

STADIEM

STARTUP DRIVEN INNOVATION IN EUROPEAN MEDIA

D5.9 OUTREACH AND IMPACT CREATION ACTIVITIES REPORT V2

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Abstract	This document describes the STADIEM communication and impact creation activities (T5.1) carried out during the second half of the project. Thanks to a close monitoring of KPIs and achievements, this document provides an overview of the activities implemented based on the strategy and plans outlined in D5.2 and the plan for the second half of the project (as outlined in D5.8)
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* R: Document, report (excluding the periodic and final reports)

DEM: Demonstrator, pilot, prototype, plan designs



DEC: Websites, patents filing, press & media actions, videos, etc.

OTHER: Software, technical diagram, etc.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The deliverable describes how STADIEM has followed, in the reporting period M19-M36, a comprehensive and effective approach to dissemination, communication and community building activities, based upon the strategy defined in Deliverable [D5.8: Outreach and impact creation activities report v1](#) (Submitted on M18 – March 2022). The objectives previously outlined are centered on outreach and impact-creation efforts that are key to ensure widespread exposure of all intended stakeholders in the Next Generation Media to STADIEM's activities, achievements and ambition – For more details on such objectives and target groups, please refer to section 2.1.

In the second half of the project, the consortium has harvested fruitful results from a wide range of dissemination, promotional and engagement activities. The different communication channels and dissemination tools identified at the beginning of the project and presented in D5.8 (such as the project website, newsletters, social media channels, press releases, printed and digital promotion materials and videos) were used to promote the activities, results and Open Calls' scale-up cohorts' progress, carried within the STADIEM project. In order to maximise the impact on the European Next Generation Media ecosystem and to support the sustainability of what created through the project, the communication and dissemination effort was successfully redirected towards corporates/investors following the conclusion of the Open Calls. With a strong batch of innovative scale-ups on board, it was now necessary to bring their work - and the success story of the STADIEM programme - to the attention of such target groups.

The key results are listed as follows:

- STADIEM strengthened its online presence featuring quality content on the project's activities and results, animating its social media channels (for a total followers count of over 990 stakeholders and creating multimedia promotional tools (details on which are offered in section 2.3).
- STADIEM created additional 14 videos featuring project activities and testimonials - engaging start-ups/scale-ups and partners - for a total output of 36, reaching over 2,600 views.
- In the second reporting period, STADIEM has continued to widely promote its results and activities, reaching more than 400,000 stakeholders (including subscribers to social media channels, website visitors and mailing lists), with the added beneficial impact brought by the re-sharing actions or individual posts by partners and beneficiaries, greatly contributing to the success in informing the targeted ecosystem about the project.
- 4 additional STADIEM press releases were distributed to over 30 specialized media contacts.
- STADIEM has participated in 28 major relevant events and presented itself to relevant stakeholders (such as media corporates, scale-ups, investors, policy makers), covering a diverse and wide range of European countries.

The collaboration among all partners – and the onboarded start-ups and scale-ups – continued at a steady pace and with great impact, as a further proof of the mutual importance and overall necessity of a cross-pollinating and resonating communication and dissemination support system, thus allowing the project to maintain a high level of communication intensity (please see the numbers relating to digital-only communication in section 2.3.2, about video output) and event presence (see the figures reported in section 2.5) even within the final leg of the COVID-19 emergency (April 2022 – August 2022).





TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS	6
LIST OF FIGURES.....	7
LIST OF TABLES	8
ABBREVIATIONS.....	9
1 INTRODUCTION.....	10
1.1 Purpose of the document.....	10
1.2 Structure of the document.....	10
2 OUTREACH AND IMPACT CREATION ACTIVITIES M19-M36	11
2.1 Objectives and stakeholders.....	11
2.2 Online Dissemination	11
2.3 Promotional materials	19
2.4 Press releases and press coverage	23
2.5 Events	24
3 PLAN OF ACTIVITIES AFTER PROJECT'S END.....	35
4 DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION IMPACT ASSESSMENT	36
4.1 KPIs	36
5 CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED	38
ANNEX A – PRESS CLIPPING SELECTION.....	39



LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: STADIEM WEBSITE - HOMEPAGE.....	12
FIGURE 1: STADIEM WEBSITE - TRAFFIC OVERVIEW AND VISIT DURATION.....	13
FIGURE 2: STADIEM WEBSITE – TOP VISITED PAGES.....	13
FIGURE 3: STADIEM WEBSITE – VISITS PER COUNTRY	13
FIGURE 4: STADIEM X/TWITTER ACCOUNT	14
FIGURE 5: STADIEM LINKEDIN ACCOUNT	14
FIGURE 6: STADIEM YOUTUBE CHANNEL	15
FIGURE 7: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM’S NEWSLETTER 6.....	16
FIGURE 8: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM’S NEWSLETTER 7.....	16
FIGURE 9: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM’S NEWSLETTER 8.....	17
FIGURE 10: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM’S NEWSLETTER 9.....	17
FIGURE 11: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM’S NEWSLETTER 10	18
FIGURE 12: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM’S NEWSLETTER 11	18
FIGURE 13: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM’S NEWSLETTER 12.....	19
FIGURE 14: FIRST DOUBLE-PAGE SPREAD OF THE STADIEM BOOKLET AND THE BOOKLET AT IBC 2022 20	
FIGURE 15: THE STADIEM “FACTS AND FIGURES” POSTCARD	20
FIGURE 16: THE SECOND STADIEM BOOKLET	20
FIGURE 17: SCREENSHOT FROM “WHAT DO YOU NEED TO SURVIVE INVESTORS WEEK”	21
FIGURE 18: SCREENSHOT FROM “SURVIVING INVESTORS WEEK: THE BIG SCORE”	22
FIGURE 19: SCREENSHOT FROM “SURVIVING INVESTORS WEEK”	22
FIGURE 20: SCREENSHOT FROM ONE EPISODE OF “THE ELEVATOR PITCH” SERIES.....	23
FIGURE 21: SCREENSHOT FROM ONE EPISODE OF “THE LIGHTNING ROUND” SERIES	23
FIGURE 28: STADIEM PRESENTED ON THE STAGE OF EBU PTS 2023.....	25
FIGURE 29: THE STADIEM SIDE EVENT AT LATITUDE59.....	25
FIGURE 25: SNAPSHOT FROM THE STADIEM WORKSHOP “ENABLING GROWTH OF A THRIVING MEDIA ECOSYSTEM IN EUROPE”	26
FIGURE 27: STADIEM PARTNERS AND SCALE-UPS IN THE IBC 2022 SHOWCASE AREA	26
FIGURE 32: STADIEM OC1 SCALE-UP TRENSITION ON THE STAGE OF THE BIG SCORE DURING INVESTORS WEEK.....	27
FIGURE 32: STADIEM SCALE-UPS IN ACTION AT DTS 2023 (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: LIMECRAFT, MEDIA DISTILLERY, BOTTALK).....	27
FIGURE 30: THE STADIEM SCALE-UPS AT MCO MEDIATECH FESTIVAL 2023	28
FIGURE 31: STADIEM HUBS AND SCALE-UPS AT THE IBC 2023 SHOWCASE EVENT	28
FIGURE 22: THE “GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES” MASTERCLASS SIDE EVENT AT TECHCHILL MILAN 2022 29	
FIGURE 23: STADIEM AT THE “AUDIO NETWORKING EVENT”	29
FIGURE 24: PROMOTION FOR THE SXSW SIDE EVENT “SHAPING THE FUTURE OF MEDIA TOGETHER: A TRANSATLANTIC DIALOGUE ON INNOVATION”	30
FIGURE 26: SNAPSHOT FROM THE JOINT-ROUNDTABLE EVENT “NEXT GENERATION MEDIA: A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE”	30



LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1 : STADIEM PRESS COVERAGE IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE PROJECT.....	24
TABLE 2 : EVENTS ATTENDED M19-M36	31
TABLE 3 : STADIEM DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION KPIS	36



ABBREVIATIONS

EC	European Commission
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
H2020	Horizon 2020
NGM	Next Generation Media
NGI	Next Generation Internet (Initiative)
OC1	Open Call 1
OC2	Open Call 2



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

D5.9 is the final report on STADIEM's outreach and impact creation activities conducted in the second half of the project's run. Following up from the previous report (D5.8), the detail on activities refer to the period April 2022 to September 2023.

1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT

The sections of this deliverable are organised as follows:

After the introductory **Section 1**, **Section 2** depicts outreach and impact creation activities and tools used during the second half of the project (M19-M36) - with extensive breakdowns of work conducted on/reach achieved by STADIEM's website and social media outlets, newsletters, videos, print materials, press releases - and also reports on STADIEM-organised events (workshops and other showcases), activities conducted at external events and numbers on stakeholders engagement reached through those.

Section 3 briefly presents the activities planned after the project's end and measures devised in support of sustainability actions, to allow partners to build upon what created through the project.

Section 4 focuses on the assessment of the activities' results (and strategic deviations), and, finally, **Section 5** briefly concludes the document, offering insight on lessons learned and key actions and results.

The document is additionally complemented by an **annex, featuring a selection of the press clipping gathered throughout the reporting period** – which can be found in its entirety, and covering the whole project's run, in the [dedicated section](#) of the STADIEM website - as a proof of returns in terms of activities directed towards the press.



2 OUTREACH AND IMPACT CREATION ACTIVITIES M19-M36

2.1 OBJECTIVES AND STAKEHOLDERS

STADIEM addresses three key pain points in the European media sector: (a) cross-border scalability; (b) start-up to corporate to market techtransfer, and (c) the availability of innovative media services in a Digital Single Market framework. As such, STADIEM's ambition is to contribute to identifying, nurturing, and retaining promising start-ups and connecting them with media industries by creating concrete opportunities to collaborate.

Outreach and impact creation activities are central to the overall STADIEM goal. They are being closely monitored and coordinated to ensure a broad visibility and an effective engagement of all targeted stakeholders in the Next Generation Media, including those from the media and non-media sectors (verticals). These activities are coordinated by Martel with active contributions from all STADIEM partners, following the objectives below:

- Ensure STADIEM's broad visibility by spreading knowledge about the project and its results, as well as establishing a distinctive and recognizable identity that will support promotional and marketing efforts.
- Reach, stimulate and engage a critical mass of relevant stakeholders to ensure that (a) the Open Calls and Incubation Programme of the project are effectively and properly disseminated to the targeted audiences for maximum promotion – after the successful engagement and participation achieved during the first half of the project, (b) the results of the project and third-party projects, selected through STADIEM Open Calls, are effectively showcased, leading to validation, improvement and possibly further adoption of the developed technologies and concepts.
- Facilitate exploitation of the project's outcomes and promote the development of innovative solutions based on the STADIEM methodology and concepts.
- To fully support the key players' engagement strategy in the project activities and concepts around the Open Calls and the Incubation Programme, while promoting and providing great visibility on the third-party projects and the best practices learned that will lead to the creation of (a) new business model(s) in the media domain.
- Establish strong liaisons and ensure close collaboration with relevant initiatives in the media industry.

2.2 ONLINE DISSEMINATION

2.2.1 Website

Launched at the beginning of the project (M2), the STADIEM website (<https://www.stadiem.eu>) has been developed to act as an information hub presenting the project's goals, activities, and achievements. To this purpose, content has been constantly updated and featured as follows:

- General information about the project, its vision, and objectives
- Introduction of the consortium and Advisory Board members



- Information about the structure of the STADIEM Open Calls (dedicated info page and FAQs section) and focus areas
- Portfolio of the scale-ups taking part in the STADIEM programme
- News items and press releases
- List of relevant events and promotion on events organised by STADIEM
- A repository of resources, such as publications, presentations/talks, promotional materials, videos, and public deliverables
- Contact information (including specific forms for corporates and investors)
- An acknowledgment and reference to relevant initiatives on Next Generation Media in Europe



FIGURE 1: STADIEM WEBSITE - HOMEPAGE

The website is being periodically updated according to the progress of the project, and required ad-hoc shifts in the presentation to boost engagement of specific target groups. In particular, following an internally-conducted analysis on the website (December 2022) – triggered by specific suggestions offered by the STADIEM Advisory Board members in August 2022 - Martel proceeded with an in-depth reorganization of the website homepage, to better cover the corporate/investors angle and boost engagement in this sense, granting more immediate access to the related information and specific contact forms (prior to the OCs' closure, the communication effort was instead leaning toward their promotion, to maximize engagement on that level).

Upon project closure, the website counts around 15,300 unique visitors, who generated around **41,900 page views** on an **average visit duration of 01'29"**. Drilling down into specific pages, the most popular pages - alongside the homepage – are the Open Calls pages, counting a total of over 6,900 views.

The figures below provide the aforementioned plus some additional details: Figure 2 (Traffic overview and visit duration), Figure 3 (Top visited pages) and Figure 4 (Visits per country).

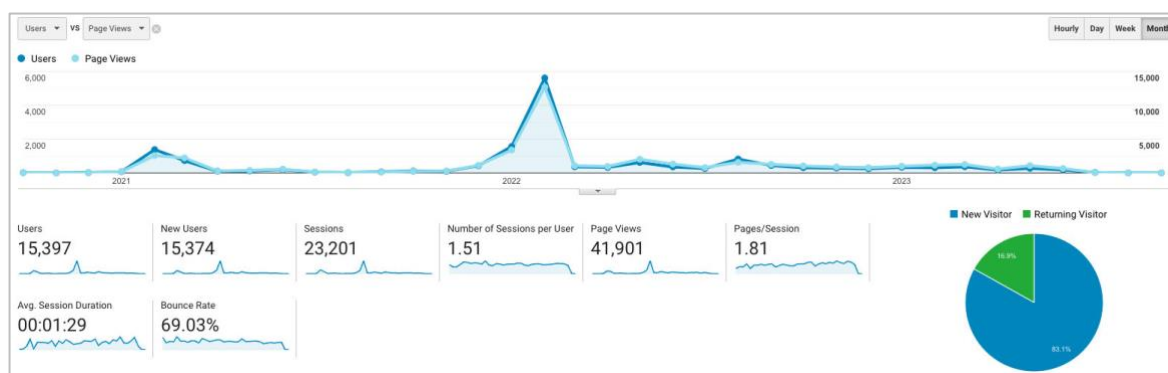


FIGURE 2: STADIEM WEBSITE - TRAFFIC OVERVIEW AND VISIT DURATION

Page	Page Views	Unique Page Views	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate	% Exit
1. /	6,516 (15.53%)	5,403 (15.32%)	00:01:17	5,063 (21.78%)	41.58%	41.02%
2. /open-call-2/	5,264 (12.54%)	4,707 (13.35%)	00:03:19	3,829 (16.47%)	83.70%	78.40%
3. /open-call-1/	1,738 (4.14%)	1,560 (4.42%)	00:02:14	1,080 (4.65%)	75.46%	67.72%
4. /about/	891 (2.12%)	785 (2.23%)	00:01:27	194 (0.83%)	50.00%	35.91%
5. /open-calls/	876 (2.09%)	740 (2.10%)	00:01:19	262 (1.13%)	57.25%	37.90%
6. /scaleups/	825 (1.97%)	698 (1.98%)	00:00:53	155 (0.67%)	39.35%	20.61%
7. /news/	743 (1.77%)	599 (1.70%)	00:00:44	75 (0.32%)	38.67%	20.86%
8. /faqs/	719 (1.71%)	620 (1.76%)	00:03:47	214 (0.92%)	74.77%	59.67%
9. /consortium/	661 (1.57%)	605 (1.72%)	00:01:10	103 (0.44%)	59.22%	36.61%
10. /consortium/	568 (1.35%)	468 (1.33%)	00:00:41	71 (0.31%)	45.07%	20.07%

FIGURE 3: STADIEM WEBSITE – TOP VISITED PAGES

Country	Users	% Users
1. Germany	1,253	8.05%
2. Belgium	1,192	7.66%
3. Romania	1,054	6.77%
4. United States	723	4.64%
5. Bulgaria	716	4.60%
6. Cyprus	687	4.41%
7. United Kingdom	646	4.15%
8. Greece	631	4.05%
9. Netherlands	535	3.44%
10. Spain	477	3.06%

FIGURE 4: STADIEM WEBSITE – VISITS PER COUNTRY

All information and e-mails collected are protected under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Contact is and will continue to only be made with people who have submitted inquiries. Similarly, the newsletters are and will continue to be sent out only to individuals who have explicitly requested to receive them. Any person who has subscribed can request for their e-mail address to be removed from the list. The website provides information on the data kept and how they are used in alignment with the GDPR under the Privacy Policy link (footer of the webpage).

2.2.2 Social media channels

STADIEM established its presence on social media channels to regularly promote the project activities and output while encouraging a wider promotion of Next Generation Media solutions. The project has built a fair follower base on several social media channels, namely X (previously Twitter), LinkedIn, and YouTube, which are all linked to the project's website. Similarly to what applied to the website, an internal analysis – and consequent round of adjustments - was conducted on the channels, in order to emphasise programme and corporate/investors engagement.

2.2.2.1 X/Twitter

STADIEM uses X/Twitter as a social network to cover the news in real-time, cross-share relevant and interesting initiatives, and to establish meaningful connections with targeted groups of stakeholders, including policy makers, industry, and the general public. So far, the [STADIEM account](#) has reached **293 followers** (including project partners, similar projects, interested stakeholders, etc.). In total, around **630 tweets** have been posted. The project also follows 130 accounts, mostly projects and initiatives in similar fields or of approximate nature where partners have been involved.



FIGURE 5: STADIEM X/TWITTER ACCOUNT

2.2.2.2 LinkedIn

LinkedIn allows the project to network with individuals and organizations within the media industry and beyond, share crucial information about project activities, and stay up to date on the latest developments in the field. [The LinkedIn account](#) has gathered **699 followers** so far. Similarly to X/Twitter, the LinkedIn account is mostly used to share the latest progress of STADIEM, echoing key promotional messages from the project website and sharing relevant news from the project's partners, pertinent projects and the European Commission.

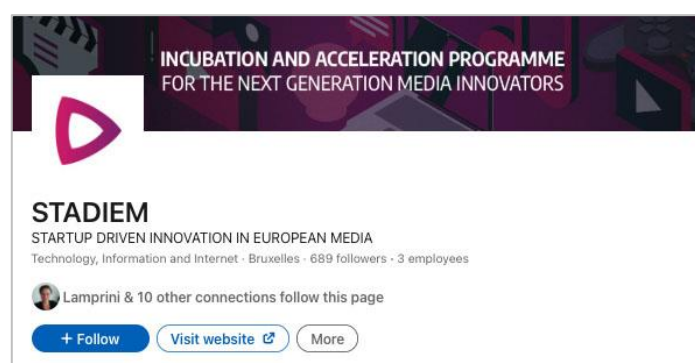


FIGURE 6: STADIEM LINKEDIN ACCOUNT

2.2.2.3 YouTube

STADIEM is also running an [account on YouTube](#), one of the leading video-sharing platforms. Since inception, the project has released a total of **24 videos** on the channel (2 of which in the reporting period). For more details on the channel's reach and content, and for information on the video series deployed exclusively on X/Twitter and LinkedIn, please refer to section 2.3.2.

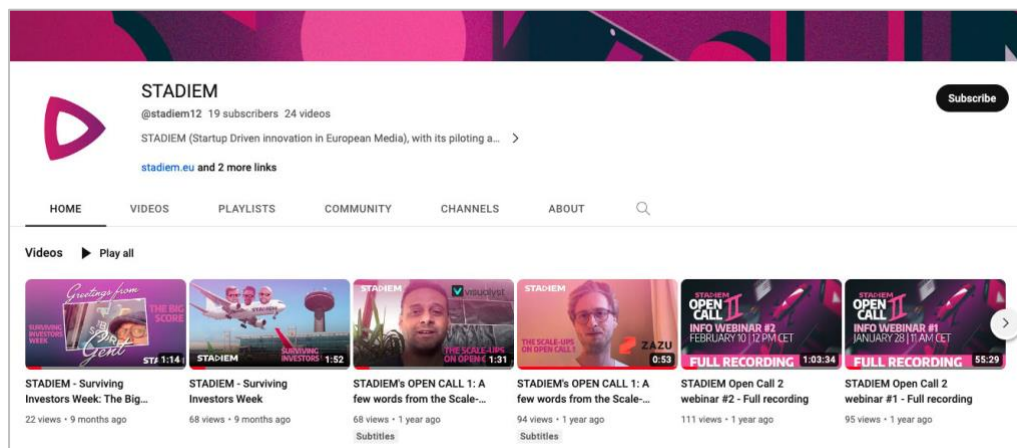


FIGURE 7: STADIEM YOUTUBE CHANNEL

2.2.3 News items and Newsletter

The STADIEM consortium keeps the community and the general public informed about key activities, undertakings, and events by regularly publishing news items and press releases. To date, **38 news items** have been published on the project website.

12 Newsletters in total - collecting such items, plus additional strategic communication - have been edited and distributed to stakeholders through STADIEM's mailing lists as well as made available on the project website (7 issues in the reporting period). At project's end, **around 300 stakeholders** have subscribed to receive STADIEM's newsletter. In terms of further analysis on the efficiency of the communication:

- ➡ The 6th newsletter (May 2022) was sent to 287 subscribers / 54% opens / 10% clicks
- ➡ The 7th newsletter (September 2022) was sent to 301 subscribers / 50% opens / 6% clicks
- ➡ The 8th newsletter (December 2022) was sent out to 303 subscribers / 51% opens / 7% clicks
- ➡ The 9th newsletter (March 2023) was sent out to 302 subscribers / 50% opens / 6% clicks
- ➡ The 10th newsletter (May 2023) was sent out to 304 subscribers / 51% opens / 8% clicks
- ➡ The 11th newsletter (July 2023) was sent out to 303 subscribers / 51% opens / 4% clicks
- ➡ The 12th newsletter (September 2023) was sent out to 301 subscribers / 51% opens / 3.4% clicks

1) Newsletter 6 (May 2022)

The 6th newsletter of STADIEM, published in May 2022, informed stakeholders on the Match phase start-ups/scale-ups selection following the closure of Open Call 2, linked to an overview on some of the corporate partners involved in the project, covered the Integrate phase selection for the OC1 cohort, promoted once again the OC1 scale-ups' video testimonials series and the STADIEM participation to OMR Festival.

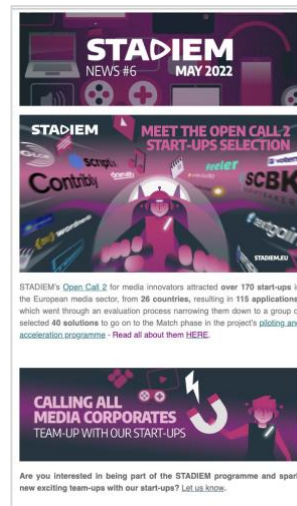


FIGURE 8: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM'S NEWSLETTER 6

2) Newsletter 7 (September 2022)

The 7th newsletter of STADIEM, published in September 2022, opened with a promotion of STADIEM's twofold participation to TechChill Milano, offered a report of the project's participation to IBC 2022, updated stakeholders on both OC1 and OC2's programme progress (OC2 Develop phase selection and developments, OC1 Pilots), and promoted VRT Sandbox's feature on Sifted.

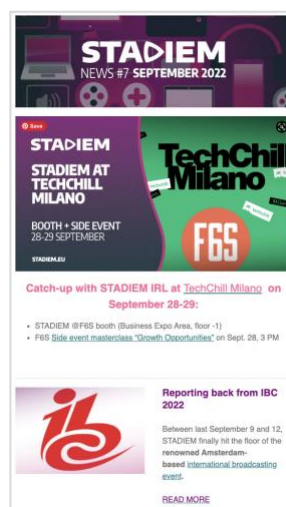


FIGURE 9: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM'S NEWSLETTER 7

3) Newsletter 8 (December 2022)

The 8th newsletter of STADIEM, published in December 2022, functioned as a full recap of the year's achievement and activities, through opening infographics and reports on the STADIEM Investors Week (including the related video-diary) and the TechChill Milano participation. Partners' articles were also directly included, covering OC1 Pilot phase scale-up FilmChain's success story and a guide to pitch/interact with investors.



FIGURE 10: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM'S NEWSLETTER 8

4) Newsletter 9 (March 2023)

The 9th newsletter of STADIEM, published in March 2023, kicked off with the promotion of the participation of STADIEM's representatives to the Future Media Hubs-organised event "Shaping the future of media together: a transatlantic dialogue on innovation", held at SXSW, in the US. The issue also informed stakeholders on the OC2 Integrate phase scale-ups selection, linked to two success stories on scale-ups Limecraft and Scriptix (authored by their respective STADIEM hubs), and promoted the upcoming STADIEM participation to EBU's Data Technology Seminar.



FIGURE 11: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM'S NEWSLETTER 9

5) Newsletter 10 (May 2023)

The 10th newsletter of STADIEM, published in May 2023, was mainly focused on the promotion of the Pilot events tour, covering the connected Latitude59 participation and the future dates (MCO MediaTech Festival, Future Week 2023, and pre-announcing the IBC 2023 presence). The issue also featured the announcement of the OC2 official Pilot phase selection.



FIGURE 12: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM'S NEWSLETTER 10

6) Newsletter 11 (July 2023)

The 11th newsletter of STADIEM, published in July 2023, offered post-event reports on the previously promoted MCO and Future Week Pilot events' dates, and a recap of achievements since January 2023, through figures presented in infographics form. The issue also offered a look back at the STADIEM participations to EBU's Production Technology and Data Technology Seminars, promoted the upcoming STADIEM event "Enabling growth of a thriving media ecosystem in Europe" and participation to IBC 2023.



FIGURE 13: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM'S NEWSLETTER 11

7) Newsletter 12 (September 2023)

The 12th and final newsletter of STADIEM, published in September 2023, served as a promotion platform to the STADIEM activities and showcase at IBC 2023 (updating on details, since previous promotion) and collected success stories from both OC1 and 2 Pilot phases. The issue also covered the project's feature in the latest issue of EBU's tech-i magazine and the highlights of the STADIEM "Enabling growth of a thriving media ecosystem in Europe" Event.



FIGURE 14: SCREENSHOT OF STADIEM'S NEWSLETTER 12

2.3 PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

With the ease on COVID-19-related restrictions and the gradual return to in-person events, plans for printed material were ultimately put to practice, with the production of several event-specific decorative elements, and informational items: details upon which are offered in this section. Nevertheless, the well-established practices for video production, gathered within the pandemic to compensate for lack of printed material, served the project greatly, generating consistent and impactful video output once again.

2.3.1 Flyer and booklets

A **first 8-page booklet** was put together on the occasion of STADIEM's first participation to IBC (September 2022), for distribution at the project's pod during the event. The booklet offered a concise overview of the project's objectives and programme structure, a recap in numbers of the achievements at that stage, and a selected list of the STADIEM Open Calls beneficiaries (including both cohorts' Develop phase scale-ups), with a brief description each. 100 copies were distributed between IBC 2022 and consequent STADIEM in-person event participations, while it counts over 120 digital copies downloaded from the project website.

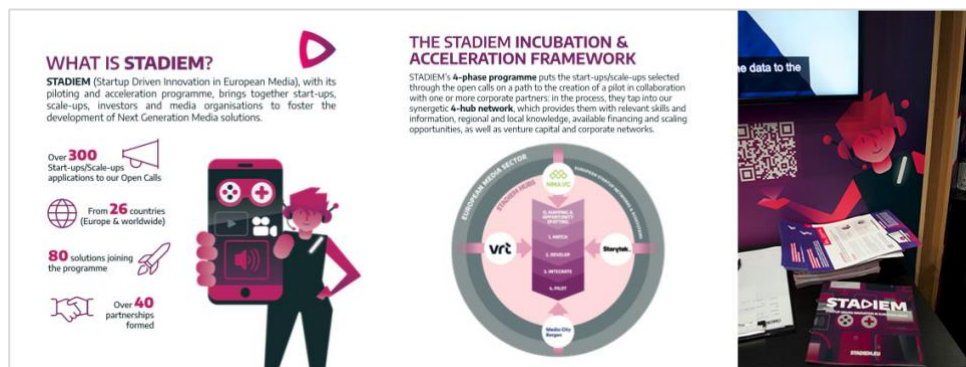


FIGURE 15: FIRST DOUBLE-PAGE SPREAD OF THE STADIEM BOOKLET AND THE BOOKLET AT IBC 2022

WP5 also produced a “**STADIEM Facts and Figures**” postcard-sized flyer (50 copies) for specific distribution during the side event organized by the project in the context of the EBU Production Technology Seminar (January 2023), which was used to engage the audience, linking via QR code to a survey designed to collect their take and feedback on our work. 50 digital copies were also downloaded from the project website.



FIGURE 16: THE STADIEM “FACTS AND FIGURES” POSTCARD

Finally, a **second STADIEM booklet** was created in September 2023, specifically in support of the project's showcase at IBC 2023 (500 copies). This promotional item functions both as an update of the previously released booklet and as a brief history of the project, featuring testimonials from the STADIEM hubs and the Pilots' scale-ups, over the course of 20 pages. 10 digital copies were also downloaded from the project website at project's end.



FIGURE 17: THE SECOND STADIEM BOOKLET

2.3.2 Videos

In the second reporting period STADIEM released **14 additional videos**, 2 of which were released on the STADIEM YouTube channel and mirrored on STADIEM's website. So far, the project's YouTube Channel reached a total of **over 2,600 views**. The remaining 12 videos were conceived either as vlogs in support to the STADIEM "Investors Week" activities or as two other different thematic series: all in formats designed for exclusive release on X/Twitter and LinkedIn, for a joint total reach of over 300,000 impressions (more details in the following breakdown). The video output focused mostly on the promotion of Open Calls beneficiaries' activities within the programme and on the personal angle, through vlog or testimonial-style communication created in close collaboration with STADIEM's hubs and scale-ups. As additional output, 3 compilation edits of previously released material were created in the reporting period, for use in the context of showcases at physical events.

- The video "What do you need to survive Investors Week" was released exclusively on X/Twitter and LinkedIn as an introduction to the series chronicling the STADIEM "Investors Week" initiative. The video sets the scene and the mood for the series, showing STADIEM scale-ups Rumble Studio and Scriptix, getting ready for their trips to The Big Score (Belgium) and Slush (Finland). The video was published in November 2022.



FIGURE 18: SCREENSHOT FROM "WHAT DO YOU NEED TO SURVIVE INVESTORS WEEK"

- The video "Surviving Investors Week: The Big Score" served as part one of the chronicle of the STADIEM Investors Week: the ironic and fast-paced piece follows STADIEM scale-up Rumble Studio during their trip to the renowned event, in the form of a vlog. The video was published in November 2022 and a specific version was also released on X/Twitter and LinkedIn.



FIGURE 19: SCREENSHOT FROM "SURVIVING INVESTORS WEEK: THE BIG SCORE"

- The video "Surviving Investors Week" served as direct follow up to the "Big Score" video and as a recap of the entire week: not only the piece follows scale-ups Rumble Studio and Scriptix during their participation to Slush (Finland), but also integrates the previous chronicle of Rumble Studio's trip to The Big Score, in compilation fashion. The video was published in November 2022 and a specific version was also released on X/Twitter and LinkedIn. Additionally, the segment on Slush was also published as a standalone item on X/Twitter and LinkedIn exclusively.

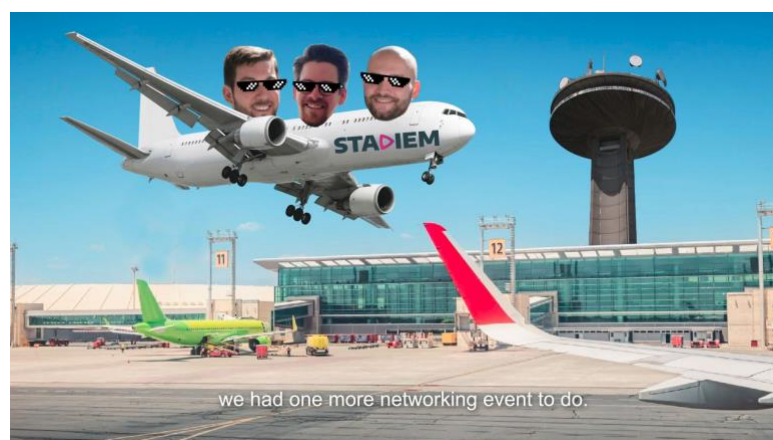


FIGURE 20: SCREENSHOT FROM "SURVIVING INVESTORS WEEK"

- The video series "The Elevator Pitch" – also recorded over STADIEM's Investors Week – features very brief interviews with STADIEM hub VRT Sandbox and scale-ups BotTalk, Limecraft, Trensition, and TinkerList, all rapidly explaining what they do, in the time span of an elevator ride. The 5 videos were published from November 2022 to January 2023 exclusively on X/Twitter and LinkedIn.

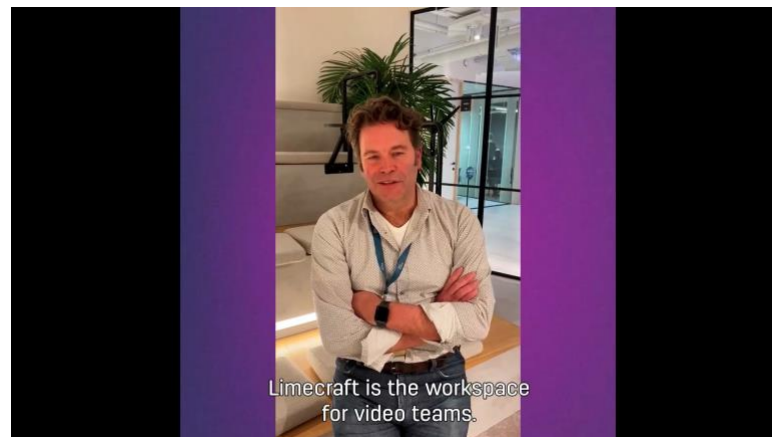


FIGURE 21: SCREENSHOT FROM ONE EPISODE OF “THE ELEVATOR PITCH” SERIES

- The video series “The Lightning Round” – recorded back-to-back with the Elevator Pitches – features once again STADIEM hub VRT Sandbox and scale-ups BotTalk, Limecraft, Trensition, and TinkerList: a rapid-fire round of “this or that” type of questions is asked to them all, to discover more about their standpoint on tech, media and the experience of navigating the scale-up world. The 5 videos were also published from November 2022 to January 2023, exclusively on X/Twitter and LinkedIn.

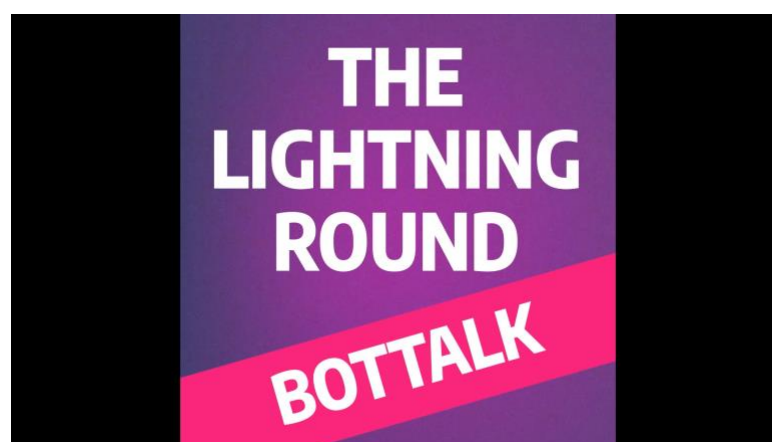


FIGURE 22: SCREENSHOT FROM ONE EPISODE OF “THE LIGHTNING ROUND” SERIES

2.4 PRESS RELEASES AND PRESS COVERAGE

To date, **10 press releases** have been issued by STADIEM, matching with key moments such as the launch of both Open Calls, announcements related to the selection phases of the project’s piloting and acceleration programme, and to promote participation to events. All press releases were made available on the [dedicated section of the project’s website](#). All press releases created over the second half of the project (releases 7 to 10 – May 2022 to May 2023) were also **distributed to an average of 30 selected contacts in the specialized press** through [Prowly](#); the 10th press release being specifically designed to promote the OC2 Pilots and the round of related events that saw the related scale-ups as protagonists, including IBC 2023.

In the table below, we detail the relevant press coverage obtained by the project in the reporting period – The articles mentioned have been made available in the “[Publications & Press clipping](#)” section of STADIEM’s website – A selection of press clipping is also present as an annex to this document.

TABLE 1 : STADIEM PRESS COVERAGE IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE PROJECT

PUBLICATION	URL	LEAD PARTNER
Sifted	https://sifted.eu/articles/vrt-sandbox-media-venture-fund?u=a	VRT
tech-i magazine - issue 52	https://www.stadiem.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/65/2022/06/tech-i-052_June_2022.pdf	EBU
iamb.org	https://www.stadiem.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/65/2022/11/Media_Distillery_partnership.pdf	VRT
tech-i magazine - issue 57	https://www.stadiem.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/65/2023/09/tech-i-057.pdf	EBU

2.5 EVENTS

2.5.1 STADIEM workshops and events

2.5.1.1 STADIEM-organised workshops

In the second half of the project, STADIEM organized 3 workshops around Europe, designed to present the project’s results to specific audiences. Here below, a detailed breakdown of such events and targeted groups we sought out to inform and engage through the activities.

On January 24, 2023, the project held a **STADIEM Side Event** reception organised within project partner **EBU’s Production Technology Seminar 2023** in Geneva (Switzerland), targeted to media corporates. Greatly leveraging on the main event in-presence attendance of over 130 participants, the reception served first of all as a great platform to present STADIEM and its relevance in Europe as the first pan-European accelerator dedicated to the media sector – the achievements so far in terms of projects and impact for corporates and scale-ups and its start-up-to-corporate supplier program – engaging the audience via the distribution of a “STADIEM Facts” postcard linking to a survey, to collect their take and feedback on our work. This was followed by a networking space, for a further discussion opportunity.





FIGURE 23: STADIEM PRESENTED ON THE STAGE OF EBU PTS 2023

Later, in spring 2023, in the context of the project’s initiative “**STADIEM Pilot events**” – which engaged the Pilot phase scale-ups of OC2’s programme in a pitching tour to dedicated events around Europe – STADIEM organised a **side event at Latitude59**, in Tallinn (May 25, 2023). The event’s aim was in this case directed to investors and scale-ups (in line with the general target of Latitude59), so it enticed both an introduction to the STADIEM programme (conducted by hubs VRT Sandbox and Media City Bergen) and pitching and presentations from scale-ups belonging to both our OCs’ cohorts, with an audience of around 50 participants in total.



FIGURE 24: THE STADIEM SIDE EVENT AT LATITUDE59

On September 7, 2023, STADIEM invited representatives of the European Commission’s DG Connect and of the media industry to gather in Brussels, for the project workshop entitled “**Enabling growth of a thriving media ecosystem in Europe**”: the aim was to create an occasion for policy makers to discover how the STADIEM accelerator benefits the innovation needs of European scale-ups and media corporates, to learn about the scale-up-driven innovation projects that it supported, understand how the program fits within the EU media policy objectives, and to learn what actions need to be taken to further support and deepen scale-up driven innovation for the media sector. Exchange with members of the European Commission identified fruitful ways to support the sustainability of STADIEM and hence move scale-up driven innovation in the media sector further forward.



FIGURE 25: SNAPSHOT FROM THE STADIEM WORKSHOP “ENABLING GROWTH OF A THRIVING MEDIA ECOSYSTEM IN EUROPE”

2.5.1.2 STADIEM showcases

STADIEM kicked off showcase-related activities in the reporting period with two **STADIEM Pods at the first post-pandemic IBC 2022** (September 9–12, 2022): the pods were located within partner Media City Bergen’s village, featuring general information on STADIEM and its funding and acceleration programme, but also served the purpose of meeting points and showcase stations for the scale-ups involved, which took turns engaging with interested parties and pitch their solutions. The project also organised a happy hour and networking event in the showcase area. The pods attracted not only other start-ups interested learning more about the STADIEM programme but also Media corporates (EU-based and international) interested in the solutions from both OC1 and OC2, as well as some considering joining as a corporate partner in future endeavours. Additionally, other organisations visited, captivated by our programme and the scale-ups’ innovations.



FIGURE 26: STADIEM PARTNERS AND SCALE-UPS IN THE IBC 2022 SHOWCASE AREA

The period November 15-18, 2022, saw instead the launch of the **STADIEM Investors Week initiative**, which sent scale-ups from both OC1 and 2 cohorts on the road to further put into practice their STADIEM programme training: they covered two major international start-up ecosystem events – The Big Score in Ghent (Belgium) and Slush in Helsinki (Finland) – in the

span of just a handful of days, on a mission to meet investors and catch their attention. The Big Score also offered the perfect chance to reward scale-ups Trensition and Tinkerlist for their successful pilots conducted in the closing phase of OC1's piloting and acceleration programme, with an award ceremony organised by coordinating partner VRT.



FIGURE 27: STADIEM OC1 SCALE-UP TRENSTION ON THE STAGE OF THE BIG SCORE DURING INVESTORS WEEK

In the period March 21-23, 2023, the **EBU Data Technology Seminar** saw STADIEM returning to Geneva with three of our Open Call 2 scale-ups – Limecraft, Media Distillery and BotTalk – presenting their solutions and the work conducted with their respective corporate partners in the exhibition area of the event. The DTS is a regular meeting point for data technology professionals in media, discussing any data-related specificity in the field, from metadata to AI; now also held in hybrid format, it attracted 221 attendees, with an on-site presence of 96.



FIGURE 28: STADIEM SCALE-UPS IN ACTION AT DTS 2023 (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: LIMECRAFT, MEDIA DISTILLERY, BOTTLALK)

Within the context of the project's initiative "**STADIEM Pilot events**" (as introduced in the previous sub-section), besides the pitching session organised within Latitude59, STADIEM held a **pitching event at MCO MediaTech Festival 2023**, in Odense, Denmark (May 31, 2023). Our beneficiaries there could also participate to the MCO Speed Dating Event, where they got quality networking and feedback from European media corporates and investors. The following stop of the tour touched **Future Week**, in Bergen, Norway (June 7, 2023), where our

scale-ups could take the event's stage dedicated to pitching sessions and, once again, actively engage in networking, securing valuable leads with media corporates.



FIGURE 29: THE STADIEM SCALE-UPS AT MCO MEDIATECH FESTIVAL 2023

Before the closure of the project, the consortium hosted a **Scale-up Showcase Event** within **IBC 2023** (September 15, 2023) and a STADIEM Pod for scale-up pitching sessions, all inside partner EBU's showcase area. The Scale-up Showcase Event featured presentations and pitches focused on the programme and the OC2 pilots (involving hubs and start-ups), but also functioned as an award ceremony to reward the work of the scale-ups involved, and as a networking venue.



FIGURE 30: STADIEM HUBS AND SCALE-UPS AT THE IBC 2023 SHOWCASE EVENT

2.5.1.3 STADIEM's participation to workshops

STADIEM's first workshop participation (and co-organisation) for the reporting period was in the context of TechChill Milano 2022, through the **side event masterclass on "Growth Opportunities" for start-ups**. The event, organised by project partner F6S on September 28, 2022 - on the grounds of the renowned Bocconi University - saw the participation of STADIEM OC2 cohort scale-up Druid Learning, and STADIEM partner VRT, engaged in discussion around roadblocks and growth opportunities in the European start-up ecosystem, together with other start-ups powered by F6S in the scope of several EU-funded projects.



FIGURE 31: THE “GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES” MASTERCLASS SIDE EVENT AT TECHCHILL MILAN 2022

In November 2022, a selected group of STADIEM OC2 scale-ups focusing on audio solutions were invited to the **“AUDIO Networking Event”** organized by sister initiative [Future Media Hubs](#) within **Slush**, in Helsinki, Finland (November 17, 2022): the side event focused on the latest topics and innovations in the European audio ecosystem, featuring some of the key players and other international start-ups operating in the field.



FIGURE 32: STADIEM AT THE “AUDIO NETWORKING EVENT”

In March 2023, STADIEM joined once again forces with [Future Media Hubs](#) and several other European partners to organise the **SXSW side event “Shaping the Future of Media Together: A Transatlantic Dialogue on Innovation”**, which took place in Austin (US). It consisted in a half-day event featuring two engaging discussions about the European and US

media ecosystem, an inspiring talk about educating in the metaverse, and start-up presentations.

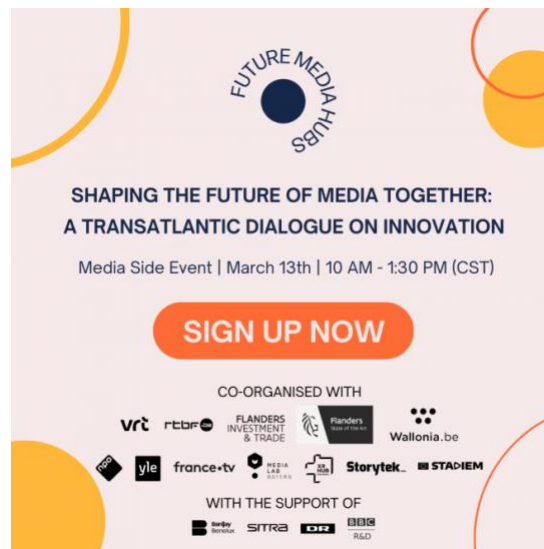


FIGURE 33: PROMOTION FOR THE SXSW SIDE EVENT “SHAPING THE FUTURE OF MEDIA TOGETHER: A TRANSATLANTIC DIALOGUE ON INNOVATION”

Finally, STADIEM was integral part of the **joint-roundtable event “Next Generation Media: a European perspective”** - organized on September 16, 2023 within IBC 2023 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands – with fellow ICT-44 projects [Möbius](#), [MediaVerse](#) and [COPA EUROPE](#): which resulted in a great opportunity to compare results and share views, in the context of creating synergies to strengthen the European media ecosystem. The event was a follow-up on a previous meeting held in the context of Future Week 2022 (June 2022), where STADIEM had a first chance to touch base with representatives from the other projects.



FIGURE 34: SNAPSHOT FROM THE JOINT-ROUNDTABLE EVENT “NEXT GENERATION MEDIA: A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE”

2.5.2 Events attended

STADIEM's partners have attended or participated to **28 events** in the second half of the project, giving keynote presentations and promoting the projects' mission, findings and achievements, whilst promoting the programme's scale-ups activities and supporting their pitching outings. The table here below summarizes the events attended. These participations have been generally reported in the news section and the events calendar of the project's website and have been promoted through the social media channels and newsletters. The outcome greatly expands the plan presented in D5.8, thanks both to the general return to in-person events, and new opportunities, resulted from the ease of the COVID-19-related traveling and gathering restrictions.

TABLE 2 : EVENTS ATTENDED M19-M36

EVENT	DATE, LOCATION	TYPE OF AUDIENCE	APPROX. AUDIENCE SIZE	ACTIVITIES	LEAD PARTNER
(OMR) Online Marketing Rockstars	17-18 May, Hamburg (Germany)	Start-ups, corporates, investors, media and marketing industry	55,000	Booth, pitching	NMA
Latitude59 2022	19-20 May 2022, Tallinn (Estonia) and Online	Investors, start-ups	5,000	Presentations, stakeholders engagement	Storytek
Cannes NEXT Media Innovation Platform (Cannes Marché Du Film)	17-25 May 2022, Cannes (France)	Corporates, media industry	10,000	Presentations, stakeholder engagement	Storytek
DLD Munich 2022	20-22 May 2022, Munich (Germany)	Investors, corporates	5,000	Stakeholder engagement	Storytek
MDN 2022	31 May – 2 June 2022, online	Start-ups, corporates, researchers	100	Meetings, networking, presentations	EBU
Future Week 2022	7-10 June 2022, Bergen (Norway)	Start-ups corporates, investors, and media industry	1,000	Presentations, stakeholder engagement, networking	MCB



Kinnernet Europe 2022	23 -25 June 2022, Avallon, (France)	Investors, start-ups, corporates	125	Meetings, networking, presentations	Storytek
sTARTUp Day	24-26 August 2022, Tartu (Estonia) and online	Investors, start-ups, corporates	5,000	Presentations, stakeholder engagement	Storytek
DLD Tel Aviv	September 2022, Tel Aviv (Israel)	Investors, start-ups, corporates	5,000	Presentations, stakeholder engagement	Storytek
IBC 2022	9-12 September 2022, Amsterdam (the Netherlands)	Start-ups, corporates, investors, and media industry	55,000	Pitching, presentations, stakeholder engagement, networking	MCB, EBU, VRT
TechChill Milano	28-29 September 2022, Milan (Italy)	Start-ups, corporates, investors, and media industry	80+	Booth, showcase, presentations, workshop, networking	F6S, VRT
B3 Biennale 2022	15-23 October 2022, Frankfurt am Main (Germany)	Media industry	>30,000	Networking, stakeholder engagement, showcasing project findings, programme promotion	Storytek
Geneva Digital Market	November 2022, Geneva (Switzerland)	Start-ups corporates, investors, and media industry	150	Demo, presentations, stakeholder engagement, networking	Storytek
The Big Score	15-17 November 2022, Ghent (Belgium)	Investors, start-ups, corporates	>1,800	Networking, pitching, presentations, stakeholder engagement	VRT
Slush	17-18 November 2022, Helsinki (Finland)	Investors, start-ups, corporates	20,000	Networking, presentations, stakeholder engagement, workshop	Storytek, VRT



Industry Innovation Forum Tallinn 2022	22 November 2022, Tallinn (Estonia)	Media industry	100 on-site + online	Networking, stakeholder engagement, showcasing project findings, programme promotion	Storytek
DLD 2023	12-14 January 2023, Munich (Germany)	Investors, corporates, media industry	>1,500	Networking, stakeholder engagement, showcasing project findings, programme promotion	Storytek
EBU Production Technology Seminar 2023	24-26 January 2023, Geneva (Switzerland) + Online	Start-ups corporates, and media industry	>250	Networking, pitching, presentations, stakeholder engagement	EBU, VRT
EFM Startups 2023	16-22 February 2023, Berlin (Germany)	Start-ups corporates, and media industry	200	Presentation, networking	Storytek
SXSW 2023	10-19 March 2023, Austin (US)	Decision-makers, start-ups, corporates	200-250	Networking, pitching, presentations, stakeholder engagement, workshop	Storytek, VRT
EBU Data Technology Seminar 2023	21-23 March 2023, Geneva (Switzerland) + Online	Start-ups corporates, and media industry	>220	Networking, pitching, booths	EBU, VRT
Cannes Marché Du Film	16-23 May 2023, Cannes (France)	Corporates, media industry	10,000	Networking, stakeholder engagement, showcasing project findings, programme promotion	Storytek
Latitude59 2023	24-26 May 2023, Tallinn (Estonia)	Start-ups, investors	5,000	Networking, matchmaking, pitching	Storytek, VRT



MCO MediaTech Festival 2023	31 May – 1 June 2023, Odense (Denmark)	Start-ups, investors, media industry	>300	Networking, pitching, presentations, stakeholder engagement	MCB
Future Week 2023	5-8 June 2023, Bergen (Norway)	Start-ups corporates, investors, and media industry	1,000	Presentations, pitching, stakeholder engagement, networking	MCB
Kinnernet Europe 2023	22-25 June 2023, Avallon, (France)	Media and creative industry	Around 100	Networking, stakeholder engagement, showcasing project findings, programme promotion	Storytek
IBC 2023	15-18 September 2023, Amsterdam (the Netherlands)	Start-ups, corporates, investors, and media industry	55,000	Pitching, presentations, stakeholder engagement, networking, roundtable	VRT, EBU
MTH Conference 2023	27-28 September 2023, Berlin (Germany)	Corporates, investors, and media industry	>700	Networking, stakeholder engagement, showcasing project findings, programme promotion	Storytek



3 PLAN OF ACTIVITIES AFTER PROJECT'S END

The STADIEM project's communication and dissemination activities will not stop altogether at M36, to ensure exploitation of the momentum and ecosystem created by the project:

- The STADIEM web domain <https://www.stadiem.eu/> will remain active for at least two years after the project's end, so that the insights collected through STADIEM can be available to other initiatives and/or industry, SMEs, etc. so that parties interested in the field of Next Generation Media in Europe can benefit from the results achieved and connect to potential follow-ups. Martel will be available to keep the website updated and the social media channels active accordingly, if needed.
- After approval from the EC, public deliverables will be not only uploaded to the F&T portal and on the STADIEM website, but also on Zenodo, in line with the recommendations offered after the first project review.
- Having STADIEM established a recognizable brand identity, which has become overtime synonymous with the project's track record and recognizable to stakeholders in the Next Generation Media ecosystem, the consortium could consider it as a jumping-off point for potential follow-ups.



4 DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 KPIS

The consortium has kept a close eye on the KPIs set at the beginning of the project, to monitor the Dissemination & Communication Results. The table below offers details on the currently achieved KPIs or variations on the plan. Color coding in the table offers an “at a glance” evaluation/comparison of the results shown: **green for fully achieved**, **orange for nearly met or subject to relevant variations**.

To expand on remarkable variations:

- Reduced amount of printed material, due to the limited feasibility for in-person event caused by the pandemic, and changes in format to engage different audiences (once the targeting focus shifted from recruiting scale-ups and corporates for the programme to showcasing results and reaching out to investors or support our sustainability aims);
- Continuously higher video output over print: also due to pandemic impact but, at the same time, favored as offering a perfect format for more testimonial-based communication, as in the second reporting period a number of scale-ups were already enrolled in or proceeding through the programme;
- Online reach slightly lower than planned, compensated by relevant in-person reach achieved through event organisation and participation (in this sense, it has to be noted that the online reach numbers refer to STADIEM project’s own official online outlets only, but we could also count on re-sharing by partners and beneficiaries – and even by some stakeholders following STADIEM from partners’ websites/social media).
- Participation to the STADIEM-organised workshops is lower than expected, but relevantly expanded by the project’s participation to several other workshops attached to renowned international events in the ecosystem, or jointly with fellow ICT-44 projects (as previously detailed in section 2.5);
- The Demo Day final event was re-framed as a series of showcases held at different international venues, in order to maximise and increase impact.

TABLE 3 : STADIEM DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION KPIS

MEASURE	INDICATORS	KPI	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	ACHIEVED AT M36
Flyers, Posters, Roll-ups	N° of flyers	> 6	Report of activities by partners	2 brochures/booklets
	N° of posters/roll-ups (by the end of the project)	> 4		1 “Facts & Figures” postcard
Project website	Unique visitors per month (average per year)	> 1,500	Built-in website statistics tool	Online at M02 >15,300 since inception
Social networks	N° of followers on X/Twitter,	> 300	Built-in platform analytics tool	293 Followers X/Twitter

	N° of followers on LinkedIn (average of new followers yearly)	> 100		699 Followers LinkedIn
e-Newsletter (every 3 months)	N° of newsletters (by the end of the project)	12	Publication on website	12
Videos	N° of videos published on the STADIEM website and social media and average n° of views	4 (videos per year), 100 views per video	YouTube analytics (+Twitter/LinkedIn Analytics)	24 Videos + 12 videos on SoMe only Tot. views YT: >2,600 X/Twitter+LinkedIn: >300k impressions
Workshops - at least 4 by the end of the project	Average n° of participants per workshop	Between 80 and 100	Registration and attendance lists, reports, presentations	Organisation and co-organisation of 4 workshops with an average of 60 participants
Participation to events and presentations	N° of external events partners attended to promote the project	At least 6 per year	Reports, recording, presentations	60
Webinars (4 by the project end, 2 per OC)	Average n° of participants	At least 50	Registration and attendance lists, recording, reports, presentations	2 (OC1) 90+70 participants 2 (OC2) 45+36 participants
One open final event - Demo Day	Average n° of participants	200	Registration and attendance lists, recording, reports, presentations	Ultimately split into multiple showcases held in 2023 (Media City Odense, Latitude59, Future week, IBC 2023): 700 stakeholders



5 CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The dissemination, communication and community building activities have been conducted in line with the previously outlined strategy – also thanks to the renewed chance of in-person showcasing and networking opportunities - and the project consortium is satisfied with the results consequently reached:

- ➡ With the conclusion of the Open Calls, the communication and dissemination effort was efficiently and successfully re-routed towards corporates/investors: with a solid batch of innovative scale-ups on board, the need was now to bring their work - and the STADIEM programme success story – to the attention of such target groups, to maximize the impact on the European Next Generation Media ecosystem, and the continuity of what started and built through the project.
- ➡ WP5 continued the successful and proficient collaboration with partners and start-ups/scale-ups to produce communication materials (mostly still remotely), as indicated by the large output and significant impact. As in the first half of the project, the communication and dissemination network was greatly expanded by the commitment of the start-ups/scale-ups present in the programme, as we could also leverage on their own social media activity and network, with an estimated comprehensive followers' pool of over 8,000 users (please refer to D1.7: Community building activity report v3 - for more details).
- ➡ With the ease of COVID-19 restrictions, STADIEM took full opportunity to deploy the planned physical events, in various formats, to reach, inform, engage and convince various stakeholders in the EU/Europe.
- ➡ Realising an objective envisioned in D5.8, through re-framing communication towards testimonials-based items, or by showing concrete examples of scale-ups' operations and programme advantages (highlighting initiatives such as our Investors Week and the direct connection between scale-ups and right counterparts within corporates, for instance), WP5 successfully backed up the significance and appeal of the STADIEM project and programme within the European media ecosystem.
- ➡ Upon project closure, communication and dissemination was designed to serve as a bridge to partners' future activities, whilst still comprehensively covering the STADIEM scale-ups' activities and the project's history.



ANNEX A – PRESS CLIPPING SELECTION

NEWS & EVENTS

How STADIEM has accelerated media innovation in Europe

The EU-Funded STADIEM project – running since 2020 and soon to reach its end – broke new ground by creating an acceleration platform for European media innovation. Through two open calls, the project attracted over 570 startups, from 26 different European countries and beyond, 80 of which were selected to take part in the programme. It culminated in 10 pilots conducted with prominent corporate partners from the extensive STADIEM hubs network.

Both pilot rounds featured outstanding solutions in a variety of media-related fields, from monetization and data to content creation and distribution. The innovations and corporate partners involved in STADIEM's first cohort of pilots included: FilmChain, a platform for revenue collection and payment in the film production sector, working with Alamode Filmdistribution; the omnichannel story content creation tool Zazu, teaming up with Roularta Media Group; Tinkerlist.tv, collaborating with VRT and DPG Media on remote



Left to right: Wim Vanobberghen (VRT and STADIEM Project Coordinator), Leshia Shaldenko (Wantent), Marianne Fjellhaug (Media City Bergen), Niamh Faller (Druid Learning), Peter De Paepe (VRT Sandbox) and Sophia Boysen (BotTalk)

production; and Trensition, providing trend analytics to Roularta Media Group and SWR.

The most recent pilot round featured: Druid Learning, a white-label educational content e-commerce platform teaming up with Irish educational publisher CJ Fallon; Scriptix, a speech-to-text service provider focused on smaller languages such as Flemish and Belgian French, for Roularta; Limecraft, working with VRT on automated subtitling; einbliq.io's streaming analytics, supporting rbb and

ARTE; BotTalk, piloting custom artificial voices with Funke, NOZ, t-online, VRT, Mediafin and Roularta; and Television. AI's multi-tool services (footage analysis and automated video production services, such as editing and voiceover), put at the service of rbb.

See these innovative media solutions in action with STADIEM at IBC2023 in Amsterdam on 15-18 September. For details, visit: stadiem.eu

STADIEM IN ISSUE 57 OF TECH-I MAGAZINE (SEPTEMBER 2023)

Innovation matchmaking opportunity for PSM

The STADIEM project, which kicked off in October 2020, offers a competitive acceleration and co-creation programme that brings together start-ups, scale-ups, investors and media organizations. The aim is to foster the development of next generation media solutions. As part of the STADIEM consortium, the EBU is helping to ensure that public service media (PSM)

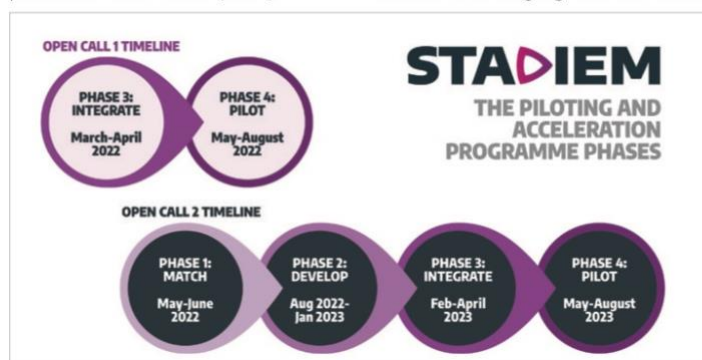
organizations across Europe are an integral part of this dynamic, innovation-focused community.

The project has completed two open calls for media innovators. The second call is now in the MATCH phase of the programme, where the aim is to identify corporate partners for the selected start-ups. Forty companies were chosen, with focus areas ranging from content

creation and distribution to archiving, data and content verification against disinformation. The list of start-ups is available now at stadiem.eu – any EBU Member interested in exploring a possible collaboration with one of these start-ups should contact the project team (info@stadiem.eu).

The scale-ups that successfully came through STADIEM's first open call have now entered the INTEGRATE phase of the programme. This means that, along with their corporate partners, they have begun technical integration and testing, or pre-pilot activities for public pilots.

Those that are working directly with EBU Members include On-Hertz (with RTBF), Tinkerlist.tv (with VRT), Web64 (with VRT), Datavillage (with RTBF and VRT) and Trensition (with SWR).
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News

Insights

Newsletters

Events

Podcasts

Access

Analysis May 24, 2022

How the Flemish public broadcaster VRT became a media innovation powerhouse

What started as a way for Flemish broadcaster VRT to get startups through the door turned into an EU-wide media innovation programme

Alejandro Tauber 8 min read

Eight years ago the Belgian government decided to cut innovation funding for Flemish public broadcaster VRT.

But VRT, which serves more than 6m Flemish constituents, has since become a catalyst for European media innovation, running an accelerator, an international media innovation hub and even its own seed fund.

Here's how the broadcaster became a media innovation powerhouse.

VRT's Sandbox model

Back in 2014, "it was extremely hard to get through the door at any public broadcaster as a startup", Peter De Paepe, head of VRT Sandbox — the broadcaster's open innovation accelerator — tells Sifted.

The VRT office wasn't a place that you could just walk into without knowing who to speak to. The broadcaster didn't have a designated contact point for startups, which made it hard to introduce an innovation without it getting lost in bureaucracy.

Traditionally, the broadcaster had also built a lot of its technology in-house, but after funding was cut it knew it needed to do something to respond to the speed at which the media market was moving.

The result was VRT Sandbox, which was founded in 2014 and started as an innovation initiative for startups to test and refine their technologies alongside VRT's media brands.

Sandbox is both an open innovation project and a kind of accelerator, in which startups can work with VRT's television, radio or online arms to integrate their technology into existing infrastructure or workflows.

The goals of VRT's Sandbox are twofold, says De Paepe: For the startups participating in VRT Sandbox to grow and create jobs in media while also helping VRT's technological advancement.

Its success was almost immediate. Sandbox won the 2016 IBC Innovation Award — an industry award for technological innovation in media — for a system to transmit and direct live broadcasts over the internet. The system was co-developed by the broadcaster with a whole range of partners including Axon, EVS, Tektronix and Trilogix.

Since launching, VRT Sandbox has worked with more than 100 startups, which collectively have raised more than €50m. Stats from 2020 (just before the pandemic) indicate that startups VRT Sandbox partnered with saw their headcounts increase by 90%.

Get good at finding EU funding

When Sandbox was scaling across Europe De Paepe says that two factors were key. Firstly, the team travelled around the continent to identify media companies that could quickly launch their own version of Sandbox, and secondly they learned how to successfully write proposals for EU funding. They won one out of every three funding proposals put forward, De Paepe says.



These two factors resulted in VRT Sandbox being used as a template for an EU-funded initiative called MediaRoad, which backed the creation of multiple "Sandboxes". Public broadcasters like the BBC, France Télévision and Finnish YLE joined, as did commercial media companies like Mediahuis, DPG Media and Red Bull Media House.

The resulting Sandbox Hub was formed in 2018 by 20 founding members, with the aim to "build a network for accelerators of media innovation, enable local startups and SMEs to scale internationally and exchange experience and expertise," according to the project's website.

International collaboration breeds strength

De Paepe says that the teams in charge of their respective incubators and accelerators meet once a month to share what challenges they are facing and what scaleups they are working with.

The network was also useful for VRT Sandbox's next step: building an EU-funded accelerator programme for media innovation startups and scaleups called STADIEM. It's run by a consortium of media organisations including the European Broadcasting Union, Media City Bergen and UK-based startup platform F6s.

Participating startups are eligible for up to €150k in equity-free grants and are supported in finding co-creation media partners from the Sandbox Hub network. The 2021 batch resulted in 12 co-creation projects between startups and European media companies.

One of those is the German startup The Chainless, which analyses visual material and makes it searchable. It's now working on making archive browsing for German commercial broadcaster ProSiebenSat1 more accessible.

Another example is On-Hertz, a Brussels-based outfit that produces a distributed production platform for audio and video, and is working with French-language Belgian broadcaster RTBF to integrate into their production backbone.



VRT also spearheads the EU-funded MediaMotorEurope, a mentoring and coaching programme for media startups and scaleups.

"I think we're seen as a trustworthy partner that can bring in new interesting technology," De Paepe says. Other media organisations agree with this view.

Thomas Seymat, editorial projects and development manager at Euronews, has been involved in discussions with multiple startups from the Sandbox Hub ecosystem.

He tells Sifted that, "over the past couple of years, the Sandbox programme has put Euronews in touch with several relevant startups from all across Europe. This led to interesting networking opportunities and potential partnerships on cutting-edge projects."

Seymat could unfortunately not say which startups they were looking at, as negotiations are still ongoing.

Public broadcaster venture fund

This month, De Paepe was up for show and tell at the Sandbox Hub meeting to present VRT's latest addition: Media Invest Vlaanderen (MIV), a venture fund VRT set up in collaboration with PMV, a government-owned investment and loan fund for Flemish entrepreneurs.

Although there have been rumours the BBC is considering a similar venture fund, VRT is the only public broadcaster that is actively investing in scaleups.

"We were already attracting developers of new technology and helping them scale, so participating in those companies and possibly generating a new revenue stream was the next obvious step," De Paepe says.

MIV invests in startups and scaleups from Flanders and Brussels, with ticket sizes between €250k and €1m. Since 2019, it has invested in three startups, all of which previously worked with VRT through Sandbox. The €10m fund has three more deals in the pipeline.

As a publicly funded venture fund, it has some interesting advantages. De Paepe mentions that Covid relief loans granted to Flemish media entrepreneurs by PMV during the pandemic carry a clause that allow the loan to be converted into an equity stake for MIV at a following investment round. The loan is convertible to equity at a value agreed upon in the original loan contract.

// We're not primarily in the venture business to generate revenue. We're trying to solve a market failure. //

De Paepe couldn't say how many companies were considering this option, but hinted that the fund might be expanding its portfolio soon.

"It's important to note that we're not primarily in the venture business to generate revenue," De Paepe says, "we're trying to solve a market failure." He says that thanks to their innovation model, his team noticed that many scaleups that tested their MVP through Sandbox couldn't find a player in the market to help them scale. "Funds were mostly risk-averse, and that killed the scaleups," he says.

Seeing how real investment in public service media has **declined by 6.9% in Europe over the past five years**, investing in startups could be an interesting model to pursue for public broadcasters.



VRT is far from the only media company that has a venture fund, but the combination of Sandbox, an accelerator and European collaboration network gives the fund a leg up in helping startups with growth potential.

"One of the startups we're working with is Web64, a company building a real-time semantic graph to monitor how ideas spread and grow online," De Paepe says. "Coupled with an AI algorithm, the product helps journalists trace back sources of stories and tell if they might be disinformation."

"It's still in early co-creation, but we are using it internally. Now, once validated, will Web64 sell that tool to other members of our network? Without a doubt."

The collaborative nature of the Sandbox Hub allows European media companies, which are often a fraction of the size of their US counterparts, to co-develop technology that can compete with better funded startups and scaleups.

The sharing of information about challenges faced and new technology adopted helps members of the network stay relevant. And even though De Paepe realises some members might just be interested in what the competition is doing, in the end the main value lies in sharing knowledge.

"The real challenge now is keeping it funded," De Paepe says. The EU funding for the STADIEM programme runs until September 2023, so his team is already looking for new opportunities.

The dependence on public funding is both a strategic liability — as the EU or local government can refocus strategy or cut funding — and a motor for innovation for public broadcasters like VRT. It forces an organisation to be creative when finding funding.

And De Paepe says the model has the potential to expand its sector focus. "We're thinking about setting up a digital innovation hub that focuses on the creative industry," he says, "so not only focused on tech startups, but startups in the creative sector as well."

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