



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY





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Communications Strategy



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01 Summary

At the heart of this Communications Strategy lies a powerful call to action: to preserve, revive and help the Baltic Sea's marine ecosystems thrive.

Through this strategy, PROTECT BALTIC aims to amplify awareness, deliver crucial information for informed decision-making, and secure the long-term effectiveness of the Baltic Sea spatial protection efforts.

Using this strategy, PROTECT BALTIC will craft messaging that illustrates the importance of preserving the Baltic for the well-being of the society that the sea supports.





Aim of the strategy

This strategy represents more than just a series of actions; it serves as a response to the urgent need for coordinated efforts in addressing the environmental challenges confronting the Baltic Sea.

As PROTECT BALTIC is a cross-border project with multiple partners, it is imperative that we collectively understand how we intend to raise awareness, disseminate project results, and utilize them effectively.

The Communications Strategy offers an overview of the project, outlines the actions we plan to undertake, identifies our target audiences, and defines the key messages we aim to convey.

Users and cases

The users of this strategy include the 17 partner organizations, their employees and stakeholders. It guides actions and informs decisions within the project, offering a valuable framework for project work. To apply this strategy effectively, it should become an integral part of the partners' project activities, informing their outreach, decision-making and interactions with stakeholders.



02 Project overview

PROTECT BALTIC aims to ensure sufficient protection and restoration in the marine environment to secure biodiversity, maintain ecosystem function, produce ecosystem services, and enable sustainable use.

The project develops, demonstrates, and promotes protection and restoration solutions in the Baltic Sea. This is achieved by strategically monitoring and managing human activities, with a focus on reducing their impact through spatial protection measures for marine protected areas (MPAs), other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), as well as actions to restore and rehabilitate damaged ecosystems.





PROTECT BALTIC's vision aligns with the biodiversity goals outlined in HELCOM's Baltic Sea Action Plan:

"A healthy Baltic Sea environment with diverse biological components functioning in balance, resulting in a good ecological status and supporting a wide range of sustainable economic and social activities."

Vision

Project goals

- 1 Spatial protection in the Baltic Sea results in tangible positive biodiversity outcomes and demonstrably contributes to a healthy and resilient Baltic Sea with diverse biological components functioning in balance.
- 2 The Baltic Sea spatial protection network is strategically planned from an ecological perspective and is resilient, coherent, ecologically representative and well connected.
- 3 The Baltic Sea marine protected area (MPA) network is effectively and equitably managed in an ecologically relevant way, enabling the potential of the network to provide biodiversity benefits to be realized.



What do we need to reach these goals?

1 Good governance of spatial protection and restoration measures

- Ensuring transparency and accountability.
- Guaranteeing the voice and legitimacy of stakeholders.
- Enabling governance vitality and capacity to respond adaptively to environmental changes.

2 Sound design and planning of spatial protection and restoration measures

- Identifying and understanding:
 - area values;
 - threats and challenges;
 - the socio-economic context; and
 - long-term protection.

3 Effective management of spatial protection and restoration measures

- Managing the ecological condition of areas.
- Mitigating threats to biodiversity caused by human activities.
- Regulating access, resource use and visitation.
- Considering the socio-economic context for an area.
- Enforcing laws and regulations.
- Implementing a sustainable, long-term management strategy for management.
- Continually measuring success.



Approach

PROTECT BALTIC will create a **protection optimization framework**, a unique and comprehensive decision support package unlike any other in the world.

For the first time ever, a region is brought together to develop a transparent, data-driven, science-based, step-by-step approach for identifying protection and restoration targets and to define a shared approach on how best to protect and restore.

The project then transforms this approach into practical actions by strategically implementing protection and restoration measures at ecologically relevant spatial and temporal scales, guided by cutting-edge modelling techniques.

The framework is co-created with Baltic Sea Member States and serves as a blueprint for planning, executing, governing, managing and monitoring Baltic Sea protection and restoration initiatives. It provides a foundation for each state to optimize their spatial protection efforts and streamline governance for adaptive management, with the ultimate goal of preserving biodiversity, associated ecosystem functions and services.



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EU Missions: Restore our Ocean and Waters



With a 2030 target, the EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters” aims to protect and restore the health of oceans and waters through research and innovation, citizen engagement and blue investments.

The Mission’s approach addresses oceans and waters as one and plays a key role in achieving climate neutrality, restoring biodiversity and generating economic prosperity.

Man-made changes are putting our ocean and waters at serious risk, leading to pollution, biodiversity loss and extreme weather events.

PROTECT BALTIC aligns seamlessly with the EU Mission, sharing the commitment to safeguarding the biodiversity of the Baltic Sea.

As part of this broader mission, PROTECT BALTIC is dedicated to addressing the specific challenges faced by the Baltic Sea ecosystem.



03 Plans for outreach

English serves as the primary language for our communication efforts within the PROTECT BALTIC project. However, we recognize the need to reach a broader audience and specific products like videos and MPA management plans may be translated to make our messages more accessible and inclusive.

The project name “PROTECT BALTIC”, slogan “Preserve, revive, thrive” and the logo, should always be in English.

Awareness raising

- *Introduce the project to audiences.*
- *Establish a clear and consistent brand.*
- *Map a network of stakeholders.*

Targeted dissemination

- *Share results to maximize impact.*
- *Build partnerships within the network.*
- *Ensure uptake and reuse of results.*

Securing maximum use of results

- *Set a framework for replicating results.*
- *Create pathways for continued use.*
- *Encourage widespread use of outputs.*



How will we raise awareness?



Develop a **compelling brand identity**, core values, mission and vision for the project. **What are the goals?**



Create a **visually appealing logo** that illustrates the project's narrative and shows the significance of protecting the Baltic Sea.



Build a user-friendly **project website** that serves as a central hub for information.



Leverage existing **social media channels** and create an active profile account for the project.



Design **marketing materials** including presentations, brochures, roll-up banners and posters.



Establish a **partner network** for collaboration to align messaging and maximize outreach.



Put in place a **clear content calendar** and a **monitoring system** to track the strategy's effectiveness and impact.



How will we target dissemination?



Identify and map stakeholders that could benefit from getting involved and make use of the project results.



Tailor communication efforts to address specific needs and interests of these groups.



Participate in **key events and conferences** on marine protection. Keep track of our participation.



Publish results, data and case studies in scientific journals, publications and platforms.



Collaborate with scientific partners to ensure credibility and reach of the research findings.



Form a **comprehensive dissemination plan** outlining key milestones and a timeline for sharing results.



Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts by **monitoring the reach and impact**.



How will we maximize the use of results?



Develop effective strategies to maximize project impact and **translate outcomes into actionable solutions.**



Evaluate the **most suitable platforms** for disseminating project outputs to diverse groups effectively.



Conduct informative **training workshops** to empower stakeholders in utilizing project tools.



Establish user-friendly, **open-access repositories** for easy access to project resources.



Craft concise **policy briefs to assist decision makers** in integrating project findings into policies.



Prioritize **accessibility and applicability** to ensure the project's long-term influence and relevance.



Internal communications

Effective internal communication is the backbone for successful collaboration within PROTECT BALTIC. By fostering clear and consistent channels for information sharing, we ensure that all partners are well-informed, engaged, and working towards common goals.

Project communication is primarily done through emails and Microsoft Teams meetings, and also through the Microsoft Teams chat channels.

PROTECT BALTIC uses **Microsoft Teams** and **SharePoint** for document sharing among the consortium members. Each work package has its own folder with specific documents that each member can work on at the same time. The home page of the SharePoint site also provides latest news on the project.

A dedicated internal newsletter with key deadlines, events and news relevant to the partnership is released monthly by work package 1.

And once content for the project is ready to be disseminated, a dedicated email news blast will be released monthly under work package 9. The email news blast will be subscription based, so will go beyond only internal communications though partners should subscribe.



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04 Communication objectives

PROTECT BALTIC's main aim is to enable sufficient spatial protection measures for the marine environment.

If sufficient and effective spatial protection is ensured across the eco-region, there will be a reduction in harmful human activities, and the goals of maintaining and restoring the status of marine biodiversity can be reached.



OBJECTIVES

The communication objectives outlined in this section will drive PROTECT BALTIC towards its aim.

All objectives are rooted in a deep commitment to ensuring the diversity and resilience of the Baltic's ecosystem, recognizing its immense value to the region, the people who rely on it for their livelihoods and well-being, and its global environmental significance.

By establishing concrete, measurable objectives, the project is demonstrating a long-term dedication to fostering a healthier and more resilient Baltic Sea for future generations.





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Plan to raise awareness

Brand development

Design a clear and visually appealing brand identity, logo and colour scheme, and ensure that all partners use this branding.

Project website

Develop a user-friendly project website as a central hub for project information. Include sections on objectives, methodologies, outputs, and expected and realised impacts. Update regularly with progress, news, and resources.

Social media presence

Create and maintain active social media profiles on platforms relevant to the project's key audiences (e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok). Regularly share project updates, publications, and relevant news to engage a wider online audience.

Event attendance and online presentations

Physical attendance at events, keynote speeches, panel participation, webinars and online presentations to introduce the project to key stakeholders. Use these platforms to explain the project's innovative approach.



Audiovisual and AR app

Produce a video outlining the project's aim and outreach videos on protection. Develop an augmented reality (AR) app for mobile phones and tablets that retrieves MPA data and operates as a novel way for visitors to interact with the marine environment.

Printed material and roll-up banners

Create brochures, leaflets, posters and eye-catching roll-up banners featuring project branding, objectives, and key messages. These can be used at conferences, workshops, and other events attended by partners.

Partner responsibilities

*Collaborate on developing **project branding** and its consistent use in all communications and materials throughout the project.*

*Participate in **stakeholder mapping**, identifying organizations and actors within your networks who should follow the project's progress.*

***Participate** in specialized webinars, workshops and training sessions to understand the project's approach and tools and introduce them to stakeholders.*

***Actively spread awareness about the project** nationally and at events. Share project updates and news on their respective websites and social media channels.*



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Audience engagement to raise awareness

National environmental authorities: engage in direct communication with national authorities to present the project and seek their active involvement. Organize webinars and workshops tailored to their needs.

MPA managers: conduct specialized workshops and training sessions to demonstrate how the project's approach can enhance their protection efforts. Provide ongoing support and guidance for implementing the project tools and optimization framework.

Scientific and research community: collaborate with research institutions to publish scientific articles and papers that highlight the project's methodologies, findings and the protection optimization framework. Engage in knowledge sharing through scientific conferences and events.

Environmental NGOs: partner to leverage their networks and publications for disseminating project information. Collaborate in awareness-raising events, seminars and workshops.

Resource users and industry: engage with sector stakeholders including fisheries, aquaculture, renewable energy, maritime transport, military and tourism through targeted communication channels. Share information on how the project's outcomes can benefit these sectors and promote sustainable practices.



EU and regional bodies: share project materials with EU bodies, such as the European Commission, European Environment Agency, and regional sea conventions. Present the project's approach, progress and outcomes at relevant conferences and meetings.

Civil society: engage with the general public, including local communities and students, through public awareness campaigns and educational programs and the development of the AR application.

International organizations: collaborate with organizations like IUCN-WCPA, CBD, UNEP, and others to align the project to global environmental protection goals. Share project findings through presentations and workshops.

Policy makers: provide targeted briefings and presentation to policy makers at national, regional and international levels. Highlight how the project can support and shape environmental policies.

Student and educational institutions: partner with universities, schools, and students of marine sciences and environmental conservation to foster a culture of environmental stewardship.

Media outlets: generate media coverage by cooperating with journalists by providing them with press releases, interview opportunities and content for reporting.

Business associations: engage with organizations representing business in sectors linked to marine activities and conservation.



Disseminate targeted information

Identify key exploitable results

Collaboratively identify the project's key exploitable results, which may include the optimization framework, tools, code, models, guidelines, data, and recommendations.

Value network mapping

The map should identify potential beneficiaries of the project findings, including organizations, authorities, and individuals who can use the results to enhance marine protection efforts.

Publishing results

Publish project results, data and case studies on open-access platforms, scientific journals and relevant publications. Ensure results are presented in a user-friendly format for wider accessibility.

Internal dissemination

Organize partner events, workshops, and publications to share project outputs within the consortium and with key stakeholders. Partners should actively promote the use of project results within their organizations.



External opportunities

Actively seek external opportunities to present project findings at conferences, meetings, and events related to marine protection, such as European Green Week, EU Mission Oceans, IMPAC, and UN conferences.

Sector-specific webinars

Organize a series of webinars tailored to specific sectors impacted by marine protection efforts, such as fisheries, tourism, and renewable energy, delving into the project's findings and their relevance to each sector.

Partner responsibilities

*Partners should actively participate in identifying the project's **key exploitable results**. Then collaborate to **prioritize** these results for dissemination based on their potential impact and relevance to stakeholders.*

*Actively **participate in external events** and opportunities where project results can be presented, including conferences, meetings, and events related to marine protection and conservation.*

***Share project outputs**, including publications, findings, and resources, within their respective organizations. Actively **promote the use of project results** among their internal networks and collaborators.*



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Audience engagement to disseminate info

National environmental authorities: engage to demonstrate how project results can improve their marine protection strategies and measures. Host workshops specifically focused on utilizing the project tools and recommendations effectively.

MPA managers: foster cooperation with MPA managers to ensure that the project findings are practically applicable in real-world protection scenarios.

Scientific and research community: collaborate with research institutions to publish scientific articles and papers that highlight the project's key exploitable results. Foster collaboration between research institutions for mutual benefit.

Environmental NGOs: encourage advocacy efforts by environmental NGOs to promote the adoption of the project optimization framework and to disseminate project results to their networks.

Resource users and industry: seek industry collaboration in implementing the project's outputs to ensure that resources are used responsibly.



EU and regional bodies: take part in policy discussions and leverage project findings to shape regional and EU policies related to marine protection.

Civil society: engage the public, local communities, students and concerned citizens in understanding the project progress and outcomes.

International organizations: showcase the project's findings as a contribution to international biodiversity protection efforts.

Policy makers: present project outcomes and their relevance to marine and environmental policies. Seek support for the adoption of project outputs in policy development.

Student and educational institutions: encourage students to explore and utilize the project findings in their academic pursuits.

Media outlets: provide accurate information on the project results and leverage media as a multiplier for reaching broader audiences.

Business associations: promote responsible practices aligned with the project outcomes, and encourage industry associations to advocate the adoption of the protection optimization framework or its component parts.



Sustainability and replication

Exploitation strategy

Develop an exploitation strategy that outlines how project results will be made available, accepted, and utilized by actors across several sectors. This should include routes for exploitation such as open-access repositories and training workshops.

Sustainability toolkit

The toolkit should provide guidance to ensure continued impact of project deliverables. Identify who will carry the results forward and how. Address issues that may arise in making outputs self-sustaining.

Online training package

Develop a comprehensive online training package in the form of videos. Each should cover a different topic linked to the project's main results, providing guidance to potential adopters outside the project's scope.

Monitoring and reporting

Evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and make adjustments as necessary.



Knowledge exchange workshops

Organize knowledge exchange workshops that bring together key stakeholders, including national authorities, researchers, and NGOs, to share experiences and best practice related to marine protection. These workshops will serve as a platform for discussing the replication of successful approaches and strategies developed under the project.

Partner responsibilities

*Collaborate on developing an **exploitation and sustainability strategy**.*

*Actively participate in the creation and delivery of an **online training package**.*

*Monitor and report on the progress of **sustainability and replication efforts**.*

*Share **lessons learned** and provide ongoing support to stakeholders.*

*Facilitate **knowledge transfer** ensuring that project methodologies can be carried forward in future initiatives.*



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Audience engagement for sustainability

National environmental authorities: secure their commitment to continue using the project results after the project's completion in 2028. Collaborate on efforts to ensure the project can be replicated in the future, and for other regions.

MPA managers: provide training to ensure that MPA managers have the support they need to replicate the project approaches in their areas in the future.

Scientific and research community: share knowledge and facilitate ongoing collaboration with research institutes so that the project outcomes can continue to be used, updated, further developed and replicated in the future.

Environmental NGOs: encourage environmental NGOs to advocate the long-term adoption of the project's outputs.

Resource users and industry: promote the continued application of sustainable practices, based on the protection optimization framework developed in the project, in resource use and business operations.



EU and regional bodies: work closely with EU bodies and regional conventions to ensure project outcomes are incorporated into future policies and strategies.

Civil society: encourage ongoing support and involvement of general public and local communities in promoting sustainable marine practices.

International organizations: cooperate with international bodies focused on global environmental protection to ensure results continue to be relevant.

Policy makers: continue to engage with policy makers to secure their commitment to the sustained use of the project outcomes in their policy development.

Student and educational institutions: provide open source and ongoing access to project resources and information.

Media outlets: maintain engagement with media to ensure ongoing reporting, and leverage them as a consistent channel for promoting sustainability and replication efforts.

Business associations: encourage business associations to actively promote and integrate project outcomes, and ensure the sustained adoption of practices aligned with these outcomes.



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Summary



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05 Target audiences

The success of PROTECT BALTIC's objectives relies on engaging a diverse range of audiences.

Our strategy is designed to include a wide range of stakeholders, from national environmental authorities and MPA managers to a broader community of environmental NGOs, researchers and the public.

By identifying and prioritizing these groups, we create a comprehensive approach to audience engagement that can achieve meaningful and lasting impact.





Three groups

1 Critical audiences

- National authorities
- MPA managers
- Scientific and research community

2 Key stakeholders

- Environmental NGOs
- Resource users and industry
- Business associations
- EU and regional bodies, and policy makers

3 Broader audiences

- Civil society
- Students, educational institutions and academia
- International organizations



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1 Critical audiences

National authorities

Primary stakeholders responsible for implementing EU policies and legislation concerning marine protection and biodiversity in each Baltic Sea country, comprising ministries, regional governments and municipalities. Their active participation is indispensable for adopting and implementing the protection optimization framework.

MPA managers

Individuals and organizations responsible for the management and protection of specific MPAs within the Baltic Sea region. They play a direct role in implementing protection and restoration measures.

Scientific and research community

Researchers and scientists specializing in marine biology, ecology, and environmental sciences, including those participating in sister projects. Their expertise validates and informs the project's scientific findings.



2 Key stakeholders

Environmental NGOs

Dedicated to environmental protection and biodiversity, they serve as advocates for the project's initiatives and outcomes.

Resource users and industry

Parties from fisheries, aquaculture, renewable energy, maritime transport, military, tourism, coastguard, and the extractive sector (mining, oil & gas, forestry), whose activities have an impact on marine ecosystems or who benefit from healthy marine environments.

Business associations

Collective organizations representing businesses within various marine-related sectors such as tourism or cruise line associations.

EU and regional bodies, and policy makers

EU entities such as the European Commission (EC), the European Environment Agency (EEA), the Regional Sea Conventions (RSCs), and the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), engaged in marine and environmental policy-making and implementation. Additionally, national and regional policy makers involved in drafting marine and environmental policies.



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3 Broader audiences

Civil society

General public, including local communities, land owners, leisure users, youth, and concerned citizens who are interested in marine protection and environmental issues.

Students, educational institutions and academia

Universities, schools, and students of marine sciences and environmental conservation, and other educational institutes such as museums and aquariums.

International organizations

International bodies such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature's World Commission on Protected Areas (IUCN-WCPA), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and other globally-focused entities dedicated to environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.

Media are considered as multipliers for the project's messages rather than as a direct audience. Media contacts will be mapped separately alongside the creation of press kits.



06 Key messages

Communications throughout PROTECT BALTIC revolves around principles encapsulated in seven key messages, each of which forms an essential building block in our shared vision for protection.

To effectively utilize these key messages, project partners are encouraged to integrate them into their communication efforts. By doing so, we can collectively raise awareness, inspire action, and achieve our common goal of protecting and restoring the Baltic Sea ecosystem.

1 Humans rely on the ecosystem and its services

Humans are an integral part of the Baltic Sea ecosystem and are entirely dependent on it for survival, including through the ecosystem services it provides.

PROTECT BALTIC supports the preservation of the Baltic Sea ecosystem, its functions, and services, by enabling effective protection and restoration measures.



2 Humans are at the core of the problem...

Human activities cause environmental issues in the Baltic Sea. These activities exert direct and indirect pressures on the environment that change the ecosystem's state. This can trigger cascading effects that impact various ecosystem components and functions, which in turn leads to socio-economic effects.

PROTECT BALTIC works to improve our understanding of what human activities are impacting the Baltic Sea, where they take place and how the ecosystem is affected.

3 ...but humans are also at the core of the solution

Since our activities are causing harm, we can do something about it! When the pressures are removed, the ecosystem can recover over time, and establish a new dynamic balance. So, to improve the state of ecosystem components, human activities need to be managed within the ecosystem's tolerance.

PROTECT BALTIC gathers and shares information on existing protection measures in the Baltic Sea, assesses the effectiveness of governance and management efforts, and provides recommendations for improvement.



4 Combining protection and restoration for success

To get the best outcomes for the ecosystem, measures have to be ecologically effective and resource efficient. Spatial protection, when well implemented, is proven to manage human activities for the benefit of biodiversity and the ecosystem. Protective and restorative measures are mutually supportive, synergistic, and often require a combination of both for success. The aim is to let ecosystem processes and components develop naturally, rather than maintaining an artificial and prescriptive equilibrium.

PROTECT BALTIC prepares an action plan for Baltic Sea restoration and a toolbox to support it.

5 No MPA should be an island

A cohesive and coherent set of measures, such as a network of mutually supportive marine protected areas (MPAs), provides far more benefits to the ecosystem than individual measures. Without effective policy and management on a broad scale, MPAs can only serve as isolated islands of protection in a larger sea of degradation.

PROTECT BALTIC plays a central role in promoting a network-level perspective for planning, designating, and managing spatial protection in the Baltic Sea.



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6 Knowledge is crucial for unlocking full protection potential

Effective management depends on a broad and deep understanding of complex environmental dynamics, and robust scientific insights for informed decision-making. Positive ecosystem outcomes require a holistic approach, including socio-economic considerations, and effective communication to ensure widespread understanding and support.

PROTECT BALTIC empowers marine protection in the Baltic Sea by using and disseminating the most extensive and up-to-date knowledge and information, fostering success through well-informed governance and management.

7 A tool only works if you use it, and use it in the right way

Spatial conservation measures like MPAs and restoration hold significant untapped potential beyond their current implementation. To maximize efficiency and effectiveness, these protection and restoration measures must be strategically implemented at ecologically appropriate scales, based on sound knowledge, and with the support of, and within, the appropriate societal and governance context. This strategic approach is a prerequisite for optimizing benefits to the ecosystem and a return on investment for current and future resource use.

PROTECT BALTIC pioneers an ecosystem-driven holistic approach to optimizing spatial protection efforts across the entire Baltic Sea.



07 Measuring impact

Public awareness index

Measure increases in public awareness regarding Baltic Sea conservation and PROTECT BALTIC through pre- and post-campaign surveys.

Community engagement score

Assess the level of engagement and participation of coastal communities in project activities, workshops, and events.

Policy influence rate

Track the adoption of updated protection criteria and policies advocated by PROTECT BALTIC.

Stakeholder support surveys

Gauge stakeholder support through regular surveys to assess their alignment with PROTECT BALTIC's objectives.



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Media reach and social media engagement

Measure the reach of media coverage related to PROTECT BALTIC's protection efforts as well as the growth of social media metrics across platforms.

Website traffic growth

Measure the increase in website traffic, including unique visitors, downloads and page views.

Community-led initiatives

Quantify the number of community-led marine protection initiatives inspired or supported by PROTECT BALTIC.

Replication success rate

Track the adoption and success of PROTECT BALTIC's communication strategies and models by other marine protection initiatives worldwide.



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