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Central Baltic Programme

Guide:
Pathways to impact

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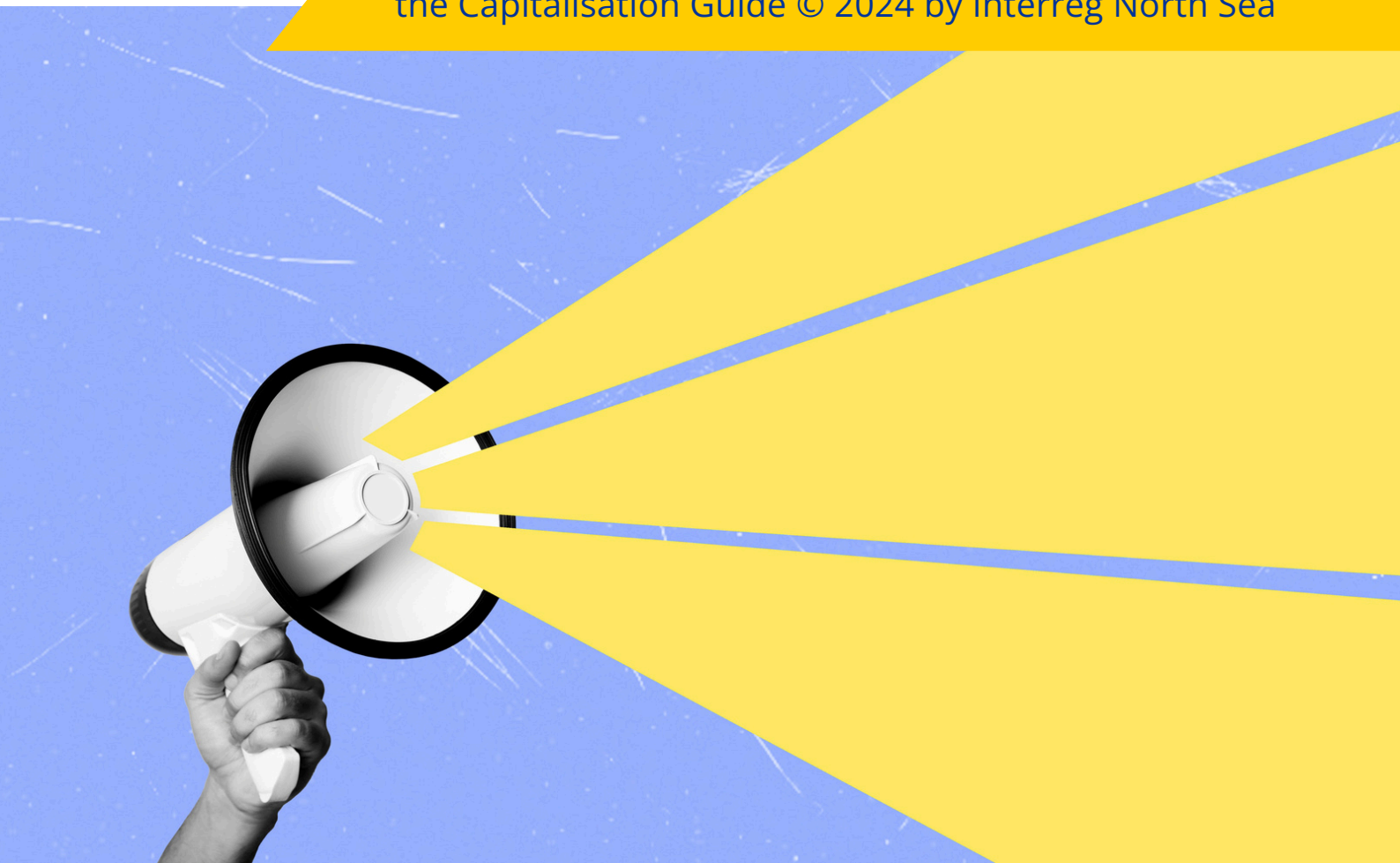

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Introduction



The purpose of this guide is to help you create lasting impact through your project. This means going beyond your expected outcomes ensuring that what your project creates is shared, adopted and used by others. By completing the seven steps in this guide, you will take important steps towards extending your project's impact beyond its lifetime.

The written content and methodology used in this guide is based on the Capitalisation Guide © 2024 by Interreg North Sea.

Why focus on making project outcomes last?

Ensuring that your project outcomes are shared, reused and built upon throughout your project brings many benefits:

- Your project will have a wider and more lasting impact.
- Working together towards your end goal will build stronger bonds and strengthen your partnership.
- Sharing your project work increases visibility for your project and its partners.
- Demonstrating the value and impact of your work can help you secure funding for new ideas.
- Building on your achievements helps you develop new networks and partnerships.
- Taking active steps to share and build on your work helps you develop valuable skills in communication, networking and persuasion.
- You will learn how to apply foresight in project planning and implementation.



Examples of transfer and reuse

Transfer of knowledge 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.

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

New organisations
Organisations outside the partnership may transfer and use or build on project work and knowledge.

New sectors
Project work may be reused in different sectors. E.g., an app designed for pollution control might find a purpose in medical science.

Continuing activities
Even when project work is not transferred, it may still produce growing impacts if one or several partners simply continue using it or building on it after project end. Over time, such cases can also lead to more 'classic' forms of knowledge transfer as outlined above.

Policy and governance
Many projects inspire policy changes or give rise to new (joint) planning or monitoring frameworks.

New geographic areas
Project work may be taken up and used in another country, province, city or municipality.

Now it is time to consider how you can encourage uptake, transfer, and reuse in practice. The rest of this guide presents tips and methods that can help extend the reach and impact of your project work.

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VOCABULARY

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

Term	What we mean
Impact	The positive change your project helps to bring about.
End goal	The 1–3 main changes you want your project to achieve, during or after the project ends.
Product / Project work	Something your project produces, such as knowledge, a tool, a method, a service or a solution, that others can use or adapt.
Givers	The people or organisations that share knowledge, tools, methods or solutions developed through a project. Your project is a giver.
Takers	The people or organisations that take up, adapt or reuse your project's outcomes.
End users	The people or groups who ultimately benefit from the changes your project brings about, such as citizens, consumers, farmers or small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs).

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Step 1: Define your impact

Before creating impact with your project, you need to have a clear end goal in mind. Your 1-3 main impacts are your end goal, 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 project implementation.

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.

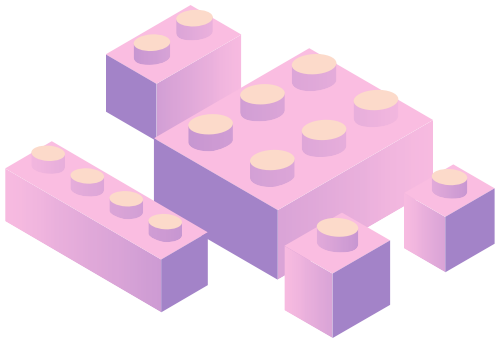
Please note that while your impacts should be clearly linked to the project goals stated in your application, they are often not the same (depending on how you formulated your goals). You should also not confuse impacts with slogans, activities, or awards. These are important but do not constitute positive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

AN IMPACT	NOT AN IMPACT
Problem reduction	Activities, events, meetings
Enhanced situation for target group	Awards, publicity, visibility
Improved governance	Slogans, taglines, logos

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 end goal will be to everybody in your team. The methodology on the next page helps you put strong and meaningful impact statements together in a way designed to put you firmly on track towards impact. 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.



Important building blocks

When crafting an impact statement for your project, there are certain elements, or building blocks, to consider. By including answers to the following questions, you will build a stronger impact statement.

- What is the **POSITIVE CHANGE** that will happen thanks to the project (impact)?
- **HOW** will you create that positive change?
- Who will be the **TAKERS** that adopt and reuse the work creatig the positive change? *(most often groups of professionals or policymakers)*
- Who will be the **END USERS** ultimately benefiting from your work? (*often citizens or SMEs, but also the environment or wildlife can be 'end users'.*)
- What is the **SCALE** of positive change created?
- What is the **TIMEFRAME** for the positive change?

EXAMPLES

1

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). By reducing CO2 emissions in the greenhouse industry the project will have contributed towards EU climate and sustainability targets (END USERS).

2

We will develop an IT training programme (HOW) for unemployed women (END USERS) to gain relevant IT skills and enter the IT industry (POSITIVE CHANGE). Our goal is for 50% of participants to find IT jobs within one year (SCALE/TIME). We will publish the programme and training materials for other educational institutions to adopt (TAKERS).

Your impact statement can be used in external communication e.g. as elevator pitch, in infographics etc.

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Step 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".

What is a product?
A product created by a project can also go under the name deliverable. This is something concrete that others outside of the partnership can understand, transfer, reuse and benefit from.

→

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.

To decide if any parts of your work is a product, ask yourself: Does it create positive change? Can it be transferred and reused?

Examples of reusable project work

- Software
- Mobile and web apps
- Online dashboards and databases
- AI tools
- Online courses and learning platforms
- Self-check and diagnostic tools
- Toolkits
- Training programmes and course plans
- Needs analysis from target group
- Coaching and mentoring models
- Kits for selling in new markets
- Handbooks, guides and manuals
- Step-by-step methods
- Templates and forms
- Frameworks for evaluating, assessing risk and monitoring
- Roadmaps and action plans
- Models for working together across borders
- Service design models
- Policy briefs and recommendations
- Strategies
- Case studies
- Feasibility studies and cost-benefit assessments
- Environmental impact assessments
- Standard work instructions
- Pilot sites and demonstration sites
- Mentor and expert pools
- Practical solutions
- Legal and regulatory reviews

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Step 3: Know your takers

Who might take up and reuse your products?

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?

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Step 4: Engage with your takers

Engaging with your takers will increase your chances of creating lasting impact. We recommend you start early to give the process more time and tap into all available opportunities. Invite your takers to follow your work and be 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.

→ **Make sure you have takers involved in your Steering Group as members or invited guests.** This enables you to make sure you capture their perspectives while enabling them to act as project ambassadors.

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Step 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 the process to reachig true impact.

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 project work. 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.

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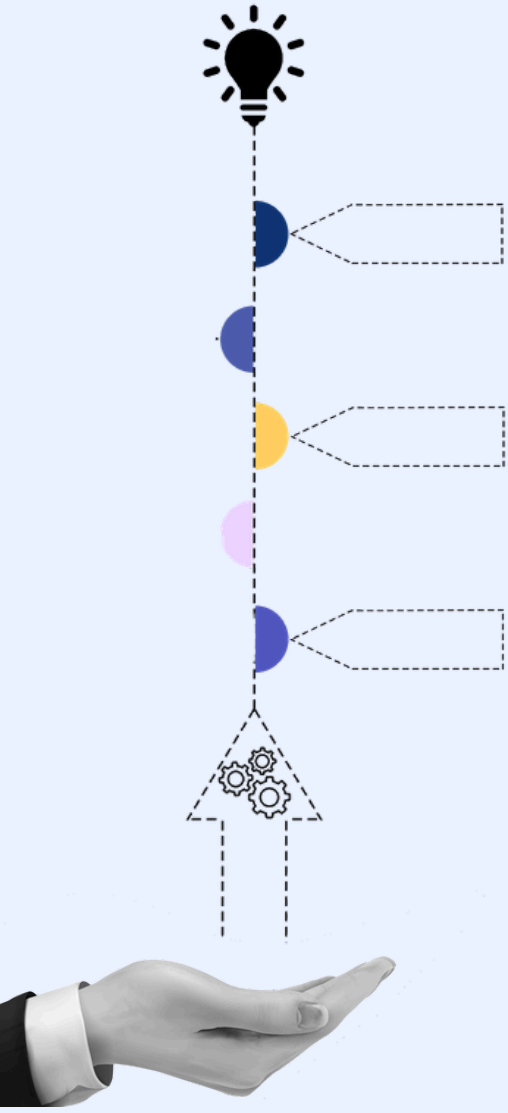
Step 6: Wrap your work



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 project work to their leaders and colleagues.

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Step 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.

Where do we go from here?

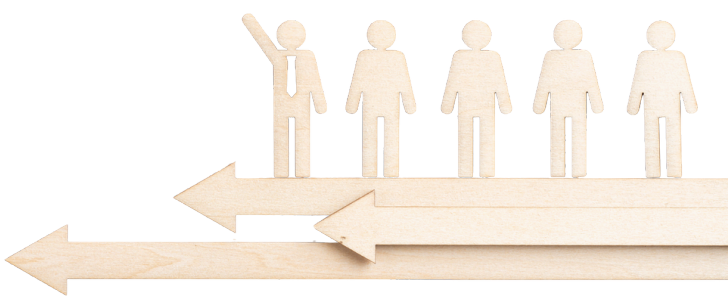
Now it is time to define and plan concrete actions by asking questions such as:

- Which opportunities will emerge during the project?
- Which actions should be taken?
- What is the best time to take action?
- Who is responsible?

We recommend integrating activities related to sharing, applying, and building on project work and achievements into your existing project framework whenever possible, making them part of your planned work rather than an additional workload for your staff.

This is a shared task involving all partners and project roles. For example, work package leaders can activate their professional networks, project specialists can provide training to help others adopt and apply the project's work, and partner communication experts can reach relevant audiences in their own countries.

It is important that everyone involved understands their role and the importance of these activities. All project colleagues should seize opportunities to share project achievements, encourage their wider use and contribute to achieving the project's overall goals.



Go, do, and come back

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 reuse and uptake even more? Sometimes a good story about how your project work has been adopted in one place can be used by another partner to convince takers in another place

