



Comms Lab: Webinar V

IW:LEARN Project

Website Made Easy

From Set Up to Stand Out

23 April 2025

Funded by



Implemented by



Executed by



AGENDA

- Welcome & Introduction
- Why: Purpose of the Website Guidelines
- What: Key Requirements & Must-Haves
- How: Design, Functionality & User Experience
- Showcase: Examples of Good IW Project Websites
- Q&A
- Wrap Up & Resources

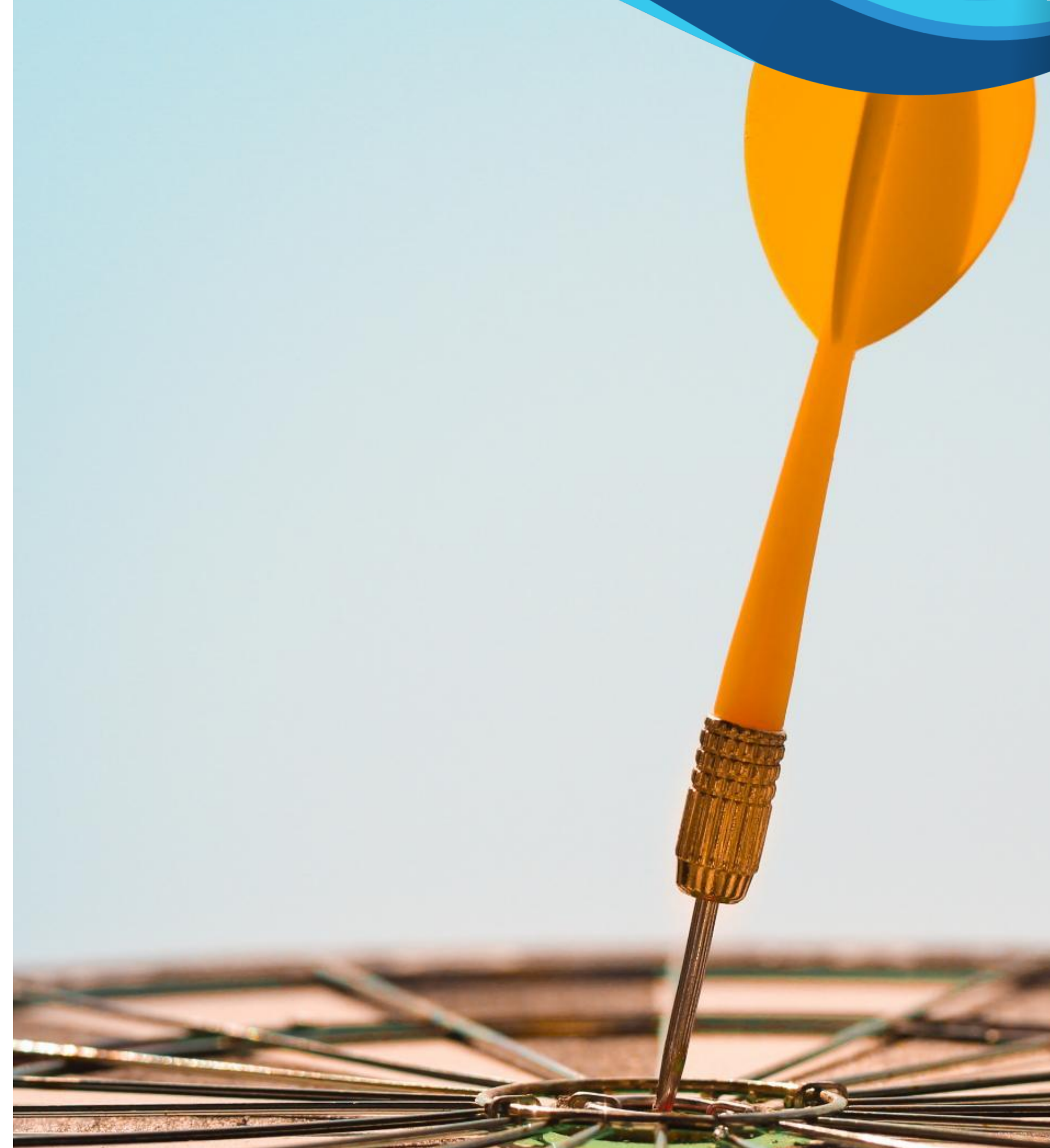
IW:LEARN Welcome & Introduction

Framing the need for strong
digital presence



Why: Purpose of the Website Guidelines

Strategic goals behind the update



Why Website Guidelines Matter

- ✓ Ensure **consistency, accessibility, and quality** across all GEF IW project websites
- ✓ Help projects create **user-friendly, credible, and informative** digital platforms
- ✓ Support long-term **visibility** beyond a project's active cycle

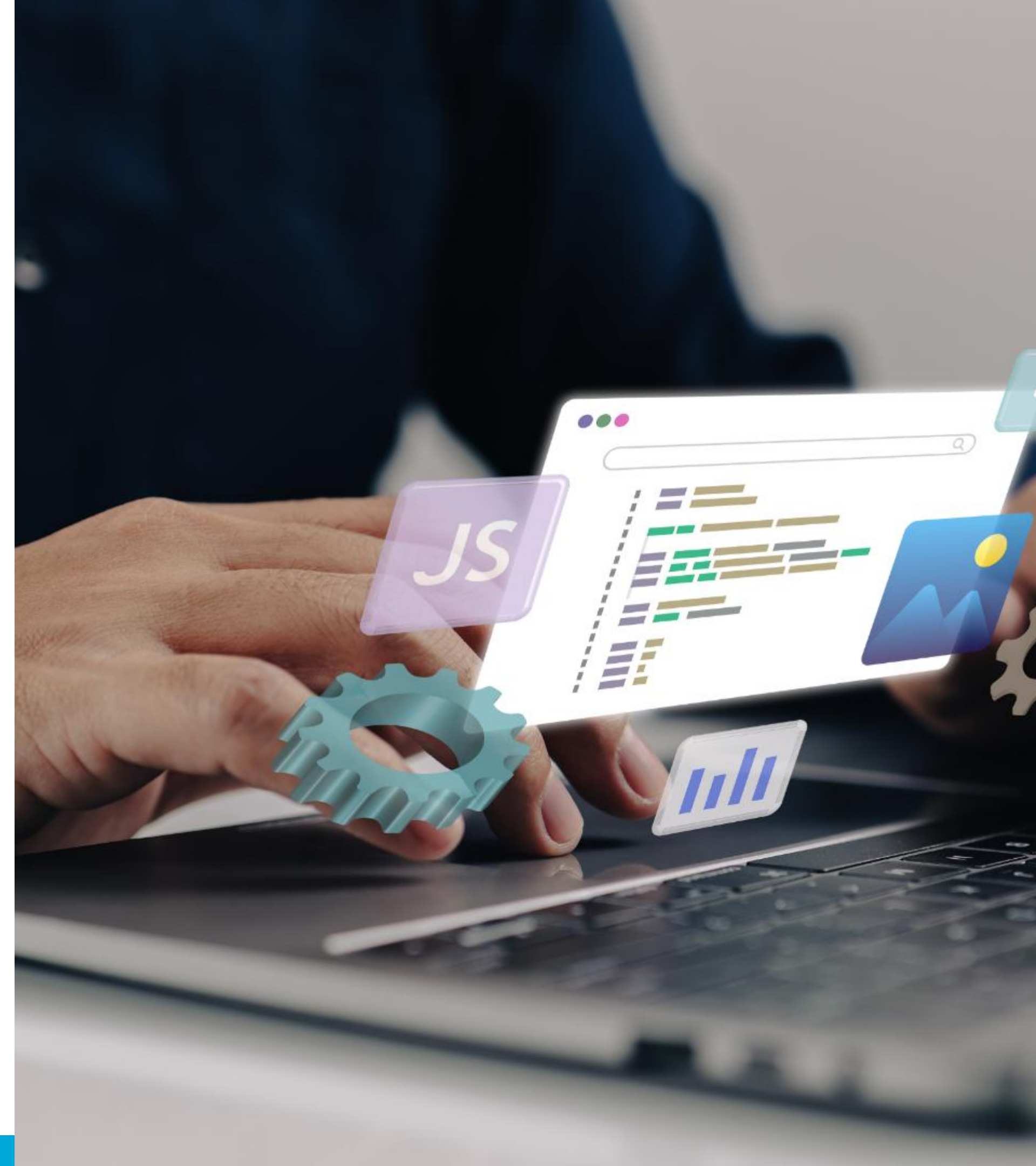


Strategic Goals Behind the Guidelines

- ✓ Standardize project site **structure & branding**
- ✓ Strengthen **outreach and global visibility**
- ✓ Promote **interoperability** across the IW:LEARN network
- ✓ Enhance **data sharing and knowledge** transfer
- ✓ Ensure **mobile-friendly, accessible, and inclusive experiences**

What: Key Requirements & Must-Haves

Walkthrough of mandatory compliance elements



Walkthrough of mandatory compliance elements

Mandatory requirements checklist	
Funding Acknowledgment	Logos
	Funding Statement
Structure	About
	Project Activities
	News & Events
Functions	Resources
	Contact information
	Engaging Homepage
	Search Function
	Social Media Integration
Performance	Multimedia Richness
	Responsive Design
	Browser Compatibility
Security and Privacy	Accessibility
	Fast Loading Time
	Link Integrity
	Secure Browsing > HTTPS
	Data Privacy > GDPR

What can IW:LEARN do for you?

Two main resources:

- ✓ Website guidelines
- ✓ Website toolkit

Website Guidelines: Outline the essential features and best practices for creating your project website.

Website toolkit: Practical service to assist you in building your project website.

This involves filling out a **form** to initiate the website creation process.

IW:LEARN staff will then provide support in setting up your site and ensuring it's automatically integrated with IW:LEARN's International Waters Information Management System.

Domain: xxxxxx.iwlearn.org

Website Toolkit

The Website Toolkit provides support for developing a dynamic content management system, that is linked and searchable through IW:LEARN's International Waters Information Management System. The resulting network will allow access to high quality data and information and ensure dissemination to a broader community of stakeholders.

IW:LEARN works with GEF International Waters projects to improve online sharing of data and information relevant to managing international waters, including marine, coastal and freshwater ecosystems.

To request assistance in generating a project web site please fill out [this form](#).

With the Website Toolkit, IW:LEARN is able to provide GEF IW projects the support they need for developing a dynamic content management system. Websites developed using the Toolkit incorporate usability, accessibility and metadata standards, and will be linked through IW:LEARN and UNEP's distributed discovery mechanism. The resulting network will allow access to high quality data and information and ensure dissemination to a broader community of stakeholders.



> Website Toolkit

- > How to: Edit content
- > How to: Work with sections
- > How to: Work with page layout
- > How to: Work with styles & scripts
- > How to: Work with other languages
- > How to: Use the admin interface
- > How to: Setup a server (Server admins)
- > How to edit a project on IW:Learn.net
- > How to: Work with custom layouts
- > How to: Add and edit project results

<https://iwlearn.net/learning/toolkits>

IW: LEARN Website Toolkit

Websites created with the toolkit adhere to usability, accessibility, and metadata standards, and they are connected through IW: LEARN.

The toolkit websites are simple in layout, design, and function on purpose so that anyone with little web knowledge can maintain them.



<https://mmcg.iwlearn.org/>

How: Design, Functionality & User Experience

Tips, tools, & layout guidance



Webinar Overview

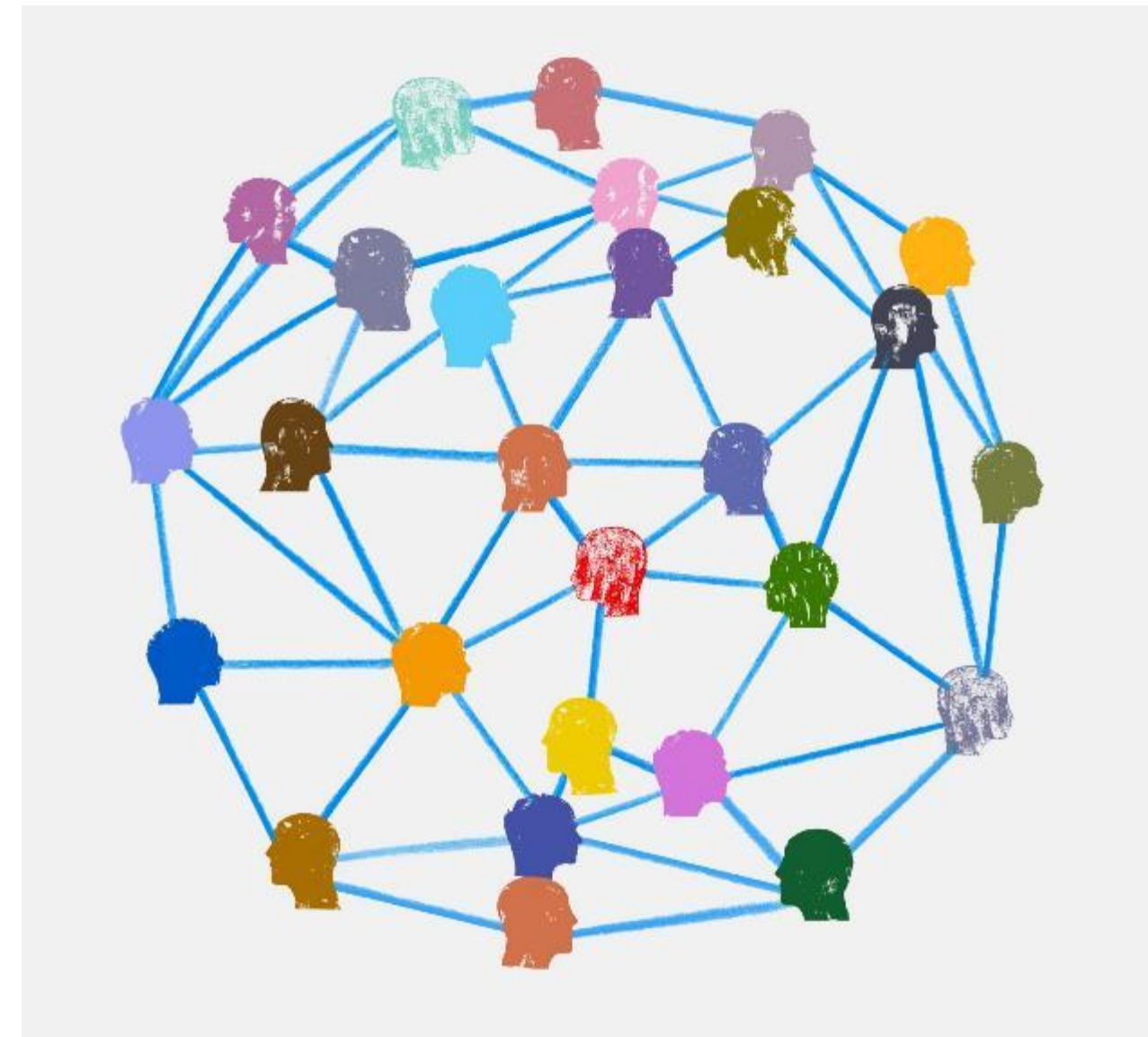
This webinar will equip participants with practical website tools to enhance IW project outreach, stakeholder engagement, and funding acquisition.

This webinar emphasizes websites as core communications tools. Suitable for all experience levels, the webinar highlights the role of IW project websites in increasing visibility, supporting collaboration, and extending the impact beyond the IW project's lifespan.

Why Websites Matter for YOUR IW Project

In today's digital world, your website is often the **first impression** of your project. It shapes how partners, funders, and the public perceive your work, instantly. **Make it count!**

- ▶ It's your project's **digital home**
- ▶ **It's more than a homepage** → it's a key tool for outreach, visibility, and credibility
- ▶ Helps share your **mission, important data,** and **results** clearly
- ▶ **Supports IW:LEARN's mission of collaboration and knowledge exchange** → a strong website helps build bridges across projects by making knowledge sharable





Core Functions of a Great Website

Every IW project site should:

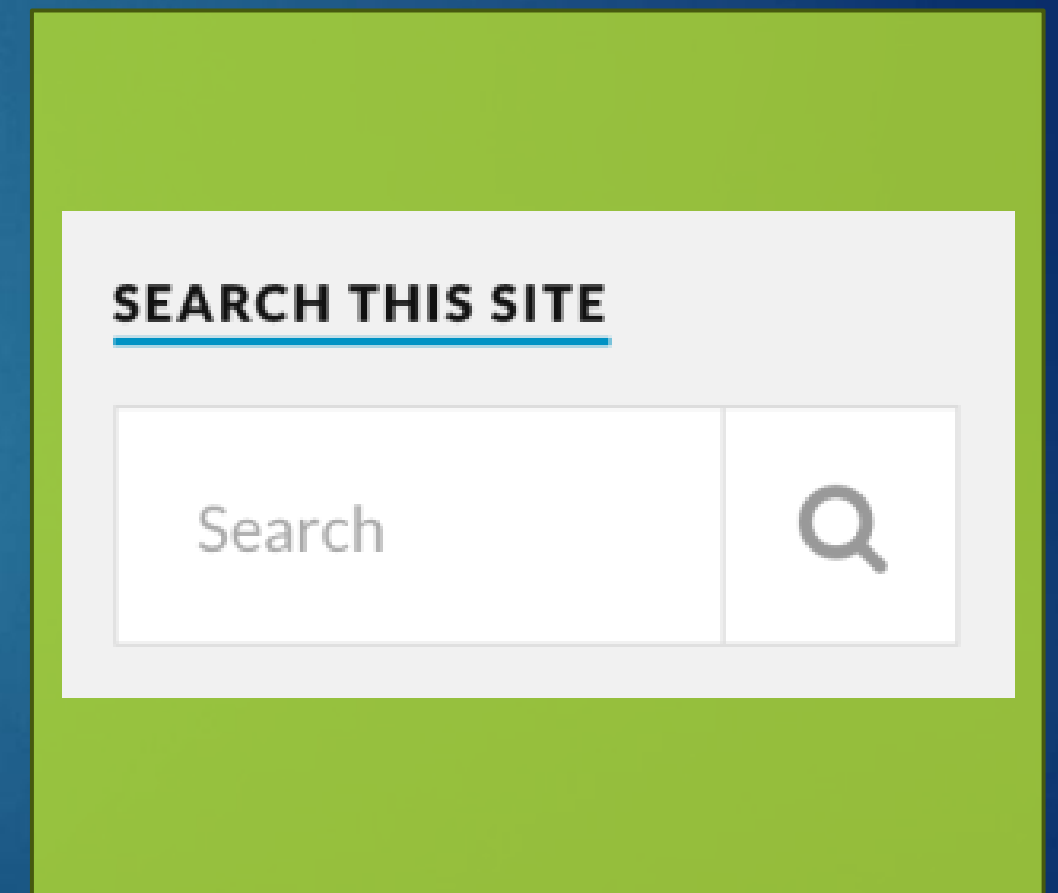
- ▶ Clearly explain your IW project's purpose
- ▶ Share updates and resources in a central place
- ▶ Be accessible & mobile-friendly
- ▶ Keep your project visible and useful, even after the project has ended

*Think of your IW project's website as a living tool to add to your communications toolbox, not a static report!

Design That Works: Layout & Navigation

Keep it **clean**. Keep it **clear**. Keep it **easy**.

- ▶ **Make your homepage do the heavy lifting** → it should answer the what, who, and why of your project in under 10 seconds
- ▶ **Use clear, simple menus** → keep the structure intuitive and content easy to find
- ▶ Include a **search bar**
- ▶ Highlight **latest updates** and **key project areas**



User Experience: Mobile & Accessibility First



If your site doesn't work for everyone, it doesn't work.

- ▶ **Mobile optimization is a must** → Most users are browsing on their phone; your layout should adjust accordingly and stay readable.
- ▶ **Accessibility helps everyone** → Alt text, high contrast, and keyboard navigation support a wider audience and boost credibility.
- ▶ **Fast, smooth navigation keeps users engaged** → Large files or confusing interfaces lead to high bounce rates. Keep it clean and efficient.



Content Strategy: Clear, Fresh, & Focused

- ▶ **Write for your audience, not yourself** → Use plain language (avoid jargon) and organize content by what users actually need
- ▶ **What should your website content do?**
 - ▶ Communicate your **IW project's mission**
 - ▶ Share **updates, milestones**, and **results** in plain language
 - ▶ Use a **mix** of **text** and **visuals** for variety and clarity
 - ▶ Stay **relevant** with **regular reviews** (every 3-6 months)
- ▶ **Use strong CTAs to give users clear direction** →
 - ▶ "Download report"
 - ▶ "Subscribe to our newsletter"
 - ▶ "Explore our map"
 - ▶ "Follow along on social media"



Show, Don't Just Tell

Visual storytelling supports understanding and makes your IW project's message more engaging.

- ▶ **Use visuals to simplify and support your message** → Infographics, charts, maps, and videos help make complex info easier to understand.
- ▶ **Avoid visual clutter** → Every image should serve a purpose. Leave white space and be sure to break up long blocks of text.
- ▶ **Balance media and content** → Pair quality visuals with text to keep users engaged without any distraction.



Common Mistakes to Avoid

- ▶ **Too much content all at once** → Overloading users with dense text or images can overwhelm and confuse.
- ▶ **Confusing navigation or structure** → If people can't find what they need quickly, they'll leave.
- ▶ **Neglecting updates or mobile optimization** → Outdated or non-responsive sites damage credibility and reduce reach.



What We Can Learn



- ▶ **Keep it simple and intentional →** A good web site focuses on what really matters: the audience and the message.
- ▶ **Build for now and for the future →** Plan your IW project's website structure and content to remain useful even after the project ends.
- ▶ **Your IW project website reflects your professionalism →** A clean, strategic site can elevate how your project is perceived and supported.

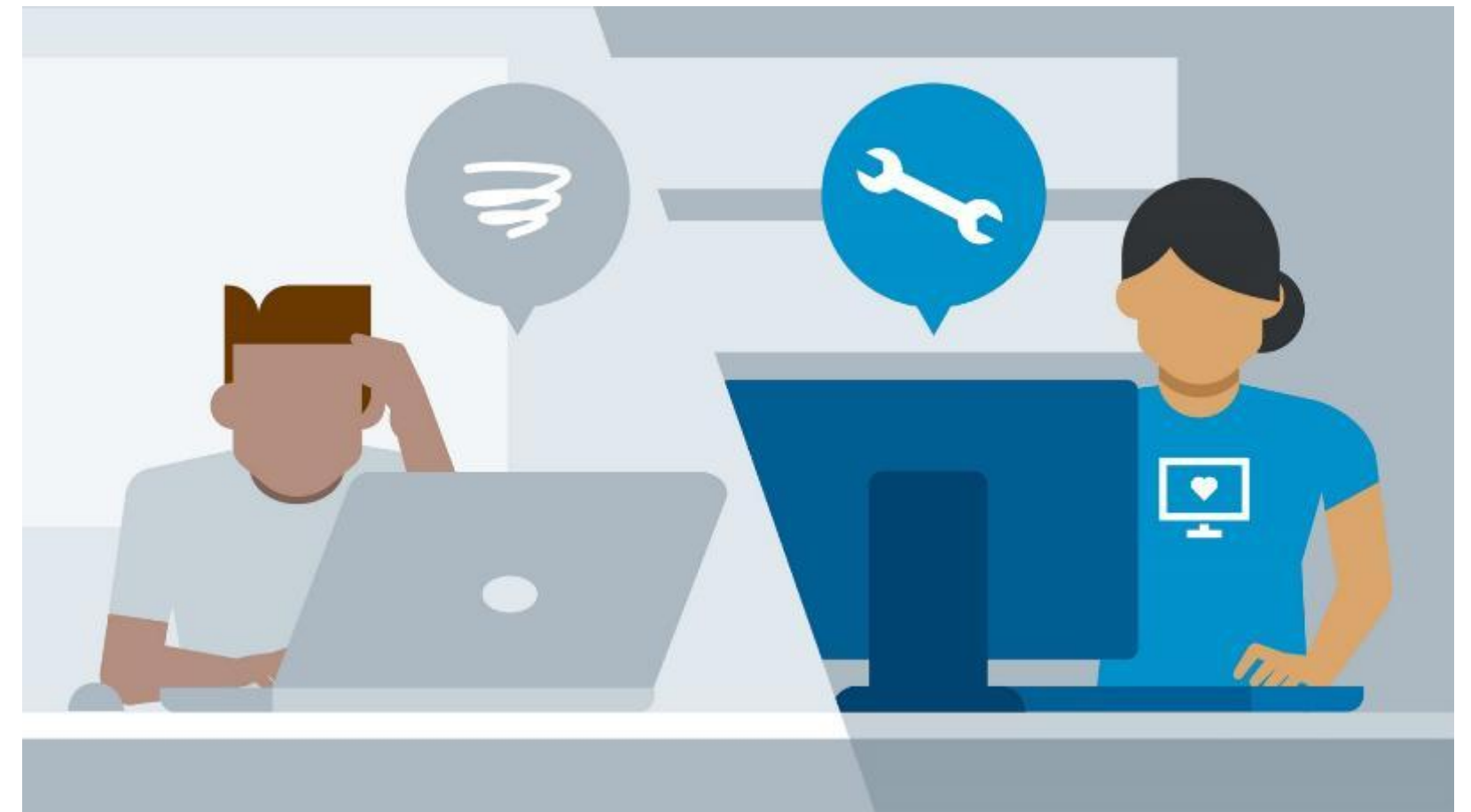
Quick Website Audit Checklist

- ▶ **Does your homepage explain your project?** → Keep it clear, concise, and purpose-driven.
- ▶ **Is your IW project website easy to navigate and up-to-date?** → Check menus, dates, links, and whether users can find info quickly.
- ▶ **Is it mobile-friendly and accessible?** → Try loading your website on different devices (phone, laptop, desktop, tablet) and make adjustments for optimized and inclusive design.



Resources to Support You

- ▶ **Use the IW:LEARN Website Guidelines Template** → A step-by-step reference to help you structure and manage your site effectively.
- ▶ **Try the website audit checklist** → A simple tool to help identify improvements and prioritize next steps for your IW project's website.
- ▶ **Explore successful project sites** → See what's working and adapt strategies that fit your context.



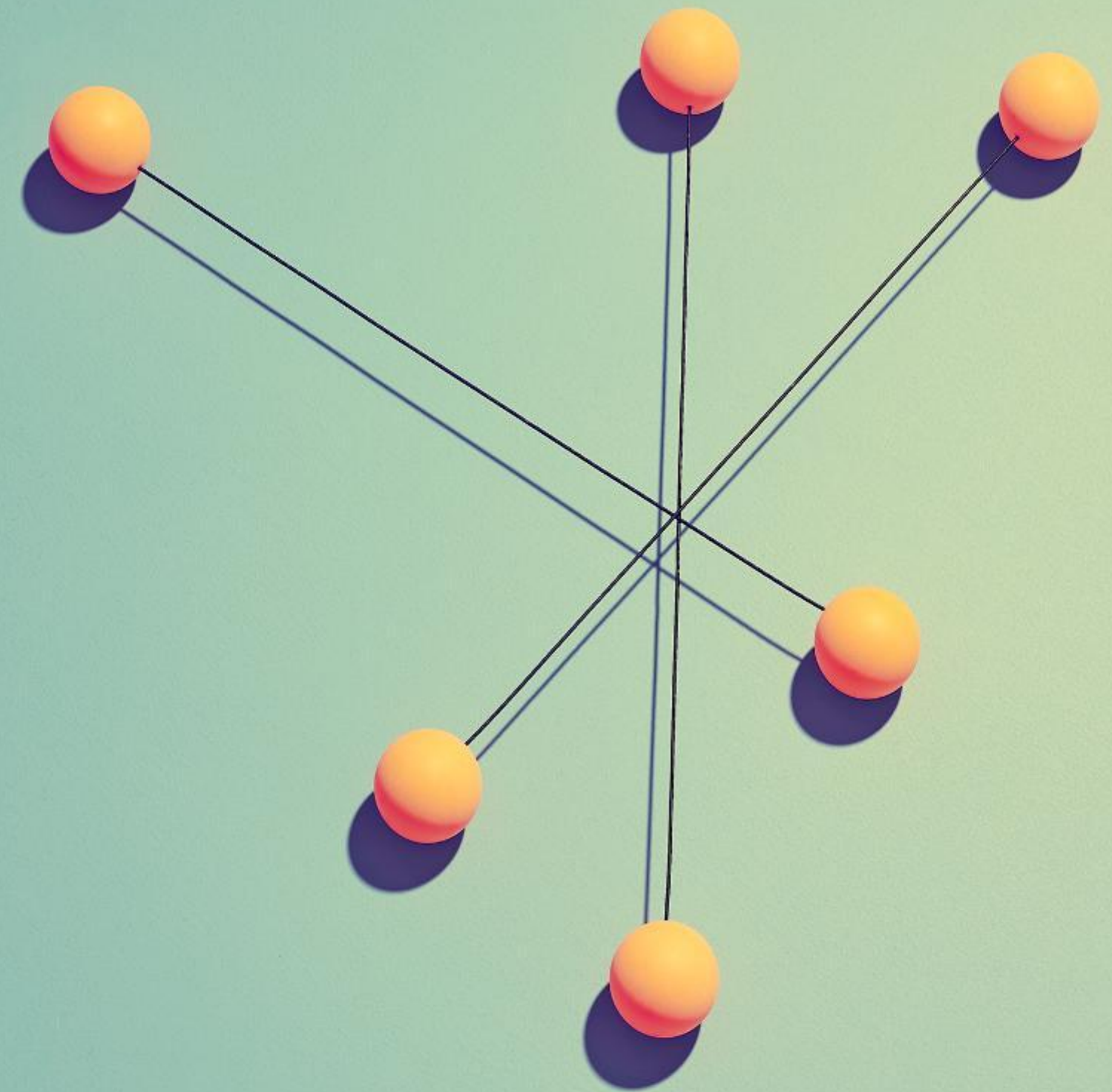
Let's Discuss!



- ▶ **What's working on your current website?** → Feel free to share examples or features that you've found to be especially helpful.
- ▶ **Where are you still facing challenges?** → Let's explore solutions and support across the IW community.
- ▶ **Any great website examples to highlight?** → We'd love to hear what's inspired you!

Showcase: Examples of Good IW Project Websites

Inspiration & learnings

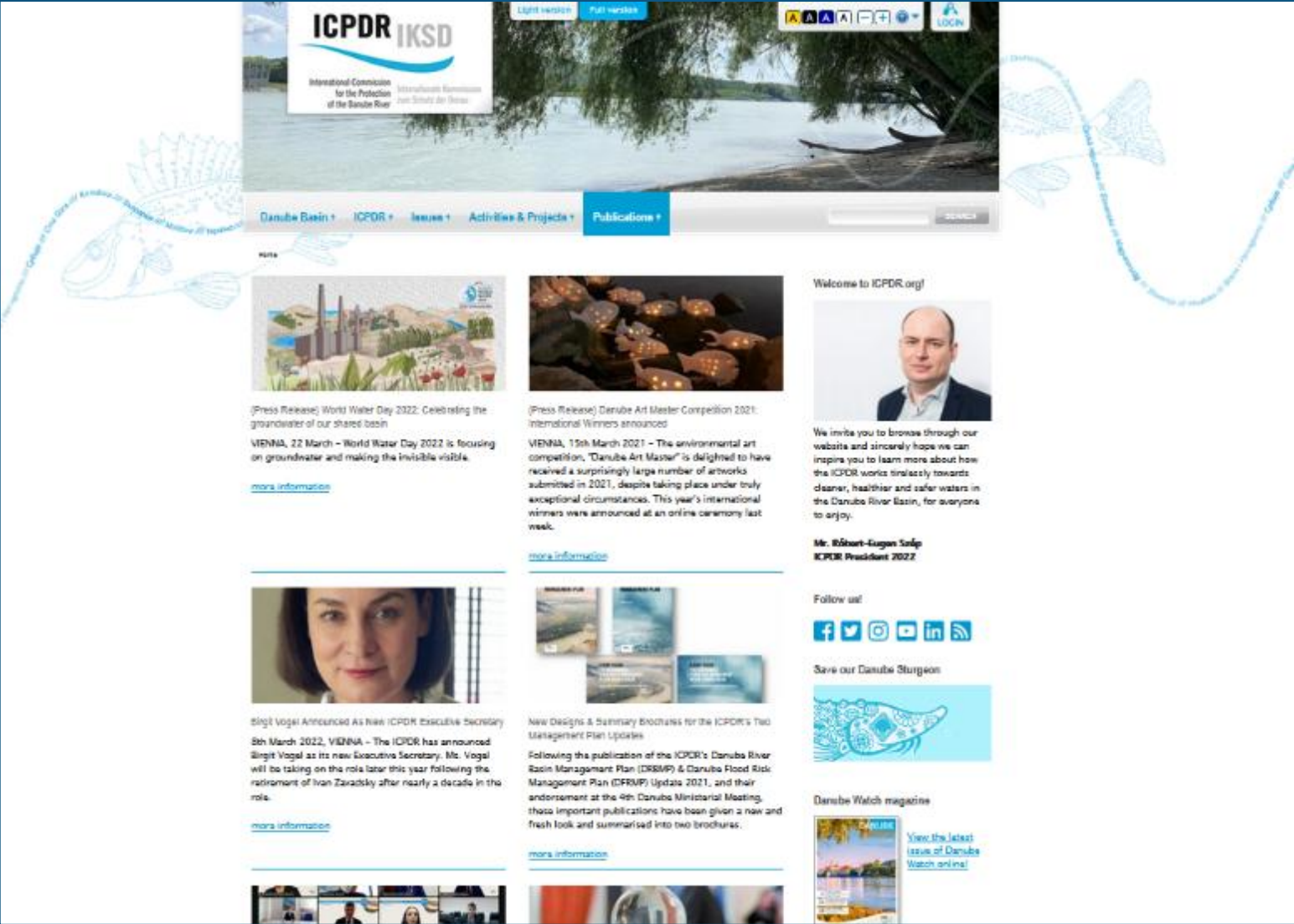


Website Highlight:

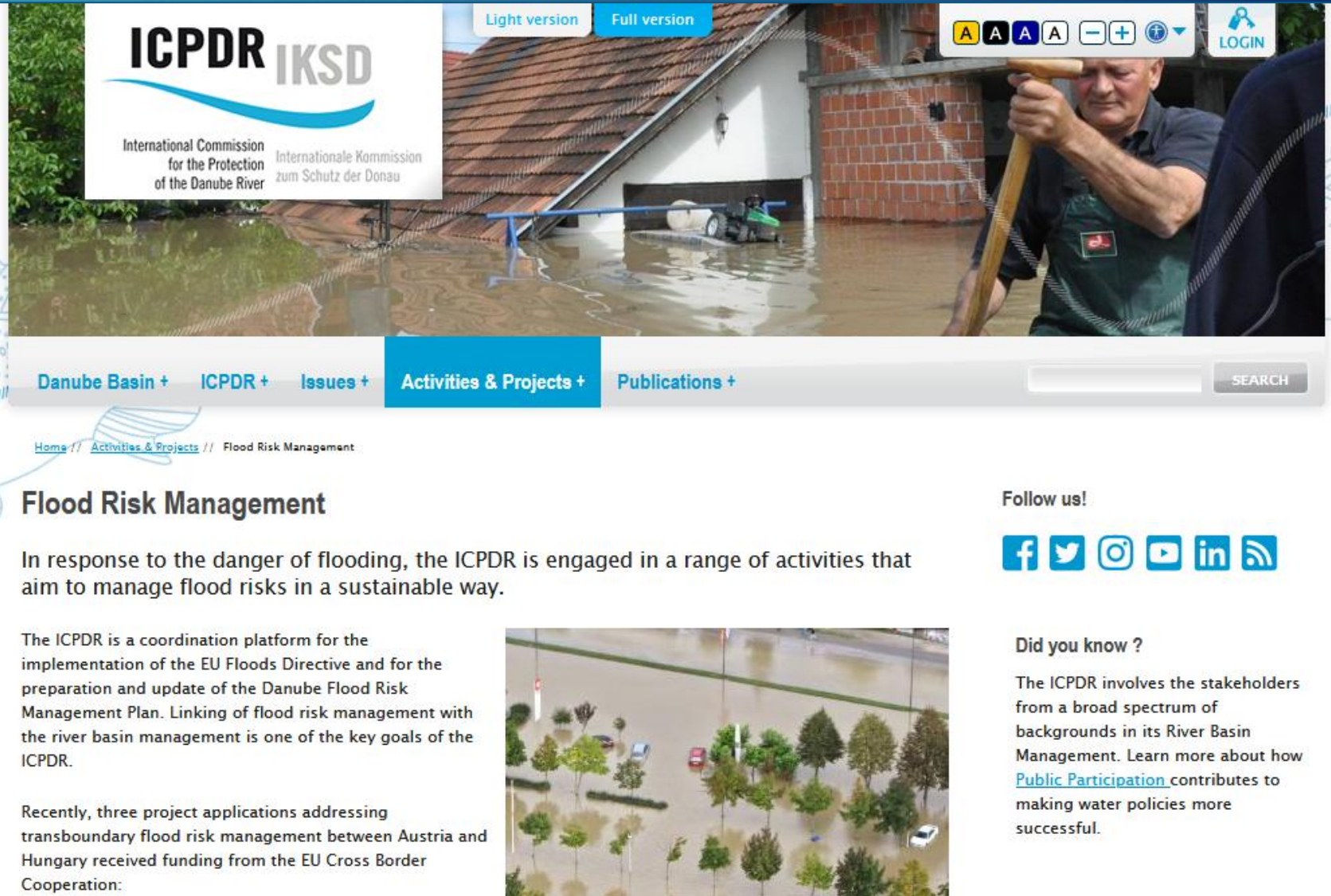
ICPDR Website Redesign Highlights

- ▶ Migrated to a **new CMS** for easier updates
- ▶ Introduced **mobile-responsive** design
- ▶ Improved **accessibility** features
- ▶ Streamlined **navigation** and **sitemap**
- ▶ Updated layout for **better readability** and **user navigation**
- ▶ **Modernized** visual design

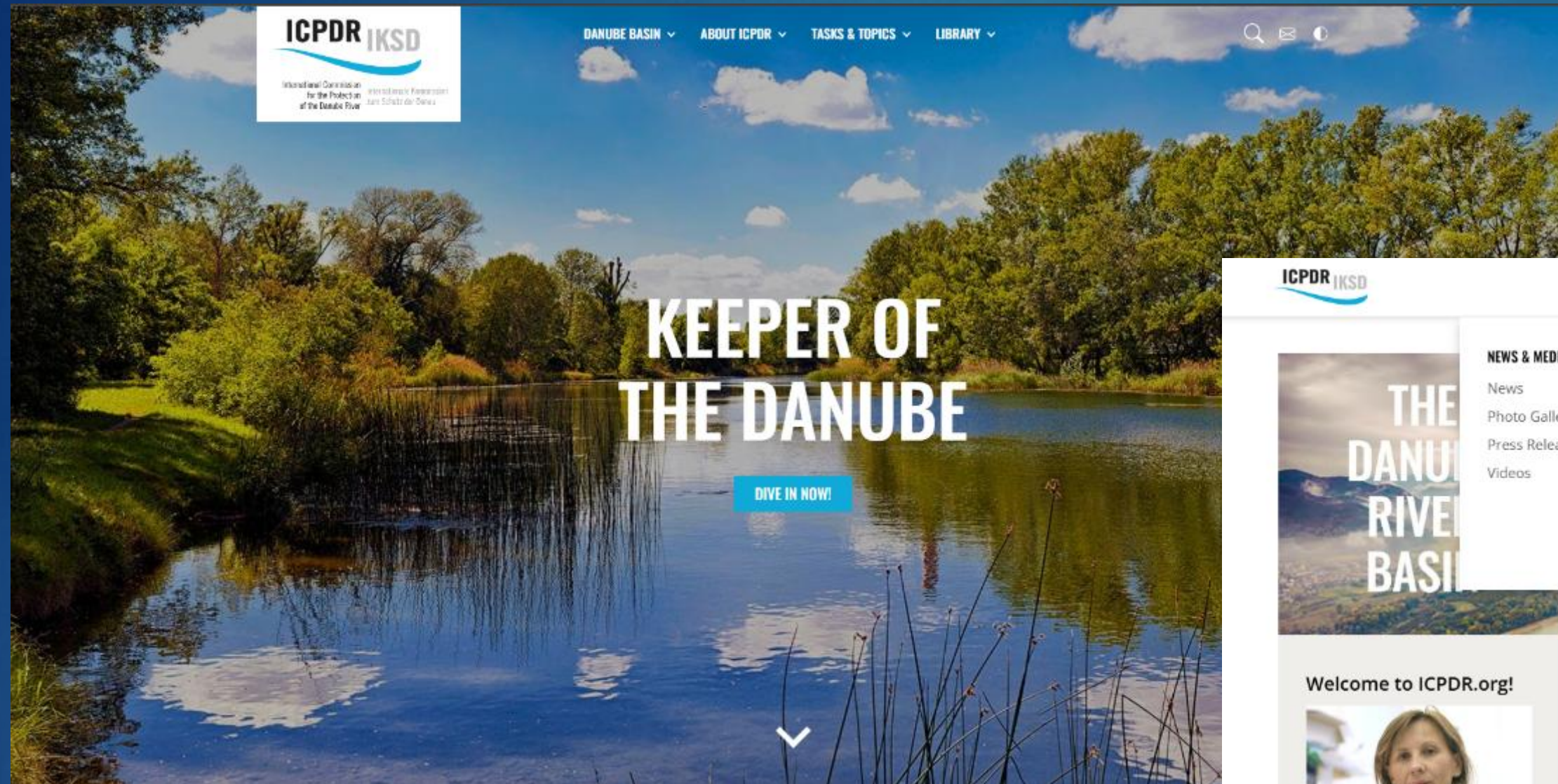
OLD ICPDR Website



Layout element or feature	Action (keep/remove/improve)	Remark
General layout	Improve	We have a “traditional” layout with header, menu, content area and sidebar, fixed content width and background image on top and bottom of the page – rather looking for a modernisation/evolution, not something completely different
(4) “Light” version	Keep/improve?	A theme without background images intended for users with low-bandwidth – is there a more elegant way to achieve the same effect?
(4) Accessibility features	Keep/improve?	3 additional colour-contrast themes and font-size change function – is this still current state of art?
(4) Link to internal working area	Improve	Only useful for ICPDR community -> could be moved to footer
(2) Main navigation	Improve	Rethink structure, simplify, should work on small/touch screens
(3) Search	Improve	Search results should be enriched with facets, e.g. types of content (e.g. News, Articles, Documents) and thematic areas (menu area)
(1) Main content	Improve	Depends on content type, see below...
(5) Sidebar	Improve	Contains editable blocks (e.g. President greeting, Social media links, Sturgeon banner, latest magazine issue).
(6) Footer	Keep	Links to Contact, Data privacy, Disclaimer, plus address and cookies info.



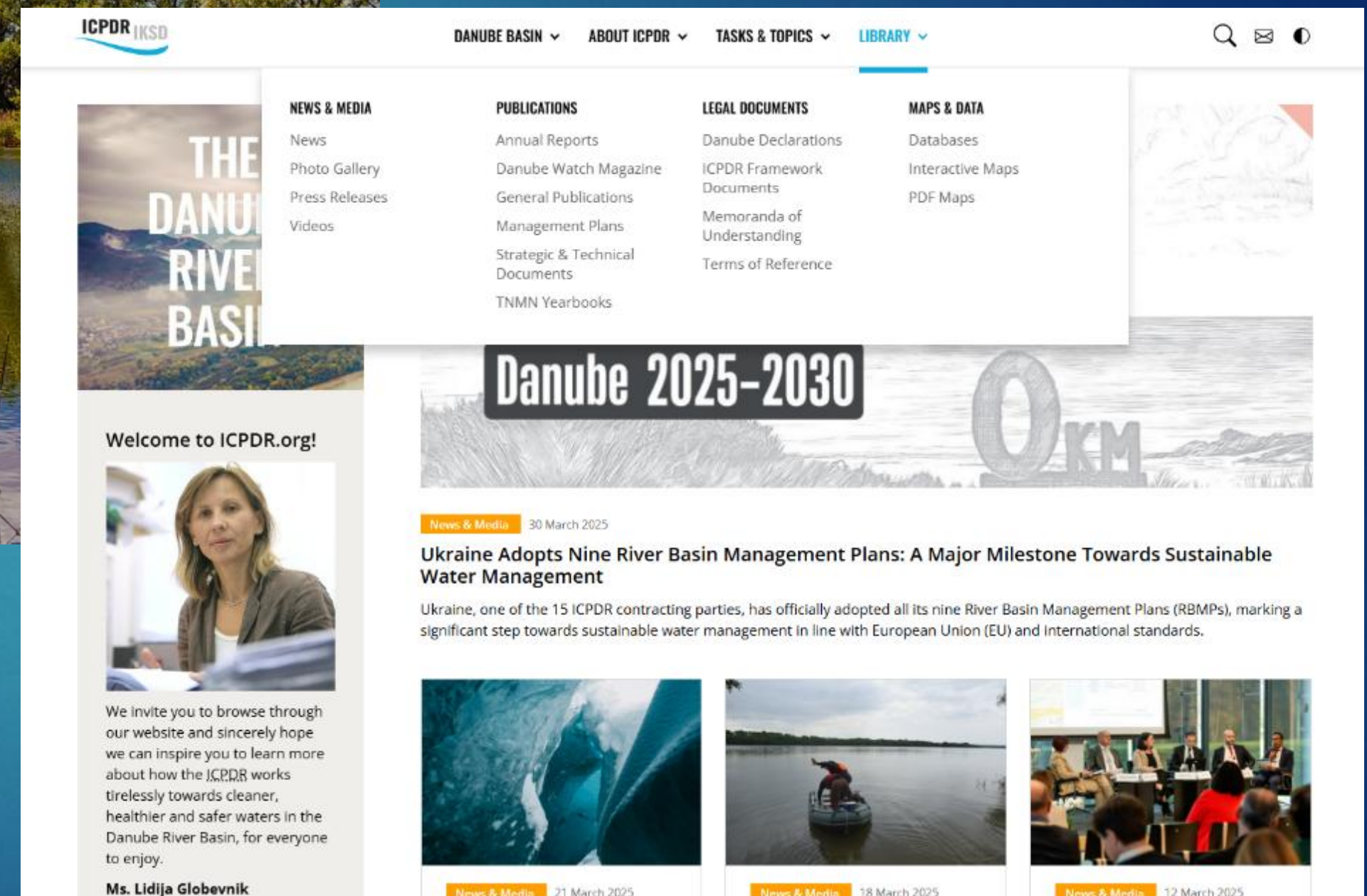
NEW ICPDR Website



DANUBE WATCH

Stay up to date with our Newsletter and the latest Danube stories.

☐ I have read and accepted the [privacy policy](#). *



More Examples of Good IW Project Websites

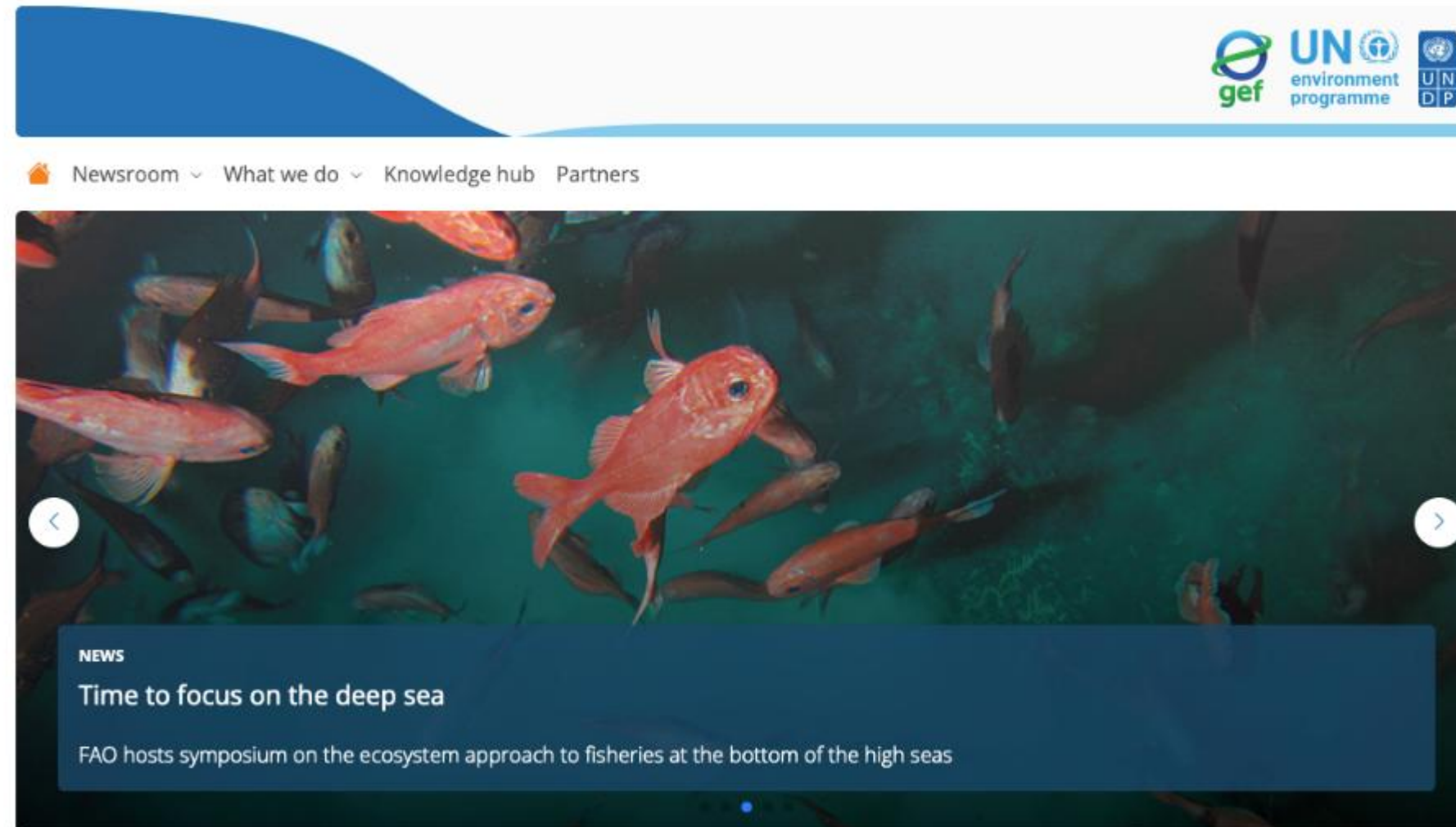
- Clear menu with reference to activities
- Prominent logos
- Clear website structure in the footer



<https://pacificosostenible.org>

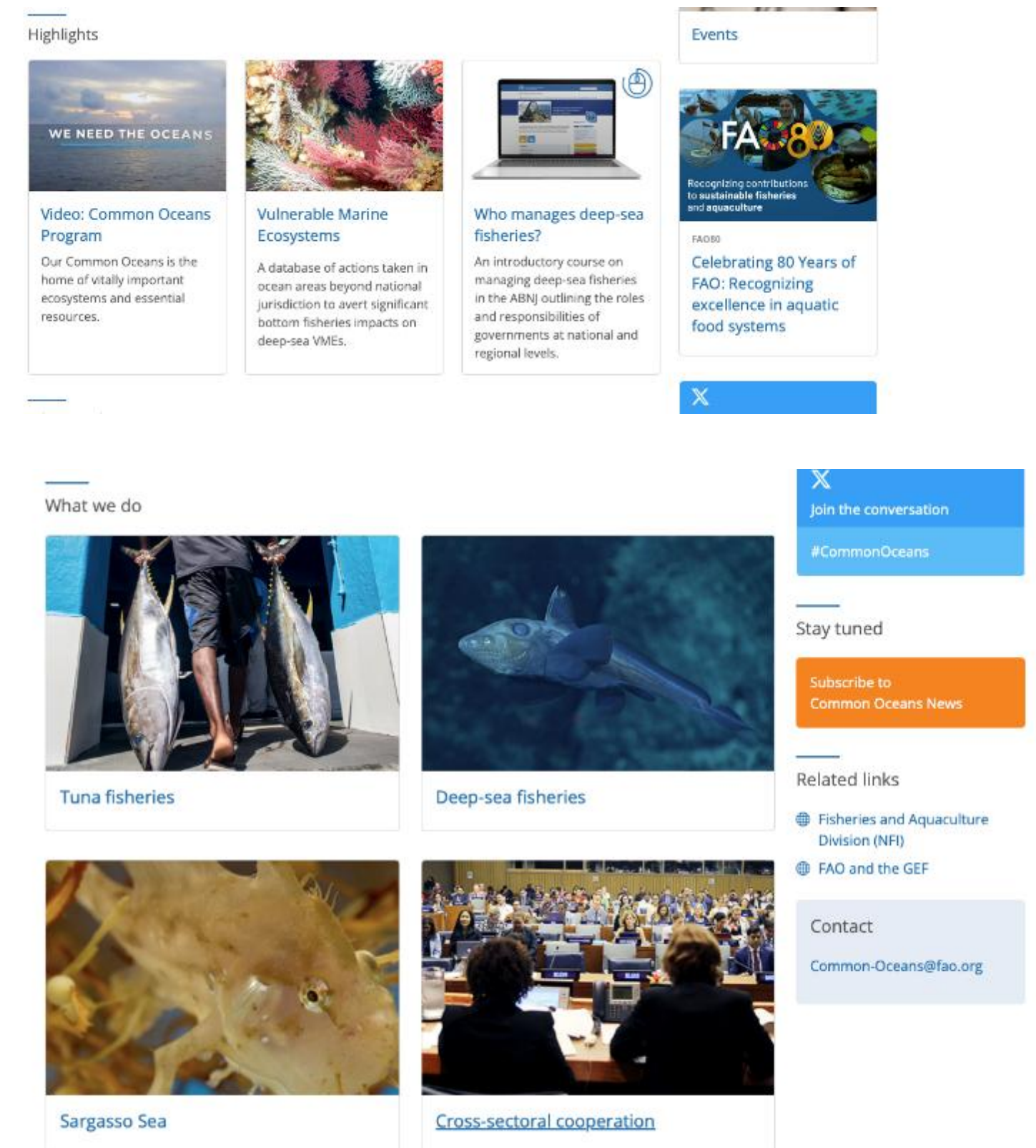
More Examples of Good IW Project Websites

Common Oceans Program



<https://www.fao.org/in-action/commonoceans/en>

- Clean design and menu
- What We Do tab



Questions?





Thank you

pcu@iwlearn.org
www.iwlearn.net

GEF



IW:LEARN



IW STORYMAP

