

# Interreg North Sea Region



EUROPEAN UNION

## BEGIN

European Regional Development Fund

## Strategy for Communication & Dissemination

## PROJECT INFORMATION

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# 1. Introduction to BEGIN

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## *“Improving Climate Resilience with Blue Green Infrastructure”*

Cities can't cope with more frequent and intense rainfall due to climate change. In addition to conventional grey infrastructure, we need blue-green infrastructure (BGI), e.g.: green corridors, permeable paving, bioswales and rainwater harvesting. BGI can better deal with extreme weather events and foster other ecosystem services and the livability of our NSR cities.

Research shows that BGI benefits outweigh costs: x2-x10. For instance, building a park directly reduces the need for pipes to collect rainwater. It raises the value of the area, leading to improved local economies. It also has other indirect benefits, like improving public health, which ultimately brings down the cost of the national healthcare bill. Blue and Green Infrastructure (BGI) can support existing grey infrastructure to cope with extreme weather events (reducing flood risk by 30%), improving urban liveability.

BEGIN proposes an approach to climate resilience for cities that mimics nature's potential to deal with flooding. Although there are many known benefits for using BGI and most cities have BGI ambitions and approaches, there are multiple barriers, and implementation is often hampered (who benefits, pays, and maintains solutions?). The BEGIN project aims to tackle this issue.

In the project, 10 cities and 6 research institutes have joined forces to better deal with extreme weather events within their urban areas using BGI through Social Innovation.

Social innovation is defined in the BEGIN project as the creation of long lasting outcomes that aim to address societal needs by fundamentally changing the relationships, positions, and rules between the involved stakeholders, through a process of participation and collaboration.

The 10 involved cities are developing [BGI pilot projects](#), while engaging in transnational exchange and city learning networks to share experiences and best practices. Six experienced scientific partners are also involved in the project, from the fields of social innovation and BGIs, including [IHE-DELFT](#), [Royal College of Art](#), [CIRIA](#), [Hamburg University of Technology](#), [University of Sheffield](#) and the [Erasmus University of Rotterdam](#).

These world-class research partners provide knowledge to the BEGIN project by combining Blue Green Infrastructure development, operations and maintenance and social innovation practices.

## 2. Strategy overview

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### 2.1 Aims and objectives

This document, Strategy for Communication and Dissemination, covers the aspects of internal and external communication related to the BEGIN project. Its objective is to define a clear and overarching BEGIN message, and identify and organise the communication activities that are to be performed in order to achieve the desired communication impact. The communication activities must remain aligned with the overall objectives of the BEGIN project. The BEGIN project will put specific effort in reaching local audiences. Therefore, the global Communication Strategy will be developed to allow customisation for local audiences.

#### Objectives of Communication & Dissemination

Communication and Dissemination activities follow and support the overall project implementation schedule. This means that in different phases of the project, different types of activities are more relevant than others.

#### Objectives of BEGIN

The overall objective of BEGIN is to demonstrate at target sites how cities can improve climate resilience with Blue Green Infrastructure involving stakeholders to overcome its current implementation barriers.

BGI is one of the most effective approaches to reduce flood risk (by 30%), particularly for urban areas (50% of NSR population). BGI can be mainstreamed with existing urban investment programmes, but opportunities are too often missed.

By recognising the multiple benefits (environmental, social and economic) of BGI, BEGIN creates shared implementation and maintenance plans, which enable the adoption of infrastructure solutions that better address climate change risks in NSR cities.

#### Communication objectives

The main communication objectives for the BEGIN project are to create awareness (of both the project itself and its content) and to impart knowledge related to BGI and social innovation.

For the internal audience, we aim to inform about the progress of the project and to engage all partners with communication activities (e.g. sharing local news, supporting dissemination through their own channels...). This will add value to all BEGIN communication outputs and activities. This will also support

the smooth progress of the project and ensure that all partners are up to date and on the same page.

For external audiences, BEGIN aims to create awareness of the possibilities and advantages of using BGI and SI. BEGIN communication will partially contribute to the incorporation of BGI and SI into standard governance practice. To do this, BEGIN communication will target citizens and policy-makers at a local level, and knowledge networks, media, and general public at EU-level.

## 2.2 BEGIN message

A standard BEGIN message has been defined to ensure consistency of all BEGIN communication activities and materials. All BEGIN communications will be in line with the BEGIN message. This message has been defined to enable tailoring to local context and audiences.

### **One liner:**

Together we can build more resilient and liveable cities.

### **Short summary:**

BEGIN's aim is to create more attractive, enjoyable and sustainable climate-proofed cities. We engage citizens in the creation and conservation of Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) through the use of Social Innovation (SI).

### **Narrative:**

Whilst many things are being done to slow down climate change, it is important to think about how we can adapt to the changes that have already occurred. Extreme weather, flooding and droughts are putting our livelihoods at risk. The Paris Agreement makes it clear that Europe will have an important lead in climate adaptation efforts. Organisations from Belgium, Germany, Norway, Sweden, The United Kingdom, and The Netherlands are collaborating to find solutions for adapting to climate change.

Climate change adaptation is not something that can be imposed, it is best done together, with the active support of the people. Sixteen organisations from six European countries are exchanging knowledge and experiences in the international BEGIN project. BEGIN stands for 'Blue Green Infrastructure through Social Innovation'.

Blue (water) and Green (nature, parks and plazas) infrastructure, as opposed to conventional grey infrastructure, not only offers solutions to cope with extreme weather conditions, but also contributes to a more attractive and enjoyable living environment.

BEGIN is running small scale projects in 10 cities to trial the concept and learn from the successes and pitfalls, to prove the value of such projects and scale them up to more cities with a greater budget. This is the first step to establish BGI as an integral part of urban development.

The active role of the local community is essential for the BEGIN project. We are reaching out to local citizens, entrepreneurs and social institutions to collaborate in the creation and conservation of solutions that will make our living environment more attractive and resilient when it comes to coping with the consequences of climate change.

## 2.3 Target groups

To enhance efficacy of any communication effort, the BEGIN message will be tailored to each target group and to the specific communication channels. As mentioned before the main communication objectives for the BEGIN project are creating awareness and imparting knowledge.

The BEGIN targets groups are classified into two categories: internal and external.

Internal target groups	
Target group	Specific communication objectives
Project partners: cities	Ensure that the respective pilot projects reach a broader audience. Inform of general project progress.
Project partners: knowledge institutions	Ensure that BGI and SI knowledge reaches a broader audience. Inform of general project progress.
Interreg	Ensure that all communication outputs acknowledge that the BEGIN project is funded by Interreg North Sea region programme. Ensure that all communications follow Interreg North Sea region programme communication and dissemination guidelines.

External target groups	
Target group	Specific communication objectives
General public (citizens and entrepreneurs)	<p>Raise awareness of the BEGIN project.</p> <p>Raise awareness of benefits of BGI and SI.</p> <p>Support engagement with SI activities.</p> <p>(* highlight local implication of respective cities and their role within the project.</p>
Media	<p>Enhance the reach of the BEGIN project (content and results).</p> <p>Connect the BEGIN project with current news and events.</p>
Regional Government / City councils / urban planning departments	<p>Create awareness of possibilities, benefits and advantages of BGI and SI.</p> <p>Inform of possibilities for replication of pilot projects.</p>
Research Networks/ Similar initiatives	<p>Impart knowledge related to BGI and SI.</p> <p>Liaise with similar projects to boost dissemination.</p>



## 3. Action

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Communication will be adapted to all target groups and help create interest in the BEGIN project. Different platforms will be used for dissemination, including a project website, events, and publications of various formats. The communication activities will all highlight the unique focus of the project that combines Blue-Green Infrastructure with Social Innovation.

For cities, BEGIN will make use of existing networks, events and communication channels to reach the widest audience in a cost-effective manner. For example, BEGIN representatives will participate as speakers and attend or lead workshops at ICLEI conferences, and use UN-MCR network mailings. BEGIN scientific partners will present every year at scientific conferences on BGI, social innovation or governance.

A communication toolkit will be adapted for efficient communications:

### 3.1 Communication toolkit

#### i. Logo

The BEGIN logo provided by Interreg will be distributed to all partners.

The BEGIN logo will be used as a starting point to develop the image of the project.

#### ii. Project image

The project image will be defined in a short brand style guide to ensure consistency and recognisability of the project. The brand style will include detailed information about color palette, font styles, font sizes and logo.

A good project image is key to the project to stand out and be easily recognised. Consistency must be ensured in all public appearances and all documents produced by the consortium. Bax & Company will develop the project image in line with Interreg guidelines.

#### iii. Website

The project website will be created in the Interreg platform. It will contain all public information related to the BEGIN project. The website will be a complete summary of the project and remain up to date. It will have a news section that will feature all

relevant project accomplishments and also relevant news about BGI and social innovation.

All partners will send information to BaxCo every time something relevant is going on. Also, a news item and press release will be written every time that a partner meeting takes place (it will be written in collaboration with the communication team of the host city). Any other partner contributions will be planned and tracked on an excel file (provided by BaxCo). The website should link to other projects related to BEGIN and to partner websites.

#### **iv. Poster, flyer and roll up**

A poster, leaflet and a roll up will be created for the BEGIN project. They will be developed following the BEGIN brand manual. BaxCo will develop standard materials that can be used by all partners to promote the project. BaxCo will also provide templates to enable the tailoring of the communication materials to local audiences. All partners will be encouraged to translate the materials to their local languages. The BEGIN poster and flyer will be printed and showcased by all partners that have a public area. The roll up will be printed by each partner according to their needs. These communication materials will be used to promote the project at events, face-to-face meetings and distributed to relevant stakeholders. The flyer will also be featured on the BEGIN website.

#### **v. Social media**

A Twitter profile for BEGIN will be created and maintained by BaxCo. The twitter account will be used to disseminate real time news about the project or any relevant news about BGI, social innovation or Interreg news. The hashtags used for the BEGIN projects will be #BEGINproject and #BGI. All partners will be encouraged to use these hashtags to enhance the presence of the project.

To make sure that the project reaches the local audiences of the respective partners, they will be asked to share any BEGIN updates. Once again they will be encouraged to tailor the standard content, provided by BaxCo to their respective audiences. In addition, a list of all partners' social networks will be compiled at the beginning of the project. Partners' social media channels will be mentioned by BEGIN posts when appropriate.

Community management is a very time consuming task and raising followers in any social media requires dedication and money. The best value can be achieved by establishing synergies with partners' social media. These synergies can really enhance the visibility and reach of the project.

The Twitter account will be regularly updated by BaxCo to share any news of the project and also world news on either BGI or SI. Members of the COM group have to collaborate with BaxCo to increase the reach of social media (retweets, mentions, publish in their own social media [Linkedin, Facebook...+]). The workflow will be discussed once the COM group has been established.

### **3.2 Events**

Partners will present BEGIN at events. This will include presentations, workshops or any other kind of activities related to disseminating the project. Partners should inform BaxCo anytime they are attending an event. BaxCo will disseminate it on the website and on BEGIN social media and will offer support for the preparation of the event. Overall, this activity aims to increase awareness of the project.

An international closing event will be hosted and must be defined by all partners a year before the project's conclusion.

## 4. Timeline

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Task	Due date
Establish Communication group	Sept 2017
Approve structure for communication plan	June 2017
First draft of Communication plan	November 2017
First approved version of communication plan	February 2017
Website	Done
Project image	August 2017

## 5. Communication Responsibilities

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Communication responsibilities must be established to best use resources and maximise the reach of the project.

**All partners** should specify which channels and resources could be available to the project. A communication group will be established before **September** (ideally including a representative of every partner). Each partner should nominate a potential member before **July**. BaxCo will have a coordinator role and will be in contact with the members of the group to collect news items, and to assist with any situation.

### 5.1 Communication group

The communication (COM) group intends to represent all 16 project partners through their internal communication representatives. In case that an internal communication person cannot be included, project partners are asked to bring forward at least one person from the project team itself as a communication contact point.

The main purposes of the BEGIN communication group are:

- To enhance scope, impact, and visibility of BEGIN and its activities.
- To facilitate communication/collaboration between communication departments of all 16 partners.
- To increase the reach of BEGIN communication outputs by sharing them through communication channels of all 16 partners.
- To extract BEGIN-related news on a local level and share it with the project consortium.

#### i. Involvement and activities

The involvement in the BEGIN COM group allows flexibility for each member. The minimum which is asked for is to provide a local contact point to facilitate the dissemination and collection of communication outputs. More involvement is not obliged, nevertheless, it would be beneficial to the project adding local presence.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

Com Contact Person  
(minimum expected)

- Subscribes to the general emailing list for communication on BEGIN  
(COM-related activities such as news sharing, invitation for teleconferences,

## Com Active Member

etc.)

- Shares local news related to the BEGIN project with COM Core Group (formed by BaxCo and Dordrecht).
- Disseminates BEGIN news through their communication channels to the local, regional, or/and national community. This includes blog posts, news articles, tweets, etc. \*

\*emailing will be limited

- Gives feedback and suggestions to enhance the impact and increase the quality of general BEGIN COM activities.
- Participates in the COM teleconferences (more information below).
- Engages in spreading BEGIN news on different platforms and through various channels.
- When a BEGIN partner meetings takes place in their city, helps to disseminate event communication materials.
- Writes news items, make videos, arranges media coverage etc.

Note: Active members do not need to engage in all the listed activities.

## ii. Communication

**COM conference calls (3x per year):** A teleconference (30 minutes - 1 hour) is scheduled one week before each BEGIN partner meeting so that we can take full advantage of the event. During this teleconference, we will also discuss other relevant points related to BEGIN. A proposed agenda will be drafted and sent to the COM group in advance (for COM Group to give input). A participation Doodle will also be sent in advance. Three days before the call, a confirmed agenda will be disseminated.

**Fixed email traffic:** every two months, a standard e-mail will be sent, reminding COM people to send local news items that may be interesting to be share on a project level.

**Continuous email traffic:** the group will get updates, news to share, upcoming partner meetings, etc. Email traffic should be limited to only what is important.

## 6. Budget

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Budget depends on that defined at the proposal stage, by each partner respectively.

## 7. Monitoring and Evaluation

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BaxCo will send a dissemination activities reporting google form once a month to all partners. The form will include the following sections: part event reporting, planned event reporting, suggestions and news clipping. The form will be linked to a spreadsheet which will contain the overview of the BEGIN communication and dissemination efforts. This will be used by BaxCo to monitor and evaluate the progress of communication activities. This form should be filled by all BEGIN partners.

In addition, a series of complementary key performance indicators (KPIs) will be defined to assess efficacy of BEGIN communication.

These targets will include:

- Number of events where BEGIN has been presented
- Twitter followers and interactions
- Number of news items
- Number of publications

BaxCo will monitor these KPIs to ensure the good progress of BEGIN communication.



# Annex 1. Strategic Communication Framework

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BaxCo has developed a strategic communication framework for the BEGIN project. This document will guide the communication strategy of BEGIN during the whole project.

## Short Paragraph:

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## Narrative:

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# BEGIN PROJECT STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK

## Together we can build more resilient and liveable cities

