Website content and design resources

For Lead Partnering Countries and Regional Coordinating Organizations participating in the GloFouling Partnerships Project

To provide information related to biofouling management, invasive aquatic species and any work related to the Project, national authorities (normally the Lead Agency or the ministry of environment) and regional coordinating organizations taking part in the GloFouling Partnerships project are required to create either a new website, or a series of webpages in an already existing institutional website.

However, in today's globalised world, it is not enough to just have a digital presence. To captivate live readers, an optimized, functional and interactive website is an obligation. Thus, the Project Coordination Unit for GloFouling Partnerships has drafted the following recommendations with the hope they can support a successful design of national and regional websites. A series of resources such as photographs, graphs and logos are also available and may be used freely by all countries and regional organizations.

Sources of information and website content

Regional and national websites should provide access to information on the issue at the national or regional level, tailored to the needs and the potential audience in the country or region. The main source of information should be any reports on the subject developed at the national or regional level. In the first case, the National Status Assessment report developed by each Lead Partnering Country would be one of the key resources, both for providing the main aspects that should be included and the content. Other sources of information would be relevant stakeholders taking part in the National Task Force or Regional Coordinating Organizations (such as ministries, universities, environmental NGOs and industry associations).

The information provided in the website should be relevant and specific to each country. The following points should be included, either directly in the text or through links to relevant reports or documents:

- **What are invasive aquatic species.** This should include the information on any species of particular concern in the country or region, with links to a database if it exists at the national or regional level, and a brief explanation of the invasive species potential impacts on the marine environment.
- **What is biofouling.** A brief explanation of how it affects different maritime industries in the country or region and its role as a pathway for invasive aquatic species.
- **Planning.** What are the plans and actions to tackle the issue at the national or regional level.
- **Recommendations or best practices for biofouling management.** With access to documents or guidance on best practices, either published by GloFouling or through other national, regional or international entities such as the

IMO guidelines. Where possible materials should be in the local language.

- **Biofouling requirements.** Regulations, protocols or requirements for all national or regional maritime industries related to biofouling management, with detailed information on any required authorizations or processes.
- **Activities.** Information on activities, meetings or conferences undertaken as part of the GloFouling Project and organized by the country or region.
- **Research and reports.** Links to reports developed at the national or regional level related to biofouling management, including reports developed under the GloFouling Project.
- **Link to the main website of the GloFouling Partnerships Project:** www.glofouling.imo.org.
- **Information on partners**. A list of stakeholders or institutions taking part in the effort at the national or regional level. This should include contacts or details of the national agencies responsible for the different aspects related to biofouling and invasive aquatic species, including government agencies, industry associations and scientific institutions or research centres. To this effect, guidance should be sought from the national focal point or the national project coordinator for GloFouling in each country, or from the regional coordinator when it is at the regional level.

The website may include information on companies and services offered by private sector companies at the national or regional level. However, in no case shall it give the impression that private sector companies are endorsed or approved by GloFouling Partnerships or IMO.

Finally, the website may suggest ways on how people or companies may contribute to the efforts to tackle biofouling. Examples of calls for action can be communicating about any invasive species detected, improving biofouling in recreational boating, etc.

Design recommendations

In a world where people have access to more than a billion websites, website design needs to be optimized for:

- **usability** – how easy the website is to use?
- **experience** – how enjoyable and informative is the interacting with the website for the actual users?

When it comes to designing a website, there is already much guidance available, even free and online. The purpose of this guidance is not to give instructions on how to design a website. The following list of helpful recommendations was put together to follow when considering content for national or regional website.

The GloFouling Partnerships team in London has also compiled some resources such as photos, clip arts and logos that can be used for the design of the national or regional website. Links for downloading the materials are available at the end of this guidance. Correct attribution should be made where required.

Simplicity

While the look and feel of a website is important, most visitors are not coming to the site to evaluate how good the design is. Instead, they are coming to find some specific piece of information related to biofouling or invasive aquatic species.

Nevertheless, certain elements on the website are going to detract from the value and message that is being conveyed. Complicated animations, content that is too long, stocky website images are just a few factors on the list. Simplicity can be employed in a variety of different ways. Here are some examples:

- **Colours**. Do not use too many. It is recommended to use a maximum of five (plus or minus two) different colours in the design. If the webpages are part of an already existing website, follow the existing design.
- **Typefaces**. The typefaces chosen should be legible at the very least. And when it comes to font colours, there should not be too many. A common recommendation is to use a maximum of three different typefaces in a maximum of three different sizes.
- **Graphics**. Only use them if they attract a user to complete a task or perform a specific function. The page should focus on the key content. Avoid using very big photos or graphic files that take a long time to load.
- **Animations**. Consider including various features into the design such as splash screens, push notifications, and animated page transitions to elevate overall user experience.
- **Charts.** Whilst charts allow to convey data easily, it is recommended to use only most relevant charts, as too many may lose the interest of the user.

Visual Hierarchy

Closely tied to the principle of simplicity, visual hierarchy entails arranging and organizing website elements so that visitors naturally gravitate toward the most important elements first. The goal is to lead visitors to complete a desired action, but in a way that feels natural and enjoyable. By adjusting the position, colour, or size of certain elements, the site can be structured in such a way that visitors will be drawn to those elements first.

Navigability

Having intuitive navigation on the website is crucial for ensuring visitors can find what they are looking for. Ideally, a visitor should be able to arrive on the website and not have to think extensively about where they should click next - moving from point A to point B should be as easy as possible.

Here are a few tips for optimizing the site's navigation:

- Keep the structure of the primary navigation simple (and near the top of the page).
- Include navigation in the footer of the site.
- Use breadcrumbs on every page (except for the homepage) so people be aware of their navigation trail.
- Include a search box near the top of the site so visitors can search by keywords.
- Don't offer too many navigation options on a page.
- Avoid creating too many levels for users to dig too deep. In most cases, it's best to keep the navigation to no more than three levels deep.
- Any links included within the page should make it clear to where they lead or what information will pop up.
- Once the site's main (top) navigation is determined, keep it consistent. The labels and location of the navigation should remain the same on each and every page of the site.
- Let the visitors to scroll on the homepage. Designing a slightly longer homepage, including 3-5 sections that help direct new and recurring users to most important areas of the site, can help create a seamless experience.

Consistency

In addition to keeping website navigation consistent, the overall look and feel should be similar across all of the site's pages and also within the design of the main website where it is embedded. Backgrounds, colour schemes, typefaces, and the tone of the writing in all areas of the website should be consistent, which can have a positive impact on usability and user experience.

However, this does not mean that every page on the website should have the same exact layout. Instead, different layouts for specific types of pages should be created (e.g. a layout for landing pages, a layout for informational pages, etc.), and by using those layouts consistently make it easier for visitors to understand what type of information they're likely to find on a given page.

Accessibility

Tablets and smartphones are responsible for 51% internet consumption globally. This means that in order to provide a truly great user experience, websites need to be compatible with the different devices (and operating systems, and browsers) that visitors are using. This means that is worth creating a responsive site, where content is automatically resized and reshuffled to fit the dimensions of whichever device a visitor happens to be using.

Ultimately, it is more important that websites provide a great experience across different platforms as opposed to having the same identical look across those platforms. For example, it could mean adhering to specific design conventions for mobile phone browsers instead of trying to squeeze in unique elements that are available in the desktop version that may not work well for mobile phones.

Conventionality

There are certain web design conventions which, over the years, internet users have become increasingly familiar with. Such conventions include:

- Having the main navigation at the top (or left side) of a page.
- Having a logo at the top left (or centre) of a page.
- Having that logo clickable so it always brings a visitor back to the homepage.
- Having links change colour/appearance when hovering over them.
- While it might be tempting to not follow all such design conventions for the purpose of being completely original or unique, this should be done carefully.

Testing

At the end of the day, usability and user experience hinge on the preferences of the end users. So, while the recommendations detailed in this guidance are a great starting point, the real key to improving the performance of the website is to conduct some testing to ensure it complies with this checklist:

- **Fast Loading.** Users do not like to wait for a long period of time for the site to load. Design sites with prompt loading times for all users on all devices (even the ones with slower Internet connections). Pingdom or PageSpeed Insights software by Google allow to check website speed and how it can be improved.
- **Tracking Enabled.** Analytics matter – it is the best way to determine that the website is actually doing its job. The final design should include functionality to gauge key indicators such as traffic, goals, and conversions.

- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO).** To develop a substantial online presence, it is important to ensure that the website can be found through the main internet search engines. This starts with including all important on-page SEO tags and elements that take into consideration the search terms that users would use when making research or looking for information.
- **Social Media**. Integrate all relevant social media platforms within the site design. Allowing users to quickly access social media pages from the website instantly broadens a brand's reach and helps to increase visibility and traffic.
- **Strong Security.** Never compromise on-site security. Every design should include fundamental security and privacy protocols, such as basic security checks, to protect user data.
- **Identify broken links.** Take the time to evaluate whether or not the site has broken pages. There might be previously high performing landing pages that are unpublished or website pages that are improperly linked.

Website design resources

A package of photographs, logos and infographics is available for download through this **Link:**

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/a2ydhgqy3vcfbxi/AABj5Up7x4WouNtaSl9jf1yLa?dl=0

Use of all materials should respect the following conventions:

Logos. Logos for GloFouling Partnerships, GEF, UNDP and IMO are provided in PNG format. While the size may be changed, the proportions and colours should be maintained at all times.

Other visuals. The images are free to use, but appropriate credit should be given to authors. The appropriate way to give credit is as follows (all credits are available in the name of the visual):

© [Photographer's name] / [Source]