expire if not used are high or medium barriers. Only farmers think the water rights expiration is not relevant.
- For path dependence/lock-in, all key stakeholders strongly agree that the difficulty to change policies, the informal institutions, the transaction costs, the limited enforceability are high or medium barriers to use TAP, except for the difficulty and informal institutions, which TOEVs think are not relevant.
- For politics and power and information and data gaps, there is a varied assessment among the key stakeholders.

3.3 Webstivals

Webstivals are complementary to local and international workshops and serve as means enhancing training opportunities, outreach, and cross-pilot discussions, and knowledge sharing. The Grant Agreement (GA) outlines their purpose but leaves their timing to be determined during the implementation phase. The Plan for the Dissemination and Exploitation including Communication activities (PDEC, D6.1) provides a tentative schedule for the webstivals, allowing flexibility to meet project needs.

Webstivals are online or virtual gatherings that replicate the features of conventional festivals. They have become increasingly popular due to their flexibility, accessibility, and ability to adapt to various themes and formats. They differ from other event formats in several ways. Instead of physical stages, webstivals feature virtual stages where performers and speakers livestream their content, hosting keynote talks, high-level panels, workshops, breakout groups, and other performances. Participants have opportunities to interact with presenters through chats, Q&A sessions, and virtual meet-and-greets. Webstivals can cover a wide range of themes and genres, appealing to diverse interests and age groups. The virtual format allows anyone with an internet connection to join, eliminating geographical and travel limitations.

Many webstivals offer on-demand access to their content, enabling participants to watch or revisit sessions at their convenience. Additionally, participants can engage with each other through social media, discussion forums, and interactive features on the webstival platform. This format reaches a global audience, fostering cultural exchange and collaboration among participants from different countries and backgrounds. CMCC has extensive experience in organizing webstivals focused on climate and financial innovations. The Climate Innovation Festivals, held under the auspices of the CLIMATEUROPE2³ project, serve as platforms for knowledge exchange and the showcasing of innovative solutions and strategies for addressing climate challenges. Financial webstivals, under the auspices of the NATURANCE⁴ project, focus on innovative financial and investment instruments in the context of sustainability and environmental conservation. These events provide a digital space for discussions on sustainable finance, green investments, and emerging financial tools designed to support environmental initiatives.

TRANSCEND webstivals connect policy and stakeholder audiences across the regional pilots, complementing other outreach and training event formats. The **First International Webstival** took place the **13-15 December** and was the conclusive event of the first year of TRANSCEND. To overcome the challenge of gathering participants across three continents and six different time zones, the webstival was extended over three days. The first and last day brought together all partners in the same sessions, while the second day was dedicated to parallel sessions, tailored to different time zones enabling deeper participation from different pilot regions. This was the first attempt at creating a platform where stakeholders, partners and policymakers would come together, participate, listen and learn from one another.

The webstival stimulated discussion focused on several key areas, including the main gaps in the modelling process and monitoring, the need to consider the latest CMIP6 simulations, stakeholder access to observed and model data, participation of stakeholders in the co-design of models, and the main challenges of using model and monitoring information in decision-making. Key issues raised during the discussion included the need for socio-economic impact assessments, the importance of serious games as tools for stakeholders and policymakers in the decision-making process, and the need to improve modelling precision and forecast data accuracy.

The first day of the Webstival opened with a short presentation of the TRANSCEND project and an introduction by C. Dionisio Pérez-Blanco (USAL). This was followed by a keynote talk by Giuliano di Baldassarre (UU), focusing on "Water and Society," and a panel discussion where lab leaders and invited speakers presented the Living Labs.

³ Supporting and standardizing climate services in Europe and beyond, Horizon Europe 2022-2027, Grant agreement 101056933, <https://climateurope2.eu/>

⁴ Nature for insurance, and insurance for nature, Horizon Europe 2022-2026, Grant agreement 101060464 <https://www.naturanceproject.eu/>



Figure 6
Agenda of the
Transcend
2023 webstival

Giuliano di Baldassarre's keynote addressed global trends in water management and described the dynamics of the Day Zero water crisis in Cape Town, South Africa. He illustrated how the complexity and uncertainty of human-water interactions challenge traditional approaches to water-related issues. The talk emphasized that while some measures might address a specific issue in the short term or for certain social groups, they often create new problems or exacerbate the same issue in the long term, affecting other social groups. Giuliano called for new models of human-water systems that explicitly account for behavioural factors (e.g., risk perception) and political processes (e.g., power relationships) to better understand the effects

of alternative measures, including unintended consequences and side effects. These models can be used to explore different trade-offs across multiple groups, interests, and goals, rather than seeking a single "solution." The panel discussion provided a comprehensive overview of the seven Living Labs of TRANSCEND. Lab leaders and invited experts gave brief presentations on their respective river basins, focusing on the main characteristics of each context and sharing their perspectives on key issues and criticalities.

The second day of the Webstival focused on the TRANSCEND modelling blueprint. The first session engaged participants from Italy, Greece, Slovakia, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and India (discussions held in English), while the second session involved participants from Spain, Peru, Chile, and Bolivia (discussions held in Spanish). Detailed presentations on this topic were delivered by Manuel Pulido Velásquez (UPV) and David Purkey (SEI) in the first part, and by Manuel Pulido Velásquez and Héctor Macian (UPV) in the second part of the day's agenda. Next, UPV and SEI showcased potential applications of the modelling blueprint, and participants engaged in a training session using serious games.

Francesco Sapino (USAL) presented the potential applications of modelling through serious game implementation, using the Cega Catchment in Spain as a case study. This case study, part of the TALANOA-WATER project, involved implementing serious games to engage scientists and stakeholders. The Cega Catchment, one of the few non-regulated catchments in the Douro River Basin, experiences extreme and uncontrolled events such as droughts and floods. Expanding groundwater-fed horticulture and insufficient aquifer recharge further complicate the situation, necessitating a common solution among stakeholders. A multimodal ensemble, incorporating climatic, DSS, and socioeconomic models (PMAUP), was developed to engage stakeholders effectively. The serious game aimed at educational training, with participants choosing different strategies to address the case study's challenges, including infrastructure, management, and financial measures. After each round, outcomes were evaluated, showing decreases in profit, environment, and labour. This process was repeated over three rounds to assess the serious game's effectiveness.

On the third day of the Webstival, participants gathered to discuss their impressions, draw conclusions, and outline future plans. The webstival was recorded and the recorded keynotes are available on the project website, in the event materials section⁵.

Participation. The webstival attracted 80 registrants and 62 unique participants, with 31 coming from outside the TRANSCEND partner organizations. On the first day, the plenary session had 47 unique participants. The second day was divided into two blocks, with the first block of countries attracting 35 unique participants and the second block drawing 23 unique participants. The third day's plenary session had 22 unique participants.

⁵ <https://transcend.usal.es/transcend-international-webstival-materials/>

Timing and lessons learned. A key takeaway from organizing the First International Webstival is the challenge of managing several time zones across the project consortium. The only viable time slot for all participants was 14-15 GMT+1, which significantly influenced the agenda, logistics, content, activities, and overall participation. Despite these difficulties, identifying this common time slot and structuring the second day to accommodate two distinct time zone sessions proved crucial. This approach was essential for the successful organization and implementation of the Webstival and effectively addressed the time zone challenge.

The session dedicated to serious games was well-received, although limited time was allocated to this popular segment. The choice of December for the event posed additional challenges due to end-of-year commitments, suggesting that timing should be reconsidered for future events. Language barriers also impacted participation, as using English as the common language may have deterred some stakeholders. However, the informal environment fostered by the moderators, along with the event's dynamic structure, facilitated active participation and fruitful dialogue. Further details on the First Webstival can be found in the annex at the end of this document.

3.4 Co-organised science policy events

During the first 18 months, TRANSCEND co-organised two major science policy event, jointly with other projects.

3.4.1 Mediterranean Water Forum, February 2024

The project team organised a side event to the 5th Mediterranean Water Forum, Tunis, February 5-7, 2024, dedicated to "Transformative Water Resources Management: Smart and Resilient Solutions for Climate Challenges Across the Mediterranean". The scope and purpose of the side event was to raise awareness on transformational strategies to build resilience against climate-related challenges. These strategies include early warning systems, digitalization, infrastructure improvements, and enhancing the capacities of water professionals. The event acknowledged the significant vulnerability of the Mediterranean region to climate variability and change, highlighting the inadequacy of traditional water management practices to meet rising freshwater demands and address emerging challenges. Therefore, the need for adaptive, transformative approaches capable of withstanding the uncertainty and variability linked to climate change was emphasized.

During the event, several distinguished speakers presented their insights on transformative water resource management. Marta Debolini from the Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change and Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC) in Italy provided the welcome and introduction. Marco Orlando from the PRIMA Foundation in Spain spoke about the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean region.

Fatima Driouech from the University Mohammed VI Polytechnic in Morocco and Elena López Gunn, a member of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change, delivered the

keynote talk. Dionisio Perez Blanco from the University of Salamanca in Spain, Simone Mereu from the Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change in Italy, and Vangelis Constantianos from the Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean (GWP-Med) discussed actionable and smart solutions for resilient adaptation to climate change. The policy panel discussion featured Doha Zamel, a water expert from the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), Manuel Sapiano, CEO of the Energy & Water Agency of Malta (EWA), Issam Nouri, Associate Professor of Water Resources Management at the National Agronomic Institute of Tunisia (INAT), Ramiro Martinez Costa, Coordinator of the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organisation (MENBO), and Emad Adly, General Coordinator of the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED). (See Annex 7.1 for more detail on agenda).

3.4.2 Union for Mediterranean consultation workshop on digital transformation, June 2024

The "Digital Transformation for Advancing Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus in the Mediterranean Source to Sea Continuum" Launching Workshop took place on June 4-5, 2024, in Lisbon, Portugal, at the Holiday Inn Lisbon. This workshop initiated a regional consultation process aimed at promoting digital transformation for advancing the WEF E Nexus under evolving climate change impacts. Digital transformation in the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus integrates advanced digital policies and technologies across interconnected systems of water management, energy, food supply chains, and environmental conservation. A draft 'WEFE Nexus Strategy' is being developed to improve policy and management integration across these sectors, supported by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the United Nations Environment Programme - Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP-MAP), and the European Union (EU). In collaboration with other projects like ACQUAOUNT and TALANOA-WATER⁶, TRANSCEND co-organized a consultation workshop on innovative demonstration solutions, held alongside the UfM Ministerial Meeting (see Annex 7.2 for more detail on agenda).

The workshop aimed to promote digital transformation for the WEF E Nexus in the Mediterranean, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), and providing recommendations for policy and practical advancements. It aimed to influence regional political forums, including the UfM Ministerial on Water, and align the research agenda of the PRIMA and H2020 projects with actionable science for climate resilience. Marta Debolini from the Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (CMCC) and Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC) opened the workshop alongside

⁶ ACQUAOUNT and TALANOA-WATER project are funded by PRIMA (Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area, <https://prima-med.org/>), ACQUAOUNT (<https://www.acquaount.eu/>) focusses on water resource allocation, and sustainable irrigation using innovative tools like Internet of Things (IoT) monitoring, interoperability, and smart visualization. It includes pilot demonstrations in Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia. TALANOA- WATER (<https://talanoawater.com/>) project addresses the global water crisis through robust, transformative adaptation strategies for climate-induced water scarcity. It emphasises economic efficiency and environmental sustainability through Talanoa Water Dialogue and socio-hydrology science.

Marco Orlando, Project Officer for Water Management at PRIMA Foundation, and Almotaz Abadi, Deputy Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Hassan Aboelnga (UfM Expert) shared key findings on digital transformation in the Mediterranean water system. Dionisio Perez Blanco (University of Salamanca) and Simone Mereu (CMCC) presented cutting-edge results from the PRIMA ACQUAOUNT, TRANSCEND, and TALANOA-WATER projects. Francesco Sapino and Javier Sierra (University of Salamanca) conducted a serious game session, engaging participants in real-world water management challenges. Reflections and field experiences were provided by Heba Al-Hariry (FAO), Khaled Abu Zeid (CEDARE), and Gianluca Cocco and Giuliano Patteri (Sardinia Region and Regional Authority for Water Management). Vangelis Constantianos (GWP-Med) facilitated a discussion on the SWOT analysis for digital transformation in the WEF Nexus. Policy panel discussions featured contributions from water management authorities across the Mediterranean, including Arduen Karagjozi (Albania), Enas Ahmed (Egypt), Mohamed Al Dwari (Jordan), Mona Fakh (Lebanon), Manuel Sapiano (Malta), Siham Laraichi (Morocco), and Heba Al-Hariry (FAO).

The workshop underscored the necessity of integrating advanced digital tools and strategies in water management, highlighting examples from ongoing projects. The discussions and activities aimed to foster a collaborative approach towards digital transformation, ensuring resilient adaptation to climate change across the Mediterranean region.

3.5 Other events

The TRANSCEND team uses outreach activities as a vital strategy to disseminate ongoing methodologies and preliminary results. This includes participating in seminars and panel discussions at prominent events attended by industry professionals, associations, regulators, and the public, as well as organizations like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, the European Environment Agency (EEA), the Joint Research Centre (JRC), and the European Commission (EC). To further enhance visibility and impact, TRANSCEND organizes side events to showcase its findings at major scientific and outreach events, such as CLIMATEUROPE and NATURANCE Innovation festivals, various conferences and water congresses.

- [Festival of Insurance and Investment Opportunities](#) for Nature-based Solutions (Vienna/Austria, 23-24 May 2024). Organised by CMCC and hosted by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), the festival brought various communities around climate risk assessment and financial innovation, showcasing the transformational financial instruments for nature restorations.
- [Hellenic Water Forum](#) (Athens/Greece, 19 April 2024) was key platform for discussing water management and sustainability issues in Greece, bringing together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to exchange knowledge and solutions.

- [European Geosciences Union](#) EGU 2024 General Assembly (Vienna/Austria, 14-19 April 2024). A traditionally well-attended cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary science and science-policy venue for many of the TRANSCEND partners, this year's event showcased different contributions from TRANSCEND⁷.
- [Life Climax Po III partners meeting](#) (Venice Mestre/Italy, 10-11 April 2024); TRANSCEND was introduced by CMCC and ARPAE in this occasion with the aim to enhance the stakeholders and modelling connections with Climax Po, a project on climate change adaptation in the Po District (Italy), which has strong linkages with TRANSCEND.
- Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions CPMR [Political Bureau meeting](#) (Patras Greece, 22 March 2024) and [Addressing climate vulnerability in coastal areas](#) workshop (Patras, 21 March 2024) showcased the TRANSCEND Pilot case.
- [Climateurope2 Festival](#) “Uniting science, services, and standards for a climate resilient future” (Venice/Italy, 11-13 March 2024). Organised and hosted by CMCC, the Festival featured the EU Mission Adaptation to climate change and the transformative water resource management, among others. TRANSCEND has been presented as a keynote speech and during the World Café tables.
- Fondazione Andrea Borri’s organised workshop [Reflections on Water: Policies and Strategies for Adapting to Water Scarcity](#) (Riflessioni sull’acqua. Politiche e strategie di adattamento alla scarsità idrica, Parma/Italy, 30 November 2023) featured the Italian Pilot.
- European Space Agency and World Climate Research Programme’s organized workshop [HYDROSPACE 2023](#) - 5th Space for Water Cycle and Hydrology Workshop (Lisbon/Portugal, 17 November – 1 December 2023) was attended by the TRANSCEND hydrological team member(s).
- [REMTECH EXPO 2023](#) (Ferrara/Italy, 20-22 September 2023); TRANSCEND has been represented by ARPAE at this international and permanent Environmental Technological Hub specialising in the issues of remediation, regeneration and sustainable development of territories.
- Society for Decision Making under Deep Uncertainty DMDU [Summer School](#) 2023 (Mexico City, 24 July – 04 August 2023).

The TRANSCEND team regularly participates in various science policy events, sharing methods and workflows similar to those employed in the project, also in anticipation of the project’s kick-off):

⁷ <https://meetingorganizer.copernicus.org/EGU24/EGU24-5414.html>,
<https://meetingorganizer.copernicus.org/EGU24/EGU24-4678.html>,
<https://meetingorganizer.copernicus.org/EGU24/EGU24-8661.html>,
<https://doi.org/10.5194/egusphere-egu24-21381>,
<https://doi.org/10.5194/egusphere-egu24-14168>,
<https://meetingorganizer.copernicus.org/EGU24/EGU24-3886.html>

- **Mediterranean Geosciences Union (MedGU)** Annual Meeting is a significant event focusing on various aspects of geosciences in the Mediterranean region. It provides a platform for researchers to present their findings and engage in discussions about the latest developments in the field (27-30 November 2022).
- **International Association for Hydro-Environment Engineering and Research (IAHR)** World Congress is a prestigious conference that brings together experts in hydro-environmental science and engineering. It covers a wide range of topics, including water resources management, hydrology, and environmental sustainability (19-24 June [2022](#)).
- **Italian Association of Environmental and Resource Economists (IAERE)** Annual Conference is a key event for environmental and resource economists. It provides a forum for discussing research on environmental economics, policy, and management (21-22 April 2022).
- **Knowledge Action Network on Emergent Risks and Extreme Events (Risk KAN)** organizes workshops and webinars on understanding and modeling complex risks in interconnected human-environment systems. It aims to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and improve risk assessment and management strategies.
- **American Geophysical Union (AGU)** Fall Meeting is one of the largest gatherings of Earth and space scientists. It offers a platform for presenting research across a wide range of geophysical disciplines, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange (13-17 December 2021).

Presentation and description of TRANSCEND in the context of university lessons, institutional and social events and conferences to create connections, spread the word about the project and raise awareness in the social community.

3.6 Publications

The TRANSCEND project relies on research and scientific publications to share its outcomes, as many of the partners involved in the Consortium have academic backgrounds and experience with this type of work. Therefore, scientific publications are a key method for the dissemination process. During the first year of the project, the following papers linked to TRANSCEND were published:

- Gil-García, L., González-López, H., Pérez-Blanco, C.D., 2023. To dam or not to dam? Actionable socio-hydrology modelling to inform robust adaptation to water scarcity and water extremes. *Environ. Sci. Policy* 144, 74–87. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2023.03.012>.
- Sapino, F., Pérez-Blanco, C.D., Gutiérrez-Martín, C., García-Prats, A., Pulido-Velazquez, M., 2022. Influence of crop-water production functions on the expected performance of water pricing policies in irrigated agriculture. *Agricultural Water Management* 259, 107248. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agwat.2021.107248>.

- Pérez-Blanco, C.D., Sapino, F., 2022. Economic Sustainability of Irrigation-Dependent Ecosystem Services Under Growing Water Scarcity. Insights From the Reno River in Italy. *Water Resources Research* 58, e2021WR030478. <https://doi.org/10.1029/2021WR030478>.
- Foster, T., Perez-Blanco, D., Schmidt, G. (2024) Monitoring agricultural water use: challenges and solutions for sustainable water management. In Knox, J. (ed) *Improving water management in agriculture*. Burleigh Dodds: Cambridge, UK. <https://shop.bdspublishing.com/store/bds/detail/product/3-190-9781835451717>

3.7 Staff exchanges

Staff exchanges are a very effective method of building relationships and initiating productive partnerships among partners as well as with external parties. In the first 18 months, the USAL staff members visited CMCC to develop an innovative Hydro-Micro-Microeconomic model.

3.8 Other outreach activities and informative publications

- Workshop "Actionable Socio-Hydrology Science Water Accounting Workshop": the training activity was led by UAB and involved CMCC, GECCO, Green Power, INRAE, INAT, USAL.
- Alessandrini C., Pérez-Blanco, C.D., Mysiak J., 2023. Per una gestione innovativa della scarsità idrica. *ECOSCIENZA* 1/2023 (<https://www.arpae.it/it/ecoscienza/numeri-ecoscienza/anno-2023/numero-1-anno-2023/ecoscienza-numero-1-del-2023>)
- Tim Foster (UoM) was interviewed and his research covered in expert media commentary for Financial Times newspaper on [UK water management and resilience](#) to future change.

4 Lessons learned and Recommendations for Improvement

This report reflects on the first 18 months of TRANSCEND, showcasing the early and middle stages of the project, and analysing the initial and specific communication activities aimed at engaging stakeholders. It details all activities and explains the strategies used based on the objectives outlined in the PDEC. The report compares the aims and results of the first 18 months, identifying areas for improvement, challenges to overcome, and aspects to implement. This foundational analysis will inform future activities, allowing for adjustments to strategies and channels to better align with our goals of stakeholder engagement and the dissemination and exploitation of results.

Stakeholder engagement is primarily a communication process led by each lab leader due to the unique characteristics of their respective living labs. Centralized management of this process is neither possible nor desirable because only those working in the labs daily fully understand their specific dynamics. However, the WP6 leader has provided guidelines and dissemination materials to support lab leaders. The engagement process itself is managed directly by the lab leaders, employing a hybrid approach that aligns with TRANSCEND's

overall goals while being specifically tailored to each case study. This method accounts for the significant diversity across the project areas.

Effective engagement often hinges on the direct and sometimes personal relationships that project partners establish with stakeholders. Personal and email communications have proven to be the most successful methods during the initial workshop phase. Once these relationships are established, maintaining them through trust, close collaboration, and regular updates as the project progresses is essential. This ongoing engagement is best managed by the lab leaders, who are most familiar with their stakeholders and local context.

While active stakeholder engagement is crucial, external factors can sometimes hinder these efforts. To navigate these challenges, maintaining constant communication with stakeholders—even during less active periods—is essential. This approach ensures they remain connected, informed, and prepared for more demanding activities. However, it is vital to balance this engagement to avoid overwhelming stakeholders. Social media plays a key role in this balanced approach by keeping the audience regularly updated and engaged with the project without requiring direct interaction. This strategy allows for effective communication that sustains interest without imposing on stakeholders' time and attention.

A key lesson from the TRANSCEND project is that the breadth of the partnership can pose significant communication and collaboration challenges among partners. Effective communication requires active cooperation from all parties involved, but differences in time zones, priorities, and understandings can create obstacles. An illustrative example is the organization of the International Webstival, which involved most partners over a three-day event. The complex logistics highlighted that no aspect of organization should be underestimated, as the intricacies are amplified by the nature of the TRANSCEND project. However, the hybrid solutions implemented to address these challenges proved successful, thanks to precise and early planning of all organizational stages. This proactive approach can be replicated and adapted to manage similar situations effectively. While it is crucial to engage stakeholders actively, it's important to recognize that external factors can sometimes hinder these efforts. To navigate these challenges, maintaining constant communication with stakeholders—even during less active periods—is essential. This approach ensures they remain connected, informed, and prepared for more demanding activities. However, it's vital to balance this engagement process to avoid overwhelming stakeholders. Social media plays a key role in this balanced approach by keeping the audience regularly updated and engaged with the project without requiring direct interaction. This strategy allows for effective communication that sustains interest without imposing on stakeholders' time and attention.

In the first year of the TRANSCEND project, we assessed our approach to communication and engagement through social media. Starting from scratch, we developed our strategy step-by-step, adjusting as needed. While the overall performance of our social media channels has been reasonable, there is potential for further enhancement.

As the project progresses, we aim to increase our visibility by reaching more people and engaging with other projects' profiles, utilizing the diverse features of social media platforms. Broader involvement is needed to maximize the potential of these platforms. Effective collaboration among all partners and social media users is crucial to amplify our message by encouraging follows, likes, and shares on personal networks.

Reaching our initial target of 100 followers on Instagram has unlocked new insights into content performance, which will guide our future efforts. Lessons learned highlight the importance of understanding audience preferences, fostering genuine interactions, and continually adapting our strategies based on feedback. Prioritizing quality over quantity is essential to ensure that content is engaging, relevant, and reflects the values of TRANSCEND.

Consistently presenting our brand voice and identity across platforms is key to building recognition and trust. Additionally, monitoring analytics and metrics provides valuable insights into audience behaviour and helps refine our strategies. Embracing authenticity, creativity, and responsiveness is vital for forging meaningful connections and achieving long-term success on social media. While it may be challenging for a consortium to agree on every aspect of a project, maintaining a common understanding of our goals and the strategies to achieve them is crucial. Communication is a fundamental component of our projects, requiring ongoing cooperation, alignment, and introspection to meet the ambitious goals of TRANSCEND collaboratively.

5 Annexes

5.1 Mediterranean Water Forum, February 2024

Transformative Water Resources Management

Smart and resilient solutions for climate challenge across the Mediterranean

Side event of the 5th Mediterranean Water Forum

Working together for shared water sobriety

Tunis, February 5-7, 2024

Welcome and Introduction

- Marta Debolini, Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change and Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC), Italy
- PRIMA - Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean region
- Marco Orlando, PRIMA Foundation, Spain

Keynote Talk

- Fatima Driouech, University Mohammed VI Polytechnic, Morocco
- Elena López Gunn, Member, European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change

Be the Waters of Change - actionable and smart solutions for resilient adaptation to climate change.

- Dionisio Perez Blanco, University of Salamanca, Spain
- Simone Mereu, Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change, Italy
- Vangelis Constantianos, Global Water Partnership - Mediterranean (GWP-Med)

Policy Panel Discussion

- Doha Zamel, Water Expert, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)
- Manuel Sapiano, CEO, Energy & Water Agency of Malta (EWA)
- Issam Nouiri, Associate Professor of Water Resources Management, National Agromonic Institute of Tunisia (INAT)
- Ramiro Martinez Costa, Coordinator, Medi-terranean Network of Basin Organisation (MENBO)
- Emad Adly, General Coordinator, Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)

5.2 UfM consultative workshop, Lisbon, June 2024

Digital Transformation for advancing Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus	
Day 1: Tuesday, 4 June 2024	
9.00-9.20	Welcome and scope of the Launching Workshop - Marta Debolini, Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (CMCC) & Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC) - Marco Orlando, Project Officer, Thematic Area Water Management, PRIMA Foundation - Almotaz Abadi, Deputy Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean
Setting the stage: Digital Transformation for advancing Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus in the Mediterranean Source to Sea continuum <i>Facilitator: Marta Debolini, CMCC & MedECC</i>	
9.20-9.40	Key findings of the UfM Study on Digital Transformation of the Water System in the Mediterranean - Hassan Aboelnga, UfM Expert
09.40-10.00	Transformational adaptation via digitalization: cutting-edge results from the PRIMA ACQUAOUNT, TRANSCEND and TALANO-WATER projects - Dionisio Perez Blanco, University of Salamanca - Simone Mereu, Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change
10.00-10.30	Q/A and discussion
10.30-11.00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
Serious game: Digital Transformation for advancing Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus in the Mediterranean Source to Sea continuum	
11.00-13.30	Serious game – instructions & conducting - Francesco Sapino, University of Salamanca - Javier Sierra, University of Salamanca <i>Participants attending in-person participants will be divided into diverse groups. Through facilitated debate, they will grapple with real-world water management challenges in the context of digital agriculture in a WEF Nexus approach. Their decisions will have a simulated future outcome, allowing them to experience the potential consequences of their choices.</i>
13.30-14.30	Lunch Break
14.30-14.45	Serious game – debriefing - Francesco Sapino, University of Salamanca
14.45-15.45	Digital Transformation for WEF Nexus in the Mediterranean S2S continuum: Reflections from the field - Heba Al-Hariry, Land and Water Officer, Regional Water Scarcity Initiative, FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa

Deliverable 6.3 – First exploitation, dissemination and communication report

	- Khaled Abu Zeid, Center for Environment & Development for Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) - Gianluca Cocco and Giuliano Patteri, Sardinia Region and Regional Authority for Water Management - Q&A <i>Facilitator: Vangelis Constantianos, Regional Coordinator, Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med)</i>
15.45-16.15	Coffee Break
16.15-17.15	Discussion – Taking stock towards a SWOT on Digital Transformation for WEF Nexus in the Mediterranean S2S continuum <i>Facilitator: Jaroslav Mysiak, Director of the Research Division 'Risk assessment and adaptation strategies', CMCC</i>
17.15	Brief conclusions of the day - Marta Debolini, CMCC & MedECC

Day 2: Wednesday, 5 June 2024	
9.00-9.20	Welcome and scope of the Launching Workshop - Marta Debolini, Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (CMCC) & Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC) - Omar Amawi, Deputy Director, PRIMA Foundation - Almotaz Abadi, Deputy Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean
9.20-10.00	Towards shaping the future: reflections on actionable digitalization solutions for resilient adaptation to climate change (reporting from previous day) - Dionisio Perez Blanco & Francesco Sapino, University of Salamanca - Simone Mereu, Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change - Q&A
10.00-11.00	Policy Panel Discussion –Taking stock towards a SWOT on Digital Transformation for WEF Nexus in the Mediterranean S2S continuum <i>Some panellists to be confirmed</i> - Arduen Karagozi, Director, Directory of Strategic Management Water, Resources Management Agency (AMBU), Albania - Enas Ahmed, Director General of Regional Organisations, Ministry of Water Resources & Irrigation, Egypt - Mohamed Al Dwari, Secretary General Assistant for Strategic Planning, Ministry of Water & Irrigation, Jordan - Mona Fakih, Water Director, Ministry of Energy & Water, Lebanon - Manuel Sapiano, CEO, Energy & Water Agency, Malta - Siham Laraichi, Directorate for Research & Planning, Ministry of Equipment & Water, Morocco

Deliverable 6.3 – First exploitation, dissemination and communication report

	- Heba Al-Hariry, Land and Water Officer, Regional Water Scarcity Initiative, FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa <i>Facilitator: Vangelis Constantianos, Regional Coordinator, GWP-Med</i>
11.00-11.20	Coffee Break
11.20 12.00	Discussion – Taking stock towards a SWOT on Digital Transformation for WEFE Nexus in the Mediterranean S2S continuum <i>Facilitator: Frederic de Dinechin, Senior Policy Advisor, Water Environment & Blue Economy Division, Union for the Mediterranean</i>
12.00-12.20	Reflections and suggestions - Donatella Spano, CMCC/UNISS - Michael Scoullou, EU Water and Environment Support (WES) in the ENI Southern Neighbourhood region Project
12.20-12.30	Conclusions and outlook – what’s next? - Omar Amawi, Deputy Director, PRIMA Secretariat - Almotaz Abadi, Deputy Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean - Marta Debolini, CMCC & MedECC