



Your journey towards success

A practical guide to capitalisation for Interreg North Sea projects



Interreg
North Sea



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Welcome on board

We are happy to have you with us!

The purpose of this guide is to help you create strong long-term impacts from your project.

Your main impacts are your North Star - your guiding compass on your journey to success. This guide is your navigation manual.

We take participants through this approach at our so-called TakeUP events. If you have taken part in such an event, you can use the guide to refresh and expand on what you have learned and to share the approach with your partners. If you have not joined a TakeUP event, you can find everything you need in this guide to educate yourself.

We hope the guide will help and inspire you to take strategic action ensuring that your work will be scaled up in the future, for the benefit of the citizens in the North Sea Region.



Hands-on-approach: The guide comes with exercises to help you put the presented concepts into action. Whenever you see the workbook symbol, you will find a ready-made worksheet in your workbook (Annex 1).

Why care about capitalisation?

Addressing capitalisation throughout your project brings many benefits:

- Your project will have a wider and more lasting impact.
- Working together to reach your North Star will build stronger bonds and strengthen your partnership.
- Capitalisation creates visibility for your project and its partners.
- Stories of capitalisation empower you to pitch and achieve funding for new ideas.
- Addressing capitalisation enables you to develop new networks.
- By taking active steps to capitalise on our work, you will build useful skills within communication, networking and persuasion.
- You will learn how to apply foresight in project planning and execution.

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VOCABULARY

Certain terms are used in a very specific sense throughout this guide:

Term	What it refers to
Impact	Positive change delivered by your project.
North Star	The 1-3 main impacts that you expect your project to produce within or beyond your project's lifetime.
Capitalisation	Transfer and reuse of project-generated knowledge, leading to positive impacts.
Product	Specific project work/knowledge that can be transferred and reused to create impact.
Givers	Owners of knowledge which can be transferred or reused (your project is a giver)
Takers	Organisations that (may) adopt and reuse the knowledge produced by your project.
End users	Groups which ultimately benefit from your project's impacts, such as citizens, consumers, farmers, SMEs, etc.

Understanding CAPITALISATION



What is capitalisation?

In line with the definitions and guidance provided by the Interreg umbrella organisation Interact, the Interreg North Sea Programme defines capitalisation as

transfer and reuse of knowledge generated by your project.

“Knowledge” is used here in its broadest sense and can signify virtually anything you have produced during your project that will create positive change and can be transferred and reused by others.

Through capitalisation, your project’s positive impact will keep growing long after it has closed, making a stronger difference. This can also be seen as the “return on investment” of the funds that went into the project.

You can facilitate capitalisation by taking a strategic approach, as outlined in this guide. Using your North Star as your compass makes it much more likely that it will happen.

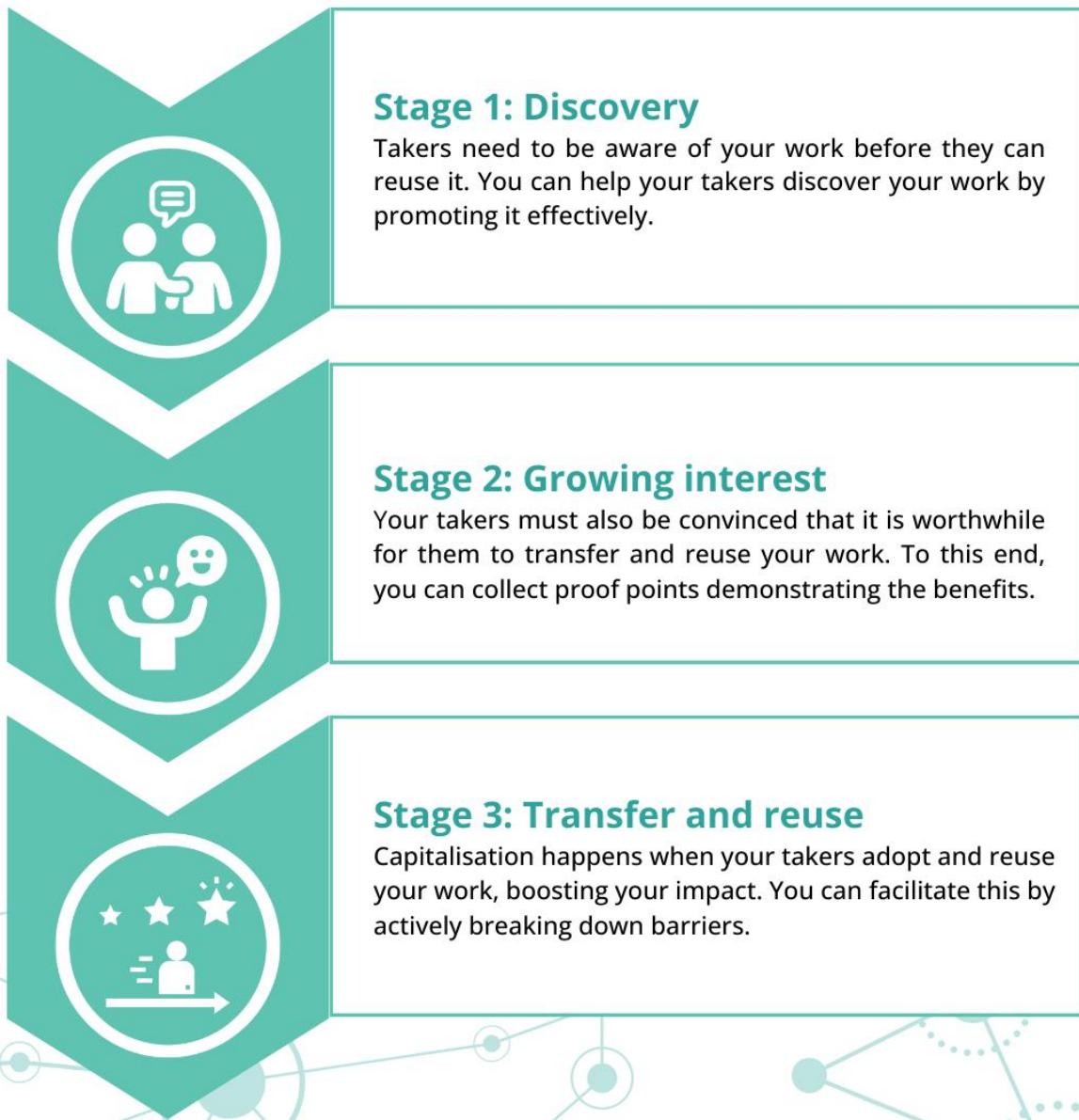
Givers and takers

To understand the process of capitalisation, it is useful to think of it in terms of givers and takers. Your project is the giver. Your takers are those groups that are likely to adopt and reuse or build further on your work. Most often, takers are professionals, practitioners or policymakers.



Capitalisation from the takers' point of view

The basic process of capitalisation, as seen from the takers' side, can be described in three main steps, each signifying a higher level of engagement by the taker. While the first two steps are crucial, capitalisation happens only in step 3.

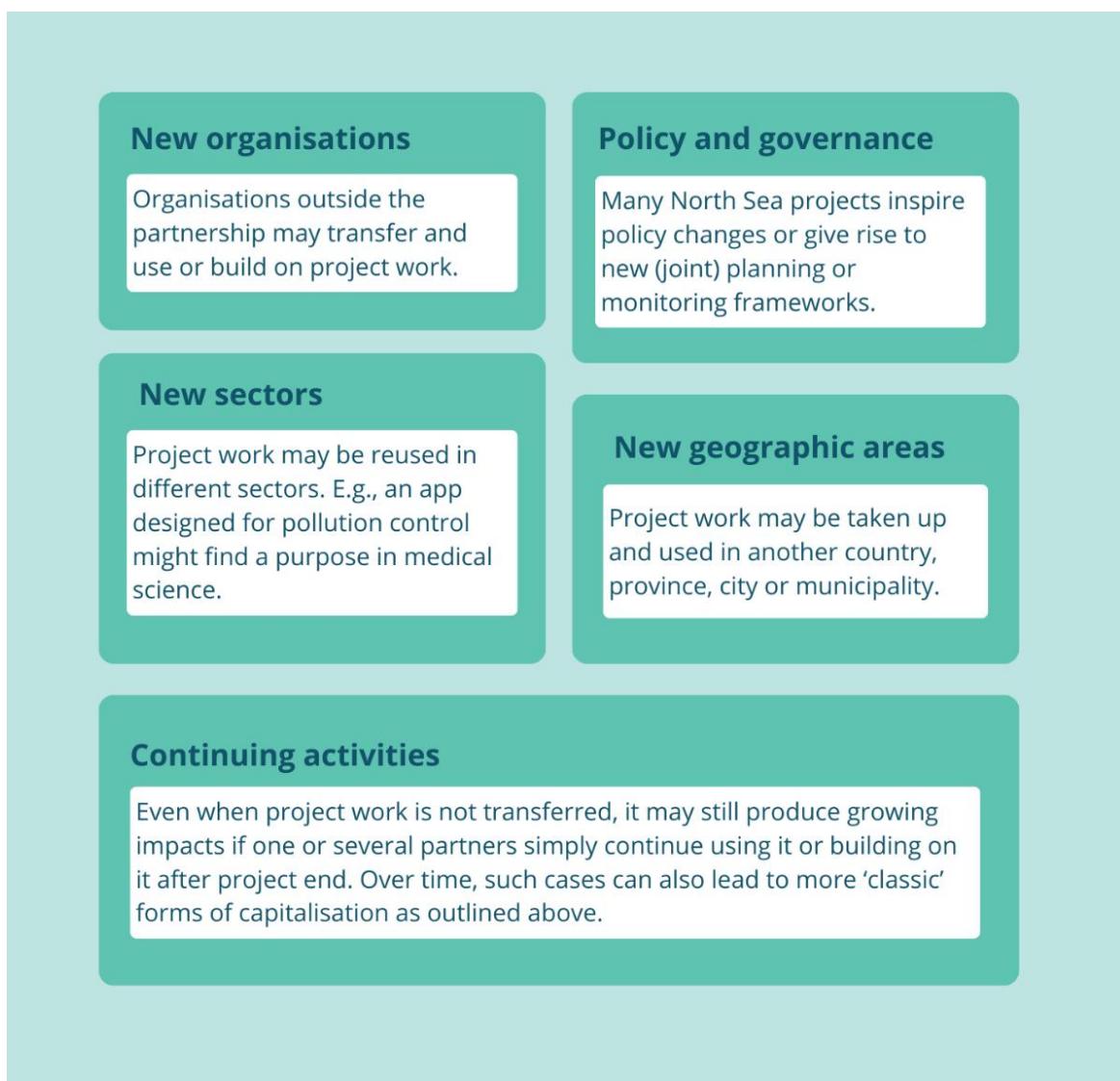


Examples of transfer and reuse

Capitalisation can happen along several pathways. For example, takers may transfer your work to new geographic areas, adapt and reuse it in new sectors, or integrate your work into policies.

This can sometimes happen in the framework of other Interreg or EU-funded projects. In other cases, the uptake happens without any European funding.

Below is an overview of the most common ways your work could expand beyond the limited scope of your project.



Now it is time to consider how you can make capitalisation happen in practice. The rest of this guide presents tips and methods that you can apply to boost your impact.

Guide to your journey

Capitalisation in practice



Get your crew on board

The approach presented in the following pages works best if the whole partnership is fully engaged. This will create a strong sense of joint ownership to your journey towards your North Star.

We recommend you set out by jointly defining your future impacts (see p. 11-14 below). It is best to do this early in the project.

Based on the impacts you have defined, you can use the remaining exercises in this guide to go further and define specific actions.

Ways to involve your partners

We recommend conducting the exercises in this guide using the workbook at face-to-face partner meetings, to allow for proper brainstorming and discussions. You can slate this as part of your kick-off meeting and regular partner meetings.

Once you have planned your actions together, you can use webinars or written inputs to keep track of the outcomes. You can also consider fun ways to highlight capitalisation efforts across your partnership. For example, you might challenge all partners to come up with a list of takers that they have reached out to before a certain deadline and announce the partner that reached most takers as the winner.

Well begun is half done

The upside of involving the whole partnership is that all partners will be more invested in the project and its future impacts. A strong internal drive and engagement will strengthen your partnership and fuel your capitalisation journey to help you go even further.



Pack the essentials

Like all adventures, well begun is almost done. It takes good planning and preparation to reach your North Star.

The main approach presented in this guide is based on seven essentials that will help you on your capitalisation journey.

When you work on the essentials together with your partners from an early stage, you will stand a better chance of finding pathways, navigating headwinds, and creating strong impacts. See how in the following pages.



The 7 essentials that you must bring on your journey

Please note that your journey is unlikely to follow a straight line from essential 1 to 7. You will likely be moving back and forth between the essentials as you go along.

Essential 1: Define your impact

Before you can start on any journey, you need to know where you are going. Your 1-3 main impacts are your North Star, guiding you in the right direction. Formulating core impact statements will enable your whole team to get behind an overall vision of what you really want to achieve together. This will give you a firm basis for the rest of your journey.

Did you know... ?

The North Star has been used for navigation since ancient times because it always stays in the same fixed place on the sky, contrary to other stars.

What is an impact?

Throughout this guide, “ impact” refers to ***positive change resulting from your work***. The more positive change your project creates, the stronger its impact. This may happen during as well as after the project lifetime.

The precise understanding of “positive change” depends on what is meaningful for your project. Some changes are tangible and measurable. For example, a new filter that removes 80% of specific pollutants from water. Others provide a strong basis for future tangible impacts on the ground through governance improvements. For example, a joint environmental monitoring plan that is adopted by the national authorities involved.

Please note that while your impacts should be clearly linked to the project objectives stated in your application, they are often not the same (depending on how you formulated your objectives). You should also not confuse impacts with slogans, activities, or awards. These are important but do not constitute positive change as such.

What is an impact?

A POSITIVE CHANGE ARISING FROM YOUR PROJECT.



Problem reduction



Enhanced situation



Improved governance

...in line with your project objective

What is not an impact?

ANYTHING THAT IS NOT A POSITIVE CHANGE.



Activities & events



Awards and publicity



Slogans and taglines

Defining your impacts

Team exercise 1A: Your impacts

- Make a list of all the positive changes that your project will create.
- Try to identify 1-3 main positive changes. These are your main impacts expected from your project.
- Make sure your impacts are well aligned with your project overall objectives, work package objectives, outputs and results.



Crafting an impact statement

Aligning on one to three impact statements for your project is a key task for your partnership. The more tangible your statement is, the clearer your North Star will be to everybody in your team. The methodology below helps you put strong and meaningful impact statements together in a way designed to put you firmly on track towards capitalisation. We suggest you use it in a joint exercise for your entire partnership as early in the project as possible.

You can create a statement for each impact that you expect your project to have, however we recommend you to focus on your main 1-3 impacts.

BUILDING BLOCKS

The table below shows a list of elements to consider crafting a statement for each of your main impacts. While the first two are mandatory, the remaining four are optional.

Mandatory elements	
POSITIVE CHANGE	Describes the impact
HOW	Describes what you will do to create that positive change
Optional elements	
TAKERS	Those groups who will adopt and reuse the work creating the positive change – most often groups of professionals or policymakers.
END USERS	Those that will ultimately benefit from your work - often citizens or SMEs, but also the environment or wildlife can be 'end users'.
SCALE	The level of positive change you will create either within your project lifetime or later on when your work has been scaled up.
TIME	Timeframe for when the positive change will happen.

As an example, let's look at the following statement: *Our project will lead to less energy use and reduced CO₂ emissions (POSITIVE CHANGE)*.

This includes the positive change but not the 'how'. To strengthen the sense of direction, let's add the 'how' element: *We will introduce a novel greenhouse concept (HOW) that will reduce energy use and CO₂ emissions (POSITIVE CHANGE)*.

The sentence now includes both of the mandatory elements and is a valid impact statement. Note that adding the HOW element made the statement more tangible.

In addition, we recommend you to consider adding some of the optional elements, too. You will often find that this makes your statement stronger and more action-oriented.

See the following example:

We will introduce a novel greenhouse concept (HOW) enabling the greenhouse industry (TAKERS) to save energy and reduce CO₂ emissions (POSITIVE CHANGE) down to near zero (SCALE).

The impact statement has now transformed from vague and generic to tangible and solid:

- ⇒ *Initial statement: Our project will lead to less energy use and reduced CO₂ emissions.*
- ⇒ *Final statement: We will introduce a novel greenhouse concept enabling the greenhouse industry to save energy and reduce CO₂ emissions down to near zero.*

Team exercise 1B: Craft your impact statements

- Start with the top positive change on your list. Consider all the elements of the impact statement for this impact.
- Jointly discuss a statement including only the two mandatory elements.
- Next, discuss which of the additional elements might be added to strengthen your statement.
- Continue until you have a final statement that you can align on within the partnership.



The Impact Challenge

The two exercises for Essential 1 (1a and 1b) constitute our "Impact Challenge". We highly recommend all North Sea projects to complete these exercises in a session involving all partners.

More examples of project impact statements

For inspiration, check out these statements from two Interreg North Sea projects. SMALL developed their own statement, while the statement for SUPER was created by the secretariat as an initial example.

SUPER

To improve mental health care, we equip 300 IT specialists to involve vulnerable people in co-creating better digital tools.

SMALL

By promoting new and adapted shared mobility options, SMALL helps cities and regions to create more attractive, healthier, and more vibrant urban environments for all their residents, with a focus on children and families, elderly, and people with physical impairment.

Using your impact statements to craft external communication

Your impact statements are the results of an internal clarification process. As such, they are your guiding compass for the rest of your journey towards success and gives you the main storyline of where your partnership is heading together. This is the key purpose of crafting such a statement.

However, you can also use your impact statement to strengthen your external communication:

- **Craft a snappy slogan.** Although an impact statement is rarely the same as a slogan, it can give you ideas for a powerful slogan.
- **Develop messages for your takers.** Try developing an elevator project pitch with your impacts and takers in mind.
- **Tell your core story.** Your impacts should play a prominent part in your core project story as they represent your response to the main challenges that you are addressing. The elements of your impact statement include some key ingredients for your story.



Essential 2: Identify relevant work

Another initial task is to identify those parts of your work that you expect will be transferred, scaled up, and built upon by others. Collectively, this is the “knowledge” you have generated. We call specific examples of such work “products”.

Examples of products and how they might be reused and transferred:

- A new **concept for an app** tailored to one sector might be replicated for use in many other sectors.
- A **digital platform** helping a city to engage with their citizens and make the city more liveable might be replicated in other cities.

Examples of products



Strategy



Business model



Digital platform



Concept



Training



Policy brief



Action plan



Scientific method



App



Blueprint



Use case



Specific solution

As you can see from the non-exhaustive list above, there is a wide range of possible products that you can consider. To decide if any parts of your work is a product, ask yourself: Does it create positive change? Can it be transferred and reused?

Team exercise 2: Your products

BRAINSTORM

List all the “products” you expect to produce throughout your project. Try to be as specific as possible.

DISCUSSION

- Discuss the order of priority. Which products are most likely to create positive change on a larger scale?
- Are some products unlikely to be reused or scaled up? What are the obstacles?



Essential 3: Know your takers

Once you have your list of products, you can start identifying your takers. Which groups might take up and reuse your products?

Your takers may be different for different products. For example, for a new set of tools for farmers, your takers are farmers or farmers' associations. But for a set of policy recommendations supporting those best practices, your takers are policymakers.



Analyse your takers

Once you know roughly who your takers are, consider what you know about them. A deeper understanding will help you reach out to them in the best way possible. Note: Beware of casting your net too wide as this can be inefficient. Try to define your takers as specifically as possible. E.g., if your product is relevant for municipalities, which roles in which departments will be your target audience?

Team exercise 3: Know your takers

- Each person prepares by filling in the table of products and takers in the workbook.
- Share your thoughts on who your takers are.
- What is your takers' outlook? Why would they care about your work?
- What are the barriers? Are there reasons why they might struggle to reuse your work?
- Are there differences between countries?



Essential 4: Engage with your takers

Engaging with your takers will increase your chances of capitalisation. We recommend you start early to give the process more time and tap into all available opportunities.

Invite your takers to join your project journey so that they are involved from the beginning. Tell them about your struggles and victories or ask for their inputs and advice. Below are a few ideas for ways to build early engagement:

- ★ **Develop messaging and a core story for your project.** Think about how this will work for each taker. You may want to tweak your message for different takers.
- ★ **Work on your general visibility.** Create an attractive project website; develop visuals; engage on social media, etc. This will help you reach your takers as well as any other audience.
- ★ **Craft your content with your takers in mind.** What would make your website or PR materials interesting for them?
- ★ **Use all partners' networks.** Word of mouth should never be underestimated – especially when you have a strong message.
- ★ **Reach more takers through multipliers** such as (industry/niche) media, influential individuals, and umbrella organisations.
- ★ **Engage on social media** to make takers aware of your project. Which social media platforms are your takers using?
- ★ **Host or attend events targeting takers.** Start early and continue at regular intervals during your project.
- ★ **Send out surveys among your takers.** This will not only provide useful knowledge – surveys are also a good way of making people aware of your project.
- ★ **Involve takers directly in project activities,** if appropriate. For example, selected takers may join a test run of your solution or approach.
- ★ **Set up an advisory board** for your project, including takers. This enables you to make sure you capture their perspectives while enabling them to act as project ambassadors.

Team exercise 4: Engage with takers

- Brainstorm on how to best engage with each taker group.
- What can each partner do within the next couple of months?
- What should be done in the longer term?



Essential 5: Build your case

Making takers aware of your project is rarely enough for them to start reusing your work. You also need to convince them to take action and adopt or build further on your work. This is the most important and also the most difficult step in capitalisation.

To do this, you need to build convincing arguments for reusing your work. Below are some examples of such "selling points".



Benefits for the takers

Make sure to highlight how the takers will benefit from adopting your solution. Which problems does it solve? Does it help them meet a regulation? Etc.



Added value

Additional benefits on top of addressing your key challenge, such as cost savings, are strong arguments for adopting your work.



Proof of concept

Your takers are more likely to adopt a proven solution. "Our trials show that you will save 37% energy" is way more convincing than "you will save some energy."



Testimonials

Takers can more easily relate to the experiences of other takers from their own group. This is why testimonials are so powerful.

TIP: Don't be late

Make sure to gather documentation and testimonials throughout your project. You need to plan this well and take action while you have the chance. You can only collect proof points while your pilot is ongoing and people are engaged.

Team exercise 5: Build your case

- Consider your main products and their takers. What will it take to convince them to adopt and reuse your work? What are the best arguments?
- Select your best ideas and create a road map for how you can provide the materials, facts and figures that will help you convince your takers to take action.



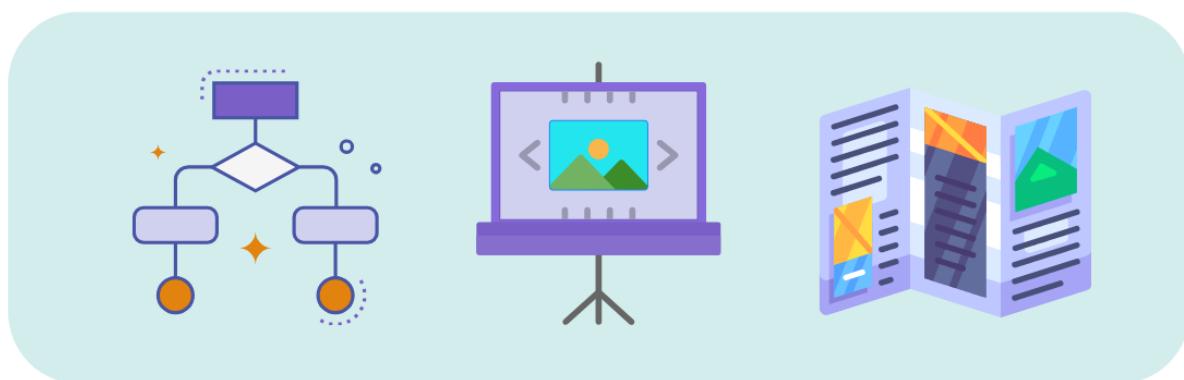
Essential 6: Wrap your work

Consider how you can convey your message and key points in simple and catchy ways – verbally, visually and in writing.

Reports and detailed documents definitely have their place. However, your main "selling points" should not only be found deep inside such materials. You can reach many stakeholders more effectively by also summarising them in formats like short case stories, infographics, presentations and videos, or snappy wording capturing your main points. And why not practice an elevator speech presenting your impacts?

Keep in mind that your takers may need to convince other people in their organisation. While a city planner may find your 50-page report super useful, chances are that their head of department will hardly read it. Superiors typically need an easy way to see why their organisation should invest time or money in adopting your work - without having to understand all the details.

You can help takers such as the city planner by providing simple shareable materials highlighting your key convincing arguments. Armed with a few slides, a short video, or a leaflet showcasing the benefits, they can better present your solution to their leaders and colleagues.



Team exercise 6: Wrap your work

- How can you present your convincing arguments in a nutshell, so lay people will understand them?
- How can you make it visual?
- Which formats are most effective and useful with your takers?



Essential 7: Help your takers along

Working with new solutions often implies initial learning and new knowledge. Most organisations are a bit adverse to 'doing things differently', and a steep learning curve may deter your takers from trying.

In such cases, consider lowering the barriers by helping your takers. For example, you might:

- Offer free webinars or training courses.
- Offer train-the-trainer courses, enabling the knowledge to spread.
- Set up transfer consultations with interested takers.
- Provide advice at the takers' premises.
- Provide a free online toolkit or course for self-teaching.
- Simply offer anyone interested to contact you for support.

On the other hand, if your solution is in fact easy or cost-effective to implement, you can highlight these as extra selling points.



Do you know your takers' barriers?

You can only help your takers overcome their barriers if you know what they are. If you are not sure, consider ways to collect knowledge about this, such as surveys or qualitative interviews.

Team exercise 7: Help your takers along

- Are there any important barriers for your takers to adopt your work?
- How can you help them overcome those barriers?
- Draw up a list of actions you could take to help your takers along.
- Select the best actions and start planning them.



Create a road map

The exercises for Essentials 1-7 will give you lots of inputs and ideas that can be translated into actions.

For example, in exercise 5 you may have identified certain proof points or testimonials that you want to put in place. Now it is time to define and plan concrete actions by asking questions such as:

- Which opportunities will emerge during the project?
- Which actions should be taken?
- What is the best time to do this?
- In which work package does this belong?
- Who is responsible?

We recommend you to integrate capitalisation-focused activities into your general project framework whenever possible.

Capitalisation is a shared task involving all partners and project roles. For example, work package leaders may be able to activate their own professional networks, project specialists may provide training enabling takers to adopt your work, and partner communication experts are well placed to reach takers in their own country.

It is important for everyone involved to clearly see their role in capitalisation and its importance. All project colleagues should seize the opportunities they have to work towards your North Star.

Team exercise 8: Create a road map

- Turn all the ideas generated in the previous exercises into a single list of actions.
- Brainstorm to see if you can come up with more actions.
- If needed, prioritise the actions and focus on the ones with highest priority.
- Discuss the best timing of each action.
- Discuss how each action will be delivered and by whom.



Go the extra mile



Adjust your compass

We recommend that you revisit your approach from time to time as you go along.

It is important that you take time to reflect with your partners:

- Does your impact statement still fit - or does it need adjustments ?
- Which parts of your approach are working well and which are working less well?
- Have you learned something new about your takers? Have new taker groups appeared on the scene that you were not aware of to begin with?
- Based on your experiences so far, is there a need to adjust your plans?

Partners should have a chance to share their experiences from working with takers and learn from each other's successes and mistakes.

In case your work has already been adopted by external parties, consider what you can learn from this success. Are there any takeaways that you can apply more widely to boost capitalisation even more? Sometimes a good story about how your solutions have been adopted in one place can be used by another partner to convince takers in another place.



Work with us

Last, but not least: Let's work together! The secretariat and our National Contact Points (NCP) are very keen to help you capitalise on your work.

Update us on your efforts

In your first progress report, you have the option to enter your 1-3 main impacts. While this is not mandatory, we highly recommend doing this to keep us informed and receive our feedback. In the following reports, we invite you to share your progress.

In between the reports, please also make sure to keep your project advisor and your NCP up to date on any achievements in any of the countries where you operate. We are always looking to take any opportunity to promote your success.

Join European and national events, contests and awards

We facilitate our projects to join European events such as the REGIOSTAR Awards and the Interreg Project Slam. These are great opportunities to showcase your achievements. Our NCPS may also invite you to join events on a national level.

Plan your end-of-project actions

Towards the end of your project, consider taking special actions to boost its lasting legacy such as those listed below. At the secretariat, we are happy to support you in these efforts.

- Ensure takers and multipliers are present at your final event.
- Create shareable materials featuring your main achievements.
- Wrap up your project website so that it will stay attractive in the coming years, highlighting your successes and making your transferable work easy to find.
- We will work with you to produce a legacy article summarising your achievements. Your story will be published on our North Sea Blog.

Your questions and feedback

Please feel free to contact us any time with questions or inputs regarding this guide or capitalisation in general. Please write to us at info@interregnorthsea.eu using "Capitalisation" as the subject line.



Good luck

Bon voyage!

