



NBRACER
Nature Based Solutions
for Atlantic Regional Climate Resilience

**HORIZON Europe Research and Innovation actions in support of the
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Communication Handbook for Regions

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Authors

**Giulia Salvini
Wageningen Research**



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About NBRACER

The impacts of climate change on people, planet and prosperity are intensifying. Many regions and communities are struggling to avoid losses and need to step up the effort to increase their climate resilience. Ongoing natural capital degradation leads to growing costs, increased vulnerability, and decreased stability of key systems. Whilst there has been noticeable progress and inspiring examples of adaptation solutions in Europe, the pressure to make rapid and visible progress has often led to a focus on stand-alone, easy-to-measure projects that tackle issues through either direct or existing policy levers, or sector-by-sector mainstreaming. But the dire trends of climate change challenge Europe, and its regions, needs exploration of new routes towards more ambitious and large-scale systemic adaptation. The European Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change (MACC) recognizes the need to adopt a systemic approach to enhance climate adaptation in EU regions, cities, and local authorities by 2030 by working across sectors and disciplines, experimenting, and involving local communities.

NBRACER contributes to the MACC by addressing this challenge with an innovative and practical approach to accelerating the transformation towards climate adaptation. Transformation journeys will be based on the smart, replicable, scalable, and transferable packaging of Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) rooted in the resources supplied by biogeographic landscapes while closing the NbS implementation gap. Regions are key players of this innovative action approach aiming at developing, testing, and implementing NbS at systemic level and building adaptation pathways supported by detailed and quantitative analysis of place-specific multi-risks, governance, socio-economic contexts, and (regional) specific needs.

NBRACER works with ‘Demonstrating’ and ‘Replicating’ regions across three different Landscapes (Marine & Coastal, Urban, Rural) in the European Atlantic biogeographical area to vision and co-design place based sustainable and innovative NbS that are tailor-made within the regional landscapes and aligned with their climate resilience plans and strategies. The solutions are upscaled into coherent regional packages that support the development of time and place specific adaptation pathways combining both technological and social innovations. The project is supporting, stimulating, and mainstreaming the deployment of NbS beyond the NBRACER regions and across biogeographical areas.

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Summary

The communication Handbook for Regions serves as a framework that outlines key principles and best practices for communication across different regions and landscapes. By doing so, it ensures that regional communications effectively support the NBRACER Communication and Dissemination general strategy while being adaptable to local needs and contexts.

The Handbook is divided in two sections: a theoretical one (this deliverable) that provides guidelines to prepare and conduct the communication strategy in each region; and a practical one, which is a living document that the Atlantic regions are currently preparing with the support of the Wageningen Research. The results of this work will be included in Deliverable D8.6 “Updated communication and dissemination plan” by M36. The content of this handbook will be also included in the communication strategy document created by NetworkNature, specifically targeted for local and regional authorities.

Keywords

NBRACER, Nature-based Solutions (NbS), demonstrations, Atlantic biogeographical area, regions and communities, climate resilient regions, Climate Change Adaptation, Marine and Coastal Landscapes, Urban Landscapes, Rural Landscapes, communication, dissemination, awareness raising, knowledge building, Demonstrating and Replicating Regions, policy transformation, monitoring and upscaling, community participation,

Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
WP	Work Package
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
DRs	Demonstrating Regions
RRs	Replicating Regions
MACC	European Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
Q&A	Question and Answer

1 Introduction

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are ways to address environmental, social, and economic challenges by working with nature. Communicating effectively about NbS is important because it helps people understand its benefits, gather support, and inspire action. By telling stories and focusing on what matters to local communities, communication can break down barriers, correct misunderstandings, and show how NbS can help tackle climate change, improve biodiversity, and support sustainable development.

This handbook is specifically designed to guide regions involved in the NBRACER project. The aim is to support the information exchange of the NBRACER journey towards resilience with the project partners and the different target audiences.

It guides regional teams in creating communication strategies that fit their specific situation, addressing unique environmental, social, and cultural challenges. In fact, for communication strategies to be effective, they should be tailored to the specific local context and challenges. For instance, a coastal region affected by rising sea levels can communicate how NbS like restoring wetlands and sandbanks can help reduce flooding and protect the coastline. In a city struggling with air pollution, NbS might focus on creating green spaces and urban forests. Communication efforts can highlight the health benefits, such as cleaner air and cooler urban temperatures. In rural areas, farming communities facing soil degradation could benefit from NbS like agroforestry or reforestation. The communication strategy can focus on how these solutions boost soil health and crop yields, benefiting both the environment and the economy.

This handbook offers step-by-step guidance for regions to explain NbS in a way that resonates with their communities, raise awareness, foster participation, and promote NbS adoption. The content of this handbook will be also included in a communication strategy document created by NetworkNature, specifically targeted for local and regional authorities.

Section 2 describes a stepwise approach to develop a comprehensive and targeted communication strategy. Section 3 dives into strategies to communicate about NbS to a wide community. Section 4 describes strategies to support participation and engagement. Section 5 describes key aspects to create a detailed action plan. Finally, section 6 the NBRACER Regional protocol to help regions grasp the scope, goals, and methodologies focusing in communication between the regions (DRs and RRs) and between regions and work packages (WPs) through several tools. Section 7 draws conclusions, followed by Appendix A, which presents an initial draft of the communication strategy for the Flanders region that could serve as inspiration for other NBRACER regions.

2 Developing a communication strategy

This chapter provides a step-by-step guide to develop a comprehensive and targeted communication strategy. A well-structured communication strategy is crucial for effectively promoting Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and engaging stakeholders, as it provides a clear roadmap for sharing information, raising awareness, and building support. Such a strategy ensures that key messages about the environmental, social, and economic benefits of NbS are communicated in a way that resonates with different audiences, from policymakers to local communities. Additionally, a structured approach allows for the use of diverse communication channels, such as social media, local events, press releases, and educational campaigns, ensuring that information reaches a broad audience. This multi-channel approach not only widens the reach but also ensures continuous engagement, helping to keep NbS initiatives visible and relevant over time. The strategy also plays a vital role in fostering active participation. Clear communication encourages stakeholders to become involved in the planning and implementation of NbS projects, creating a sense of ownership and responsibility. When stakeholders feel connected to the process, they are more likely to support and sustain NbS initiatives in the long term.

2.1 Define clear objectives and goals

Clear objectives are essential for providing direction and ensuring that efforts remain focused and aligned with the desired outcomes. By establishing well-defined objectives, regions and their local stakeholders can work towards a common goal, measure progress, and adjust strategies as needed. Communication objectives might include:

- **Share the story:** Increase understanding of the aims and activities of the NBRACER project
- **Raise awareness:** increase knowledge and understanding of NbS among target audiences.
- **Foster engagement:** encourage active participation and collaboration from stakeholders.
- **Influence behaviour and attitudes:** promote positive attitudes toward NbS and motivate stakeholders to take action.
- **Support policy and decision-making:** provide evidence and narratives that support policy changes or funding allocations for NbS.

2.2 Identify target audiences and their interests

Effective communication starts with understanding who the stakeholders are and what their interests, needs, and concerns might be. Stakeholders in NbS projects can vary widely and may include:

- **Community members:** residents who live in the areas affected by or benefiting from NbS projects. Their support and involvement are crucial for the project's success.
- **Local authorities and policymakers:** decision-makers who can influence policy and funding for NbS. Communicating the benefits and evidence of NbS effectiveness to them is essential.
- **Businesses and industry leaders:** stakeholders from local businesses or industries who might be impacted by or could support NbS initiatives. They need to see the economic and social benefits of engaging in or supporting NbS.

- **NGOs and community organizations:** organizations that can support NbS initiatives through advocacy, community mobilization, and technical expertise.
- **Researchers and academics:** experts who can provide scientific support and credibility to NbS projects.
- **Media:** journalists and media organizations that can amplify the message and raise public awareness.
- **Create audience personas.** Develop detailed profiles of your target audiences, including their needs, challenges, and motivations. Use these personas to fine-tune messages and engagement strategies.

2.3 Develop key messages and storylines

To raise awareness on the NbS it's crucial to increase knowledge and understanding of NbS among target audiences through clear, concise and compelling messages. Crafting tailored messages to specific stakeholder groups makes them more relevant and accessible and it ensures that each group understands how NbS directly benefits them. For example, while local communities may need to see how NbS improve their daily lives through cleaner air or reduced flooding, policymakers might be more interested in long-term cost savings and resilience.

Messages should:

- **Highlight Benefits:** Focus on the tangible benefits of NbS for different audiences:
 - Environmental benefits: highlight how NbS can restore ecosystems, enhance biodiversity, and mitigate climate change impacts.
 - Social benefits: emphasize how NbS can improve community well-being by providing green spaces, reducing health risks, and enhancing local resilience.
 - Economic benefits: communicate how NbS can provide cost-effective solutions for urban planning, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable development.
- **Address Concerns:** Anticipate potential concerns and provide evidence-based responses.
- **Call to Action:** Include a clear call to action that encourages stakeholders to get involved, support, or learn more about NbS.

2.4 Identify appropriate communication channels

Digital tools and media are powerful for expanding the reach of NbS communication efforts. Effective use of digital platforms can amplify messages, engage new audiences, and facilitate two-way communication. Selecting the right channels is crucial for reaching and engaging target groups. Consider the following:

- **Social media:** Effective for reaching a broad audience and fostering interactive engagement. Platforms include Facebook, Instagram, X and LinkedIn.
- **Websites and blogs:** Create a dedicated website or blog to provide comprehensive information about NbS projects, updates, and resources.
- **Email campaigns and newsletters:** Use email to reach stakeholders directly with tailored content and calls to action.
- **Webinars and virtual events:** Host webinars and virtual events to engage with stakeholders who cannot attend in person, providing opportunities for learning and discussion.
- **Traditional media:** Print media, radio, and TV can reach wider and more diverse audiences, especially in areas with limited internet access.

Once these channels are identified, the next step is to tailor the communication content (section 3.1) to suit the format and style of these platforms. For instance, using visual content like infographics or videos may work better on social media, while more detailed information might be suitable for local newspapers or community forums.

2.5 Exploring existing communication channels

Understanding which communication channels are already popular and trusted by the community is essential for effective dissemination of information about NbS. Building partnerships with popular local media channels or influencers can help amplify messages and ensure they reach wider audiences in a format they are comfortable with and trust.

Strategies to identify these channels include:

- Conducting surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions to gather insights on how different segments of the community access information.
- Analysing digital and social media usage data can provide a clearer picture of which platforms (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp, local blogs) are most frequented.
- Engaging with local community organizations, libraries, or media outlets can help uncover non-digital channels such as local radio stations, community newsletters, or bulletin boards that are commonly used.

3 Communicating about NbS to a wide community

To foster broad community engagement in Nature-based Solutions (NbS) initiatives, communication efforts should begin by raising awareness about NbS and related project activities in the region. This can be achieved through informative and engaging content that is tailored to the specific interests and needs of the target audience. By addressing these needs, communication can lay the groundwork for increased participation and sustained engagement. The following paragraph (Section 4) will explore additional strategies aimed at deepening community involvement and enhancing participation in NbS initiatives.

3.1 Raise awareness through informative content

Raising awareness about NbS is essential for increasing public understanding and support. Many people may not be familiar with the concept of NbS or may have misconceptions about their effectiveness. Awareness-raising involves informing stakeholders about what NbS are, why they are important, and how they can benefit communities and ecosystems. Additionally, to effectively communicate about NbS, content should be engaging, informative, and tailored to the needs of different audiences. Tools which can be used to raise awareness and build knowledge among stakeholders include:

- **Posts and campaigns:** share stories, infographics, and videos that highlight the benefits of NbS. Use hashtags and interactive content to increase reach and engagement.
- **Press releases and media kits:** provide journalists with ready-to-use content, including press releases, fact sheets, high-quality images, and quotes from key stakeholders.
- **Newsletters and e-bulletins:** keep stakeholders informed with regular updates on NbS projects, upcoming events, and success stories.

- **Tailor content specifically for different platforms:** use for instance short, engaging videos for Instagram, longer educational content for YouTube, and in-depth case studies for newsletters or blogs. Ensure that content format matches the communication channel for maximum impact.
- **Centralize all NbS-related content in a dedicated website** including videos, podcasts, infographics, and case studies. This hub can act as a resource centre for educators, policymakers, and the public, offering content in multiple formats to suit different learning styles.
- **Create message templates for local ambassadors:** provide local champions, community leaders, and businesses with pre-made content (e.g., social media posts, flyers) so they can easily promote NbS within their networks. This approach amplifies the message through trusted voices.
- **Educational materials and toolkits:** provide resources for schools, community organizations, and local governments to raise awareness and build capacity for NbS.
- **Case studies and success stories:** highlight real-life examples of successful NbS projects and their impacts on communities and ecosystems.
- **Press conferences and media briefings:** engage with media to disseminate key messages and raise public awareness.

3.2 Utilize visual and creative communication

Visual content, such as infographics, comics and animations can simplify complex NbS concepts and make them accessible to different age groups and literacy levels. Creative communication methods can capture attention and make information more memorable.

Strategies for using visual and creative communication include:

- **Develop visually engaging materials** that explain NbS concepts and their benefits. Tailor content to suit different platforms and audiences, ensuring clarity and cultural relevance.
- **Videos and animations:** short videos or animations that tell compelling stories about how NbS work and their impact.
- **Infographics and visual aids:** use visuals to simplify complex information and make it more accessible to a broader audience, by providing quick and easy-to-understand information.
- **Launch a design competition for local artists.** Encourage artists in the community to create visual representations of NbS and their benefits. The winning designs could be featured in public spaces or on social media, generating buzz and making the message more relatable.

3.3 Use storytelling to build relatable narratives

Storytelling is a powerful tool for emotionally engaging the community. Highlighting relatable success stories from local champions, residents, or small businesses that have benefited from NbS makes the solutions more credible and relatable. Sharing real-life examples helps the community see how NbS directly impact their lives.

Tips on storytelling include:

- **Identify and document real-life stories within the community** that showcase the positive impact of NbS. Share these stories through various formats, such as video documentaries, podcasts, written testimonials, or photo essays, to reach different segments of the community.

- **Create a storytelling toolkit for local advocates.** The toolkit could offer resources such as templates, video equipment, and training that enable stakeholders to share their own NbS stories. This empowers community members to take ownership of the narrative, enhancing both authenticity and the emotional impact of the message. By equipping locals to tell their stories, the communication is likely to resonate more deeply and reflects the community's unique voice and experiences.

4 Supporting participation and engagement

This paragraph describes some strategies to promote participation and engagement of different stakeholder groups. Participation and engagement are key to the success of NbS projects: when people are actively involved in decision-making and implementation, they are more likely to support and maintain the initiatives.

4.1 Foster two-way communication

Two-way communication is essential to fostering a sense of ownership and co-creation among community members. Interactive platforms, such as community workshops, open forums, or social media campaigns, encourage community members to share their ideas, feedback, and experiences. Strategies include:

- **Workshops and training sessions:** focused on building knowledge and capacity among stakeholders, such as local communities, policymakers, and businesses.
- **Organize regular community workshops** or town halls to discuss NbS projects and gather community input. Use social media and community forums for polls, Q&A sessions, and discussions that allow for real-time interaction.
- **Community meetings and open forums:** provide platforms for dialogue, feedback, and consensus-building among community members.
- **Participatory planning and decision-making:** involve community members and stakeholders in planning and decision-making processes through public consultations, workshops, and interactive mapping exercises.
- **Volunteer programs and citizen science:** encourage community members to participate in monitoring and maintaining NbS projects through volunteer programs or citizen science initiatives.
- **Organize NbS “hackathons” or innovation challenges.** These events can bring together community members, researchers, and businesses to collaboratively solve local environmental challenges using NbS. Offering small grants or prizes for the best solutions can incentivize innovation and participation.
- **Educational institutions and youth engagement:** Schools and universities can be powerful channels for raising awareness and fostering long-term change.
- **Networking events:** facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration, and partnerships among stakeholders.
- **Online surveys and polls:** Use digital surveys to gather feedback, understand stakeholder preferences, and improve future communication efforts.

4.2 Organize local events to generate interest

Local events can attract diverse community participants and generate interest in NbS. Events such as NbS-themed fairs, green festivals or tree planting days create hands-on learning opportunities and help people experience the benefits of NbS firsthand.

- **Plan and host local events that appeal to different community groups**, from families and schools to local businesses and organizations. Use these events as platforms to showcase NbS projects, provide educational workshops, and offer volunteer opportunities.
- **Integrate NbS into existing local events or festivals**. Collaborate with organizers of well-attended local events, such as cultural festivals or farmers' markets, to host NbS-related activities. This strategy leverages existing audiences and creates a natural entry point for engagement.
- **Field visits and demonstration days**: offer hands-on experiences where stakeholders can see NbS projects in action and understand their benefits.

4.3 Build a sense of ownership

When stakeholders feel a sense of ownership over NbS projects, they are more likely to support and sustain them. This can be achieved by:

- **Recognizing contributions**: acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of stakeholders, whether they are community volunteers, local businesses, or policymakers.
- **Providing opportunities for feedback and adaptation**: create mechanisms for stakeholders to provide feedback on the progress of NbS projects and suggest adaptations based on their experiences and insights.
- **Ensuring transparency and accountability**: keep stakeholders informed about the status of NbS projects, including successes, challenges, and next steps.
- **Co-brand NbS projects with local sponsors**: partner with local businesses or organizations to co-brand NbS initiatives (e.g., local parks, green spaces). This allows businesses to support and promote the projects while giving the community a tangible sense of ownership through local partnerships.

4.4 Identify and overcome barriers to engagement

Barriers to engagement can arise from various factors, such as lack of awareness, misinformation, resistance to change, or competing interests. Identifying these barriers is the first step in developing strategies to overcome them.

Common barriers may include:

- **Misinformation or lack of knowledge**: misconceptions about what NbS are and how they work can hinder support and participation.
- **Resistance to change**: people may resist NbS initiatives if they perceive them as a threat to their current practices, lifestyles, or economic interests.
- **Competing priorities**: stakeholders may have other priorities that take precedence over engaging with NbS projects.
- **Limited capacity and resources**: some stakeholders may lack the capacity or resources to engage meaningfully in NbS projects.

Strategies for addressing barriers may include:

- Providing clear and accurate information: use evidence-based communication to address misinformation and provide clear, accurate information about NbS and their benefits.
- Engaging in dialogue and building trust: foster open dialogue with stakeholders to understand their concerns and interests and work collaboratively to find solutions that address these concerns.
- Highlighting co-benefits and synergies: emphasize the multiple benefits of NbS that align with stakeholders' existing priorities, such as improved health, economic opportunities, or enhanced community resilience. This can be achieved also by providing success stories and best practices.
- Offering capacity-building opportunities: provide training, resources, and support to stakeholders to enhance their capacity to engage with and benefit from NbS projects. The European Union provides support to regions through different resources (e.g., via MIP4adapt platform)¹.

4.5 Identify and overcome challenges related to events and engagement

Organizing events requires careful planning, especially when ensuring that major events, other projects activities and local actions won't conflict with yours and reduce participant turnout. There are some key challenges and considerations to take into account :

- **Incompatible schedules with major events** : Before scheduling an event, make a research and monitor key dates in your region of major events such as holidays, sport finals, concerts, international conferences, that can significantly reduce attendance at your event. Manage an updated calendar and list of major events at local, regional, national and international scale, will help to ensure that your event won't be overshadowed by other major events.
- **Mutually exclusive events**: Regions may have multiple projects running simultaneously and scheduling conflicts with other projects events (workshops, conferences and training sessions) can cause participants to chose between competing activities. **Considerations:**
 - Coordinate with other projects to stablish a shared calendar to avoid overlap
 - Schedule meetings or cross project planning sessions to align event timing
 - Stablish synergies with other existing NbS projects in your region to co-host events and create a major impact
 - Use cross-promotion to link events thematically so participants will see the value in attending more than one event
- **Audience saturation** : When the target audiences are the same, attendees may feel overwhelmed reducing enthusiasm, attendance and engagement, especially if the events cover similar topics and they are to many events in a short period of time. **Considerations:**
 - Offer hybrid or virtual options to allow more flexibility for participants

¹ <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/mission/community-of-practice/technical-assistance>

- Incorporate interactive elements, diversify the content, use creative formats and unique experiences to keep your event fresh and engaging
- Offer shorter, more focused events rather than long sessions

4.6 Partner with local influencers and organizations

Collaborating with local influencers, community leaders, and trusted organizations is key to effectively amplify NbS messages and build trust. These individuals and groups, who already have strong connections within their communities, can communicate in ways that resonate with local values and experiences, making the message more relevant and impactful. To maximize both reach and credibility, it's important to ensure that these messengers represent the diversity of the community, helping to make NbS messages inclusive and widely accepted.

Strategy: Identify and engage local influencers, such as educators, community leaders, or local businesses, to promote NbS initiatives. Partner with community-based organizations to co-host events, share information, and build a supportive network for NbS advocacy.

4.7 Incorporate local languages and dialects

Communication efforts should incorporate local languages and dialects to make messaging more accessible and inclusive. In multilingual or multicultural communities, providing materials in multiple languages ensures that key messages reach a broader audience and resonate more deeply. It also shows respect for local cultures, traditions, and identities, fostering a sense of belonging and trust. Tailoring communication in this way helps break down language barriers, promotes cultural understanding, and increases the likelihood of community engagement and support for NbS initiatives.

4.8 Engage with difficult-to-reach groups

Engaging difficult-to-reach groups, such as marginalized communities, elderly residents, or non-native language speakers, requires tailored strategies that address specific barriers these groups may face in accessing information. These strategies include:

- **Leverage trusted intermediaries**, such as local community leaders, religious institutions, or grassroots organizations, who have established relationships with these groups.
- **Develop culturally relevant and language-appropriate content** is also crucial—this could mean translating materials into local dialects or using culturally familiar symbols and narratives.
- **Traditional communication methods.** In areas with limited digital access, employing traditional communication methods, like community theatre, local radio broadcasts, door-to-door campaigns, or public information sessions, can be effective.
- **Mobile units or pop-up information booths** in local markets or community centres can also help disseminate information in hard-to-reach areas.
- **Employing participatory approaches**, such as organizing small-group discussions, listening sessions, or community mapping exercises, can provide platforms for these groups to express their concerns and ideas. By actively involving them in the process, communication efforts become more inclusive and relevant, ensuring that no group is left behind.

5 Creating a detailed action plan

A detailed action plan is vital for turning communication strategies into actionable steps that lead to tangible results. It serves as the blueprint for executing each element of the strategy in an organized, efficient, and outcome-driven manner. By breaking down broad goals into specific activities, the action plan ensures clarity and accountability across the team, driving forward progress in a measurable way.

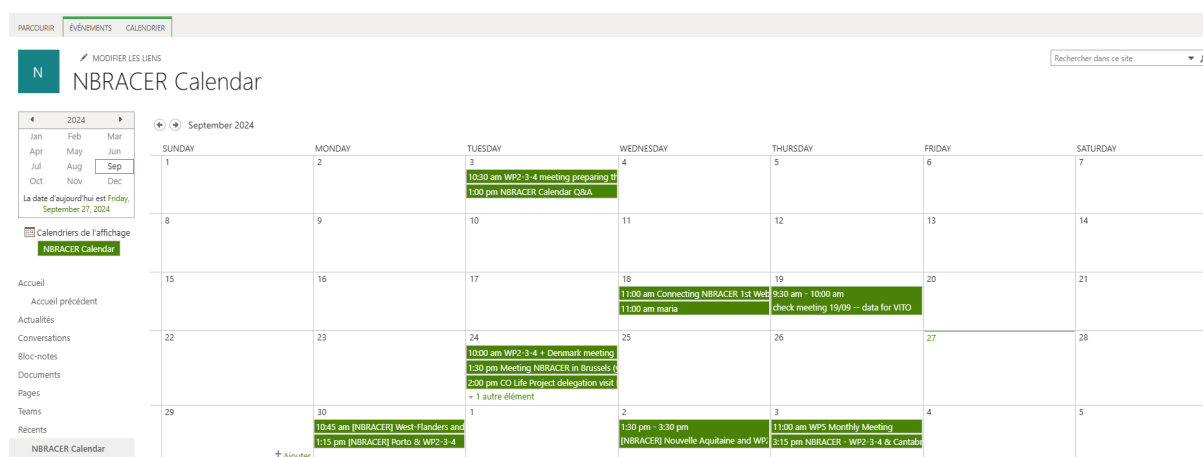
- **Outline the activities.** The action plan should clearly outline the activities required to promote and implement NbS projects. These could include organizing workshops to educate the community, launching targeted social media campaigns to raise awareness, publishing newsletters to provide ongoing updates, or hosting stakeholder meetings to foster collaboration and feedback. Each activity needs to be meticulously detailed, with a clear understanding of how it contributes to the overall communication goals.
- **Define a well-structured timeline.** It's important to establish when each activity will begin, how long it will last, and the key milestones that will indicate progress. This timeline provides a visual roadmap of the project's flow, ensuring that tasks are completed on schedule and that stakeholders can track progress over time. It also helps in prioritizing activities, allowing for more urgent or impactful initiatives to be addressed first.
- **Defining roles and responsibilities.** Every team member, partner, and stakeholder involved should have a clear understanding of their individual roles within the broader plan. This not only ensures accountability but also enables better coordination, as everyone knows their tasks and how their contributions align with the overall objectives. Clarity in responsibilities helps avoid overlaps or gaps in the execution process, ensuring that the plan runs smoothly.
- **Allocate resources**—financial, human, and technical. Without sufficient resources, even the most well-designed plans are likely to fall short. The action plan should detail the specific budget required for each activity, the manpower needed, and the technical tools or platforms that will be used, such as digital tools for social media campaigns or audio-visual equipment for workshops. Resource planning guarantees that every activity is supported by the necessary tools to be successful.
- **Flexibility** is a key component of any action plan. As circumstances evolve, challenges may arise, or unexpected opportunities may present themselves. A rigid plan that cannot adapt to these changes is unlikely to succeed in the long term. Therefore, it is important to build in mechanisms for adjustments, ensuring the plan remains realistic and adaptable to changing conditions.
- **Establish measurable outcomes.** This is critical to assessing the effectiveness of the action plan. Including specific, quantifiable objectives—such as increasing local awareness of NbS by 20% or engaging 200 community members in a particular project—provides a way to measure success. These metrics allow teams to track progress, evaluate the impact of their efforts, and refine strategies if needed. By reviewing these outcomes regularly, teams can make data-driven decisions that improve communication efforts and drive continuous improvement.

6 Connection with Work Packages and Partners Contributions

The Regional Protocol that aims to help regions grasp the scope, goals, and methodologies of NBRACER. Its central focus is communication between the regions (DRs and RRs) and between regions and work packages (WPs). This is facilitated through several tools:

NBRACER Calendar: This provides a transparent and easy way for regions to schedule important meetings while offering insights to other regions and WP leads on overall regional progress. As part of the Regional Protocol, monthly calendar snippets are shared with the NBRACER community to further enhance communication and transparency.

Figure 1 NBRACER Calendar



Activity Log and Deliverables: This document contains all information regarding the project timeline, including details on deliverables (data needed, deadlines, persons in charge, etc.), tailored for the needs of DRs and RRs. The information is organized to improve communication between WP/Deliverable leads and regions, while also providing regions with an understanding of their progress toward resilience.

Databases for Workshops, Events, and Activities: This emphasizes the importance of having an integrated, summarized activity plan that is easily accessible to all project partners and regions. It enables regions to set up their own activities while tracking and learning from the progress of others. This database serves as a communication board for everyone.

Figure 2 Database for Workshops

Please report all the planned and finalized workshops to WP8. You can do that by filling the Form (link: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=kZ_I0hRbkaIqWAmEneRPLaD0T1LgVGvGnXIAh5JCAdUwZlVzNjQzE0MDVlTjU1V1VWVzIV5kPBRQIQCNOPWou) or by launching the Form in WP8 tab (C&D reporting). Reporting is mandated for the purpose of collecting and sending information to the European Commission. If you wish your workshop/activity/event/publication to be covered by social media/press/NBRACER website etc. please contact WP8 Team (Natalia Brack, natalia.brack@iid-sii.org).

#	Date	Month	Year	Planned workshops in the coming months (name)	Brief description	DR and/or RR	Region(s)	Expected duration of the workshop	Information to be gathered	WP / Task	Organizer(s)	Email(s)	Is the workshop reported to WP8?	Would you like this workshop to be covered by social media/press/website
	24	April	2024	Exploitation Workshop	Exploitation Workshop dedicated to IP Issues set the bases of the initial exploitation strategies and initial version of the exploitation plan		All Regions	1 day		WP8 - T8.2	IID-SII		yes	No
1 and 2	May	2024	Regional Workshop Central Denmark		DR	Central Denmark	2 days including visit fields			WP1-T1.1				
23	May	2024	Regional Workshop Nouvelle-Aquitaine		DR	Nouvelle Aquitaine	1 day			WP1-T1.1				
23	May	2024	Regional Workshop West-Flanders		DR	West-Flanders	1 day			WP1-T1.1				
12	June	2024	Regional Workshop Cantabria		DR	Cantabria	1 day			WP1-T1.1				
4	July	2024	Regional Workshop Porto		DR	Porto	1 day			WP1-T1.1				
23	September	2024	Workshop Cávado region		RR	Cávado	1 day			WP1-T1.1	CM Cávado	ceciliamarques@cmcavado.pt rtiasilva@cmcavado.pt	not yet	yes
12	October	2024	Regional Workshop Cantabria											
18 and 25	November	2024	Workshop West-Flanders	Workshop about risks and co-creation of solutions in the region LSP Zuid area (focus area Maleveeld and beyond)	DR	West-Flanders	2 days (including 2 evenings)	Flemish partner meeting, feedback from WP1 to 4	WP1	Flemish partners	contact person: elis.deveck@west-vlaanderen.be	not yet	TBD, but probably yes	
	November	2024												
	December	2024												
	January	2025												
	February	2025												
	March	2025												
	April	2025												
	May	2025												
	June	2025												
	July	2025												
	August	2025												
	September	2025												

< > ...

DR deliverables

Workshops

Events & Activities

Publication database

+

Figure 3 Database Events & Activities

Please report all the planned and finalized events and activities to WP8. You can do that by filling the Form (link: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=kZ_I0hRbkaIqWAmEneRPLaD0T1LgVGvGnXIAh5JCAdUwZlVzNjQzE0MDVlTjU1V1VWVzIV5kPBRQIQCNOPWou) or by launching the Form in WP8 tab (C&D reporting). Reporting is mandated for the purpose of collecting and sending information to the European Commission. If you wish your activity/event to be covered by social media/press/NBRACER website etc. please contact WP8 Team (Natalia Brack, natalia.brack@iid-sii.org).

#	Date	Month	Year	Planned event/activity (name)	Brief description	DR and/or RR	Region(s)	Expected duration of the event	Information to be gathered	WP / Task	Organizer(s)	Email(s)	Is the event reported to WP8?	Would you like this event to be covered by social media/press/website
	4	September	2024	meeting monitoring ecology at VLM	Meeting with VLM colleagues in West- and East-Flanders to discuss the monitoring of ecological parameters in ongoing projects and NBS	DR + RR	West-Flanders + East-Flanders	2h	overview of monitoring	WP2 + WP4	VLM		no	no
	15	September	2024	info stand at 'day of the farmer'	an information stand will be placed at the 'day of the farmer' by the Province of West-Flanders (and INAGRO); this concerns mainly topics OUTSIDE NBRACER, but 2 flyers are made for NBRACER to be distributed to the participants	DR	West-Flanders	1			Province of West-Flanders		no	no
	18	September	2024	WORKSHOP the resilience selfassessment tool	NBRACER representative from VLM will join workshop and make contact with partners from REGILIENCE in flanders and learn about the new maladaptation tool (https://regilience.eu/self-assessment-tool-for-maladaptation/)	RR	East-Flanders	0,5d	info about tool maladaptation and connecting to other NBS EU-projects in the project proposal	WP7	REGILIENCE	geert.merten@regilience.eu	not yet, will do after	maybe make linked-in post based on info send to WP8 if interesting?
	19	September	2024	NBRACER follow up meeting: workshop and other topics	Meeting with flemish partners to discuss activities in WP1, WP2 and WP4 and next steps for the workshop	DR and RR	West-and East-Flanders	1	Next steps for tasks in WP1 for flanders	WP1-2-4	Province of West-Flanders + VITO + Inagro + VLM		no	no
	19	September	2024	infomarkt niet-kerende bodembewerking Vlaamse-Ardenen	Infomarket for farmers (+50) about NBS non-inversion tillage in the Flemish Ardennes, discussing climate adaptation and monitoring in NBRACER	RR	East-Flanders	evening	Opinions of farmers in the RR about NBS and possible cooperation for monitoring	WP4 + WP8	VLM		not yet, will do after We will bring NBRACER poster that was used on workshop before and send pictures	no

< > ... DR deliverables Workshops Events & Activities Publication database +

Publication Database: This database helps communicate the scientific progress of knowledge partners, enabling regions to reach out to experts and seek guidance where needed.

Figure 4 Publications Database

Please report all the planned and finalized publications to WP8. If you wish your publication to be covered by social media/press/NBRACER website etc. please contact WP8 Team (Natalia Brack, natalia.brack@iit-sil.org).

Date	Month	Year	Publication name	Brief description	WP / Task / deliverable that the publication is related to	Author(s)	Link to the publication	Journal name	Is the publication reported to WP8?	Would you like this publication to be covered by social media/press/website
	October	2024								
	November	2024								
	November	2024								
	December	2024								
	January	2025								
	February	2025								
	March	2025								
	April	2025								
	May	2025								
	June	2025								
	July	2025								
	August	2025								
	September	2025								

Internal newsletter: Managed by the PMO, this is a comprehensive dissemination tool distributed monthly. It keeps regions informed about upcoming activities, workshops, and meetings.

6.1 Relation to other activities

Effective collaboration between work packages, partners and regions is essential to ensure appropriate updates to WP8 about their activities, as well as sharing relevant information about the project with their respective networks and contacts.

The following tasks from other WPs will be particularly interrelated with the work of WP8 for dissemination of results:

- WP1 [Task 1.2] Framing demonstrations across Landscapes WP8 facilitate dissemination of results.
- WP2 [Task 2.3] Assessing the impact of Marine and Coastal solution portfolios Findings and lesson learned in the RRs will be assessed and incorporated in scaling-out the project in WP8.
- WP3 [Task 3.3] Assessing the impact of solution portfolios in Urban systems Landscape scale.
- WP4 [Task 4.3] Assessing the impact of solution portfolios and pathways in rural systems.
- and [Tasks 2.4, 3.4 and 4.4] Transposing and validating solutions with Replicating Regions, findings and lessons learned in RRs will be assessed and incorporated in scaling out of the project in WP8. Lessons learnt will be shared with WPs 1,5,6 and 7 for deliverable optimization and further replication.
- WP5 Technical framework supporting the design and implementation of NbS.

- WP6 [Task 6.4] Strategies for inclusive community building to support behavioral change, These strategies provide valuable input for WP8, specifically addressing communication challenges in overcoming resistance to transitioning towards a green society.
- WP7 [Task 7.3] Packaging NBRACER products and messages for other regions. WP8 will assist in design, promotion and exploitation.
- WP8 collaborates with WPs1 and 7 to align the outcome of the distillation processes with comprehensive and targeted outreach campaigns.
- WP8 [Task 8.1] Broader Audiences – Communication and dissemination via the NBRACER communication channels and communication materials
- WP8 [Task 8.2] Other Regions Awareness-raisin strategies an activities showcasing demonstration and integrated innovations developed in NBRACER that implements NbS.
- WP8 [Task 8.3] Regional, EU and Global Level – Raising awareness among policymakers about the potential of NbS for creating resilient regions
- WP8 [Task 8.4] Other Projects and Regions- Networking; enabling a two-way dialogue between the project, the already engaged regions and potentially interested regions

6.2 Partners contribution

- Support in translating communication and dissemination content and promotional materials when needed in European languages of the regions
- Support to relay news and results produced in the NBRACER project
- Dissemination about the NBRACER outcomes through all partners communication channels (contact databases, social networks, national press, local stakeholders)
- Provide regular information for website & news about the activities and actions related to NBRACER developed by partners and regions
- Use the official NBRACER templates and apply the brand visual identity
- Ensure formal acknowledgement of EU funding, Disclaimer and logo in all communication and dissemination materials provided by WP8
- Provide contents for dissemination and communication materials, i.e. texts and images, infographics, videos etc.
- Update the NBRACER Teams Calendar with all the activities
- Update and communicate to WP8 the press review

7 Conclusion

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) offer a holistic approach to addressing environmental, social, and economic challenges. Effective communication is central to the success of NbS, as it helps share knowledge, build understanding, garner support, and inspire action among key stakeholders. By sharing compelling stories and focusing on the interests of target groups, communication efforts can break down barriers, address misconceptions, and highlight the value and impact of NbS in addressing climate change, enhancing biodiversity, and supporting sustainable development.

This handbook is designed to guide NBRACER's demonstrating and replicating regions on how to strategically plan and execute communication activities that promote storytelling, raise awareness, foster engagement, and promote the adoption of NbS tailored to local needs and challenges. It provides a stepwise approach to help regional teams communicate effectively about NbS in their specific contexts. The goal is to use knowledge and real-life stories to engage various stakeholders—such as community members, policymakers, businesses, and NGOs—in the development, planning, and implementation of NbS.

Appendix A: Draft Communication strategy of East and West Flanders region

The Flanders region aims to promote Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) by addressing various challenges and leveraging opportunities through a tailored communication and dissemination strategy. To this aim, the region aims to target a wide range of stakeholders, including policymakers, the general public, farmers, research institutes, companies, and local communities, each of whom require specific communication approaches due to the diversity of their needs and levels of understanding regarding NbS. By defining communication strategies that respond to these challenges, the region seeks to achieve broad participation and foster sustainable climate adaptation practices.

A.1 Communication strategy per stakeholder type

Policymakers, Decision Makers, and Land Use Planners

One of the primary goals of Flanders region is to raise awareness among policymakers about the systemic benefits of NbS. Currently, some projects in Flanders still focus mainly on specific issues like water conservation without considering the broader ecosystem services, biodiversity, and economic benefits. NBRACER offers a more holistic approach that addresses multiple challenges, such as water shortages, ecosystem degradation, and economic pressures. By advocating for NbS as a transformational alternative to traditional grey infrastructure, the Flanders region aims to create a mind shift within this group.

Informative events, workshops, and the use of social media platforms like LinkedIn and X are key tools for disseminating this message. Concrete benefits will be shared to help policymakers understand how NbS can deliver local and regional benefits.

Several ongoing initiatives aim to improve the holistic approach in Flanders, many of which are connected to NBRACER:

- **VMM (Flemish Environmental Agency)**, through VITO as the lead of the subcontracting consortium, has developed a climate portal ([Klimaatportaal](#)). This portal helps local policymakers, developers and the general public understand the risks, future strategies, and opportunities of Nature-Based Solutions (NbS).
 - *Opportunity:* The focus on rural landscapes is still incomplete, with much of the current work centered on urban environments.
 - *Opportunity:* The list of NbS is not yet comprehensive, and many are not yet integrated into strategies.
- **VLM (Flemish Land Agency)** is creating a climate guideline, which will use the portal and other available tools in active land development projects. This guideline promotes climate-focused NbS and aims for a more holistic approach both technically and in communications with local stakeholders. It seeks to establish climate goals for specific projects based on the area's vulnerabilities and needs.
 - *Opportunity:* The NBRACER cases of Vlaamse Ardennen and Boven-IJzer serve as test cases for this guideline.
 - *Opportunity:* NBRACER provides support for developing this guideline.

- **Water+Land+Scape** (Water-Land-Schap) is working on uniting regional coalitions to promote climate-resilient and NbS-oriented outcomes through knowledge exchange and expert involvement. A shared vision document for climate adaptation to flooding, called *Weerbaar waterland*, is already available (Weerbaar waterland), along with videos showcasing inspiring examples (Water-Land-Schap: 3 inspirerende voorbeelden).
 - *Opportunity:* We plan to release a video on NbS agricultural initiatives in Water+Land+Scape, which is connected to NBRACER's Boven-IJzer case.
 - *Opportunity:* This initiative is generating significant NbS knowledge, which we will link through NBRACER, particularly in the Roesbrugge case.
 - *Opportunity:* Water+Land+Scape has created an extensive network of stakeholders, including local governments, farmers, farmers organisations and nature NGOs, that work on NbS for climate adaptation. We will use this network to further disseminate our gained knowledge on NbS.
- A shared vision for the **IJzer and Handzame Valley** has recently been developed by the **province of West-Flanders**, outlining landscapes, possible NbS, and a vision for the region covering recreation, biodiversity, agriculture, and water. Once finalized, this vision will be shared and integrated into the NBRACER Boven-IJzer case.
- The development of the **Landscape Park Zwinregion** creates a solid foundation for the establishment of shared visions, integrated action plans, and the implementation of concrete solutions, including Nature-based Solutions (NbS) as well as grey solutions where necessary. This recognized Landscape Park is subsidized by the Flemish Government. Both a masterplan and an operational plan are being developed. The focus is on four overarching storylines and more than eight focus areas, built around eight themes: landscape, water management, agriculture, nature, enterprise, recreation, collaboration and governance, and history. The four storylines are: 'On the border of fresh and salt,' 'A storytelling landscape park,' 'Food landscape across borders,' and 'Living and experiencing without boundaries.' Cross-border cooperation with the Netherlands is also a key aspect of the Landscape Park. The Landscape Park Zwinregion is an initiative of six cities and municipalities and three provinces: City of Bruges, City of Damme, Municipality of Knokke-Heist, Municipality of Maldegem, Municipality of Sint-Laureins, Municipality of Sluis, Province of East Flanders, Province of West Flanders, and the Province of Zeeland. The Landscape Park covers a cross-border area of almost 45,000 hectares.
Within NBRACER, there will be close collaboration with the Landscape Park Zwinregion focus area Maleveld. We will provide input for the use of NbS to adapt the landscape to climate change..

Local Communities

A significant challenge faced by local communities is the lack of information about NBS, which often leads to fear and resistance to change. Many citizens fear losing conveniences like parking spaces, while farmers are concerned about losing agricultural land and income.

To address these fears, the region will carry out communication and dissemination strategies which will transfer knowledge on what NBS are and how they impact local spaces. Additionally, local stakeholders will be actively involved by taking their fears, wishes and needs into account in the decision-making process around land use. Furthermore, emphasizing the wider benefits of NBS—such as improved air quality, reduced urban heat islands, and new public spaces—can help sell the idea of these changes. For example, the perceived loss of farming land to make space for water can also contribute to tackling drought in the natural and food system and serve as a multi-hazard tackling solution based on water and soil management and thus NbS.

Farmers



Farmers are critical stakeholders in the Flanders region, as they play a central role in land management. While many farmers are open to the idea of NBS, they often lack the time and resources to fully engage with the information provided, which can sometimes be too abstract or administratively burdensome. NbS also often take up a lot of space, which puts pressure on farmers since in Flanders we have limited land availability and the farmland is very expensive. The project must simplify communication with this group by using visual aids, like drawings instead of text-heavy reports, and by organizing small-group discussions where farmers can learn from their peers.

To increase farmer participation, the region is planning to further involve farmer ambassadors by building up on existing initiatives. Farmer ambassadors play an important role in increasing farmer engagement as they can share their experiences and guide them in implementing NBS. Platforms for peer-to-peer learning and information markets can also provide practical insights into how NBS can benefit agricultural practices. These should be coupled, when possible, with information on existing financial incentives such as subsidies. Additionally, providing tailored information for young farmers is essential to encourage broader adoption of sustainable farming techniques.

In particular, the focus in **Vlaamse Ardennen** is on supporting farmers in implementing Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) by:

- Assisting the province in organizing general information markets for farmers.
- Offering direct support to farmers for NBS implementation.

- Connecting with external networks to bring relevant information and resources to the region.
- Sharing experiences and best practices with the Demonstrating Regions (specific network or organization).
- Helping to understand the linkages between changing climate conditions and the NbS on the longer term.

In **Boven-IJzer and the polder region of West-Flanders**, the focus is also on helping farmers adopt NbS through:

- Supporting the province in setting up general information markets.
- Providing direct assistance to farmers.
- Engaging with external networks to introduce valuable knowledge to the region.
- Sharing experiences with the Replicating Regions (specific network or organization).
- Monitoring the impact of NbS in agricultural context.

Researchers and water- and nature managers



The region is planning to foster collaboration with research institutes to share scientific insights, particularly hydrological and economic models. This partnership aims to create a bridge between academic research and practical implementation, ensuring that the latest scientific findings are used to inform and refine Nature-Based Solutions (NBS).

The region is planning to promote exchange of knowledge through webinars, conferences, and lectures, which provide platforms for gathering feedback, discussing innovative approaches, and integrating new data into ongoing projects. Moreover, the region is planning to actively involve students by encouraging professors to include NBS in their curriculum and to highlight the significance of NBS in addressing environmental challenges. These educational initiatives aim to foster a deeper understanding of the critical role NBS plays in climate change mitigation and adaptation, sparking interest in sustainable practices among the next generation of researchers and practitioners.

Municipalities



Municipalities often lack the time and resources to implement NBS, despite being key actors in local land-use planning. To assist them, the region can provide practical guidance on how to access NBS funding and implement projects. Encouraging collaboration between municipalities and facilitating the exchange of best practices can help scale up NBS efforts beyond pilot projects. The key challenge is encouraging municipalities to look beyond their own borders and take collective action to address regional climate risks. An example is the **Water+Land+Scape** initiative and the **Roesbrugge case** with VLM, where close cooperation with municipalities focuses on safeguarding flood-prone areas while fostering economic and social transitions toward climate resilience. Another example is providing guidance for municipalities in the application for and construction of decentral water purification solutions (eg. giving them access to a reference-quote request). In the municipalities we should also consider private landowners that want to contribute to the implementation of NbS and discuss opportunities for collaboration with them.

Youth and seniors



Another important demographic for the Flanders region is youth and schools. Young people are often overwhelmed by negative narratives around climate change, leading to fear and anxiety. By organizing school visits and interactive sessions the region aims to inspire action and raise awareness about the potential of NBS. The region aims to focus on agricultural high schools and universities or young farmers in VLM Vlaamse Ardennen possibly and maybe co-designing workshop in a university for case Boven-Ijzer.

In addition, partnerships with educational organizations, such as Good Planet Belgium and MOS, may provide opportunities for young farmers and students to learn about sustainable practices.

This engagement with youth is expected to encourage long-term support for NBS while empowering the next generation to lead the way in climate adaptation.

On the other hand, a stakeholder group that is not reached often is the older generation. Especially for the farmers this is often a challenge. By bringing together young and older farmers, the region wants to understand the vision of both generations and stimulate dialogue between the generations about NbS.

Media

NBRACER also faces the challenge of tailoring communication to reach a wide array of stakeholders, from farmers and policymakers to young people and the elderly. Traditional methods of communication may not be sufficient to engage all groups, so the region is planning to actively use NBRACER VLM website, newsletters (amongst others from Inagro) and LinkedIn to keep them up to date with news and provide all relevant information on events related to WP8.

A.2 Communication materials

The Flanders region has developed a range of visual elements aimed at enhancing the appeal and effectiveness of its dissemination materials. These visuals include infographics (figure 5 and 6), and other general illustrations (figure 7) which are designed to present complex data or information in a simplified, easily digestible format to a wider range of stakeholders. By using clear graphics, charts, and visuals, infographics help convey key messages at a glance, making the content more engaging and accessible to a broader audience.

In addition, icons have been created to represent the various stakeholders involved in the project (displayed in the section above). These icons serve as symbolic representations of different groups, individuals, or organizations, allowing for their quick recognition. For now, the key stakeholders the region wants to focus on are included in the handbook. In the process, while talking and more importantly listening to all kinds of stakeholders, they might discover other relevant stakeholders and complete further the icon set of key stakeholders. For every official NBRACER workshop the icons will be used to visualize the stakeholders invited. Also, when communicating about common problems and which stakeholder group is connected to it the icons will be used to explain where we have common goals and common issues. Understanding more the connections for every group to climate mitigation and adaptation.

Posters (figure 8) are another key component of the visual strategy. These are designed to be eye-catching and informative, combining text and images in a way that attracts attention while delivering important messages or calls to action. It was also used to introduce the NBRACER project to colleagues of the partner organizations, making clear what are the goals and what they can expect from the project.

Figure 5 Infographic on the NBRACER project

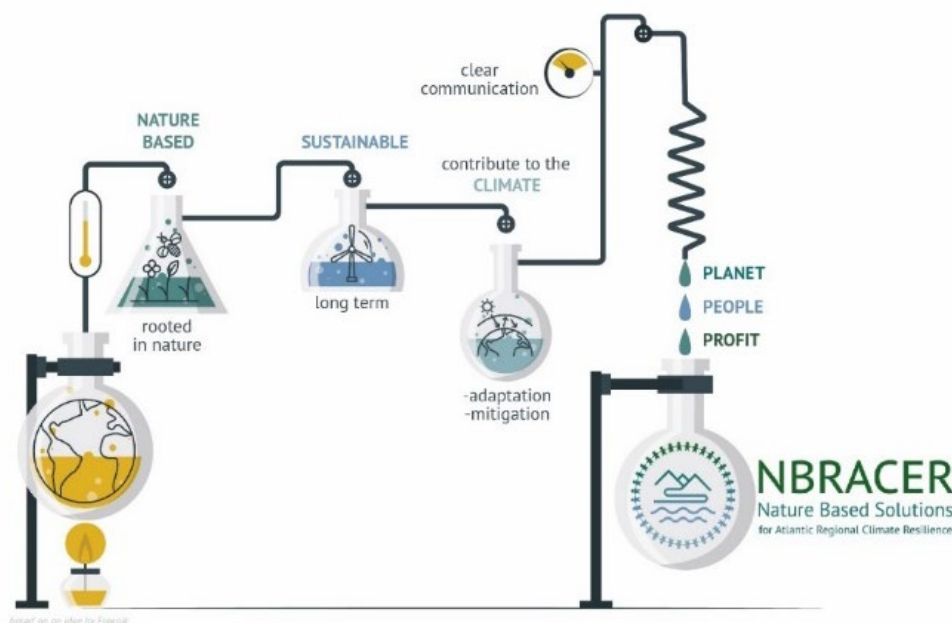


Figure 6 Infographic Agricultural Study

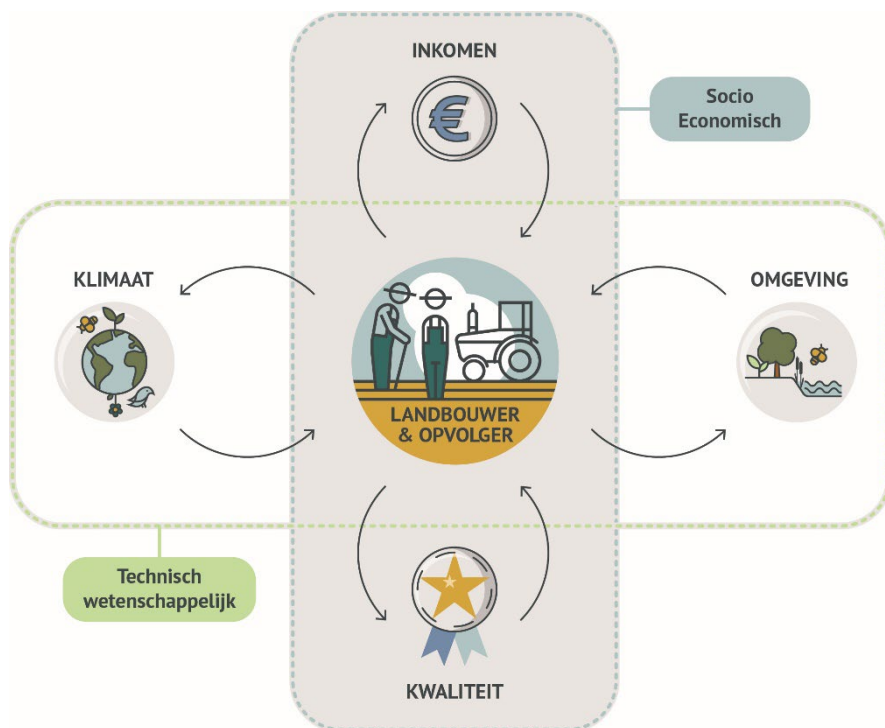


Figure 7 Soil as our strong foundation



Figure 8 NBRACER Poster Flanders



A communication material created by the region used during the regional workshop in December 2023 to explain NBRACER. A small version that is easily transportable is used on smaller events and meetings to put in the room and explain about the project, specifically for the region of Flanders. On bigger workshops this is combined with the official NBRACER banner provided by WP8.

Conclusion

In summary, the East and West Flanders region is committed to effectively communicating the benefits of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) to a wide range of stakeholders, addressing their specific concerns and challenges. Through diverse communication strategies—including participatory planning, tailored messaging, and interactive events—the region aims to increase understanding and acceptance of NBS as a viable solution to climate challenges. Through NBRACER the region is committed to building on existing initiatives and to offer additional communication efforts. The NBS Communication Handbook provides guidelines for potential communication activities, though their feasibility will depend on factors such as time availability, the progress of related projects, and the practical implementation of certain actions. The range of stakeholders is aimed to grow through the project by creating new icons for key stakeholders every end of the year and reporting on insights and new actions to include these new stakeholders.