NBS 4 Drought

D1.1 Project Management Manual

30-11-2025

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Technical References

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1 PU = Public, fully open, e.g., web (Deliverables flagged as public will be automatically published in CORDIS project's page)
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Document History

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Summary of the deliverable

Deliverable D1.1 outlines the governance, coordination, and quality assurance framework for the NBS4Drought project. Developed under Task 1.1, it serves as a practical guide for all consortium members throughout the project duration.

Key components include:

- Governance Structure: Defines roles and responsibilities of the General Assembly, Executive Board, Coordinator, Work Package Leaders, and Task Leaders.
- Communication Tools: SharePoint is the central platform for document management and collaboration, supported by Microsoft Teams and mailing lists for formal communication.
- Quality Assurance: Procedures for reviewing deliverables and tracking milestones are established to ensure high standards and timely reporting.
- Reporting: Details the two official reporting periods and internal progress reviews, including technical and financial reporting via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal.
- Project Changes: Outlines the process for handling amendments, delays, and deviations, with the coordinator acting as the liaison to the European Commission.

The manual ensures transparency, consistency, and effective collaboration across the consortium, supporting the successful implementation of the NBS4Drought project.

Disclaimer

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction

This Project Management Manual (Deliverable D1.1) has been developed as part of Task 1.1: Governance, Coordination, and Quality Assurance under WP1 of the NBS4Drought project. As the Coordinator of the project, Aarhus University is responsible for the management of the project.

The manual provides a comprehensive overview of the project's governance principles and outlines the procedures that will guide coordination, communication, quality assurance, reporting, and meeting structures throughout the project's duration (M1-M48). It serves as a practical reference for all consortium members, ensuring clarity and consistency in project execution.

To support effective collaboration, the manual defines the roles and responsibilities of key actors, including the Project Technical Committee (PTC), Work Package Leaders, Task Leaders, and other participants. It also establishes mechanisms for efficient information flow and decision-making across the consortium.

By introducing these procedures early in the project (M3), the manual aims to foster transparency, accountability, and high-quality outcomes, thereby supporting the successful implementation of NBS4Drought.

2. Legal framework

The legal foundation of the project consists of two key documents: the Grant Agreement (GA) and the Consortium Agreement (CA). Both documents are stored on the project's SharePoint site.

The Grant Agreement is the legally binding contract between the European Commission and the project beneficiaries. It defines the rights and obligations of all participants and sets the framework for funding rules, deliverables, project objectives, budget, reporting requirements, timelines, and intellectual property and dissemination provisions. The consortium is obligated to deliver according to the terms outlined in the Grant Agreement, which serves as the primary reference for project implementation.

The Consortium Agreement is an internal agreement among the project participants (beneficiaries and associated partners). It governs the relationships within the consortium, outlining the organisational structure, roles, responsibilities, and mutual obligations of the partners. Unlike the Grant Agreement, the Consortium Agreement does not involve the European Commission.

3. Governance structure

The NBS4Drought consortium is composed of 21 beneficiaries and 3 associated partners. Its organisational structure is built around several key governance bodies, each with defined roles and responsibilities to ensure effective coordination and decision-making:

- **General Assembly (GA):** The highest decision-making body of the consortium.

- **Executive Board (EB):** The supervisory body responsible for overseeing project execution and reporting to the General Assembly.
- **Coordinator:** The legal entity acting as the intermediary between the consortium and the Granting Authority.
- **Work Package (WP) Leaders:** Responsible for coordinating activities and fostering consensus within their respective work packages.
- **Task Leaders:** Responsible for managing and distributing work within individual tasks.

Further details on roles and responsibilities are outlined in the sections below and in the consortium agreement, Article 6 “Governance Structure”.

3.1. Project Coordinator

The Coordinator serves as the primary contact point between the European Commission and the consortium. Key responsibilities include receiving and distributing EU funding, submitting formal requests, and overseeing the overall performance of the project covering financial, ethical, coordination, and project management aspects.

The coordination team consists of Shubiao Wu (Coordinator) and Benedikte Holm (Project Manager, PM). Shubiao is the overall responsible, ensuring the technical and scientific quality of the project. Benedikte manages the administrative aspects of the project, supported by the AU Research Support Office (RSO). Together, the coordination team handles the day-to-day operational and administrative tasks, ensuring smooth project execution.

In addition, the Coordinator chairs both the General Assembly and the Executive Board, facilitating discussions and ensuring strategic alignment across the consortium.

3.2. General Assembly

The General Assembly (GA) is the highest decision-making body of the consortium. It is composed of one representative from each partner, referred to as a “member,” who holds voting rights and is entitled to cast votes during GA meetings. A full list of the GA members can be found in the contact list on SharePoint.

The General Assembly is responsible for strategic decisions, including amendments to the Grant Agreement (e.g., the inclusion of new partners), and for endorsing proposals submitted by the Executive Board.

The General Assembly convenes at least once per year and is chaired by the Project Coordinator. Its decisions are binding and serve as the foundation for the project's direction and implementation.

3.3. Executive Board

The Executive Board is composed of the Project Coordinator and the leaders of each work package, who were appointed as members of the board during the first General Assembly. In addition to its governance role, the Executive Board also functions as the Project Technical Committee (PTC).

The Board is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of decisions made by the General Assembly and for overseeing the overall progress of the project. This includes monitoring compliance with both the Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement.

The Executive Board convenes at least four times per year. These meetings serve to assess project progress, prepare proposals for the General Assembly, and coordinate upcoming project activities and meetings. All Executive Board meetings are chaired by the Coordinator.

3.4. Work Package leaders and Task Leaders

Work Package Leaders coordinate activities within their respective WPs and facilitate consensus among partners. They maintain regular contact with the coordinating team to report on progress, upcoming activities, and emerging results. Any risks or issues that cannot be resolved within the WP are escalated to the Executive Board.

Task Leaders are responsible for managing their assigned tasks, organising activities, and distributing responsibilities among supporting partners.

4. Meetings

The Coordinator is responsible for organising and steering project meetings to ensure effective communication and coordination across the consortium.

The meeting structure includes:

- Consortium Meetings: Held annually, bringing together all partners to review progress and plan upcoming activities.
- Executive Board Meetings: Held quarterly, with additional meetings arranged if necessary to address emerging issues or decisions.
- General Assembly Meetings: Convened once a year as the main decision-making forum of the consortium.
- Work Package Meetings: Organised regularly by the respective WP Leaders, who are responsible for coordinating activities within their work packages. The Coordinator may participate in these meetings when relevant.

For meetings where formal decisions are made, such as those of the General Assembly and the Executive Board, minutes will be taken and made available to all consortium members via the project's SharePoint site.

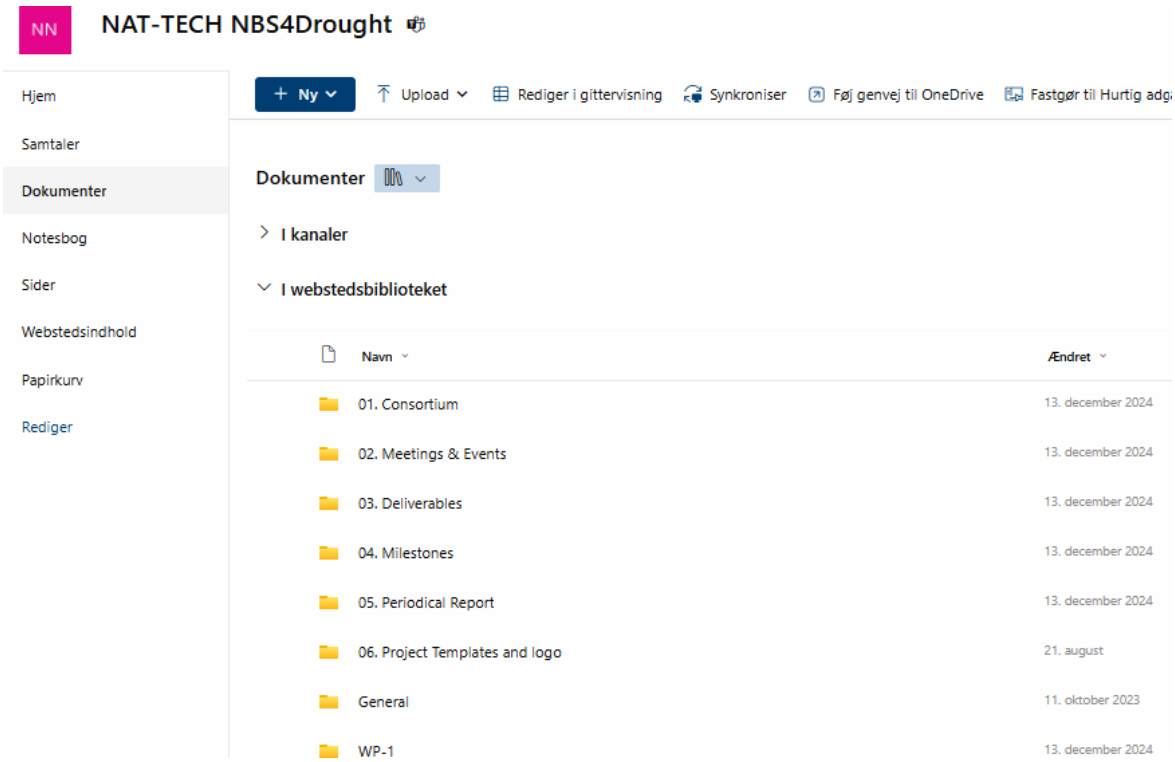
5. Communication and collaboration tools

5.1. SharePoint

The NBS4Drought SharePoint site serves as the primary platform for document storage and information exchange among consortium partners. Its main objective is to maintain a well-organised and continuously updated filing system for all project-related materials. It functions as a collaborative environment to support internal communication, project administration, and dissemination of activities. The platform is designed to ensure open access for all project participants, allowing users to view, download, copy, save, and collaborate on documents within a shared workspace.

The SharePoint site is managed by Aarhus University, the Project Coordinator, and was established at the start of the project. The site hosts a wide range of resources including:

- Legal documents (e.g., Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement)
- Project logo and templates
- Contact lists
- Deliverables, milestones and other outputs
- Internal project documents
- Scientific publications, abstracts, presentations



The AU University central IT department maintains the system, and this service includes backup of all data and information. AU has entered into a data processing agreement with Microsoft so that everyone, who has access to the SharePoint site, can safely use the tools in Office 365. However, we must be particularly attentive to classify the data correctly, as special rules apply for processing data (GDPR) as well as confidential data. The storage of confidential and sensitive data requires that personal data be pseudonymised.

The platform also supports integration with Microsoft Teams, which is used by the Coordinator for all project meetings and virtual collaboration.

5.2. Access to SharePoint

The SharePoint site can be accessed using the link:
https://aarhusuniversitet.sharepoint.com/sites/NAT-TECHNBS4Drought

Access to the SharePoint site is granted to all project members listed on the official contact lists. It is the responsibility of the Coordinator to ensure that all partners have access.

5.3. Contact list and mail lists

Formal communication within the consortium is primarily conducted via email, either through bilateral exchanges or group messages. To support this, a central contact list is maintained and made available to all partners via the SharePoint site.

The contact list includes details for all project participants, covering both scientific staff and administrative/financial personnel. It also contains information on Work Package leaders, General Assembly members, and Executive Board members. Keeping this information current is essential for effective communication and coordination. Any updates or changes should be reported to the Project Manager (Benedikte Holm).

To facilitate efficient communication, two mailing lists have been established:

- WP leaders: nbs4drought_wpl.agro@maillist.au.dk
- Technical consortium: nbs4drought_all.agro@maillist.au.dk

These mailing lists are intended to streamline communication when addressing either the WP leaders specifically or the full consortium.

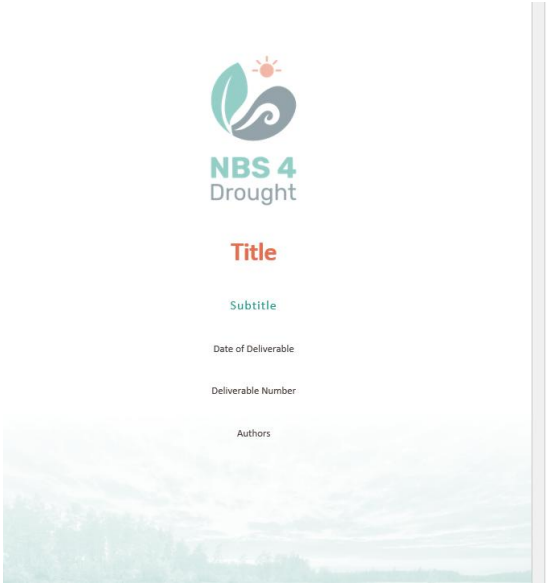
5.4. Communication with the European Commission

The Project Coordinator is the official interface to the European Commission. All formal exchanges of information with the European Commission should therefore be handled through the Coordinator.

6. Deliverables and milestones

6.1. Deliverables

The deliverables are the documents of the project results and serve as indicators of project progress. The deliverables are listed in the Description of the Action (DoA) in the GA and a copy of the list is also located on SharePoint. The deliverables are drafted by the responsible partner, using the template available on SharePoint (see below figure)


NBS 4 Drought

Title

Subtitle

Date of Deliverable

Deliverable Number

Authors


Title of Deliverable
Date of Deliverable

NBS 4 Drought

Technical References

Project acronym	
Project full title	
Call	
Grant number	
Project website	
Coordinator	

Deliverable No.	
Deliverable nature	[R, ADM, PDE, OTHER]
Workpackage (WP)	
Task	
Dissemination level 1	[CO/PU]
Due date	Status completion
Number of pages	
Keywords	
Authors	
Contributors	
Due date of deliverable	
Actual submission date	

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SEN = Sensitive, limited under the conditions of the Grant Agreement

6.2. Quality assurance

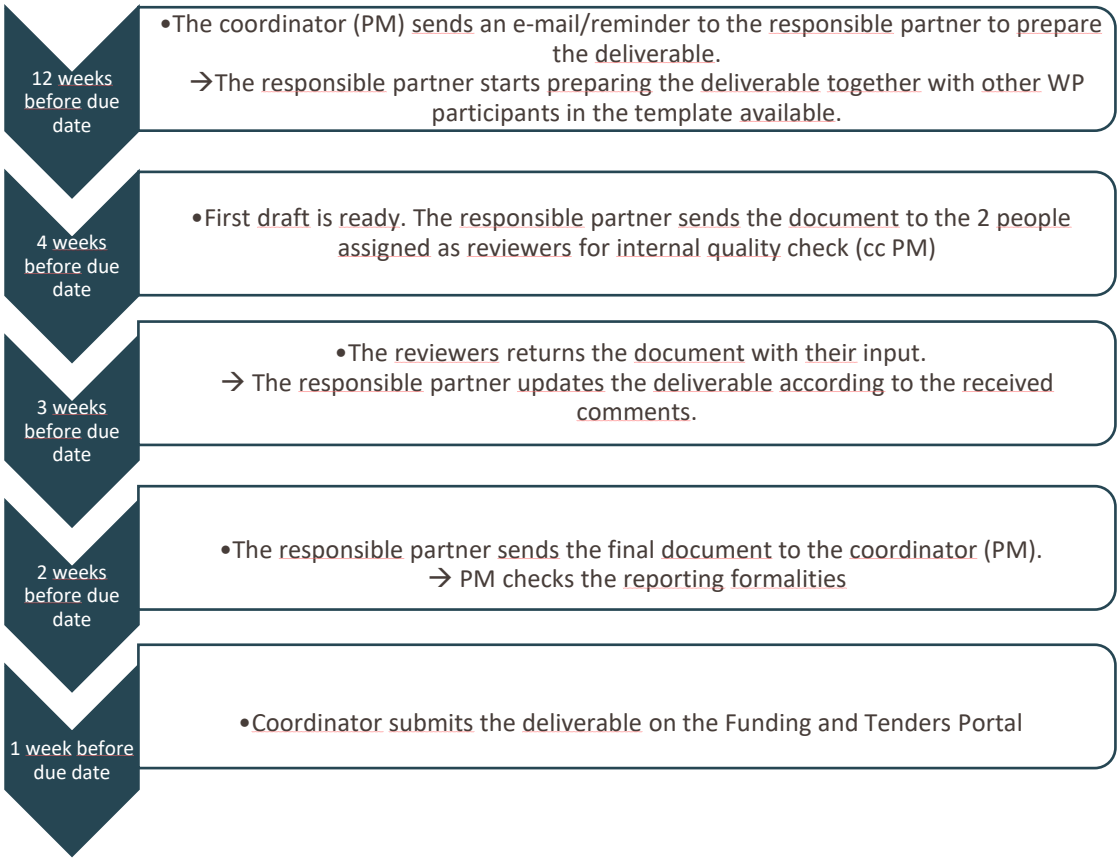
To ensure the high quality of project deliverables, the consortium will actively participate in the review process. At the beginning of the project, reviewers will be assigned to each deliverable listed in the SharePoint deliverables overview.

Each deliverable must be reviewed by a minimum of two individuals:

- One Work Package leader
- One additional relevant consortium member

This review ensures both technical accuracy and alignment with project objectives.

The figure below illustrates the quality assurance workflow, including key deadlines and responsibilities throughout the review process.



6.3. Milestones

The project includes 12 milestones, each serving as a key indicator of progress. To ensure quality control and proper documentation, the responsible partner for each milestone must prepare a milestone summary using the official template available on SharePoint. This summary serves as an internal validation tool and supports transparent project monitoring.

To facilitate timely delivery, the Coordinator (PM, Benedikte Holm), will send a reminder 12 weeks prior to each milestone's due date. The completed milestone summary must be submitted to the Coordinator (PM, Benedikte Holm) no later than 2 weeks before the official deadline.

The achievement of milestones is formally reported by the Coordinator via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal.

7. Reporting

7.1. Reporting periods

As a European-funded project, NBS4Drougt is under the reporting obligations as set out in the Grant Agreement.

There are 2 reporting periods in NBS4Drought and additional 2 internal reviews (progress reports).

- RP1: 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2027 (M1-M24), followed by an interim payment
- Progress report: M12
- RP2: 1 September 2027 to 31 August 2029 (M24-M48), followed by the final payment
- Progress report: M36

Information about the payment and financial management can be found in the consortium agreement section 7, *Financial Provisions*.

7.2. Periodic report

Each reporting period includes the submission of a periodic report, which consists of both a technical and a financial part. The coordinator team will guide all beneficiaries through the reporting process and provide the necessary templates and guidelines to ensure a smooth and consistent submission.

The technical part includes an overview of the action implementation. It must be prepared using the Commission's template and also include information from the continuous reporting process in the portal.

The financial part contains the financial statements for all beneficiaries/affiliated entities, the explanation on the use of resources and the certificates on the financial statements (CFS) (if required).

7.3. The EU Funding and Tenders Portal

The EU's electronic exchange system, the Funding & Tenders Portal (F&T Portal), is the primary platform for managing financial and administrative documentation related to the project. It is especially used during periodic reporting, but also for submitting other key project documents.

All project partners were registered in the F&T Portal during the proposal phase, and each partner has designated individuals with access rights to the system.

The portal remains continuously accessible throughout the project's duration and must be kept up to date. Each beneficiary is responsible for contributing to the Continuous Reporting section: Researchers, Publications, Results, Datasets, Impact, and Other Results (see below picture).

8. Project changes

The project is expected to follow the budget, tasks, activities, and timeline as outlined in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement. However, if changing circumstances require modifications to the Grant Agreement, the following procedure applies:

- The beneficiary must inform the Project Coordinator as soon as a potential change is identified.
- The Coordinator will assess the situation and, if necessary, initiate contact with the European Commission (EC) to discuss and process the amendment.
- All significant changes or deviations must be documented in writing. The proposing party (e.g. a participant, Work Package Leader, or Task Leader) must submit a written explanation detailing the rationale for the proposed change and the expected impact on the budget, timeline, and work programme.

Minor changes, such as small deviations from the timeline, will be addressed through the annual progress reporting process. In the event of delays or deviations in the delivery of agreed project outputs, the Work Package Leader responsible must notify the Coordinator without delay. Together, they will develop a recovery plan to address the delay or adjust the content as needed. The Coordinator is responsible for informing the Project Officer at the European Commission of any significant delays, deviations, or required changes, and for preparing and submitting amendments to the GA if necessary.

9. Conclusion

This manual provides a clear and practical foundation for managing the NBS4Drought project. It defines the governance structure, roles, and responsibilities, ensuring that all partners work in alignment with the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement.

To support collaboration and transparency, the project uses digital tools such as SharePoint for document management and Microsoft Teams for communication. Procedures for reporting, quality assurance, and milestone tracking are well-defined, helping to maintain high standards and timely delivery.

The Coordinator plays a central role in guiding the consortium, facilitating communication with the European Commission, and ensuring compliance throughout the project. Together, these elements create a solid framework for effective project execution and successful outcomes.