

M18 mid-way progress report (Milestone 2)

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Abstract	The STANDOUT Mid-Way Progress Report provides a public update on the project's progress during its first 18 months. It highlights key results from the research phase, the delivery of three international knowledge exchanges, and the early stages of the co-creation process for the outdoor sport standards. The report also reflects on lessons learned, outlines emerging impacts, and sets out the project's next priorities. It is intended for stakeholders, partners, and the broader community interested in inclusive, sustainable outdoor sports in urban environments.



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1. Executive Summary

This Mid-Way Progress Report (Milestone 2) provides an update on the STANDOUT project's activities and achievements during its first 18 months. It summarises key outcomes from all Work Packages (WPs), and outlines priorities for the next stage.

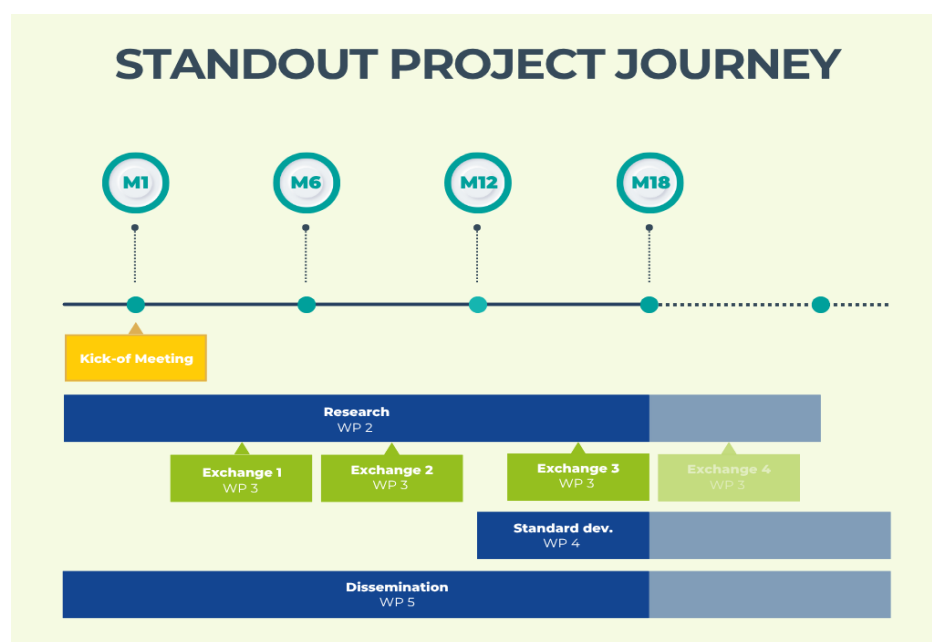
At the halfway point of the STANDOUT project, significant progress has been made in establishing a unified European approach to outdoor sports in urban environments. The project has completed a comprehensive research phase, held three international knowledge exchanges, and produced a first draft of a standard to assist cities in planning and evaluating outdoor sport policies and initiatives.

The research phase generated valuable insights into participation drivers, policy gaps, and best practices across 15 countries. These findings informed the co-creation of the draft standard, which is now coordinated by Silkeborg Kommune and prepared for testing in selected partner cities.

The three Knowledge Sharing Exchanges, held in Silkeborg, Lecco, and Viana do Castelo, brought together partners, experts, and local stakeholders to explore topics such as spatial planning, digitalisation, and indicator validation. These sessions also contributed to building a strong community of practice within the consortium.

Dissemination efforts have prioritised early visibility, including presentations at Euro'Meet 2024 and ICOS+ 2025, as well as an initial capacity-building session focused on social media communication. A project website is currently under development and will serve as a central hub for tools, updates, and stakeholder engagement.

Further, priorities will include pilot testing of the standard, website development, conducting knowledge exchanges, and expanding outreach through webinars and public events.



2. Research phase

Over the first 18 months of the STANDOUT project, substantial progress was made in understanding the landscape of outdoor sports in urban environments across Europe. Coordinated by the Technical University of Munich (TUM) and supported by all partners, the research phase addressed key dimensions of participation, good practice, and existing policy frameworks, laying the foundation for the next stages of the project.

A key milestone early in the project was the agreement on a common definition of “Outdoor Sports in Urban Areas”. This represented an early collaborative work, which has guided all subsequent activities and ensured a consistent research framework.



Outdoor sports in urban areas are defined as physical activities that take place in urban green and blue spaces to benefit health, well-being, and nature experience.



The definition includes criteria related to physical activity, nature experience, accessibility, sustainability, and the types of spaces and infrastructures used.

In the final months of the first year of the project and the beginning of 2025, several focus group workshops were held in different cities across Europe, led by project partners. These sessions explored the drivers and barriers to participation in outdoor sports, bringing together local authorities, community organisations, practitioners, and citizens to reflect on the challenges, motivations, and opportunities for outdoor sport in their urban contexts.

A total of 12 workshops were organised across 12 cities and 7 countries, engaging approximately 148 participants.



Denmark - Silkeborg

Sweden - Sundsvall

Portugal - Mafra, Rio Maior,
Viana do Castelo

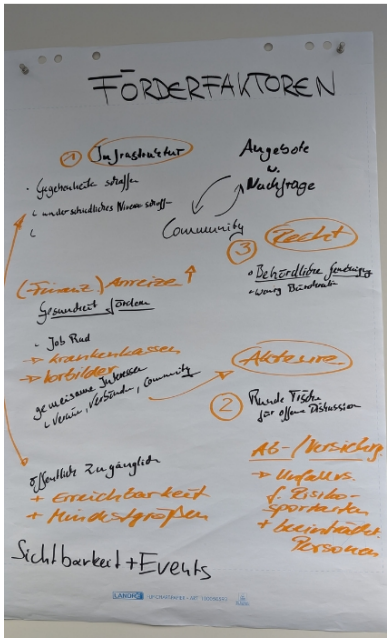
Germany - Munich, Leipzig,
Landsberg am Lech

Czech Republic - Prague

Italy - Perugia, Genova

Serbia - Bajina Bašta

Common themes included the importance of accessible infrastructure, the role of social cohesion and safety, and the value of locally driven initiatives. The workshops were documented and analysed using shared templates and methodology, and key findings were shared during a core group 3-day meeting held in Prague in January 2025.



In parallel, during the last 6 months of 2024, partners conducted a structured collection of good practice examples through coordinated desk research. These examples reflect a diversity of approaches to promoting active, healthy lifestyles through outdoor sport, covering topics such as sustainable infrastructure, community engagement, urban planning, and digital tools. A total of 70 examples were collected across 14 countries, with entries ranging from local initiatives and city programmes to national policy frameworks. These findings were used to inform the design of practical, scalable standards under WP4.

To complement the field research and good practices review, TUM led a qualitative analysis of 20 existing city-level labels and accreditation systems. The desk research focused on tools and frameworks that relate to sustainability, sport promotion, health, and mobility in urban environments. Examples include city-level schemes like “Green City Certification” in Germany, the “Ville Active & Sportive” label in France, and health promotion frameworks such as Healthy Ireland.

Initial findings suggest that while there is a wide array of frameworks targeting urban well-being or green infrastructure, very few address outdoor sports specifically. This comes to confirm the relevance and added value of the STANDOUT project in filling a clear gap at both local and European levels.

Now, a year and a half into the project, with all data collection completed and thematic analysis finalised, the research phase is entering its final stage. The consolidated Research Report (Deliverable D2.1) is scheduled for publication by December 2025. This report will present the most significant findings on the drivers and barriers to participation, as well as a range of good practice examples that promote healthy and active lifestyles through outdoor sports in urban environments. These insights will play a central role in guiding the co-creation of practical and inclusive standards under WP4.



3. Knowledge Exchanges

In the first half of the STANDOUT project, Work Package 3 (WP3) has played a central role in building a shared learning environment across the consortium. Led by the County Administrative Boards Länsstyrelsen (CABVN) and supported by all project partners, WP3 has focused on designing and delivering a series of transnational Knowledge Sharing Exchanges that bring together municipalities, experts, practitioners, and local stakeholders. These exchanges serve as dynamic platforms for dialogue, peer learning, and mutual inspiration, helping cities explore common challenges, share innovative practices, and test emerging ideas. They have also provided critical spaces for relationship-building within the partnership, while directly informing the development of co-created standards and pilot activities. By the end of the first 18 months, three of the five planned exchanges had been successfully delivered, laying a strong foundation for the next phase of the project.

SILKEBORG
Emphasis on spatial planning and access to nature as drivers of sustainable urban development.





LECCO
Focused on digital tools and standards to support collaboration, participation, and innovation.

VIANA DO CASTELO
Centred on validating indicators for practical and inclusive policy implementation.





Knowledge Exchange 1 – Silkeborg (Denmark)

The first exchange occurred in Silkeborg, Denmark, in May 2024. Identified as Denmark's self-proclaimed Outdoor Capital, Silkeborg not only hosted the event but also served as a significant source of inspiration for the STANDOUT project. The city's holistic approach to outdoor sports, where nature, health, education, and urban development are strategically interconnected, created an engaging backdrop for the launch of the project's knowledge exchange phase.

- 📍 **Location: Silkeborg, Denmark's Outdoor Capital**
- 👥 **Consortium first full in-person meeting**
- 🏛️ **Key Speakers: Johan Brødsgaard, Søren Hald, Xenia Lauritsen**
- 🗺️ **Theme: Spatial planning & cross-sector outdoor policy**
- 🌱 **Focus: Inclusion, nature access, and co-creation**
- 🚲 **Highlight: Exploring urban nature... by bike**

This was the first time the full consortium met in person, following an online kick-off meeting in January 2024. Meeting face-to-face was essential for building trust, strengthening working relationships, and fostering a sense of shared ownership among the partners at an early and formative stage of the project.

The program, hosted by the Outdoor Institute in collaboration with Silkeborg Kommune, focused on the role of local policies and spatial planning in supporting outdoor activities as a key component of sustainable urban development. Over the course of three days, participants explored how outdoor sports can enhance community welfare, promote health, and encourage environmental stewardship.

A diverse group of Danish experts contributed to the program. Deputy Mayor Johan Brødsgaard presented Silkeborg's strategic vision and political commitment to promoting outdoor sports across municipal departments. Simon Hartwell Christensen outlined the municipality's operational approach, emphasising cross-sector project development and collaboration with citizens. Heiko Buch-Illing from the Outdoor Institute introduced essential principles for knowledge sharing and evidence-based development in outdoor policy.

The exchange included contributions from national organisations, featuring Søren Hald from the Danish Nature Agency, who shared strategies for biodiversity, protected area management, and sustainable forestry. Kaspar Ginnerup Knudsen from Idræt om Dagen discussed nature-based public health initiatives. Sessions on accessibility and inclusion were led by Lærke Falstaff from the Handicap Knowledge Centre and Ulla Westendorp from Dybkjær Special School. They provided practical examples of how to make nature more inclusive for individuals with special needs.

Also, Xenia Ramirez Lauritsen from the Central Denmark EU Office led a session that introduced European perspectives. She presented models for standardisation across the continent and initiated early discussions on how STANDOUT could develop its own tools and recognition systems.

“ Collaboration among multiple stakeholders always creates added value, as everyone brings different ways of doing things. It opens up new perspectives on how we can achieve our goals. That’s precisely why European collaboration matters. ”

Xenia Ramirez Lauritsen

Participants had the opportunity to visit outdoor facilities like Søsportens Hus and Silkeborg Ungdomsskole. These site visits provided a firsthand experience of how the city integrates nature, sports, and education. Additionally, using mountain bikes for daily transportation added an immersive and eco-friendly element to the exchange, reinforcing Silkeborg's commitment to outdoor activities.



The feedback from the exchange was overwhelmingly positive. Participants highlighted the importance of place-based learning and commended the open and collaborative atmosphere. This exchange laid a strong foundation for the rest of the project and introduced many themes that would later influence the standards development process in WP4.

Knowledge Exchange 2 – Lecco (Italy)

The second exchange took place in Lecco, Italy, in September 2024. It focused on the role of digitalisation in promoting and managing outdoor sports in urban environments. Hosted by Trekkify, the program offered a dynamic mix of expert-led sessions, hands-on workshops, and peer learning activities, enhancing the project's exploration of technology as both a tool and a challenge in governing outdoor sports.

- 📍 **Location: Lecco, Northern Italy**
- 💻 **Focus: Digital tools for planning, engagement, and data**
- 🗣️ **Key Speakers: Massimo Mandelli (FIE), Anders Erlandsson (Sundsvall Municipality)**
- 🌱 **Innovation: SIGWAY project on green infrastructure reuse**
- 🧠 **Outcome: Connected research with future standardisation**

A key highlight of the program was a session led by Dominik Huber from Outdooractive. He introduced partners to digital solutions for mapping infrastructure, monitoring usage, and improving access. These solutions included route planners, georeferenced dashboards, mobile-friendly tools, and accessibility filters, many of which could support the future implementation of the STANDOUT standards. The session also included a reflective exercise on good and bad practices in digital communication, prompting participants to critically assess how technology can either enhance or hinder inclusive participation. This theme was further explored in a complementary input by Massimo Mandelli from the Italian Hiking Federation (FIE), who emphasised the role of responsible digitalisation in enhancing sustainability and promoting a more conscious relationship between people, nature, and urban outdoor activities.

This exchange was notable for being the first to operationalise the research methods developed under Work Package 2 (WP2). A hands-on workshop introduced participants to the tools and structure used to explore barriers and facilitators to outdoor sport participation, including the "Outdoor City Game" and a thematic focus group model. Partners were trained on how to apply these tools in their cities, ensuring consistency across local focus groups and strengthening the project's qualitative evidence base.

Jean Esselström and Anders Erlandsson shared their insights on developing national and local standards for outdoor recreation in Sweden. Drawing from their experiences in Västernorrland and Sundsvall, they emphasised the importance of aligning local needs with national policy goals. They also highlighted the value of long-term planning, community dialogue, and collaboration across different administrative levels. Their presentation served as an early model for integrating urban outdoor sport strategies into broader governance frameworks.

Additionally, Trekkify presented the SIGWAY project, which focuses on repurposing greenways and underused infrastructure to enhance outdoor mobility and engage the

community through principles of the circular economy. This project demonstrated how outdoor sports can promote environmental regeneration, social inclusion, and volunteerism, providing a creative, grassroots alternative to the more formal digital strategies discussed earlier in the program.

“The interaction between the natural environment and our approach to activities in urban and developed areas can help amplify the message of sustainability and responsibility, particularly in how we engage with tourism and hiking in today’s world.”

Massimo Mandelli

Overall, the exchange offered a valuable opportunity for relationship building among partners. The lessons learned from Lecco helped bridge the gap between research and practice, highlighting the crucial role that digital and policy frameworks will play in bringing the STANDOUT standards to fruition.



Knowledge xchange 3 – Viana do Castelo (Portugal)

The third Knowledge Sharing Exchange took place in Viana do Castelo, Portugal, in May 2025 and marked a significant turning point in the STANDOUT project. Organised by the Municipality of Viana and the Surfing Viana High-Performance Centre, this exchange focused on validating the draft standards developed under Work Package 4 (WP4) and aligning them with municipal realities and implementation pathways.

- 📍 **Location: Viana do Castelo, Portugal's water sports and sustainability hub**
- 🎯 **Focus: Validation of draft STANDOUT standard**
- 🛠️ **Workshop Tools: “Why–What–How” reflection model**
- 🗣️ **Input: STOKE certification and narrative-building**
- 🌊 **Highlight: Site visits to water sport and inclusive spaces**

Hosted in a city renowned for its water sports infrastructure and sustainability credentials, the exchange included structured workshops, peer learning, and hands-on outdoor experiences.

A key feature of the program was a series of workshops dedicated to reviewing the structure, categories, and indicators of the STANDOUT standard. Partners worked in small groups to assess the clarity, relevance, and feasibility of each indicator, using a shared scoring template to identify the most and least critical elements. This collaborative process brought up questions about terminology, measurement, and adaptability across diverse urban contexts. The workshops also introduced a “Why–What–How” reflection tool that encouraged partners to think more deeply about the purpose and application of specific indicators. The feedback gathered during these sessions will directly inform the next iteration of the draft standards.

The exchange also welcomed municipal representatives from Mafra, who provided valuable external validation. During an open discussion, the Mafra team confirmed the relevance of the draft categories and offered suggestions for making the indicators more accessible to small and medium-sized cities. Their input emphasised the importance of creating standards that are both rigorous and practical for implementation.

An important contribution came from the presentation of the STOKE sustainability certification system, which drew on the certification journey of Surf Clube de Viana. This session examined how self-assessment and third-party evaluation can be combined to foster continuous improvement. The STOKE model provided both a technical reference and a philosophical alignment with STANDOUT's goals, particularly regarding transparency, stakeholder involvement, and long-term commitment.

Throughout the discussion, the concepts of narrative and identity emerged as crucial elements in the development of standards. Partners emphasised the importance of framing

outdoor sports as an integral part of a city's cultural fabric and using storytelling as a tool to foster ownership, visibility, and political support.

The program also featured outdoor activities, including guided visits to local water sports centers and practical sessions on environmental awareness and inclusion. These activities reinforced the connection between policy, infrastructure, and lived experience, ensuring that discussions about standards remained relevant and adaptable to various geographical, cultural, and institutional contexts.

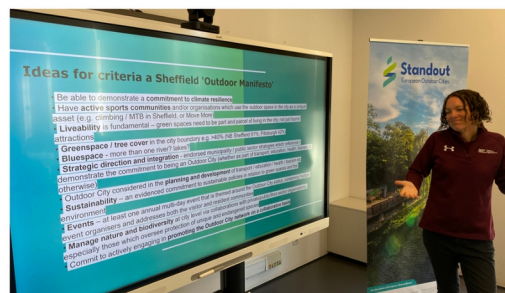
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Sustainability isn't a stamp; it's a long-term commitment that can only be achieved by the entire organization and its partners.

João Zamith

”

By the end of the exchange, the partnership had not only tested the structure of the STANDOUT standard but had also strengthened its foundation through validation, dialogue, and mutual learning. The meeting in Viana thus served as a springboard for the next stages of WP4, while continuing to highlight the value of WP3 as a platform for reflection, co-creation, and momentum-building across Europe.



4. Development of standards

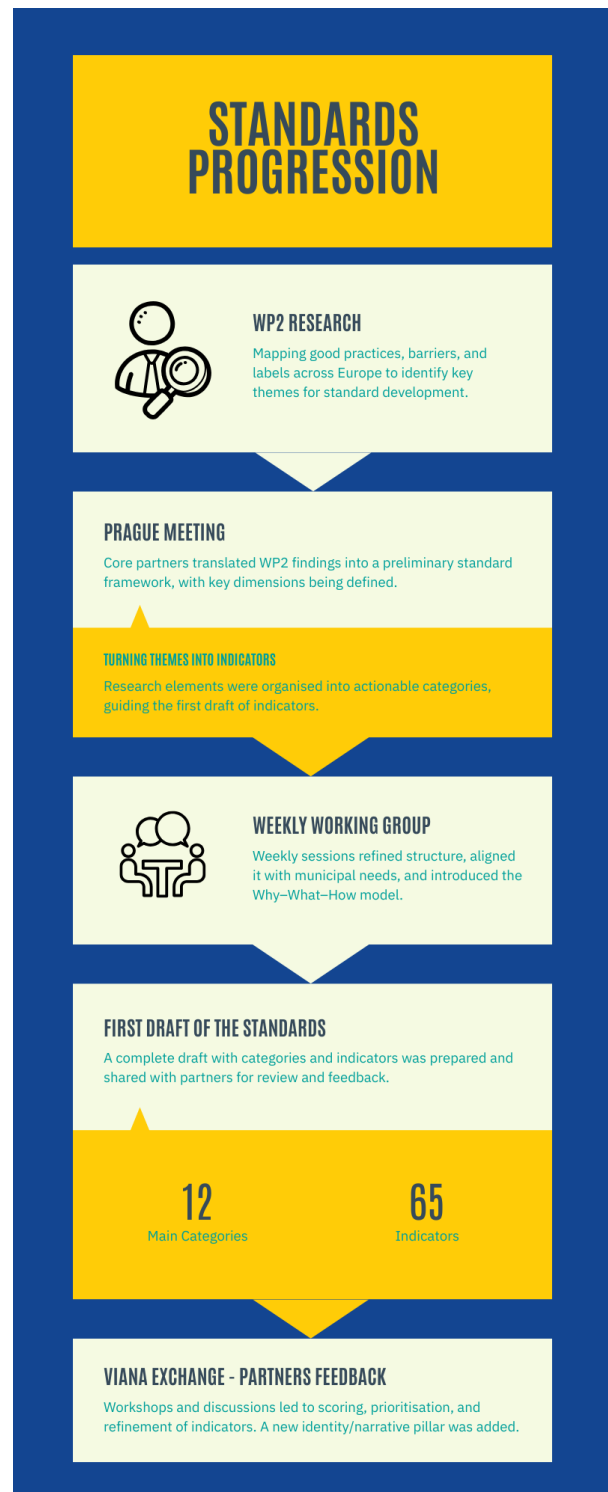
The development of a shared standard for outdoor sports in urban areas is a central objective of the STANDOUT project. Over the first 18 months, Work Package 4 (WP4) has evolved from concept to concrete structure through a collaborative and iterative process, drawing insights from WP2 and engaging with partners continuously.

The initial development of the standards was supported by the Outdoor Institute, which hosted the first in-person exchange in Silkeborg and provided input on the structure and thematic priorities. Building on findings from WP2, which included mapping good practices across European cities and gathering insights from local focus groups on participation drivers and barriers, the consortium began to shape a shared framework for the standard. These research outcomes established a strong evidence base for identifying key themes and drafting early structural elements.

In early 2025, leadership of WP4 transitioned to Silkeborg Kommune (SK), a partner with strategic experience and a well-established local approach to outdoor policy. This shift coincided with a core group meeting in Prague in January 2025, during which WP2 results were reviewed and co-creation efforts commenced. During a three-day working session, a preliminary structure for the standard was developed, emphasising areas such as infrastructure, governance, accessibility, participation, and sustainability.

Since then, the core working group, coordinated by SK and supported by ENOS, TUM, CUP, and CABVN, has been meeting regularly to refine the draft. These sessions have allowed the group to clarify indicator definitions, align with municipal realities, and develop a working methodology to support future implementation.

By the time of the third Knowledge Exchange in Viana do Castelo, this process resulted in the first draft of the STANDOUT



standard. This version was shared with the full consortium and became the focus of a multi-day workshop, where partners reviewed and scored indicators, assessed the clarity and relevance of the framework, and reflected on the feasibility of implementation across different urban contexts.

Feedback from the workshops in Viana confirmed the relevance of the draft standard and highlighted areas for further refinement, particularly in simplifying terminology, clarifying data requirements, and ensuring flexibility for cities with varying capacities. A key insight from this exchange was the importance of allowing cities to express their narratives, leading to the inclusion of identity-building elements within the framework.

By the end of this reporting period, a revised version of the draft was already in progress. It will serve as the foundation for pilot activities in the next phase of the project, where selected municipalities will apply and test the standard in real contexts. Additionally, supporting tools and templates will be developed to guide cities through the self-assessment process and facilitate peer learning across the network. A clean version of the draft standard, containing the complete set of categories, indicators, and accompanying implementation guidance, has been prepared and will be made available to partners and stakeholders through the project website.

5. Impact assessment and dissemination

During the first 18 months of the STANDOUT project, Work Package 5 (WP5) has undertaken several key actions to enhance project visibility, strengthen communication among partners, and lay the groundwork for long-term impact tracking. Coordinated by MTF and supported by all consortium members, this work is steadily establishing a foundation for a more strategic dissemination phase in the project's second half.

The STANDOUT Dissemination Handbook is based on an intensive analysis of narratives, which were developed specifically for the project and discussed in several online meetings and during the second exchange meeting in Lecco, Italy. It serves further as a guideline for the project-related communication and dissemination activities by all partners, containing the dissemination strategy, visual identity, formal guidelines, and templates for presentations, documents, and promotion material (poster, flyer, roll-ups). The STANDOUT landing page, hosted on the ENOS website, is under ongoing development. While the page provides a basic overview of the project's goals and partnership, further enhancements are planned to expand its structure and content as the main project website is developed. In the coming months, the project website will host dedicated sections for standards, a self-assessment quick check, and pilot city activities.

To support (internal) communication and build dissemination capacity across the consortium, the first part of the STANDOUT Social Media Workshop was delivered to partners. Based on a pre-survey, this session introduced social media channels, the basic principles of digital storytelling, and strategic content sharing while providing a space for partners to reflect on their communication approaches. Feedback gathered during the session will inform the design of the follow-up modules focused on practical implementation and a final session on sponsored content strategies.

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The social media training was very engaging and full of practical tips I can apply both personally and professionally.

Elena Volterrani (Trekify)

”

Externally, STANDOUT has begun to establish its presence by participating in key sector events. The project was first introduced to a broader audience at Euro'Meet 2024, held in Lecco in September, where it contributed to the wider European dialogue on outdoor sports and active cities. More recently, in June 2025, STANDOUT was presented at the ICOS+ Conference in Rio Maior, where the team shared early results and discussed the standard co-creation process during a dedicated session. These presentations have initiated engage-

ment with stakeholders beyond the immediate consortium and laid the foundation for future partnerships and increased visibility.



Together, these activities represent a significant starting point for the project's dissemination and strategy. The remaining half of the project will focus on transforming these foundational elements into active communication and engagement channels, ensuring that project results are not only co-created but also seen, shared, and scaled across Europe. This will include presenting STANDOUT at various national and international conferences as well as organising a series of webinars and thematic sessions on the project results designed to facilitate knowledge exchange, stakeholder engagement, and the uptake of the standard.

6. Lessons learned and areas for improvement

The first 18 months of the STANDOUT project have provided valuable insights into research and content development, as well as internal processes, collaboration, and engagement strategies.

One key lesson learned is the importance of maintaining continuity and regular communication in coordinating work packages. For example, the transition of leadership for Work Package 4 to Silkeborg Kommune was significantly improved through weekly meetings, which facilitated a smooth and transparent handover.

Another important finding relates to the diversity of city contexts within the consortium. Feedback gathered during the Viana exchange highlighted the need for flexibility in our standards and emphasised the importance of framing indicators in a way that can adapt to various municipal capacities and administrative structures.

While dissemination activities have started to gain traction, the development of the project's digital presence (e.g., landing page and social media planning) remains an area of improvement for the coming months. The project has also identified the need to strengthen internal coordination tools and further support partners in communicating their local activities.



These lessons will guide the planning and execution of the next phase, particularly during the piloting and evaluation stages, ensuring that the project remains responsive, inclusive, and impactful.

8. Priorities for Next 18 Months

The second half of the STANDOUT project will be focused on testing, refining, and consolidating the tools and knowledge developed during the first 18 months. With the research phase complete and the first draft of the standard co-created, the emphasis now shifts to piloting, digitalisation, and enhanced external engagement.

- A core priority will be piloting the draft STANDOUT standard in selected cities, starting with Silkeborg and Viana do Castelo. These cities will apply the standard within their local contexts, utilising co-creation workshops and stakeholder engagement to assess the performance of the indicators in practice. The goal is to evaluate usability, relevance, and adaptability across different urban environments while gathering structured feedback to improve the clarity and feasibility of the framework. This process will lead to the refinement and finalisation of the standard, directly informing its future implementation in European cities.
- Alongside the piloting, two additional Knowledge Sharing Exchanges are scheduled. The fourth exchange will be held in Västernorrland, Sweden, in September 2025, focusing on the intersection of public health and outdoor recreation. The fifth and final exchange will take place in Munich and Immenstadt in spring 2026, concentrating on evidence-based policymaking, the management of shared public spaces, and reflections on the piloting experience. Both exchanges will contribute to the final outputs of WP3, including the online learning resource, stakeholder mapping model, and a carbon impact and sustainable mobility report.
- At the same time, the digitalisation of the STANDOUT standard will commence. This will include designing and developing an online self-assessment tool that cities can use to engage with the standard independently. The digital format will be user-friendly, scalable, and adaptable, supporting long-term uptake beyond the project's duration.
- Efforts will also intensify around dissemination and stakeholder engagement. The current landing page will evolve into a comprehensive project website featuring the standard, project results, partner stories, and thematic resources. A series of national and international webinars will be launched to promote the project to a wider audience, while STANDOUT will continue to be presented at key sector events. Additionally, preparations will begin for the final international launch event, scheduled to be held in Serbia in 2026, marking the public presentation of the project's final tools and findings.

As these activities unfold, attention will also shift to evaluation. The impact assessment strategy, currently in its early stages, will be further developed in line with the pilot activities and dissemination efforts, ensuring that the project can effectively measure its outcomes and legacy.

In summary, the next phase of STANDOUT will transform co-created ideas into tested and usable tools while strengthening the project's external presence and supporting cities in reimagining outdoor sports as an integrated part of urban life.