

**Interreg
North Sea**



Co-funded by
the European Union

Short guide to project communication

Make your website shine



Unlock the potential of your website

Captivate your target groups and boost your online presence

The purpose of this guide is to support you to create a cool website that attracts the groups you want to engage with.

Your project website is a key asset for your project and a top priority in project management. It comes with a built-in superpower: Since it is embedded within the main North Sea Programme website, your site profits from the overall site's high traffic and visibility from the start.

All North Sea projects are obliged to keep their website updated as their go-to channel for disseminating project news, events, progress and achievements. Check out this guide to get tips and ideas for how to make your content fly.

In the following pages, you will find our top tips to creating a great experience for your visitors.

Did you know....?

Your website will have a very long life. It will stay online for at least 10 years after your project has closed.



Know your **audience**



Understanding your audience is the best starting point for crafting your website's content.

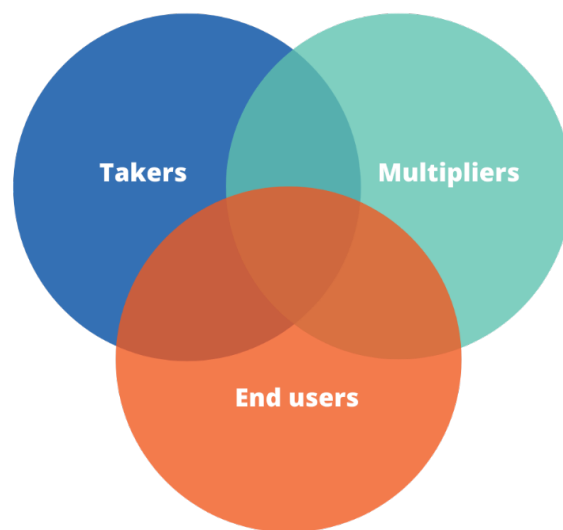
Tip #1. Keep your target audience in mind

Who are your target groups? This is a crucial question in any kind of communication, including your website.

The vast majority of North Sea projects want to engage with several audiences including experts and non-experts. If this applies to your project, then you need to take this into account.

For the purpose of crafting your content, we recommend dividing your audience into the following categories:

- 1) **Takers** – groups who may transfer and reuse your work so that your project will have maximum impact. For example, professionals working within your topic, politicians and decisionmakers.
- 2) **Multipliers** – groups who can help promote and disseminate your work. For example, the media, associations, influential people, social media influencers.
- 3) **End users** - groups who will ultimately benefit from your project's work. For example, citizens, SMEs, patients.



Consider what each target group needs to know about your project. Why do you want to engage with them? What is the purpose of communicating with them? What would make them interested in your work? Armed with the answers, you can develop and organise your content to cater for the needs.

It is a good idea to develop and structure your contents with the least-informed audiences in mind. Please make sure that the content visitors immediately see on your site is understandable for all your target groups, including the occasional policymaker or citizen.

To keep your expert visitors engaged, you can offer more advanced or technical information on dedicated pages or as downloadable materials.

Boost

your visual appeal



An inviting and easy-to-navigate website is more discoverable and encourages your stakeholders to explore your content further.

Tip #2. Get your header right

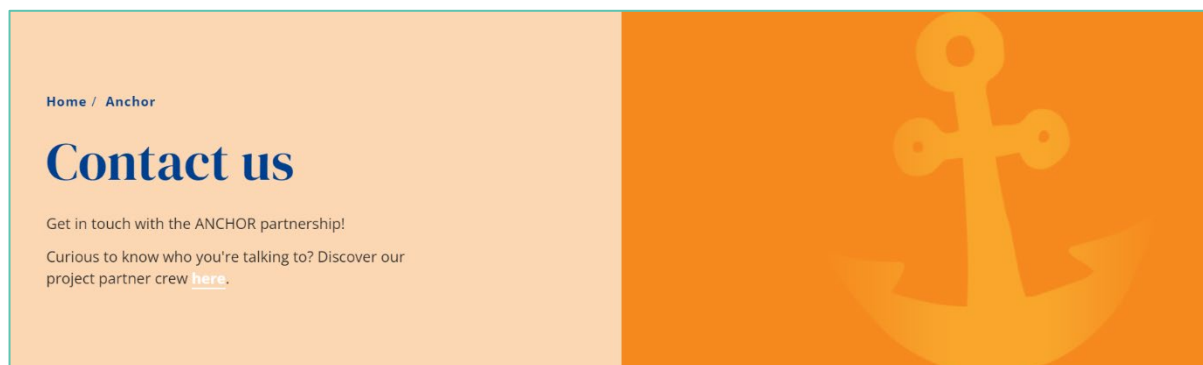
First impressions matter. So, you should pay special attention to the top part of your homepage.

The header space includes a large image with a white text overlay. There are three main pitfalls that can ruin the look of your header: Using the wrong image dimensions, using a random image, and putting in a tonne of text. Instead, make sure to:

- **Carefully choose the right image.** The image should be eye-catching and illustrate your project well.
- **Use the right image dimensions.** For a crisp header image, we advise you use the standard dimensions 1920 x 510 pixels. Otherwise, the image may look blurred.
- **Keep the text in the header at a minimum.** A lot of text looks overwhelming and is hard to read. Also, this will enlarge the header space which may distort/blur the image.

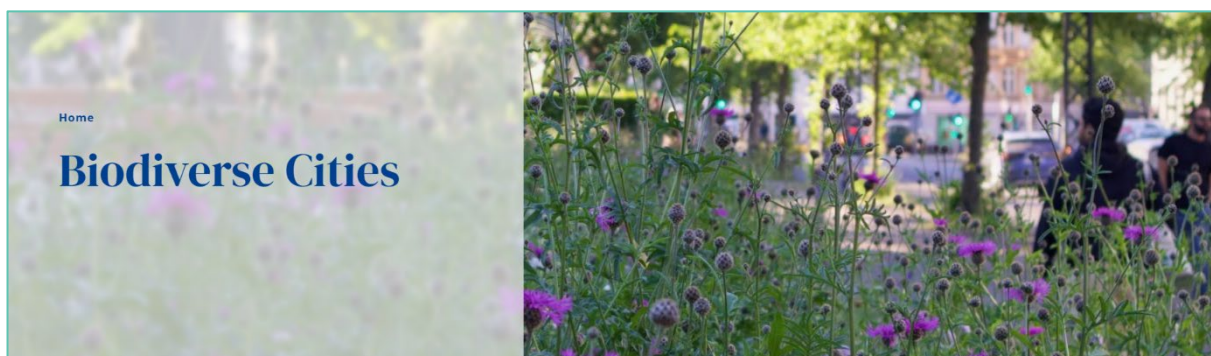
PROJECT EXAMPLE: ANCHOR

The short text in the header is used to engage directly with the reader. The design is clear and eye-catching, playing on the project acronym.



PROJECT EXAMPLE: Biodiverse Cities

The picture is clear and crispy and illustrates the project's main topic. The only text is the title which neatly captures what the project is all about.



Tip #3. Use powerful visuals

In today's visuals-packed world, great images, videos and infographics are not just the icing on the cake. Strong visuals are very much needed if you wish to reach your audience.

Project-specific images and videos are unique and create an authentic vibe. We strongly recommend you build a healthy stock of project images and videos with the help of your partners.

Hiring a professional photographer, videographer, and/or illustrator can further provide unique assets that will go a long way in branding and highlighting your project, through beautiful photos and impactful videos showcasing your activities, events and achievements.

Also, tailor-made infographics and illustrations conveying your project's goals, expected or realised impacts, and slogans will greatly enhance your communication.

We would advise you to limit your use of stock photos which most often lack an authentic feel. You should not rely on database imagery as your main or sole visual branding although they may have a place in your visual mix.

You can use images and videos in several of your site's components including the header, the Media component, and the Slider component.

Beware of copyright

IMPORTANT: Make sure to respect any copyright and content credit requirements.

[Read more in our Fact Sheet 24](#)

PROJECT EXAMPLE: SMALL

SMALL uses a set of illustrations to visualise the main citizens' groups who will benefit from its work to foster inclusive mobility.



Tip #4. Use visual website components

The website system offers several options to create more visual appeal.


Text and Image



The “text and image” component allows you place text next to a larger image. You can choose between three background colours – white, light grey and blue.

PROJECT EXAMPLE: Connected River

The Pilot Area

Ports de Lille consists of 12 multimodal locations along the Deûle River and is one of 6 pilot regions within the EU project. Through their activities in container handling, real estate management and development, they are working together with many stakeholders in the region to provide alternative mobility solutions for the economic use of the waterways.





Exploring the Deûle River

On the first day of the event, about 50 local and European partners were welcomed aboard the Eldorado barge to explore the Lille area. The event gave the floor to the local waterway management (VNF), cultural and sport associations, economic players and local authorities to present development project, challenges and ideas for a shared and sustainable use of the Deûle River.

Button

Use the Button component to make selected links super visible.

[More about Interreg](#)

Banner

The Banner component allows you to highlight any call-to-action.


Sign up to our newsletter

Are you curious about Denmark? Receive weekly updates in your mailbox!


[SIGN UP NOW](#)

Media

The Media component allows you to publish one or several images and videos.



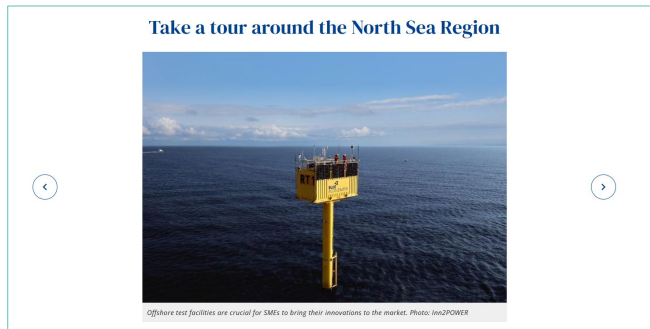
Lovely Skagerrak



Central Copenhagen

Slider

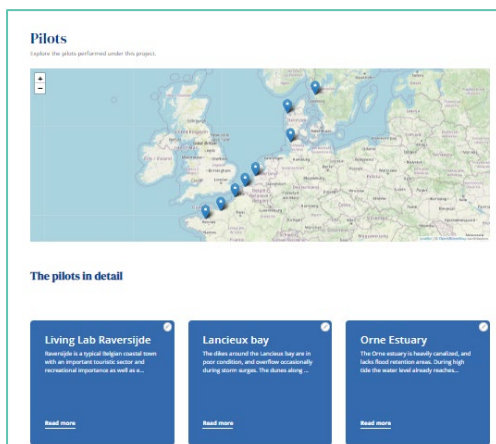
The Slider component enables you to create a slideshow including images and/or videos.



Pilot map and list of pilots

A special component enables you to set up a page presenting your pilots in an interactive map. The page also includes a list of cards linking to pages describing each pilot.

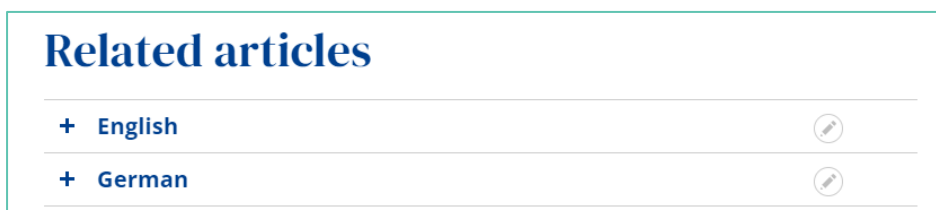
PROJECT EXAMPLE: Connected River



Accordion

An accordion is an expandable list of items, allowing your reader to scan the page and select which items they want to learn more about.

PROJECT EXAMPLE: Blue transition



Keep your text
simple



You can create powerful text for your website if you know how to write for the web. Easy-to-read and scannable text is key. In this part, we present a few ground rules that will take you a long way.

Tip #5. Keep blocks of text short

On websites, bite-sized text works best. You should avoid long blocks of text in general.

To help your reader, insert some space in between short paragraphs allowing your text to breathe and helping your reader digest it.

The wording in the two text samples below is identical. Which one do you find most inviting?

The North Sea is a wild and wonderful place. It is treacherously stormy and one of the most dangerous places on Earth to navigate a ship. Nevertheless, its shipping lanes are among the world's busiest, chock full of ships crossing these risky waters. The North Sea is full of remarkable, beautiful and spooky creatures (with names like Dead Man's Fingers and Bloody Henry) as well as remains from several world wars. Did you know that once upon a time the North Sea was not a sea at all? It used to be a mythical place called Doggerland where both humans and mammoths roamed.

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What if the topic requires a lot of text?

In general, the longer the text, the more you need to break it up. You can do this by:

- Inserting white space (as in the example above).
- Using subheadings (see the next page).
- Including an accordion (see page 7). This works well for lists.
- Splitting your text on several pages, for example if there is a natural subdivision of topics.

Tip #6. Include subheadings

Headlines help your reader navigate your text. For text of more than a few paragraphs we recommend you to use subheadings to label each part of the text, enabling your readers to quickly scan your page.

PROJECT EXAMPLE: Anemoi (event announcement)

Why is this important

Construction of offshore wind energy in the North Sea should be smart, sustainable and smooth. Understanding potential investment risks and a harmonised regulatory framework are key to make the industry predictable and functional.

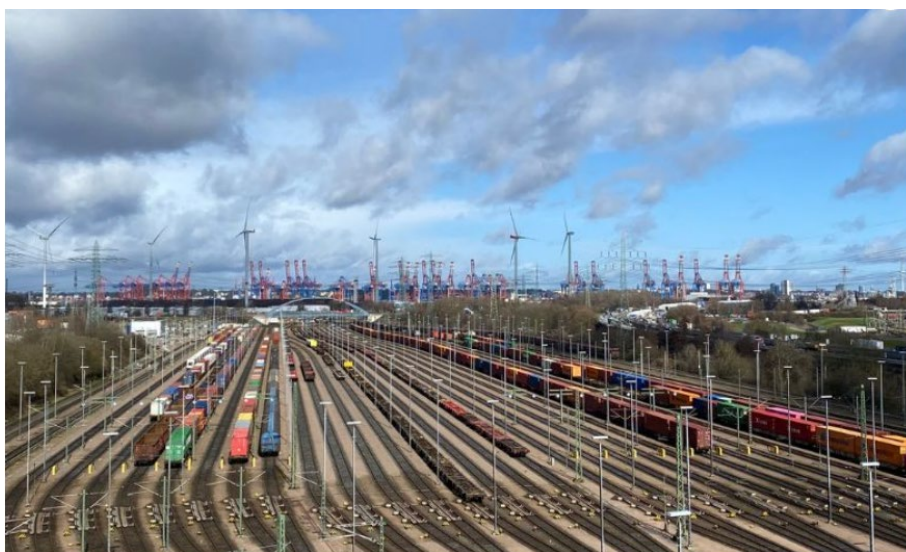
What is in it for you?

- Be part of the core network engaging with OWF science and regulatory concerns
- Stay up to date on various aspects, including chemical emission risks from OWFs, EU taxonomy and technological solutions
- Have input into research and policy development

Tip #7. Use image captions

For extra impact, add captions to your images. Captions are often read before most of the body text. Use captions to explain what the image shows or to make your message clearer. You can also use the caption to add photo credits.

PROJECT EXAMPLE: North Sea CONNECT (blog article)



Logistics are complicated at the Port of Hamburg. Photo: North Sea CONNECT.

Tip #8. Use plain language

Keeping your text simple helps ensure that people will actually read and understand it.

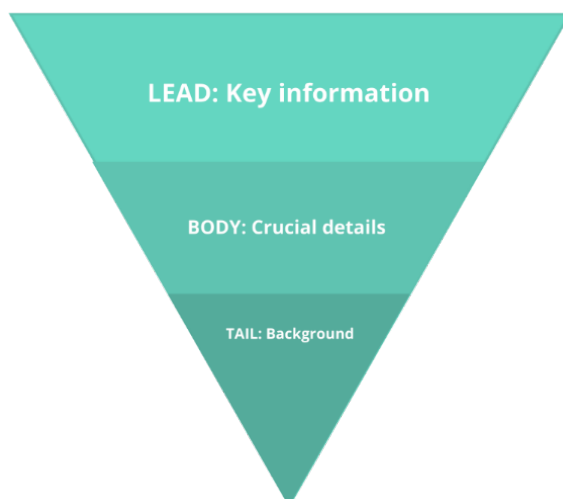
If you are used to academic writing, this means doing almost the exact opposite of what you usually do. It is not an easy thing to accomplish but the challenge can be overcome. Try following the tips below.

- **Keep most sentences short.** Too many long sentences can make your text really hard to read. Try reading your text aloud to discover sentences that should be shortened or split in two. (This will also reveal if you have gone overboard with the exercise and made your sentences so short that the text has lost its flow.)
- **Avoid technical jargon and abbreviations.** Use technical terms sparingly or not at all. Above all, avoid abbreviations that only specialists understand. If you have to use such terms, make sure to explain them in all pages where they occur.
- **Use active verbs and avoid passive wording.** For example, instead of “it should be noted that...”, say “please note that...”. Active verbs make your text clearer and stronger.
- **Avoid typos and grammar errors.** Finally, be aware that flaws stand out more in a simple, readable text. Do run your text through that grammar and spell check.

Tip #9. Start with the main point

Create instant engagement by starting with the main points rather than with the background. The background details can be added at the end of the page, in a pdf file, or in a linked subpage.

The inverted news pyramid, shown below, is a concept used by journalists and communication experts. It was invented for news stories but you can apply it to other content too. You will find it helps you create fresher, more engaging content.



The inverted news pyramid

Create content with **online tools**



Tip #10. Use nifty tools

There are numerous online tools that are easy to use and help you speed up your creative process and craft better content. If you would like to add a little extra magic force to your work, why not explore the options? Below are a few tools that we find helpful.

- [Canva](#) is a strong and user-friendly graphic design tool that helps you create a wide range of visual content in a whiz. It comes in a free and a paid version.
- Text-to-image AI tools such [MidJourney AI](#) and [StableDiffusion](#) enable you to generate images based on prompts.
- The [Hemingway app](#) is a free online tool to help you keep your text simple and enhance readability. Using it can be a great learning experience.
- Some free AI tools help you speed up the creative process of crafting strong text. The following are just some of the many options out there: [ChatGPT](#), [Quillbot](#), [Paraphraz.it](#).

Note: Please make sure to respect any copyrights and credits requirements, no matter from where you get your content. If you use AI, we recommend always crediting your AI generation source.

We used the AI StableDiffusion to create the illustration on the front page of this guide. We then used Canva to replace the original background with a single click.

Time spent in total: 10-15 minutes.

And finally...

Let's work together! We want to support your efforts to create and impress.

We will provide you with our feedback and we hope to receive feedback from you, too.

Website reviews

The Joint Secretariat will review all project websites and share our feedback with the project leader and communication manager.

Promote your website

Even the best website in the world will need promotion to get any traffic. Social media are a great way to drive traffic to specific content on your site. Remember to tag the North Sea Programme so that we can share your posts and help boost the promotion.

Surveys

From time to time, we are sharing surveys asking for your feedback on our communication support including the website. We are very grateful for your feedback and suggestions.

Need help?

Some tips in this guide are tailored to the content management system (CMS) and the specific features it offers. If you need to learn about this, please consult our [website user guide](#) which takes you through all the technical options and how to use them.

If you are seeking additional advice or would like to discuss some ideas, you are always welcome to contact one of our communications advisors. You will find their contact details [here](#).

We hope this guide has inspired you to get even more creative.

Smooth sailing!

The Joint Secretariat

