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LEGAL

The Commission Regulation EC NO 1828/2006 stipulates that *“The beneficiary shall be responsible for informing the public (...) about the assistance obtained from the Funds”*.

Dissemination activities will be the overall responsibility of SNN/Nordconnect and the overall communication plan will lay the ground for the regional communication plans, which each North Sea Supply Connect partner is responsible for developing in the beginning of the project period.

The communication and dissemination plan will be elaborated during the first semester of North Sea Supply Connect (NSSC) and needs the approval of the Steering Group before being implemented. Hereafter, all NSSC partners are responsible for following the dissemination plan.

SNN/Nordconnect will have the responsibility of dissemination at European level, and each regional partner will make sure that dissemination about the project and its results are made on local, regional and national level, as well as reporting these activities back to the information manager.

All partners within the North Sea Supply Connect project must comply with the publicity and information requirements laid down in the Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 (Articles 8 and 9) of 8 December 2006 and in the subsidy contract signed between the lead partner and the managing authority (Article 7).

The use of the North Sea Region Programme logo and EU emblem is compulsory on all communication materials and tools produced by the co-financed project. It is also necessary to indicate on all communication materials a reference to the contribution of the ERDF and the program. This could be for example the phrase: “Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and made possible by the Baltic Sea Region programme”.

It is up to the project partners to ensure they have the latest version of the publicity guidelines and ensure they are followed.

Finally, NSSC will liaise with the sister project called BalticSupply funded under the EC Baltic Sea programme, which has the same project objective and expected outcome as NSSC, but is merely being implemented in the Baltic Sea area. SNN/Nordconnect and the South Denmark European Office are the two work package leaders and will coordinate a coherent development and implementation of the communication and dissemination plan.

1 Introduction

1.1 North Sea Supply Connect

North Sea Supply Connect (NSSC) is a European project part of the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme. Small markets in the NSR and SME access barriers to European markets are key problems addressed by this project. They cause competitive disadvantages for Northern SMEs and their regions compared to suppliers and regions involved in large regions.

NSSC pursues an integrated and proactive approach to SME support in accessing interregional supply markets through linked innovation policies and competitiveness promotion strategies in the NSR. The objectives are to:

- extend knowledge for better SME performance on NE European SME supply markets
- enhance competitiveness of NSR SMEs on NE European supply markets.
- increase impact of regional economic innovation policy on SME involvement in NE European supply markets
- promote Northeast European integration and to build economic bridges between the Baltic Sea and the North Sea Region

Focus of the project are the clusters:

- maritime industries
- energy & public infrastructure
- health & food

NSSC intends to cooperate closely with BalticSupply, submitted in the parallel BSR Interreg IVB call.

1.2 Dissemination & communication

Communications is a Work Package (WP2) of its own for all projects under the North Sea Region Programme 2007- 2013. WP2 activities are aimed at disseminating the project's achievements outside the project to the relevant SMEs, OEMs, Public authorities and stakeholders within the partner regions and in Europe. Main output of these activities is the Communication Plan¹ containing the dissemination strategy. This document is the first step towards the definition of a relevant and effective dissemination and exploitation strategy for NSSC, which will be adapted on a regular basis, reflecting the most actual project's progress.

¹ All projects must write a Communication Plan including a Publicity Strategy. This should be based on the measures suggested under Section 8.1 and 8.2 in the project Application Form of the Programme. Projects will be encouraged to develop communication tools in early stages of the project life cycle, i.e. graphical guidelines including logo, a website and marketing materials.

The Communication plan, following the requirements stipulated by the Programme Secretariat in the 'Guidance for Projects' (Version October 2009), is based upon the principles of Corporate Communication² and specifies the communication efforts to be taken. The plan outlines the aim and objectives, target groups, messages and methods and tools planned to ensure the communication of the project; its purpose, the work carried out within it and the achievements made as a result of it. NSSC intends to cooperate closely with the parallel BalticSupply project, particularly concerning dissemination and exploitation. Therefore the dissemination strategy explained in this plan keeps this in consideration at all levels.

² Cees B.M. van Riel defines corporate communication as 'an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized as effectively and efficiently as possible.'

2. Aim and Objectives

2.1 Aim

>> to disseminate the project's objectives, benefits, results and achievements to the relevant SMEs, OEMs, Public authorities and stakeholders within the partner regions and in Europe throughout and after the duration of the project . Results won't only benefit partners and SME's operating in NSR but also other SMEs and economic promotion agencies operating in other neighbour areas and other regional/local authorities.

2.2 Objectives

- to raise general awareness of NSSC and its importance for the region by informing and publishing project findings, results and outcomes on all levels in the NSR, BSR and Europe;
- to communicate the added value of NSSC to decision makers and policy makers as well as citizens in the region by widely publishing good practice stories about the project and her achievements;
- to achieve involvement of selected target groups by effectively communicating results, value and outcomes of the project;
- to work closely with BalticSupply on communication in order to maximize the potential of a joint dissemination strategy through coherent and consistent messaging of results and outcomes
- to involve SMEs and OEMs by promoting the added value of clustering services and virtual environments;
- to provide beneficiaries with relevant and updated information about agreements, progression and outcomes and to facilitate and stimulate the exchange of information and results by using web based tools.

3. Target groups and audiences

Communicating the project involves both informing about and promoting the goals and achievements of the project to stakeholders such as -potential- beneficiaries, relevant SMEs and OEMs, SME business associations, public authorities with their economic development intermediaries, and politicians within the partner regions and in Europe.

It is important to involve media in the NSR and BSR to further enhance the effects and impact of the communication efforts and to reach out to the general public.

The following target groups can be identified:

- Beneficiaries (Provinciale Ontwikkelings Maatschappij West-Vlaanderen BELGIUM, SYNTRA WEST BELGIUM, BAW Institut für regionale Wirtschaftsforschung GmbH GERMANY, Wirtschafts- und Tourismusfördergesellschaft Peine mbH GERMANY, NOM THE NETHERLANDS, Kamer van Koophandel Noord-Nederland THE NETHERLANDS, Samenwerkingsverband Noord-Nederland THE NETHERLANDS, Basildon Council UNITED KINGDOM, Edinburg Napier University UNITED KINGDOM). Lead beneficiary: partner Provincie Groningen THE NETHERLANDS
- Potential beneficiaries
- Beneficiaries BalticSupply
- NSR Programme secretariat, Monitoring and steering Committee, European Commission
- SMEs and OEMs in the NSR and BSR; SMEs and OEMs operating in other neighbour areas
- Regional economic development organizations and SME business associations
- public authorities and stakeholders within partner regions and Europe
- politicians supervising economic development associations and parliamentarians
- general public and national and regional media in NSR, BSR and Europe.

4. Strategy

Communications needs to be an integral part of the planning, set-up and implementation of the project. The communication plan will be linked to the application form of the project and to the communication plan and dissemination and exploitation strategy of the parallel project in the Baltic Sea Region. As such it will be updated annually, to ensure that the measures proposed and taken are relevant and effective. An evaluation for communications will be held on an annual basis.

The WP2 beneficiary together with the lead beneficiary take care of the communication on a central (corporate) level; towards Viborg and Brussels the lead beneficiary acts as originator. Close cooperation with all beneficiaries is necessary to reach the project aim and objectives in communications.

All beneficiaries are responsible for communicating with their own regional target groups (including the regional media) within the framework of the corporate dissemination strategy and corporate identity manual. To be able to do so consistently and continuously all beneficiaries have to develop implementation plans on an annual basis for the following year.

The project will be consistently communicated and branded in line with its graphical identity in order to achieve a wide recognition of the project among stakeholders and target groups. Moreover all expressions need to include the required logos (logo of the European Union, the Regional Development Fund, the North Sea Commission and the NSSC).

Generally, all communications will be in English since this is the project language. In consultation with other partners, it is possible that specific expressions, like a brochure about project activities, are translated and published. Communication about local activities under the project is generally done in the language of the participating partner.

4.1 Principles

The Communication Plan of NSSC is based on the following principles:

- *Transparency:* all communication carried out under the project will be as transparent as possible. Relevant information for beneficiaries and other target groups and stakeholders about procedures, activities and progress will be provided and made easily available through different communication channels.
- *Consistency:* the messages delivered about the project, its work, results and outcomes will be consistent in order to achieve a clear and unambiguous image.

- *Interactive:* the key difference between information and communication is interaction, i.e. to engage the recipient. Interaction with the beneficiaries, the Baltic Supply project and its target audiences such as the SMEs and OEMs.
- *Innovative:* new media (such as social networks, twitter, RSS, You Tube, Google bookmark etc.) will be an integrated part of the overall communication efforts of the project.
- *Sustainability:* communication should be 'sustainable' looking at the overall aim of the Interreg IVB NSR Programme to address issues of a sustainable future for the region. . Meaning: no unnecessary printing. If print outs are required then use environmentally friendly paper and printing on demand. Communication via internet is preferred when possible.

4.2 Timeframe and measures

Over the course of the project life cycle different issues will be in focus in relation to the Communication Strategy. In the early stages the main issue will be to build support for the project and to recruit and inform beneficiaries. As the project enters its next phase, recruiting SMEs and OEMs in the supply clusters maritime industries, health & food and energy & public infrastructure and communicating activities, findings, results and impacts to target groups will be a key issue. When the project comes into its final stages it will be important to communicate the findings widely to policy makers at all levels and citizens, by this creating support for the project among decision makers and the general public. Finally, success, achievements and best practices should be exploited after the duration of the project.

There is a natural overlap between the phases of the communication strategy as identified in this document and the timeframe should therefore be regarded as indicative.

2009-2010

- facilitate and stimulate the sharing of information between all beneficiaries to create involvement
- reaching out to Baltic Supply to develop a joint dissemination strategy through coherent and consistent messaging of results and outcomes
- raising awareness of the project, its aim and objectives and informing about the value for SMEs and OEMs in the NSR. And by this creating an interest in the project among policy makers and potential beneficiaries and the participation of SMEs in the region.
- informing the general public about aim, objectives and value of the project

2010-2011

- Build up SME and OEM awareness of the cluster portals and service portfolios to be established and pilot tested under WP 4, 5.
- Focus on communicating best practices to SME's and OEMs for recruiting purposes
- Facilitating networking possibilities to create the right conditions for partnership building
- Encourage beneficiaries to communicate early concrete results and activities within their regions to build support among target groups
- to involve SMEs and OEMs by promoting the added value of clustering services and virtual environments

2011-2012 and after

- Identify good practice, results and outcomes to build a platform to communicate the added value of the project
- Creating support of the general public and policy makers in the region by working with beneficiaries to address regional and national media with messages and stories about results and outcomes
- Exploitation: Keep the project alive! > after the ending of the project period, a simple exploitation plan should be made to disseminate the national case stories.

4.3. Communication message

Throughout the life of NSSC project messages will evolve and develop over time as WPs develop and partnerships emerge. However, at the core of this project there is a consistent positive message:

NSSC creates new markets for SMEs and OEMs by improving interregional supply and tendering chains in Maritime industries, Energy & Public Infrastructure as well as Health & Food across NE Europe.

The SME Supply Cluster concept is an innovative instrument for effective regional development and SME promotion in the NSR.

Furthermore, by cooperating with the sister project BalticSupply the cluster specific portals, as well as SME training and innovation programmes will facilitate SME entrance to new supply markets in the Baltic Sea region and vice versa.

4.4. Actors

The following actors have a role to play in the delivery of the Communication Strategy of NSSC:

Programme Secretariat

The Programme Secretariat is responsible for all communication activities for the IVB North Sea Region Programme 2007-2013. Therefore it is of great importance to inform and update the secretariat on a regular basis about progress, problems and successes.

Lead Beneficiary

Lead beneficiary (LB) is the Province of Groningen and is responsible for the overall project management, the organization of the project meetings and the coordination activities with the parallel BalticSupply project. LB also takes the responsibility of producing and delivering related outputs and coordinating content contributions of the other beneficiaries. It is the LB who provides all necessary information to and serves as a vital bridge with the Programme Secretariat and beneficiaries.

Beneficiaires

Potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries play a role as a link between the project and citizens and media in the participating regions and countries. They have diverse connections within their respective the regions and can therefore better build relationships with media and other potential message carriers.

Beneficiaries produce concrete and tangible results through the project, results and outcomes that have a direct impact on regional business communities .

5. Measures

Web based formats are an important part of the measures used, with the NSSC website as a base. Other means of communication will be explored and deployed as deemed appropriate. Different measures will be relevant in the different stages of the project life cycle and also depending in the target group(s) addressed.

The main communication resources, as described in the Project Proposal, are:

- Kickoff meeting and 1 closure conference
- project website & blog
- 2 brochures (initial & final)
- 3 newsletter issues
- 2 press conference
- 3 Leaflets on cluster promotion
- Business networking conferences for SMEs and OEMs at the end of each year
- a series of 6 road shows on three themes: Maritime, Energy, Food & Health
- 1 dissemination Report with summary conclusions

5.1 Joint effort and measures

Joining forces means maximum synergy and maximum visibility to the target audiences. Therefore, NSSC and BS develop a number of resources and activities together:

Graphical identity/logo

NSSC and BS have a unique graphical identity which emphasizes the connectivity and overlap between the project. The graphical identity improves project visibility in all its communication efforts and works to streamline production of communication activities and materials. It includes a logo and corporate colour scheme as well as templates for all print and presentation materials. These unique corporate features are described in an identity manual which will be publicized on the web and therefore easily accessible for all partners.

Virtual project environment: internal communication

Two virtual project environments (one for the partners of NSSC and one for BS) to connect partners within their own project and with the parallel project to ensure:

- Communication between partners by mail or open discussion forum
- Dissemination of project related information
- Common updates on project deliverables and progress

Website NSSC and Baltic Supply

Two corporate websites that look alike and refer to one another: the NSSC and BS corporate websites are used as starting point to inform and promote the project(s) and to interact with the target groups. A number of different web based tools can potentially be used: web based video formats and podcasts, twitter, RSS, social networks, blogs, newsletter etc.

The website is also the main news channel of NSSC and will be updated on a regular basis – at peak seasons the website is updated daily, twice weekly updates is a goal at all times.

Video pressconferences

The NSSC and BS corporate on holding two press conferences for both projects. The 2 press conferences will be held initially in the project and at the project end. The press conferences will be held on a regular basis taking point of departure in a local setup, where the respective project managers and a local high level person could hold the conference with local press and stakeholders.

However, in order to have a broader audience a small video of the press conference will be made of the local press conference, so this can be uploaded on the company web pages, and all the remaining partners in the 2 projects can have a reference to the press conference as well. This solution will secure Baltic and North European ownership and not merely the local project manager ownership.

With other words: we will reach a broader audience and disseminate the message to a larger amount of persons.

Video interviews

During the project participating SMEs, OEMs and partners in both the NSR and BSR, will be interviewed. These interviews will be taped and broadcasted on the website of NSSC/BS.

5.2 NSSC measures

Corporate brochure

Describes in detail NSSC and its objectives, goals and output. The corporate brochure can be used as information tool and to create interest in NSSC.

Printed materials will primarily be publicised on the web in accessible and easy to download versions.

Marketing materials

A 'tool kit' will be produced to support beneficiaries in the acquisition of SMEs and OEMs.

The tool kit contains the corporate brochure, a project leaflet and a multimedia presentation highlighting interests, results and outcomes. This material will be produced in English.

The brochure and project leaflet should be displayed by the partners, participating businesses in the network and public authorities in the regions as well as with relevant European organizations. The rest of the publications should be electronic and available on the CG website, contributing to the environment and avoiding distribution and printing costs. Distribution should be done locally/regionally/nationally by the partners to the key target groups and/or by “print-on-demand” and the information manager will distribute at European level based on a common list made by the whole partnership.

Partner meetings

A number of events will be arranged to inform beneficiaries about the work carried out, progress and results and to share information and experiences. These events will take place at least twice a year. An annual conference will be held in order to bring beneficiaries of NSR and BSR together and inform and communicate the achievements of the two parallel projects.

Newsletter

Published 3 times a year; contains news items, best practices, results and calendar. The digital newsletter will be sent to several hundreds interested parties and subscribers.

The first digital newsletter will be sent out by the end of April 2010. Each partner should develop a list of relevant recipients of the newsletter and send it to the information manager (list must be sent in the beginning of April 2010)

Press and Media

A pro-active media approach will achieve press coverage and gain broadcast media attention in the whole of the NSR and BSR area as well as in relevant publications. Press releases will be communicated widely when deemed relevant and news worthy. A corporate publicity plan and regional publicity plans have to be developed annually for gaining maximum exposure.

Each partner is responsible for:

- I. Developing a list of relevant media and press contacts to whom, they can distribute press releases on a half-yearly basis.
- II. Each partner must keep track of media coverage during the project period and send all press clips to the information manager (SNN/Nordconnect) on a half-yearly basis (scanned copies) and possibly make it available on the website.
- III developing a publicity plan to disseminate regional press releases (what, when, to whom?)

A press kit (press releases, photo's, contacts and project description) will be published on the internet.

Reporting

The project results will be communicated to the Interreg secretary in Viborg by mandatory reporting twice a year. Partners give input from their projects to the Lead Beneficiary who gathers the input and sends it to Viborg.

Road shows

A series of 6 thematic road shows (Maritime industries, Energy & Public Infrastructure, Health & Food) will be organized to communicate, present and discuss best practice approaches on a territorial-specific basis. Results, best practice descriptions and conclusions will be analyzed and discussed for the elaboration of recommendations and for networking purposes with representatives from NSR. The road shows will take place within the respective clusters for the project, and the geographical location for the road shows will be appointed during the project lifetime (after WP 4), since the exact location will depend on the analysis and the infrastructure for sharing knowledge within the clusters. The road shows will take form as workshops and information about the cluster portals potential, as well as the results from pilot testing of tendering and subcontracting will be disseminated. The target groups for the road shows are SMEs, OEMs, business development offices, chambers of commerce etc.

6 Budget & Planning

Below mentioned schedule features a global planning of the communication activities and measures developed in 2010. Known subjects are included. Additional, the annual implementation plan applies as an update of the following chart.

Measures/activities	Responsible	Schedule 2010	Costs
Intranet	WP2 NSSC	March	€ 950,-
Logo/graphic Identity	WP2 NSSC	March	€ 1000,-
Manual	WP2 NSSC	March	€ 400,-
Press release	WP2 NSSC	March	€ 750
Total cost first report period			€ 3450,-
Press conference + video	WP2 NSSC	April	€ 600,-
Corporate brochure	WP2 NSSC	April	€ 1.250,-
Project leaflet	WP2 NSSC	April	€ 750,-
Templates (Power Point/leaflet/coverpage	WP2 NSSC	April	€ 750,-
Video' pressconference	WP2 NSSC	April	€ 600,-
Website	WP2 NSSC	May	€ 5.000,-
Total costs second report period			€ 8950,-
Video Interviews for website (8)	WP2 NSSC-BS	Through 2010-2011	€ 1500,-
Newsletter 2010	WP2	October	€ 1.500
Total costs third period			€ 3.000
Newsletter 2011			€ 1.500,-
Newsletter 2012			€ 1.500,-
Press conference			€ 600,-
Total costs fourth-sixth period			€ 2.600
Total costs			€ 18.000,-

7 Monitoring & Evaluation

7.1 Monitoring

The implementation of the communication plan will be monitored throughout the life of the project in order to assess their effectiveness and make updates as necessary.

For monitoring the accomplishment of each partner in the field of communication the communication manager of NSSC will collect and monitor the communication activities at local, regional, national and EU level including the achievement of planned results: efficient dissemination of the activities and results of the project and successful media coverage.

The management team will be responsible for reporting and keeping the INTERREG IVB secretariat informed of all communication achievements throughout the life of the project. The management team will also establish necessary mechanisms and responsible partners to evaluate and monitor the objectives listed above. All the feedback obtained will be archived in a coherent manner allowing partners to obtain data and statistics as needed for reporting purposes.

The implementation of the communication plan will be monitored throughout the life of the project in order to assess the effectiveness and make updates as necessary and all partners are responsible for reporting back to the information manager on the above mentioned measures. Reviews will be obtained through regular monitoring through feedback from partners for annual reviews of the communication plan, taking into consideration several measurable outputs such as:

- Number of press releases disseminated;
- Number of project leaflets created and disseminated;
- Numbers of newsletters created and disseminated;
- Numbers of dissemination events organised and number of events participated in;
- Number of participants in events,
- Number of visitors on the project website per month;
- Number of articles/appearances in press and media.

These outputs are subject to change and might be updated as the CG evolves.

7.2 Evaluation

Based on the record from the monitoring mechanisms for communication and dissemination activities, the project team will get all required information for the evaluation of this component.

The Evaluation indicators for communication and dissemination activity are:

- ✓ Number of press conferences disseminated (2)
- ✓ Number of press releases disseminated per year (5)
- ✓ Number of articles/appearances in press and media (8)
- ✓ Number of project leaflets created (2) in 5 language versions and disseminated (5000)
- ✓ Numbers of newsletters created per year (1) and disseminated (1000)
- ✓ Numbers of dissemination events/ road shows(6) organised and number of events (3) participated in
- ✓ Number of participants in events (250)
- ✓ Number of visitors on the project website per month (1000 unique visitors)

Based on these indicators it will be decided if the communication and dissemination activities carried out during project implementation have been efficient, if the messages reached the defined target groups and if the awareness and visibility towards EU, INTERREG IVB and best practices created by “NSSC”, increased.

Appendix A: WP2 Project Budget

Activity	Budget in EURO
Personnel	€173.700,-
<p>Budget to cover: Overall coordination of WP, development of communication plan, implementation of logo and website design, development of intranet, newsletter design, coordination of press conferences, coordination of articles and press releases at local, national and European level, coordination of partner's contribution for specific communication activities, such as business networking conferences and road shows (e.g. input for newsletters, project flyers, conferences etc.)</p> <p>Who will be involved? Communication manager from SDEO has 34.100 of the budget and the lead partner has 16.500 of the budget. The rest is split among the partners. They will contribute with translation of project flyers, press releases and carrying out conferences in their region etc. All partners will hereby be involved.</p>	
External services	€ 31.000,-
<p>Budget to cover: Contracting of external management consulting, consulting communication experts for effective dissemination through the project's lifetime, development of virtual identity for website, brochures and leaflets, distribution of project leaflet design and print through social media and hand outs during press releases and press conferences and small films with partners to target groups, help with website maintenance.</p> <p>Which contracts etc. It is expected to involve Webbuilding company with communications expertise for consultation on effective website communication and general dissemination in cooperation with the BalticSupply project.</p>	
Travel and accommodation	€ 52.500,-
Promotions and Publications	€ 41.700,-
Other direct costs	€ 34.740,-
Meeting conferences & seminars	€ 31.280,-
<p>Budget to cover: Cover meeting and events, as well as costs for dissemination material.</p>	
Total	€ 364.920,-

Appendix B: Framework for Implementation plan beneficiaries

Content

- Introduction and framework (corporate communication plan NSSC)
- Aim and message
- Determine target group(s)
- Determine objectives
- Determine strategy
- Select your measures and activities
- Budget & planning
- Monitoring and evaluation