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NEXT BlueGeneration

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Next BlueGeneration

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1. Executive Summary

The Next BlueGeneration Final Conference, with title "Skills, Jobs & Future in the Blue Economy", was successfully held on 2 June 2026 in Brussels as a hybrid event, bringing together stakeholders from industry, education, research, policy, and youth engagement sectors.

The conference marked closing of the 36-month implementation period of the Next BlueGeneration project and provided a space to discuss current and future workforce challenges in the European Blue Economy.

Through keynote interventions, project presentations, and two expert panel discussions, participants explored solutions to address skills shortages, improve awareness of blue careers, and strengthen long-term policy support.

The event attracted more than 200 participants through physical attendance and online participation channels.

Attendance Overview:

The conference achieved strong participation across both onsite and online channels, confirming the effectiveness of the hybrid format. In total, the event reached **220 participants**, including **45 physical attendees**, **55 Zoom participants**, **79 YouTube livestream viewers**, and **45 Facebook livestream viewers**.

The registration process also showed strong interest, with **90+ onsite registrations** and **98 online registrations via Eventbrite**. The livestreaming evidence confirms that the event extended beyond the physical venue, allowing a wider audience to follow the conference remotely through Zoom, YouTube, and Facebook, while maintaining solid onsite participation in Brussels.

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Attendance Overview

Physical Attendance	YouTube Livestream	Zoom Participants	Facebook Livestream	Total Reach
45 participants	79 viewers	55 attendees	45 viewers	220 participants

Total Reach

220 participants

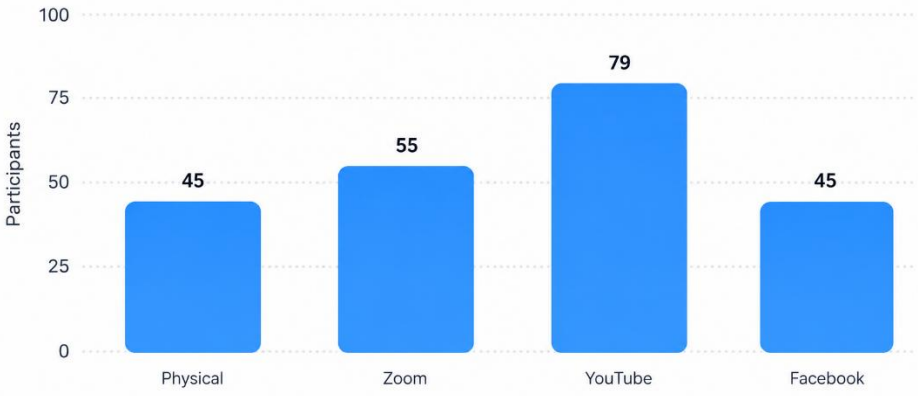
Registrations

90+ onsite registrations

90+ online registrations

Conference participation channels

Participant reach across onsite and online channels.



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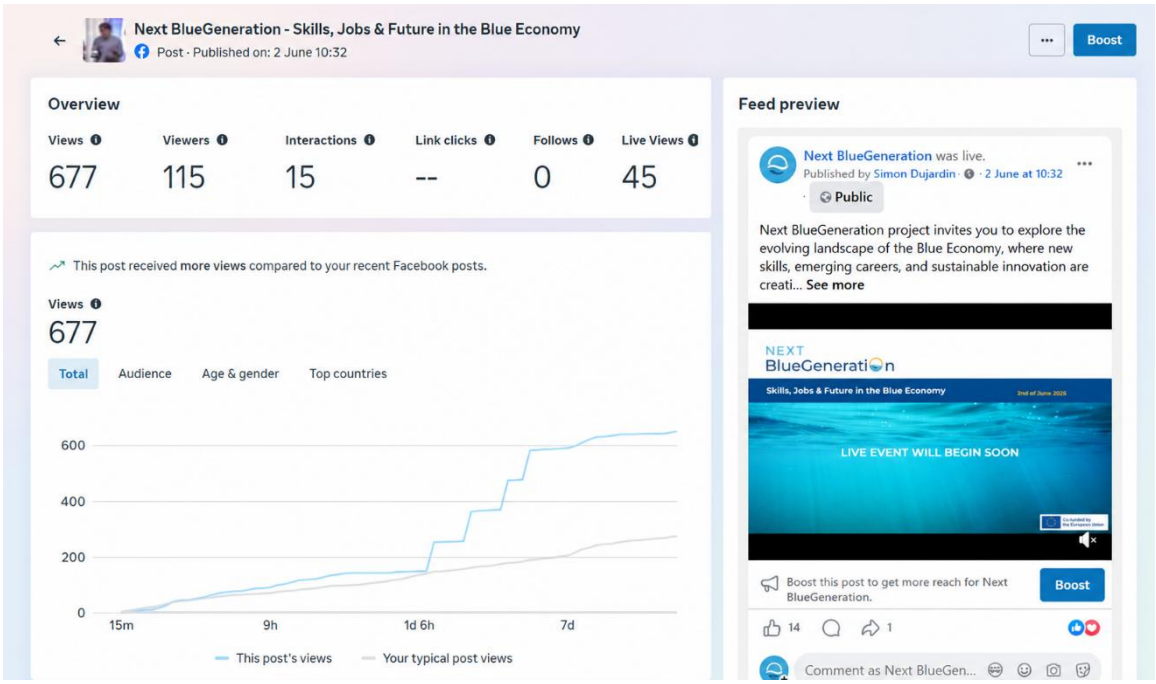
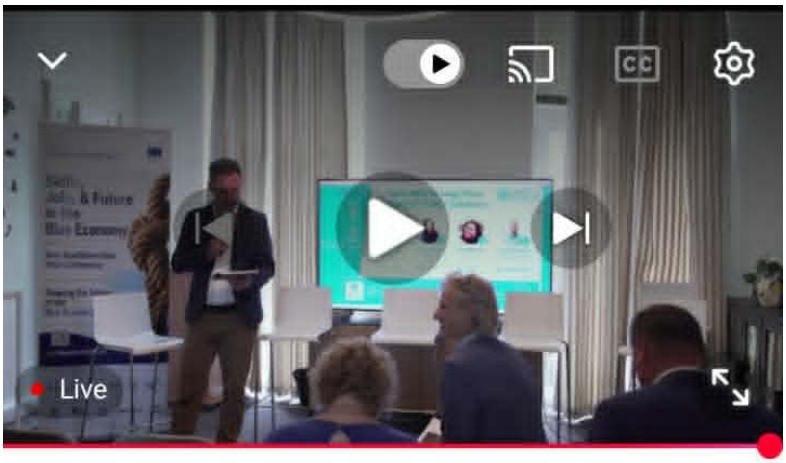
Live streaming views with numbers





Next BlueGeneration | Skills, Jobs & F...

@NextBlueGeneration 107 χρήστες παρακολουθούν...ακό...

86 Αποθήκευση

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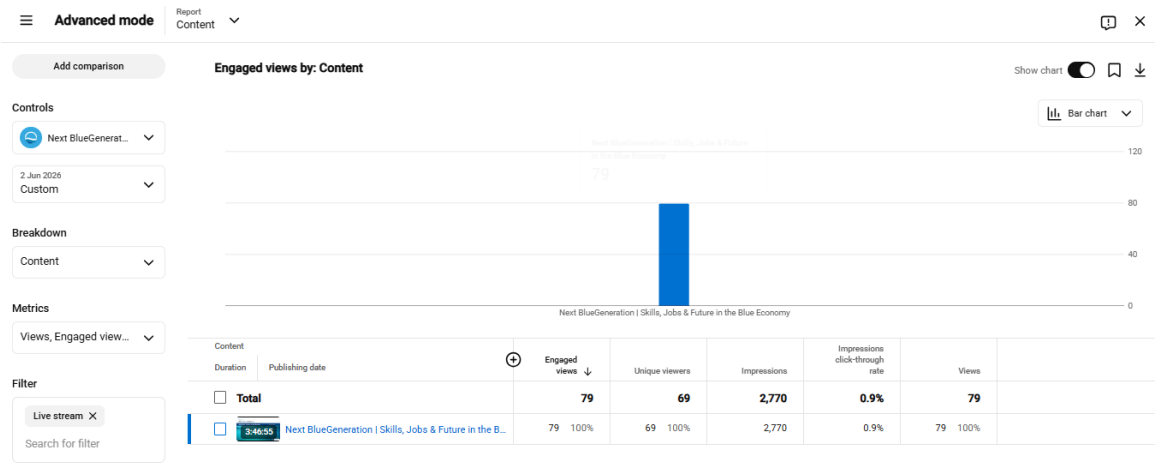

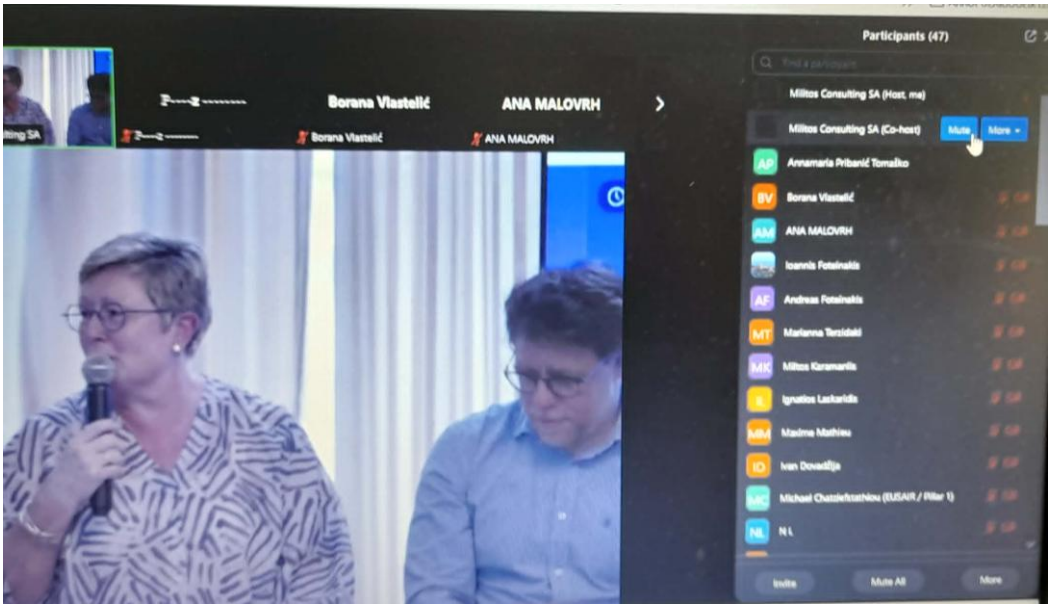

2. Background and concept

The conference was conceived as the final dissemination and policy engagement activity of the Next BlueGeneration project, providing an opportunity to present the project's achievements and facilitate dialogue on the future of skills development, workforce needs, and career attractiveness within the European Blue Economy. Particular emphasis was placed on the challenges reshaping maritime industries, including sustainability objectives, digitalisation,

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automation, and the growing use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

These developments are creating new employment opportunities while increasing the demand for specialised skills and competencies. The conference therefore aimed to bring together representatives from European institutions, maritime industries, education and training providers, research organisations, youth organisations, and civil society networks to discuss how education, industry, policymakers, and young people can work together to ensure a skilled and future-ready Blue Economy workforce.

Key themes included: skills development, the role of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies in maritime activities, strategies for increasing the attractiveness of blue careers among younger generations, stronger collaboration between industry and education providers, innovative training approaches, and the results and impact of the Next BlueGeneration project.

3. Prepatory Actions

The preparation of the Next BlueGeneration Final Conference was carried out over several months before June 2026, starting from the first months of 2026, through close collaboration among the project consortium.

The event was jointly coordinated by **Militos Consulting SA, WP7 leader** for Dissemination and Communication activities; **European Boating Industry (EBI), a Brussels-based partner** with an active network and strong experience in networking actions; and **Sea Teach, the project coordinator**. All partners contributed to the successful delivery of the conference by being involved in the different stages of the preparation process.

Preparatory activities covered all aspects of conference planning and delivery. These included the development of the event concept and agenda, the definition of objectives and expected outcomes, the identification and confirmation of keynote speakers and panel experts, and continuous coordination among project partners.

In parallel, organisational arrangements were made for venue management, audiovisual services, participant registration, hybrid participation facilities, and

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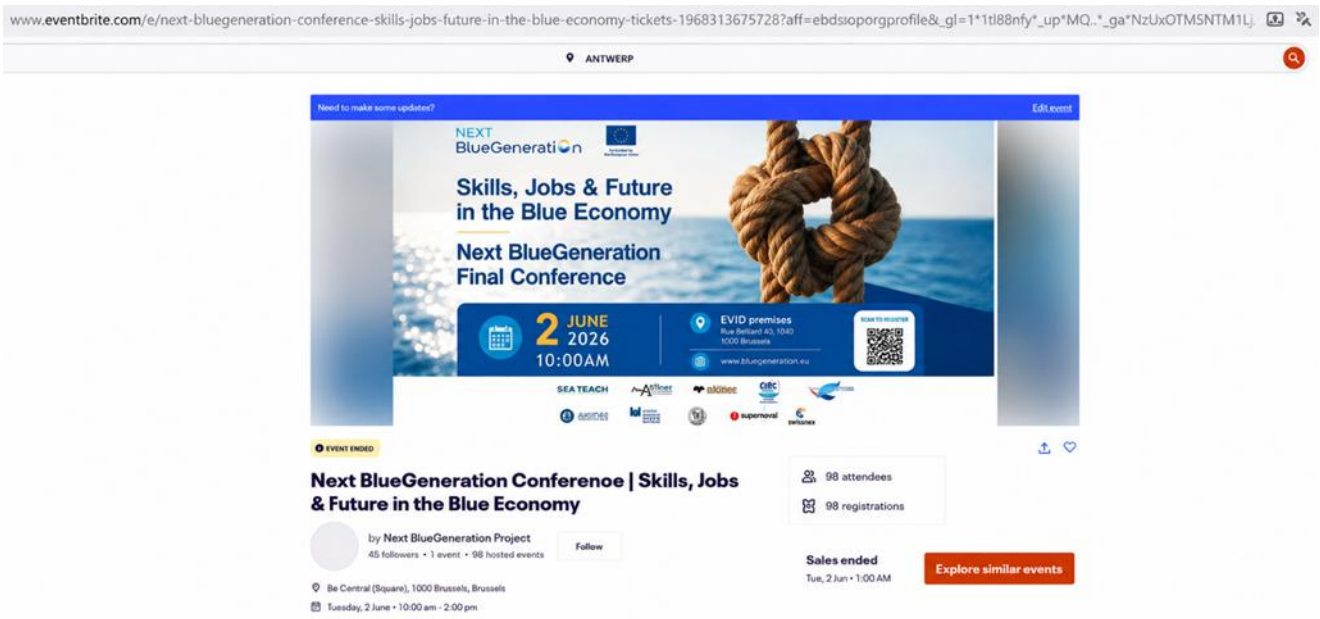
livestreaming solutions to ensure broad accessibility for both onsite and online audiences.

As part of the preparation process, an Eventbrite registration page was set up to manage registrations for physical attendance, allowing the organising team to monitor participant numbers, collect the necessary attendee details, and ensure smooth on-site coordination. This helped the consortium plan the logistics of the conference more effectively, including venue capacity, participant check-in, and overall event management.



For online participation, registrations were handled through Zoom, enabling remote attendees to register in advance and receive the necessary access details for joining the conference virtually. This ensured that both physical and online participants could be managed efficiently, supporting the successful delivery of the event in a hybrid format.

Significant effort was also devoted to communication and stakeholder engagement activities. Promotional materials, invitations, visual assets, and digital content were developed and disseminated through partner networks, social media channels, newsletters, and direct outreach campaigns. These activities aimed to maximise participation and ensure representation from the wide range of stakeholders involved in the European Blue Economy ecosystem.

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4. Communication, Outreach and Participant Recruitment

To maximise visibility and ensure broad stakeholder participation, a comprehensive communication and outreach campaign was implemented in the months leading up to the conference. The campaign combined digital promotion, direct stakeholder engagement, partner dissemination activities, and targeted communication efforts aimed at reaching relevant audiences across Europe.

A coordinated dissemination strategy was developed and implemented, ensuring consistent messaging and broad geographical coverage. Promotional activities through the social media channels highlighted the conference programme, keynote speakers, project achievements, and registration opportunities while emphasising the relevance of skills development and workforce renewal for the future of the Blue Economy.

The communication strategy relied on a combination of complementary dissemination channels and stakeholder engagement activities, summarised in Table 1 below.

Communication Tool	**Dissemination Activities**	**Target Groups**
Email Invitations	Distribution of invitations and registration information through project and partner mailing lists via mailchimp	Policymakers, industry representatives, educators, researchers, maritime stakeholders
Newsletters	News announcement of the invitation	Blue Economy stakeholders, training providers, industry associations

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Social Media Campaign	Publication of speaker announcements, programme highlights, registration reminders across LinkedIn, Facebook Instagram	General public, young professionals, maritime community
Project Website	Pop up page, agenda updates	All stakeholder groups
Partner Networks	Direct dissemination to partners networks	SMEs, industry organisations, education providers, policymakers

The communication campaign generated significant visibility for the event and contributed to strong participation levels.

Through the combined efforts of project partners and associated networks, the conference successfully reached stakeholders from across Europe, resulting in **more than 180 registrations for physical and online participation** and **over 200 participants attending** onsite and through online channels.

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Communication Results

Metric	Result
1. Number of social media posts	12 in total at Facebook + Instagram + LinkedIn
2. Campaign impressions / views	162,870
3. LinkedIn reach	721 members reached
4. Facebook reach	57,603 viewers
5. Newsletter recipients	More than 1,500 (in each round)

NEWSLETTERS

Two newsletter announcements were sent for the NBG Conference: one for **physical attendance** and one for **online attendance**. The physical attendance announcement was sent to 1,666 recipients, achieving a 92.3% delivery rate**,** 1.6% click rate**,** and 38% open rate. The online attendance announcement was sent to 1,662 recipients, with a 92.0% delivery rate**,** 1.6% click rate, and 36% open rate**.** Overall, both campaigns performed similarly, with the physical attendance email showing a slightly higher open rate and delivery rate.

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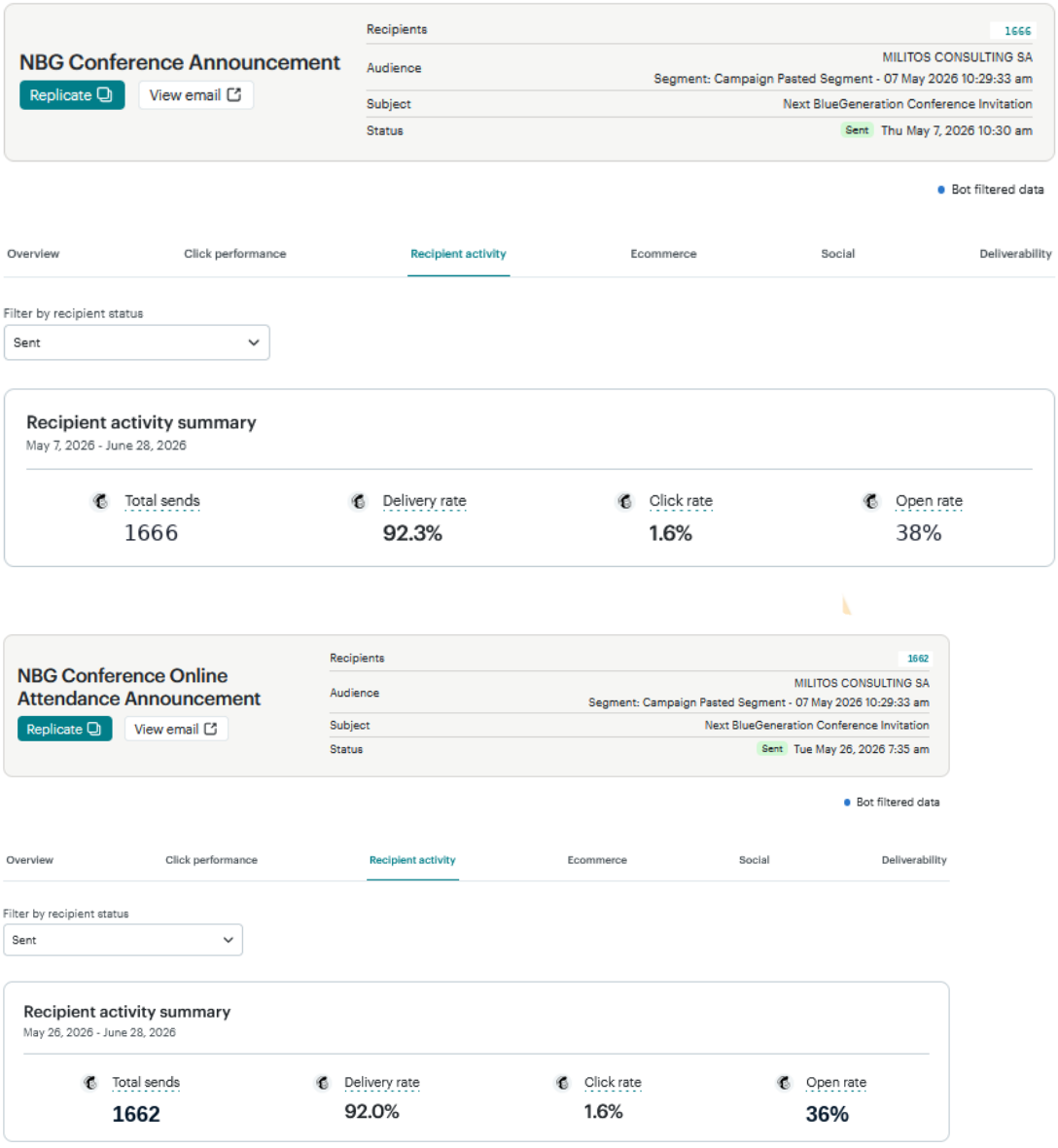

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTING & PROMOTION CAMPAIGNS

Overall, the campaigns achieved strong visibility across the three channels, with **162,870 total views/impressions** and **76,645 total people reached/viewers**.

Facebook delivered the highest volume, mainly because the two conference attendance promotion posts were boosted, generating **105,800 views** from the first two Facebook posts alone. Instagram also performed strongly for reach and

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interaction, with **31,559 views** and **460 interactions**, while LinkedIn contributed more professional engagement, with **24,854 impressions**, **215 clicks**, and **13 new followers**.

Social Media Performance Summary

Totals across 4 posts per channel

Channel	Posts	Views / Impressions	Reach / Viewers	Interactions	Link Clicks	Reactions / Likes	Followers Gained
LinkedIn	4	24,854	721	409	215	158	13
Facebook	4	106,457	57,603	82	456 visible	72	0
Instagram	4	31,559	18,321	460	—	—	5
Total	12	162,870	76,645	951	671 visible	230 visible	18

The boosted posts clearly helped expand the audience before the conference, while the organic posts after the event supported engagement, visibility, and continued dissemination.

It is important to note that in the first days following its live stream, the conference YouTube video reached around **2,000 views**, demonstrating strong interest from the target audience. **The video of the livestream can be found here.**

Evidence shows that more than 215 clicks were directed to the Eventbrite registration page, indicating that the promotional campaign successfully encouraged users to seek further information about the conference. Social media posting Analytics evidence are shown in the **ANNEXES**.

3. Conference Programme

The Next BlueGeneration Final Conference followed an agenda that combined project presentations, expert discussions, slido questions, and policy reflections on the future of skills and employment within the European Blue Economy.

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The agenda was designed to showcase the project's achievements while creating opportunities for dialogue among policymakers, industry representatives, educators, researchers, and young professionals. The conference was moderated by Philip Easthill, Secretary General of the European Boating Industry. **See Agenda in Annexes**

4. Key Outcomes

The conference opened with welcome addresses from Andreea Strachinescu, Head of Unit at the European Commission's DG MARE, and Silja Teege, Next BlueGeneration Coordinator from Sea Teach.

In their remarks, they highlighted the strategic importance of the Blue Economy for Europe's sustainable growth and competitiveness, with particular emphasis on addressing skills shortages and preparing future generations for the green and digital transitions. It was underlined that the need to strengthen cooperation between education providers, industry, research organisations, and policymakers in order to respond to emerging workforce challenges and support ocean-related careers is important. Participants were encouraged to contribute to forthcoming European initiatives, including the planned Blue Generational Renewal Strategy under the European Ocean Pact.

The conference then featured a dedicated presentation of the Next BlueGeneration project, introducing participants to its objectives, achievements, and key outputs. These included career guidance resources, educational materials, skills intelligence activities, stakeholder engagement initiatives, and innovative educational tools such as the project's MOOC.

A specific presentation on the NBG Games was delivered by René Bigum from Innopixel, showcasing the platform's interactive approach to promoting maritime careers and engaging young people in learning about opportunities within the Blue Economy.

A dedicated session was then devoted to the presentation of the Next BlueGeneration project and its main achievements by Silja Teege, Next BlueGeneration Coordinator from Sea Teach. Participants were introduced to the project's key outputs, including career guidance resources, educational

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materials, the MOOC that promotes innovative and interactive approaches to learning about maritime careers.

The programme also featured two expert panel discussions that brought together representatives from industry, education, policy, and research organisations.

Panel 1: Future of the Blue Economy – Identifying the Skills Gap

A key highlight of the programme was Panel 1: "Future of the Blue Economy: Identifying the Skills Gap", which brought together Anne-Marie Bouweraerts (President of Nautibel and Vice-President of the European Boating Industry), Thanos Gkritzalis (VLIZ), Djani Mohovic (Faculty of Maritime Studies, University of Rijeka), Evy Copejans (European Marine Science Educators Association), and Lina Keratsa (Technical University of Athens).

The first panel brought together representatives from industry, education, research, and policy to discuss the evolving workforce needs of the European Blue Economy and the challenges associated with attracting, training, and retaining qualified professionals.

A central theme throughout the discussion was the growing skills gap affecting many maritime sectors. Panelists agreed that, while the Blue Economy continues to expand and diversify, employers are increasingly facing difficulties in recruiting personnel with the competencies required to support emerging technologies and sustainable business practices. In addition to workforce shortages, participants highlighted a persistent mismatch between educational outputs and labour market needs, with training programmes often struggling to keep pace with rapid technological and environmental changes.

The discussion emphasised that future professionals will require a broader and more interdisciplinary skill set than in previous generations. Alongside traditional technical knowledge, increasing importance is being placed on digital competencies, data management, sustainability awareness, green transition expertise, and the ability to adapt to rapidly changing working environments. Participants noted that emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, automation, alternative fuels, and smart maritime technologies are creating demand for new professional profiles across the sector.

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Panelists also stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation between industry and education providers. Greater involvement of employers in curriculum design, expanded internship and apprenticeship opportunities, and closer collaboration between schools, universities, vocational training centres, and businesses were identified as essential measures to ensure that training provision remains aligned with labour market requirements.

Another key topic concerned the attractiveness of maritime careers among young people. Participants acknowledged that many young individuals continue to have limited awareness of the diversity of opportunities available within the Blue Economy. The panel highlighted the need to promote ocean literacy from an early age, improve the visibility of maritime career pathways, and showcase the innovative, technological, and sustainability-driven nature of modern maritime professions. Challenging outdated perceptions of the sector was considered essential for attracting future talent.

Panel 2: From NBG to Long-Term Impact and Policy Solutions

This panel featured contributions from Flavia Cavaliere (BIP Group), Monia El Faziki (SEA Europe), Olga Mashkina (ACTeon), and Ferdinand Bulmer (SUBMARINER Network).

The second panel focused on the long-term sustainability of the Next BlueGeneration project results and explored policy measures that could support workforce development within the European Blue Economy beyond the project's lifetime.

Discussions highlighted the importance of ensuring that successful project outcomes continue to generate value after the end of EU funding. Panelists emphasised that long-term impact depends on strong stakeholder ownership, continued collaboration among relevant actors, and the integration of project outputs into existing educational, industrial, and policy frameworks. Participants agreed that initiatives such as Next BlueGeneration can serve as catalysts for wider structural changes if their tools, methodologies, and recommendations are effectively embedded within broader strategies.

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The conversation also addressed the role of public policy in supporting skills development and workforce renewal. Panelists stressed that the green and digital transitions require sustained investment in education, training, and lifelong learning opportunities. Stronger alignment between industrial policies and education policies was identified as a critical factor in ensuring that future workforce needs are adequately addressed. Particular attention was given to the challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises, which often require additional support to adapt to technological and regulatory changes.

A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the need for stronger European cooperation in promoting blue careers and supporting workforce development. Participants highlighted the value of sharing successful practices, replicating effective tools and methodologies, and fostering collaboration across regions and sectors. The experience of Next BlueGeneration demonstrated how stakeholder engagement, innovative learning approaches, and cross-sector cooperation can contribute to addressing common challenges across Europe.

The panel concluded that the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of the European Blue Economy will depend not only on technological innovation, but also on continued investment in people, skills, education, and collaborative action among policymakers, industry representatives, educators, and civil society organisations.

The conference concluded with closing remarks from Agnieszka Kempny (CINEA) and Silja Teege (Sea Teach). The conference concluded with reflections on the legacy of the Next BlueGeneration project and its contribution to the development of a more skilled, resilient, and future-oriented Blue Economy workforce. Speakers stressed the importance of maintaining cooperation among stakeholders beyond the project's lifetime and continuing efforts to promote maritime careers, strengthen skills development, and support policy actions that address long-term workforce needs.

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5. Impact and Conclusions

Through its educational resources, stakeholder network, innovative engagement tools, and policy recommendations, the Next BlueGeneration project leaves a strong legacy for the European Blue Economy. The conference demonstrated that continued collaboration between education, industry, and policymakers will be essential to ensuring a skilled, adaptable, and future-ready maritime workforce.

The conference successfully demonstrated the relevance of workforce development within the European Blue Economy and reinforced the importance of collaboration among policymakers, educators, industry representatives, and young people.

The Next BlueGeneration project leaves a strong legacy through its educational tools, stakeholder network, and policy recommendations, contributing to the development of a skilled and future-ready Blue Economy workforce.

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Annexes

Annex 1 – Conference Agenda

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Annex 2 – Invitations for physical and online attendance

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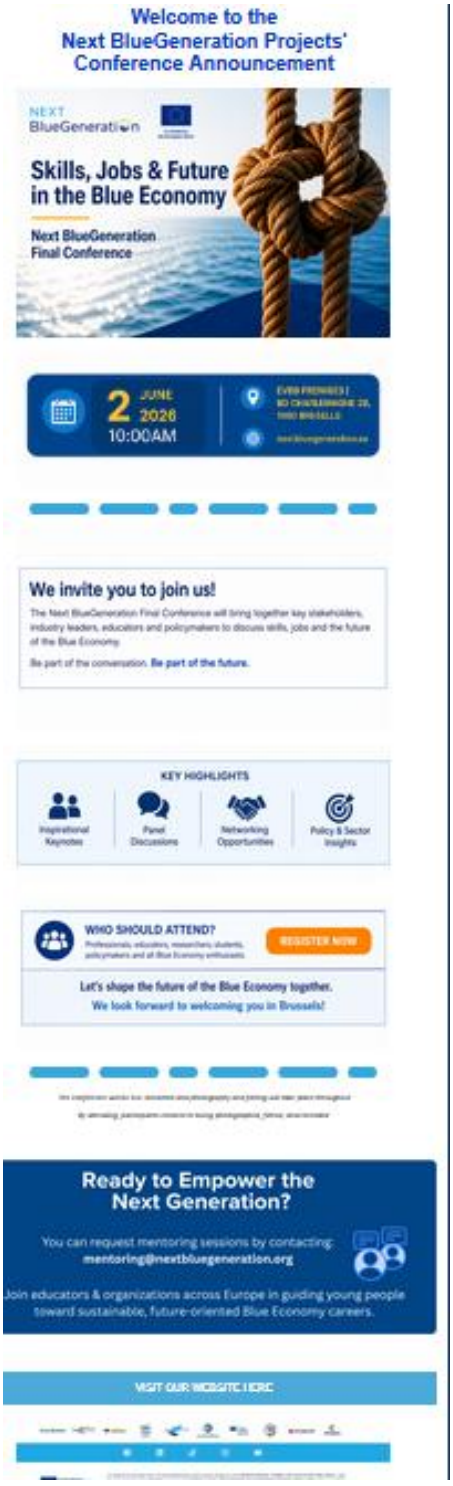
Annex 3 – News Announcement/Invite for physical attendance



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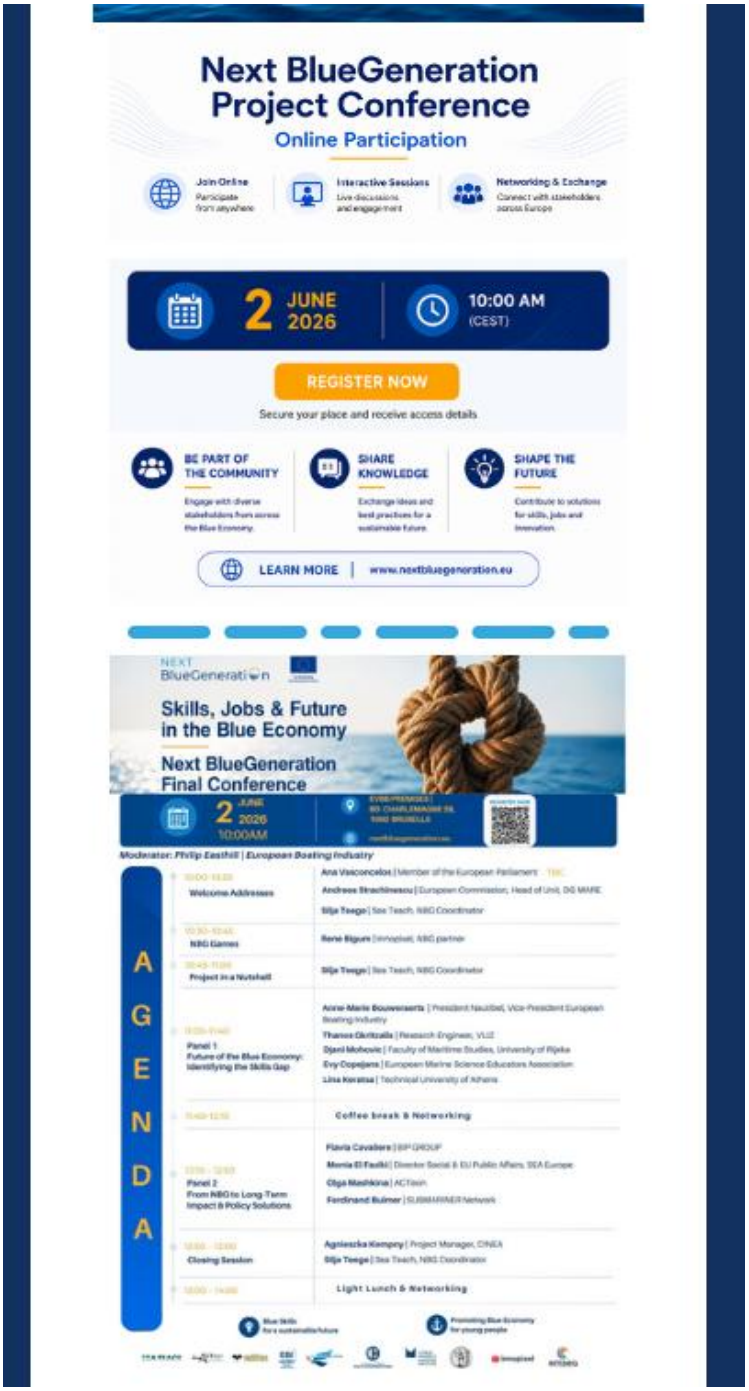
Annex 4 – News Announcement/Invite for online attendance



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Annex 5 – Livestream Video Link

Link in YOUTUBE https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBTHawW-CBQ

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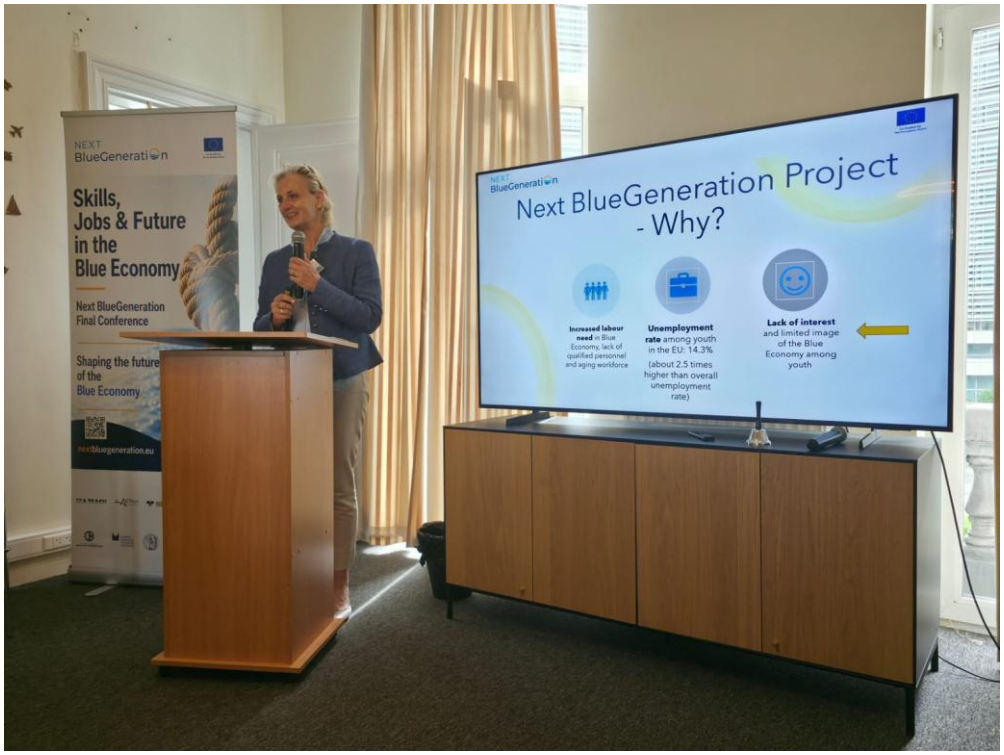
Annex 6 – Event Photos



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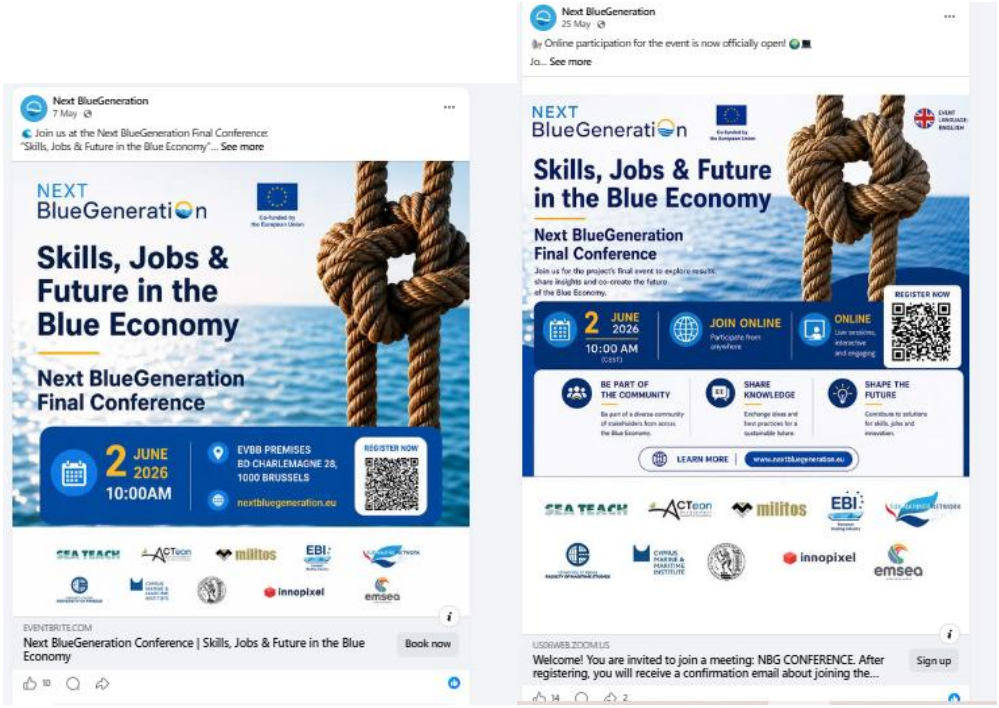
Annex 7 Social media Posts



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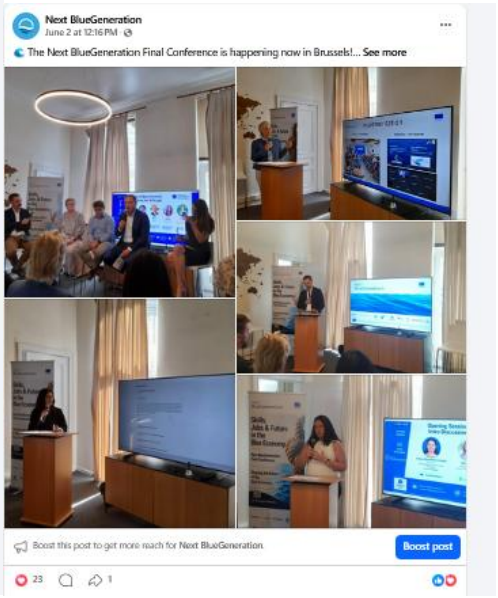

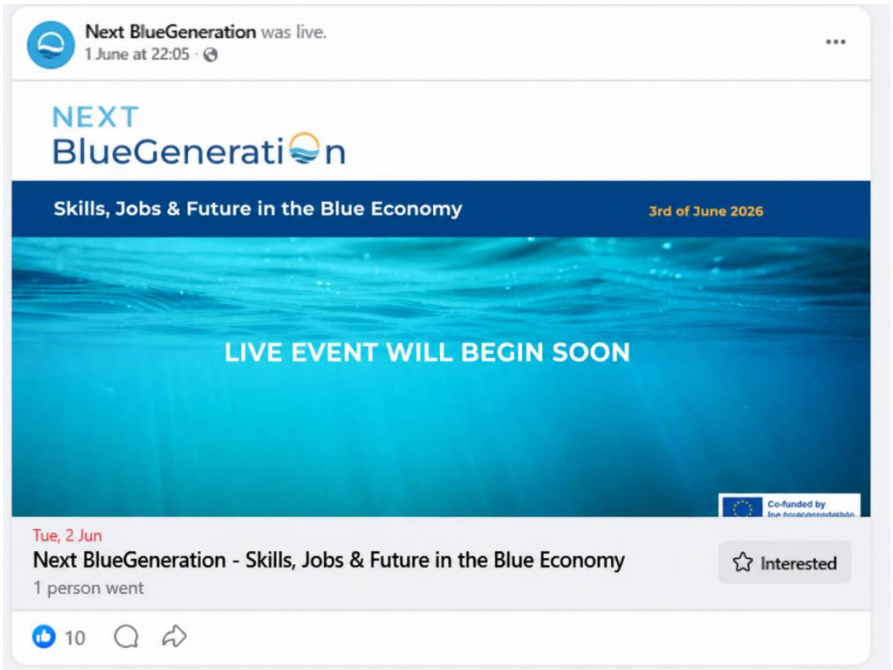

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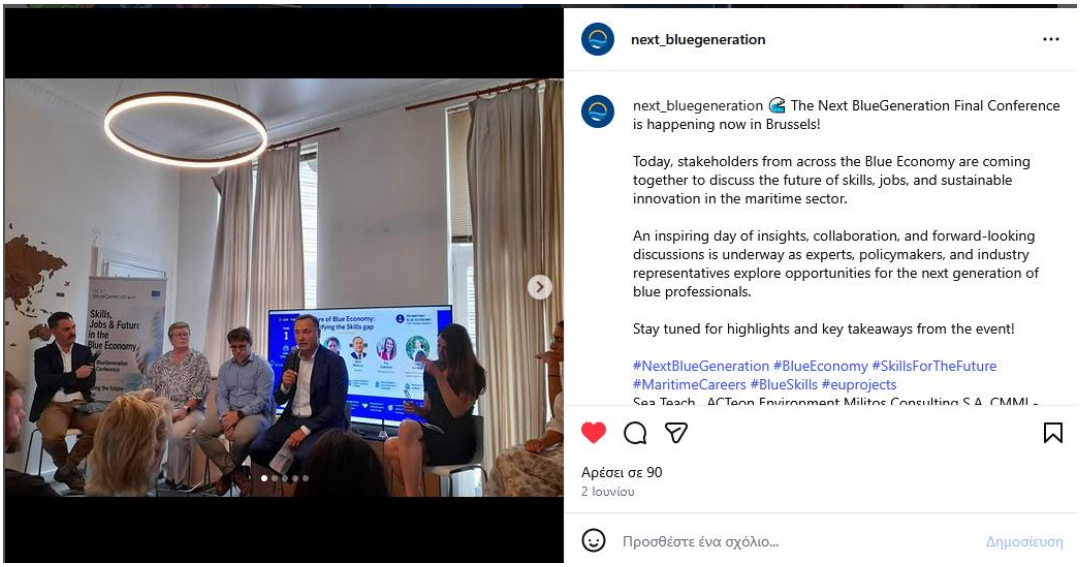

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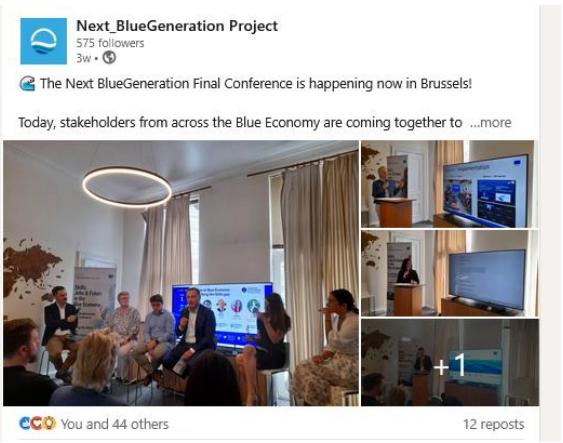

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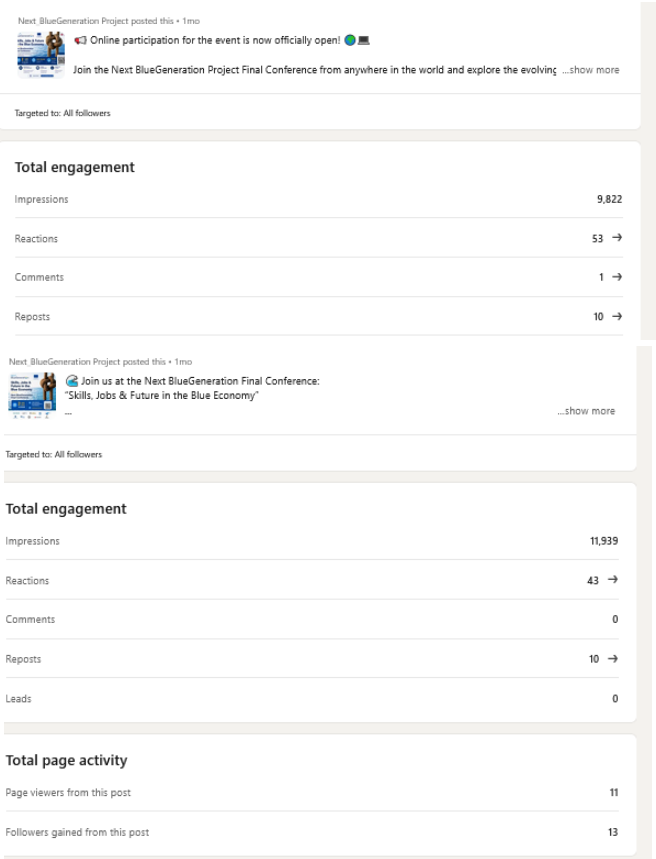
Annex 8 Social Media Posting Analytics



Next BlueGeneration Project posted this • 1mo

📢 Online participation for the event is now officially open! 🌍💻

Join the Next BlueGeneration Project Final Conference from anywhere in the world and explore the evolving ...show more

Targeted to: All followers

Total engagement

Impressions	9,822
Reactions	53 →
Comments	1 →
Reposts	10 →

Next BlueGeneration Project posted this • 1mo

🌊 Join us at the Next BlueGeneration Final Conference: "Skills, Jobs & Future in the Blue Economy"

...

...show more

Targeted to: All followers

Total engagement

Impressions	11,939
Reactions	43 →
Comments	0
Reposts	10 →
Leads	0

Total page activity

Page viewers from this post	11
Followers gained from this post	13

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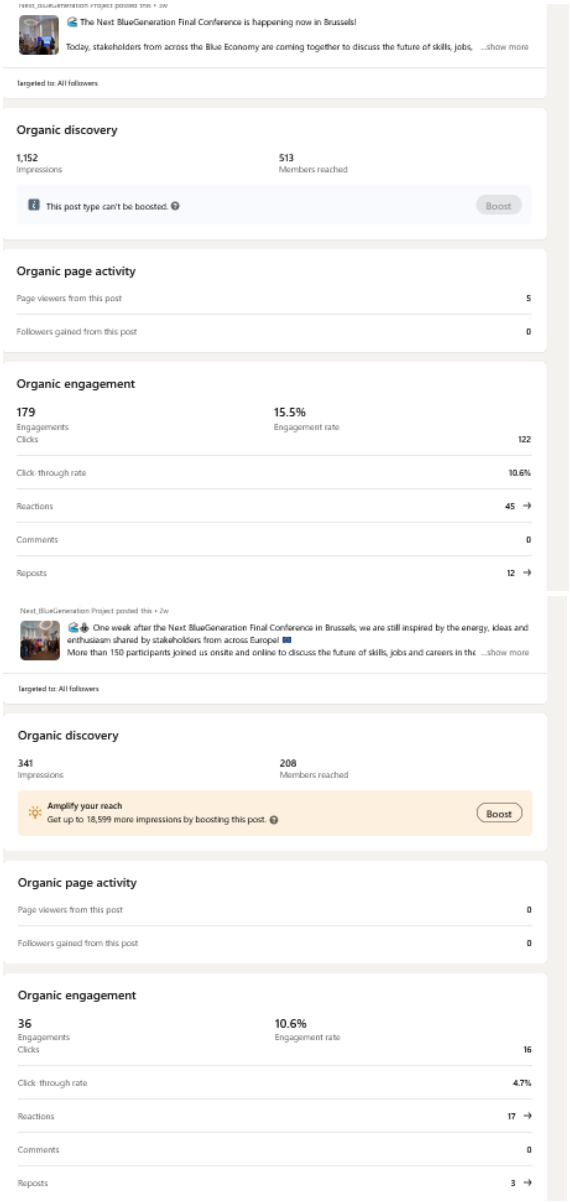

Metric	Total for 4 LinkedIn posts
Impressions	**24,854**
Members reached	**721**
Reactions	**158**
Comments	**1**
Reposts	**35**

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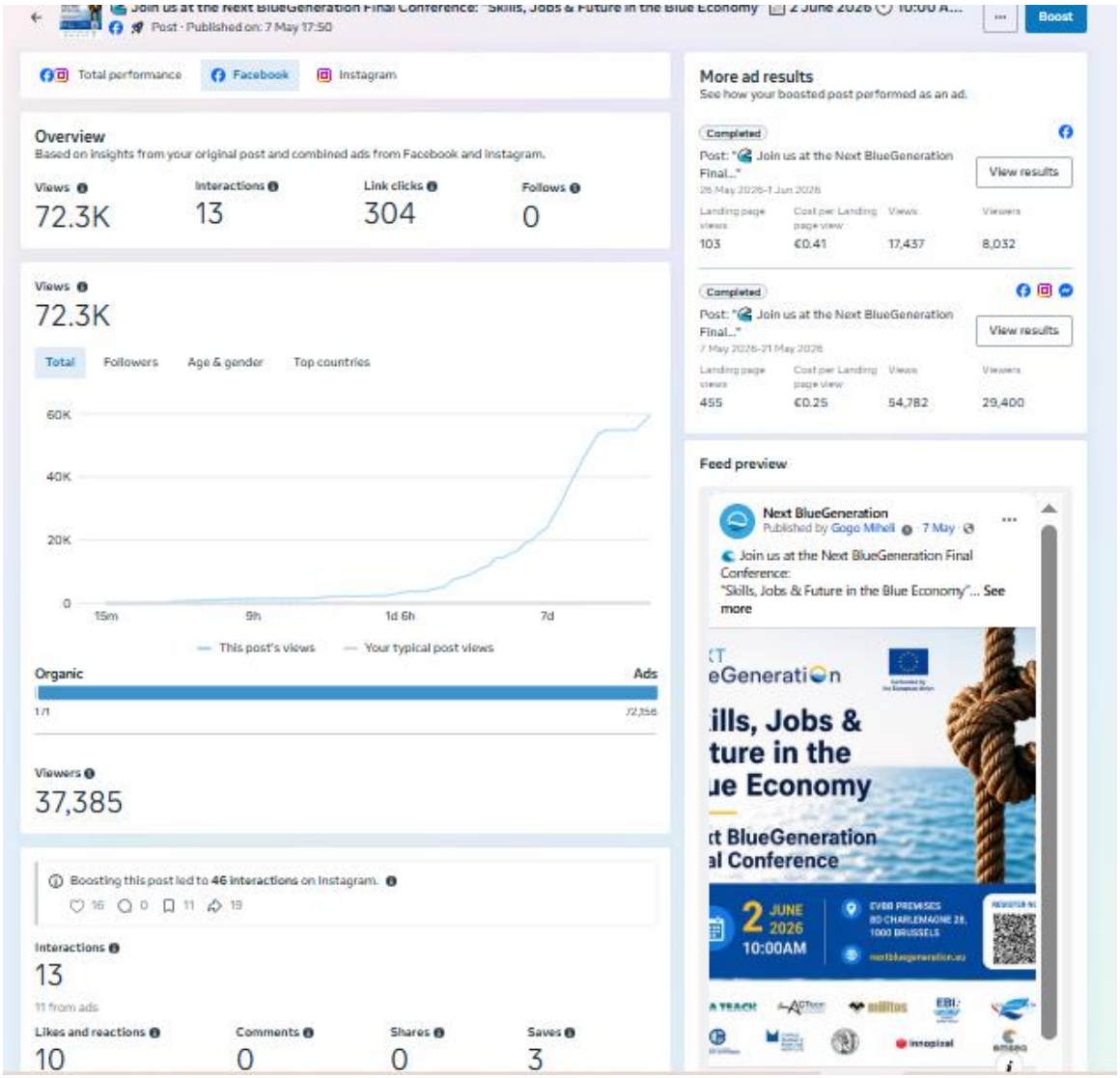
Metric	Total for 4 LinkedIn posts
Clicks	**215**
Page views from posts	**16**
Followers gained	**13**
Total visible engagements	**409**



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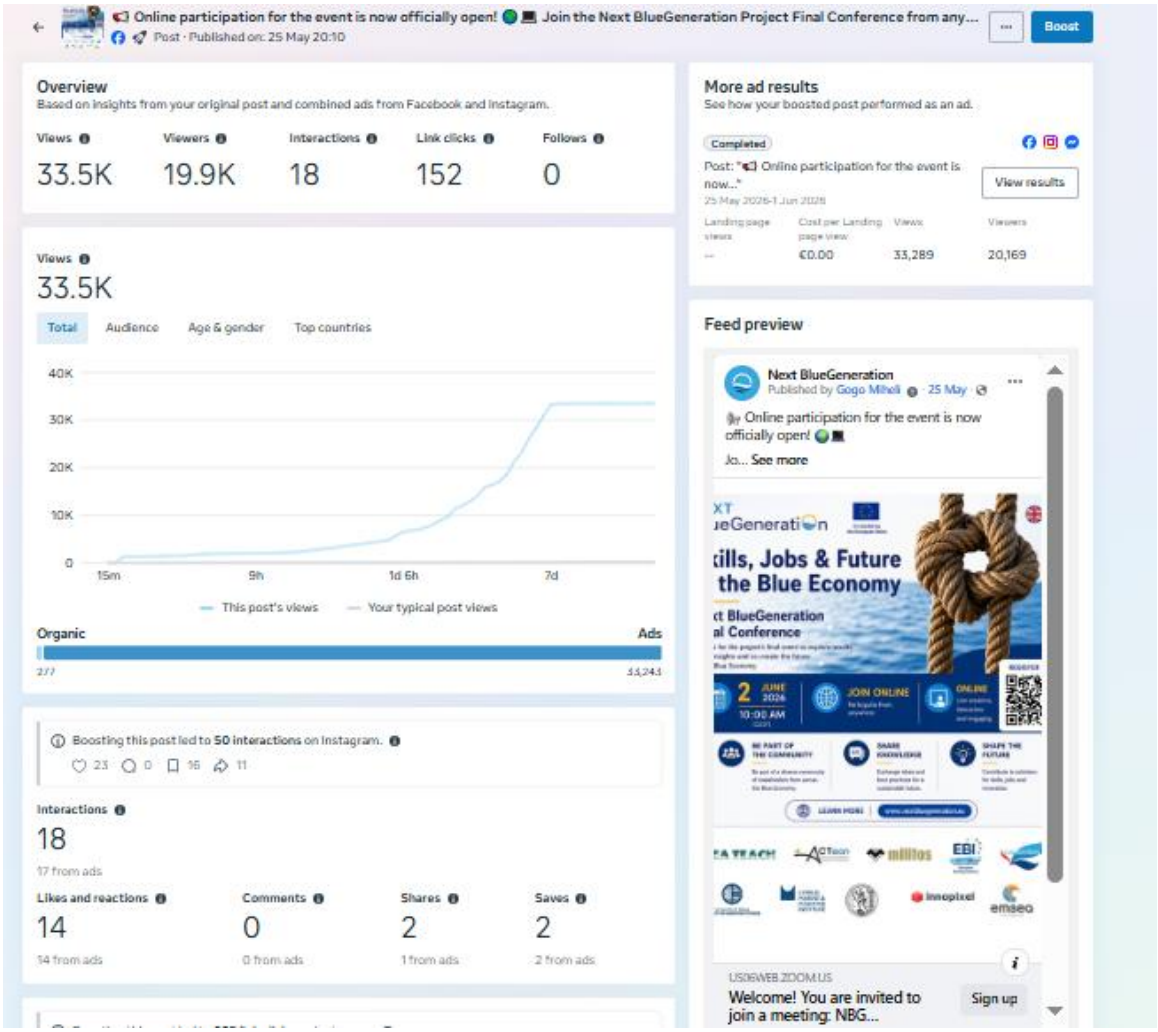

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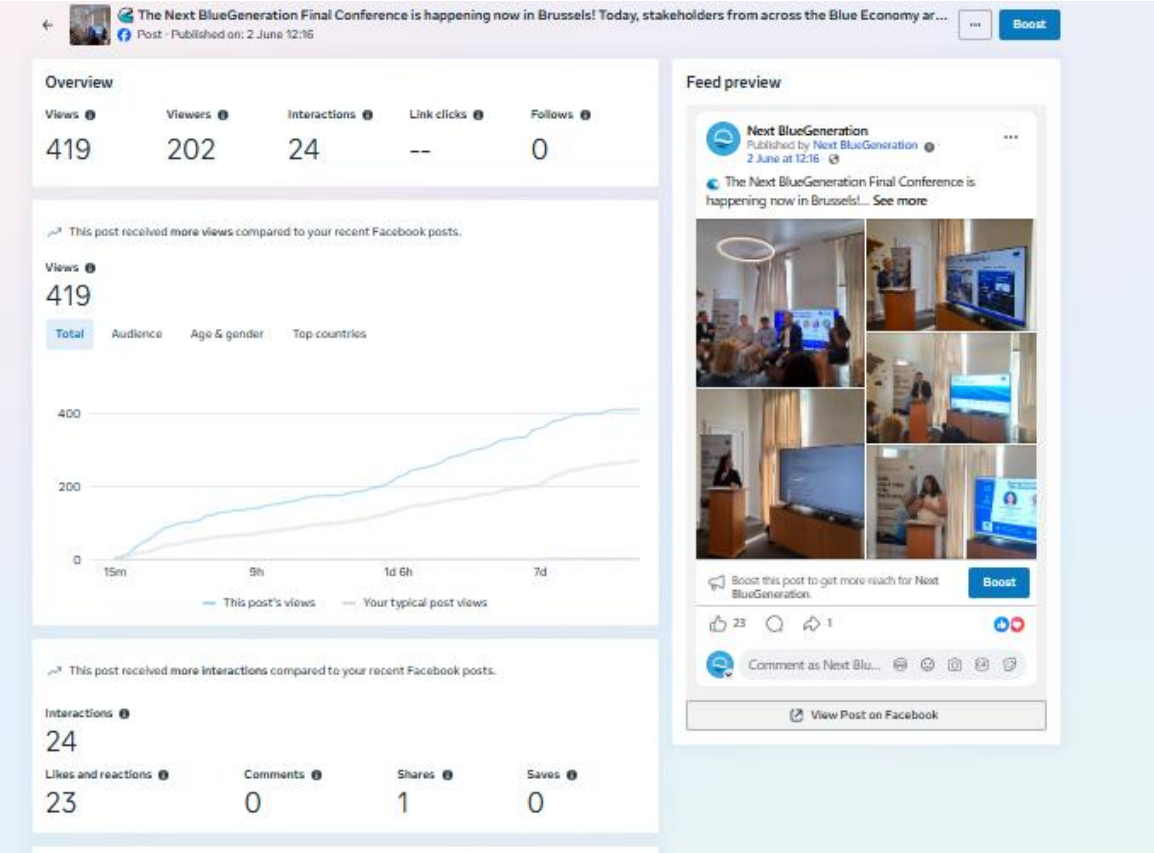

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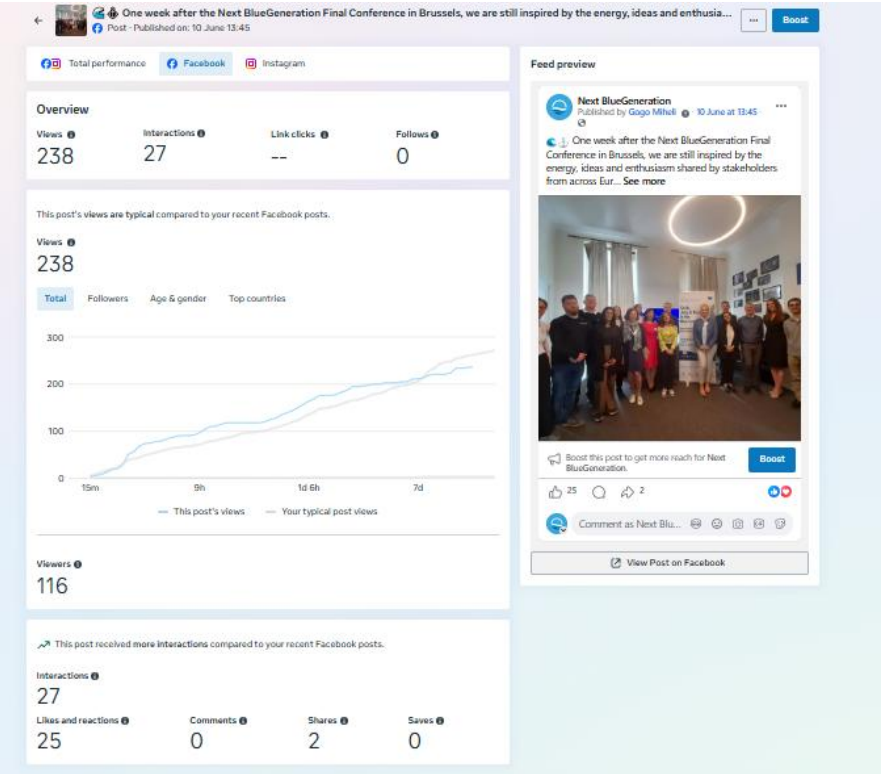

Facebook post	Views	Viewers	Interactions	Link clicks	Likes/Reactions	Shares	Saves
Post 1	72,300	37,385	13	304	10	0	3
Post 2	33,500	19,900	18	152	14	2	2
Post 3	419	202	24	—	23	1	0
Post 4	238	116	27	—	25	2	0
Total	**106,457**	**57,603**	**82**	**456 visible**	**72**	**5**	**5**

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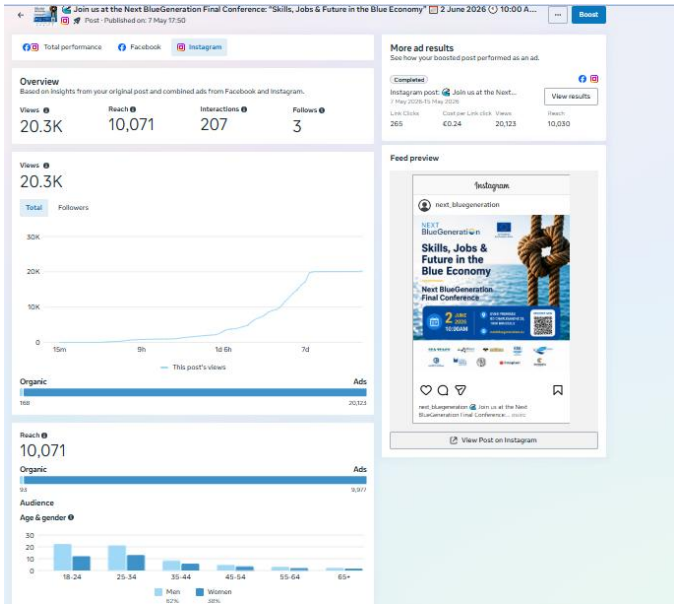

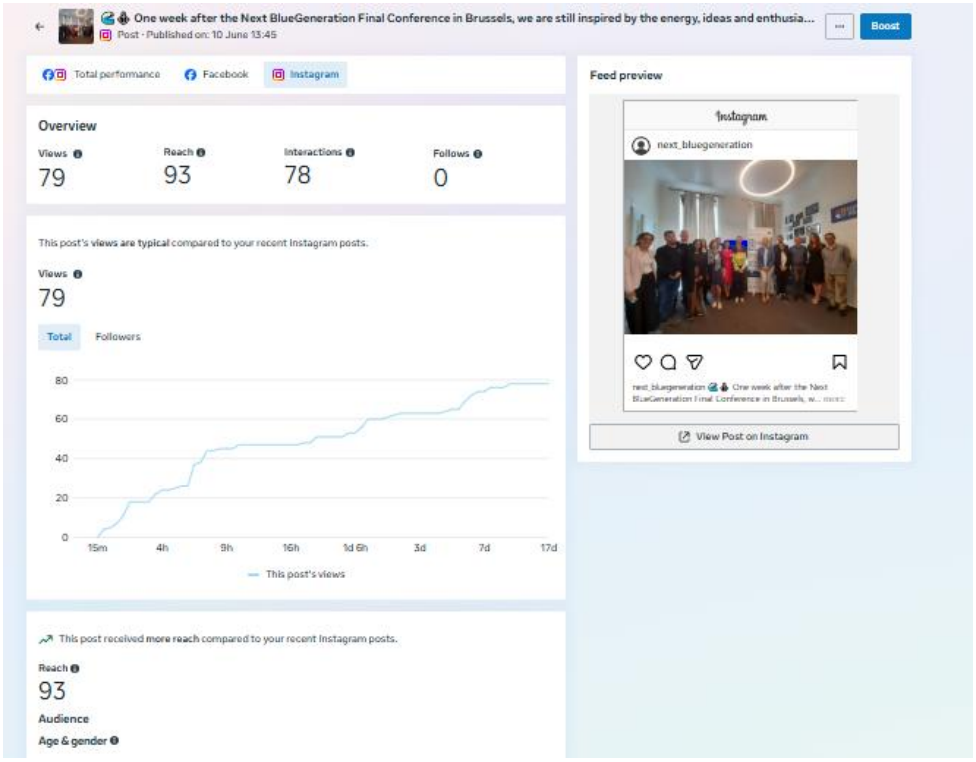

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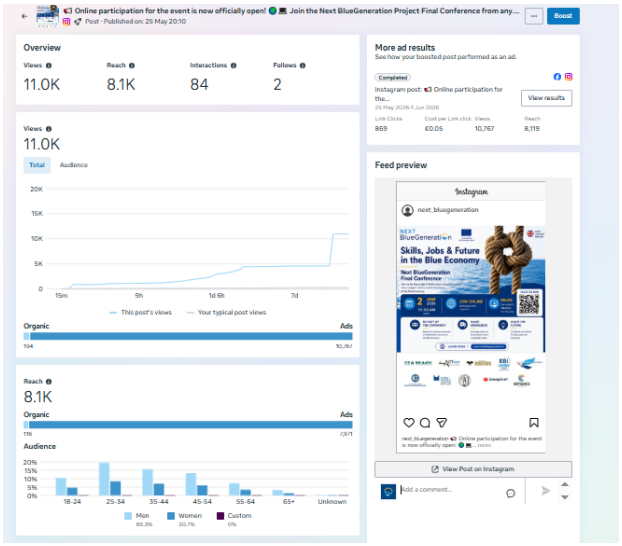

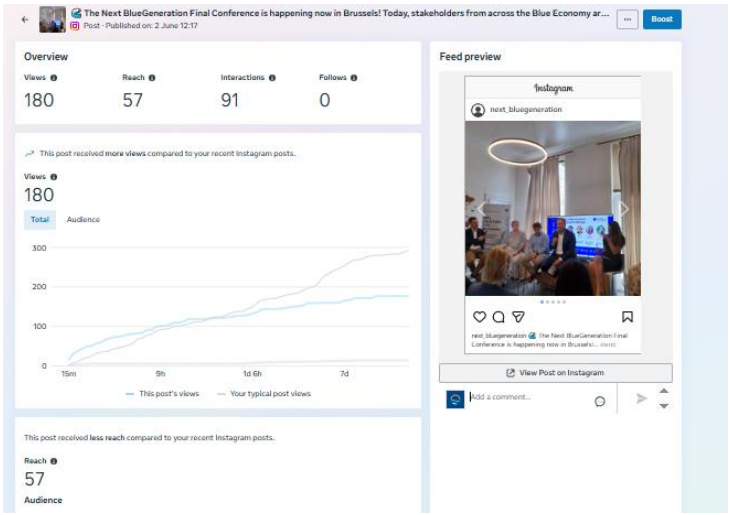

Instagram post	Views	Reach	Interactions	Follows
Post 1	20,300	10,071	207	3
Post 2	11,000	8,100	84	2
Post 3	79	93	78	0
Post 4	180	57	91	0
Total	**31,559**	**18,321**	**460**	**5**

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