

# Information Activity of a Large European Project in Social Media

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**Abstract:** - **Purpose:** The aim of the article is to present the information activity of a large European project based on information policy in social media. Social media are an excellent means of reaching a wide audience, while activity in this sphere reflects the degree of organisation of project partners and their involvement in achieving the project's objectives. **Design/methodology/approach:** The present paper makes use of the experience gained while promoting the results of the GoSmart BSR project via social media. The GoSmart BSR project is concerned with enhancing the low capacity for innovation in less developed Baltic Sea Regions (BSR) through mutual learning, translating smart specialisation strategies (S3) into practical joint activities of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and applying best practices used in better developed regions. The project is fully integrated with 3S and aims at promoting efficient co-operation between the industrial sector, the R&D sector, and the authorities, following a transnational approach. **Findings:** Social media play a significant role in the three phases of the project life, i.e. disseminating knowledge (raising awareness), collecting and verifying information that has been acquired during the project, and storing and disseminating the knowledge acquired during the project.

**Originality/value:** research on Social Media profiles is predominantly descriptive and focused on the organizational perspective all projects R&D. This research paper contributes to both theory and practice by studying the causal impact of these guidelines on research teams.

**Key-Words:** - GoSmart BSR, communication management, project management, information technologies, innovation

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## 1 Introduction

The European Territorial Cooperation program - Interreg - is a community initiative that has been launched by the European Commission. The main tasks of this initiative include helping internal border regions and promoting the creation and development of cooperation networks along internal borders. The European project is therefore a large undertaking characterized mainly by the one-off specificity of the jointly determining conditions [1]. During its implementation, a specific goal is to be achieved, a specific result is to be obtained, but its final form is initially unknown. The start and end schedule set for a project determines its time limitations. During its implementation, various resources are used: human, financial, materials, devices, and digital resources.

The aim of the paper is to present the information activity of a large European project in social media - GoSmart BSR (project acronym), using project profiles. The work attempts to answer the questions posed, identifying the research gap: Do social media have an impact on reaching a wide

audience? Does the activity of project profiles reflect the degree of organization of the project partners and their involvement in the achievement of the goals set in the project?

The present work presents the experience in promoting the results of the GoSmart BSR project according to the Interreg program with the use of social media.

### 1.1 Synthetic description of the GoSmart BSR project

The GoSmart BSR project focuses on enhancing the low capacity for innovation in less developed Baltic Sea Regions (BSR) through mutual learning, translating smart specialization strategies (S3) into practical joint activities of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and application of best practices used in better developed regions. The project is fully integrated with 3S and is aimed at promoting efficient co-operation between the industrial sector, the R&D sector, and the authorities, following a transnational approach.

The main objective of the GoSmart BSR project is to increase the capability of innovating entities (innovation intermediaries, authorities, research institutions) to apply smart specialisation strategies. The expected outcomes include developing a working and sustainable Transnational Innovation Brokerage System (TIBS), as well as joint smart strategies of small and medium enterprises implemented in partner regions.

The project, entitled "Strengthening smart specialization by fostering transnational cooperation - GoSmart BSR", is implemented with the financial support of the European Regional Development Fund Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020.

The main objective of the GoSmart BSR project is to increase the capability of innovating entities (innovation intermediaries, authorities, research institutions) to apply smart specialization strategies. The project, entitled "Strengthening smart specialization by fostering transnational cooperation - GoSmart BSR", has been implemented with the financial support of the European Regional Development Fund Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020. The obtained findings reveal a marked upward trend, as well as an interest on the part of various international projects, in publicizing the accomplished results via social media channels.

From October 2017 to September 2020, the project brought together 8 partners from 7 countries - Bialystok University of Technology (lead partner, Poland), Podlaska Regional Development Foundation (Poland), Vidzeme Planning Region (Latvia), Valga Town Government (Estonia), Public Institution Lithuanian Innovation Centre (Lithuania), Kouvola Innovation Ltd. (Finland), Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI) (Germany), Business Aabenraa (Denmark).

## **2 Communication Channels and Instruments in GoSmart BSR Project**

Internal processes among the partners of GoSmart BSR are also a significant part of the project's communication efforts. Mutual communication methods include e-mail messages, telephone conversations, Skype chats, online meetings, and face-to-face meetings. Obviously, for the project's partners, engagement in internal communication is obligatory.

The meetings of all the partners are organized in every period and are combined with international conferences, sessions of the Steering Committee and the Advisory Board, with a view to ensuring

efficient and economical use of the financial resources.

The leader of a work package or an activities package, as well as the project's lead partner, can initiate an online meeting, or a telephone/email communication should any advice, contribution, information, or suggestion be required of some or all the other partners. A face-to-face meeting can be initiated by the leader of a work package and by the project's lead partners.

Regular communication and updates on the implementation of each package of activities are held between a project partner and the lead partner, as well as between a project partner and the leader of a work package or of an activity package. At each meeting, electronic notes are taken to make all the partners, whether they have participated in the meeting or not, aware of the project implementation process. Creating partial reports makes it possible to retain the knowledge acquired through 'small' activities, which comprise the future successful implementation of the project. Notes (index cards) contain information about conversations, participants, places, and topics discussed at meetings.

The GoSmart BSR project specifically mentions what channels and instruments should warrant effective communication. The communication channels and instruments have been chosen depending on the defined target groups in each partner region. To each instrument, the obligations of project partners have been matched. All the external and internal communication materials are prepared in accordance with the visibility requirements and the guidelines on the visual strategy of the Baltic Sea Region Programme.

For communication purposes, the Internet website of GoSmart BSR is a platform for publishing project messages from all the three perspectives (local, national, and international). It serves as a platform which contains information pertaining exclusively to the project, unlike social media accounts on, e.g., Facebook, where other information on partial activities is published. Social media keep the public constantly updated on the project's progress. The website and all the information posted there is in English. Also, after the project has been completed, the website will remain a source of information on the project, the measures it involves and their outcomes.

Media coverage is crucial for raising the project's profile and facilitate access to the project's outcomes by a wider public. Press releases are sent not only to the general media, but also to magazines specializing in business, innovation, economy, as

well as specialist Internet websites. Press releases are published on the GoSmart BSR project website and in the GoSmart BSR section or the news section on each partner's websites.

The social media profiles of the GoSmart BSR project – on Facebook (FB), Instagram, LinkedIn (LI), Twitter (TT), and YouTube (YT) – were designed and launched already in the first period and are updated throughout the project. The two social media profiles: GoSmart\_BSR and GoSmart\_BSR\_PL are instruments that reach branch specialists, small and medium enterprises, mass media, civic society, and international organizations. Social media are the most appropriate channel for disseminating important news, as well as photos and videos documenting events and activities.

Information technologies, are accessible from virtually all the corners of the Earth, are relevant to all the phases of a project's life cycle and constitute its inherent part. Blogs of various types and social media channels are most often used to facilitate the widest possible consultation on a given aspect. The tools used for actual co-operation rely on the data cloud technology (for example G-Cloud Google) – a convenient instrument for creating a repository of temporary information for persons of the entire project so that everyone can work on the same document before it is officially published.

## **2.1 Monitoring the Reach of Published Content**

Due to the project schedule and efficient implementation methodology of the GoSmart BSR project, the review of the stakeholder engagement process was planned with a 6-month frequency since the project schedule was divided into Period. The GoSmart BSR project lasted 7 periods (P1-P7).

This chapter presents the information activity of the GoSmart BSR project based on the reach of posts in social media. The frequency of the reviews took place on a regular basis over the six-month period.

The advantage of research on social media is the fact that the user can access project information in a relatively simple way via social networks [2,3].

The reliability of the collected information via social media is one of the greatest advantages of this modern approach to the issue of marketing research [3].

The analysis of the collected information is the more complex part, where the number of comments posted by users is significant [4]. Despite the use of the necessary software allowing to accelerate the process of analyzing the collected information, the time to obtain appropriate conclusions may be significant [3].

Monitoring information in social media can be performed almost in real time. Thanks to specialized software, people analyzing user behavior, competition activities on social networks, can almost immediately obtain information about posting a new entry about a monitored brand or issue [3].

The methodology that was used to collect detailed data based on the scope of published materials informing about the progress of the GoSmart BSR project was based on proprietary tools provided by FF, TT, Instagram, or LI from the administrator's side of the above-mentioned profiles. Users do not have knowledge about the generated ranges of published content. It should be clearly emphasized that this is a valuable knowledge that is often underestimated by ordinary users. From the administrative side, profiles in social media are equipped with tools that track the reach of publications. The collected statistical data make it possible to evaluate the attractiveness of the published content.

Below are presented the amounts and ranges of posts published in social media as part of the GoSmart BSR project. The ranges from October 2017 to March 2020 were presented.

Two social networks were the most popular and reachable during the project: Facebook and Twitter. Social media play a significant role in the three phases of the project life, ie disseminating knowledge (raising awareness), collecting and verifying information that has been acquired during the project, and storing and disseminating the knowledge acquired during the project.

The presented data is the result of work in the GoSmart BSR project. It is worth noting that the author of the article played the role of a Communication Manager in the project from Lead Partner.

Table 1. GoSmart BSR Stakeholder Engagement Review Plan

No.	Elements of the engagement process	Inspection frequency	Form of review	The person responsible for the review
1.	Stakeholders' identification	every 6 months	During the semi-annual review of the project	Project manager
2.	Characteristics of the stakeholders	every 6 months	During the semi-annual review of the project	Project manager
3.	Stakeholder importance assessment	every 6 months	During the semi-annual review of the project	Project manager
4.	Analysis of the relationship between stakeholders	every 6 months	During the semi-annual review of the project	Project manager
5.	Strategies towards stakeholders	every 6 months	During the semi-annual review of the project	Project manager with a committee controlling
6.	Activating activities	every 2 weeks as needed	During weekly project team meetings	Members of the project team

Source: own study based on [12].

Looking at the information activity of the large European GoSmart BSR project through the prism of social media allows us to see, for example, the phases of the project life cycle within the period of its implementation. Thanks to social media, we obtain a real range of published content and obtain an invaluable "voice" of stakeholders using powerful technological possibilities to reach as many domestic and foreign SMEs as possible - along with the project in mind.

Analyzing the 3-year duration of the GoSmart BSR project, it should be concluded that social media played a significant role in promoting both the idea of the project and its results. Quantitative states and the reach of individual channels in social media were selected for comparison. The reach of the published posts on the social media of the GoSmart project reached 26,910 users at its peak.

During seven project periods (P1-P7) the project website, Facebook (FB), LinkedIn (LI) and some accompanying digital channels were engaged to assure project online presence. The official project profiles in FB generated the biggest feedback and therefore could be considered most successful. The biggest feedback has been recorded in FB account's GoSmart\_BSR (total no. of posts views): TNoV 63982 and Gosmartbsr\_pl: TNoV 213069. The SM range statistics in the P1-P7 are as follow: FB

(Gosmartbsr\_pl): 133 posts, TNoV 116688; Instagram (gosmartbsr\_pl): 84 posts, foll. 6395; Twitter (GoSmartBSR\_PL): 130 posts, TNoV 77120; LI (GoSmartBSR\_PL): 85 posts, TNoV 12470; YouTube (GoSmartBSR\_PL): 12 posts; FB (GoSmartBSR): 200 posts, TNoV 63982; LI: (gosmart-bsr): 162 post, TNoV 33012. The website www.gosmartbsr.eu range statistics in the P1-P7 are as foll.: users 10144, new users 10243, sessions 15744, returning visitors 13,5%, new visitors 86,5%, page views 41721. A full version of the methodology for developing international strategies for smart specialization was published in English on the project website – has been downloaded 688 times (since the date published), a short version of the methodology published on website Faculty of Engineering Management, www.wiz.pb.edu.pl in Polish has been downloaded 138 times (since the date published). Number of publications on PPs' digital information channels: PP1 (BUT) – website 43 (SM 444), PP2 (PFRD) – website 21 (SM 64); PP3 (VPR) – website 104 (SM 362); PP4 (VMG) – website 10 (SM 2 times); PP5 (LIC) – website 10 (SM 17); PP6 (KI) – 1; PP8 (HWWI) – website 7 (SM 66); PP9 (BA) – website 8 (SM 24).

During the P1-P7 much of the qualitative feedback has been received from project stakeholders.

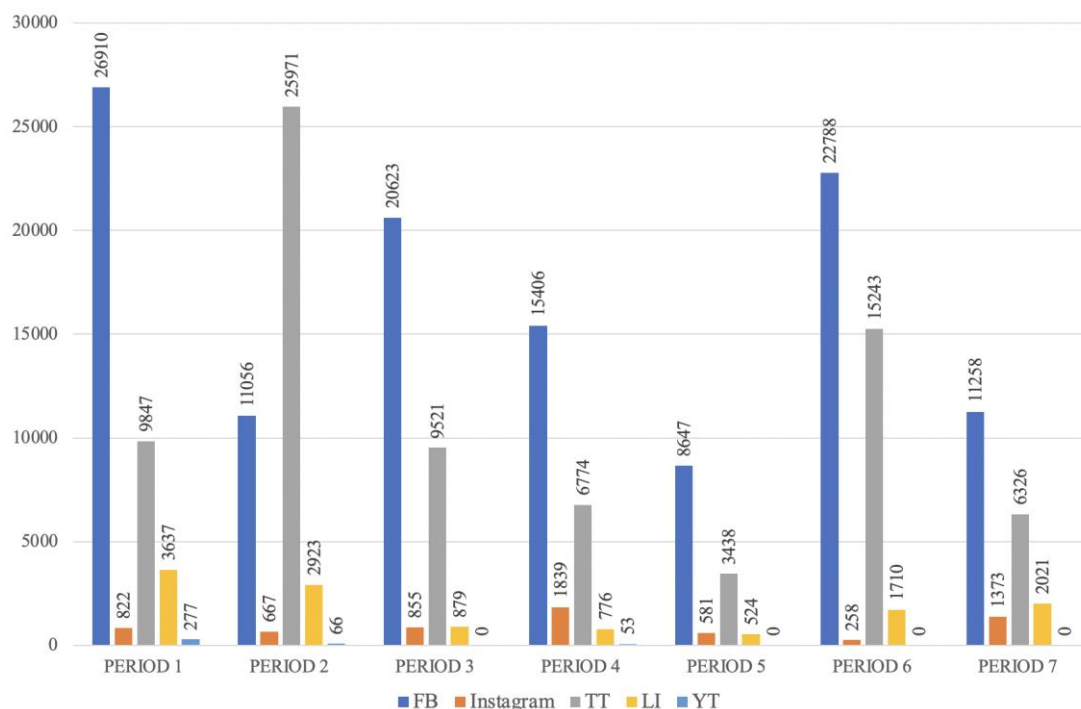


Fig. 1: The reach of posts published in the social media of the GoSmart BSR project (Polish-language profiles - Gosmartbsr\_pl) at the turn of Period 1 - Period 7

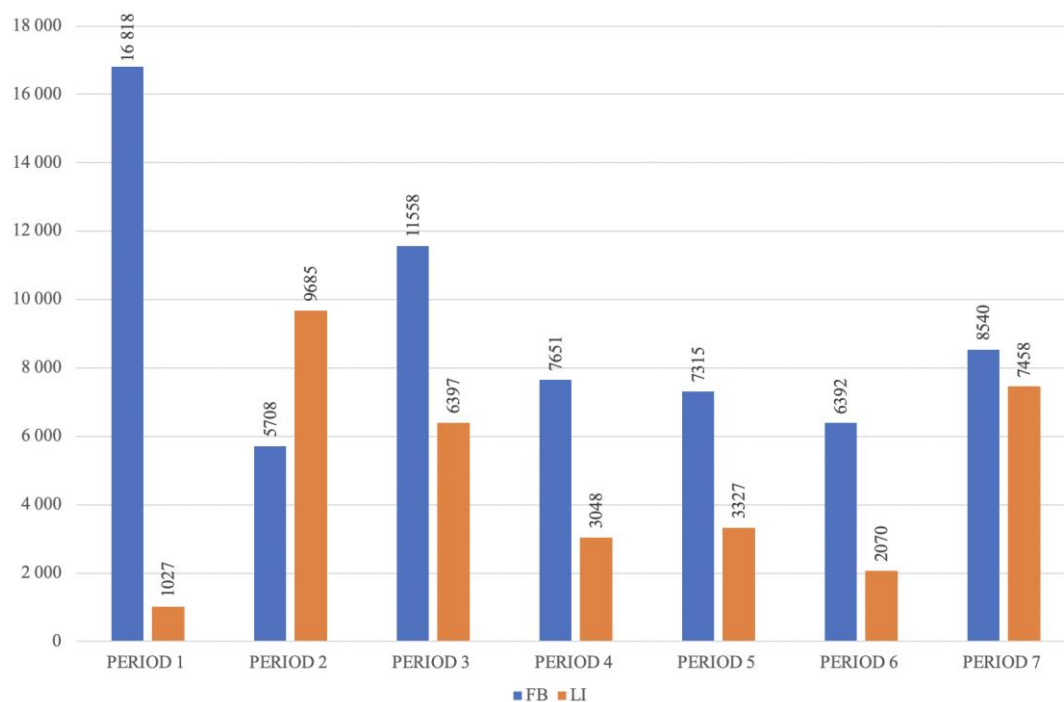


Fig. 2: The reach of posts published in the social media of the GoSmart BSR project (English-language profiles) at the turn of P1-P7

The medium-term (6-month) number of published materials is 29. The presented content is an original and own contribution to building the awareness of enterprises in the field of their

internationalization. It should be emphasized that building the image and

reach in social media is a time-consuming process. Reaching selected groups of stakeholders without

using paid positioning is an additional information barrier.

## 4 Conclusion

The changing world forces the use of information technologies in various aspects of social and everyday life, including learning, at work, access to information and knowledge [5]. Open and free access to virtual resources developed as part of the projects enables shaping and developing knowledge and skills, creating, and sharing knowledge, thus supporting participation in the information society.

The aim of the chapter was to present the information activity of a large European project on the example of proprietary profiles in social media - GoSmart BSR. The answers to the research questions posed in the introduction will be shaped over the next period immediately after the end of the project, to fully obtain a picture of the dynamics of the project implementation. Social media has the power to build a brand, not only for the (physical) product we can use, but also for the services we can use. SM are undoubtedly a contribution to building a network of contacts, but also to building a knowledge base about the achievements gained during the project [6]. Referring to the first question posed, the answer based on the experience gathered during the project is unambiguous. If we refer to the second question, we can see that the answer requires a lot of research and analysis, which obviously have positive symptoms, that is, there is a substitute for the identification of a research gap, which will contribute to the continuation of research. Taking advantage of the technological progress, we are doomed to "live" with social networks that facilitate human life in many aspects. However, it should be remembered that broad and carefree access to information also carries with it certain dangers related to cybersecurity [7,8].

Undoubtedly, social media play an increasingly important role in providing information [3,9], not only in the form of "private" profiles, but also a significant demand from business world institutions that openly promote their companies and brands, thus supporting the development of their industry. Social media perform many functions during the project, as well as during the project's durability [10,11]. They allow, above all, to conduct in-depth research and analysis as well as obtain information about the structure and needs of the target group. It is also a source of knowledge regarding feedback from stakeholders [12]. Moreover, active participation in social media enables two-way

communication with project stakeholders. Enterprises also use SM to bring the worlds of business and science together [13, 14].

In conclusion, it should be stated that thanks to social media it is possible to collect and archive the knowledge and experiences that were gained during

the projects, and the formal completion of the project does not mean losing the acquired knowledge, experience, and contacts.

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