



Making a difference together

ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY 2021

Photo: Leo Devree/TOPSOIL



North Sea Region projects bridging the gaps

From green energy solutions to flood resilience and digital innovation, North Sea Region projects showed strong impacts and achievements in 2021.

Many projects demonstrated ways to overcome barriers and bottlenecks and make the region a greener and more liveable place. They inspired change that will last and spread far beyond the scope of the individual project.

This happened despite a new surge in the Covid-19 pandemic that once again put a spanner in the wheel for many planned actions.

More solutions ahead

In 2021, 25 projects were awarded an extension, allowing them to expand and further strengthen their work. Approximately €12 million in ERDF funding and €237,000 in Norwegian funding were allocated to extensions.

INDU-ZERO makes energy renovation affordable

INDU-ZERO supports the energy renovation of 22 million homes in the North Sea Region built between 1950 and 1985. This housing stock was not designed with energy efficiency in mind and is in need of a serious makeover.

However, the high cost of retrofitting slows down the renovation wave. This is why INDU-ZERO has developed a factory blueprint for energy renovation at half the current cost. In 2021, the project launched the blueprint, complete with 3D visualisation of the factory, and a Dutch showcase building attracting visitors from all across Europe.

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) named INDU-ZERO among 200 best practice examples for the EU Green Deal.

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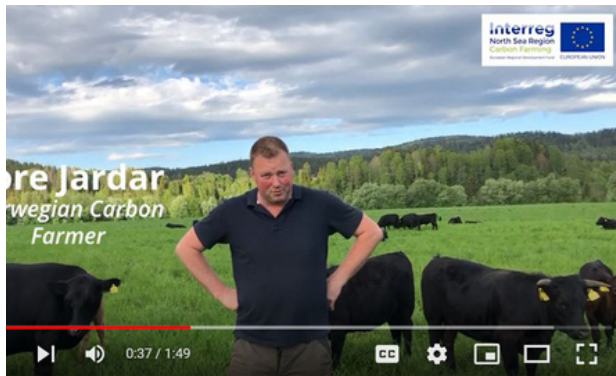
The climate crisis concerns everyone. This is why we need to tackle this huge challenge by working together internationally.”

- Ulla-Britt Krämer, INDU-ZERO project manager



Carbon Farming message welcomed in Brussels

Carbon Farming promotes agricultural practices enabling soils to store more carbon while improving soil biodiversity, health, and productivity. The project engages with 2,000 farmers, promoting techniques and business plans for carbon sequestration on farmlands.



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The most important lesson for me is that we can heal the land again and that we can also be climate heroes.

- Tore Jardar, Carbon Farmer

[Watch the carbon farmers' video](#)

The partners produced a compelling video including a direct message from carbon farmers to Executive Vice President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans. The video did not go unnoticed. In November 2021, the Carbon Farming team were invited to Brussels to hand over their [white paper](#) to Mr Timmermans.



BEGIN wins a REGIOSTARS Award!



Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms Elisa Ferreira announces the happy news to Sebastiaan van Herk from BEGIN.

For the first time ever, a North Sea Region project won a REGIOSTARS Award. BEGIN reached the finals based on their amazing work on using blue-green infrastructure to bolster cities against climate impacts like floods and heatwaves.

BEGIN measures put in place in 10 large cities are estimated to reduce flood risk by 30% and provide health, social, and biodiversity benefits estimated at €347 million. BEGIN's approach is included in master plans and investment programmes worth over €1 billion. The project has contributed to regional and national policies and given rise to minimum 7 new projects.

BEGIN uses social innovation to involve citizens in planning blue-green infrastructure in their city. Fittingly, the project won the top Public Choice Award!

[Visit BEGIN's website](#)

DRYPORT in the REGIOSTARS finals

DRYPORT promoted smart inland hubs linking ports to the hinterland via rail. The project demonstrated a range of benefits: Less shipping costs, less congestion, less carbon emissions, and more jobs in the hinterland.

DRYPORT was shortlisted for its remarkable long-term success. The project set up pilots that are still growing, inspired dryports elsewhere, led to long-term research collaboration, and gave rise to a global organisation (IPCSA), consulted by the United Nations and the World Economic Forum. While DRYPORT closed 10 years ago, its legacy keeps growing.

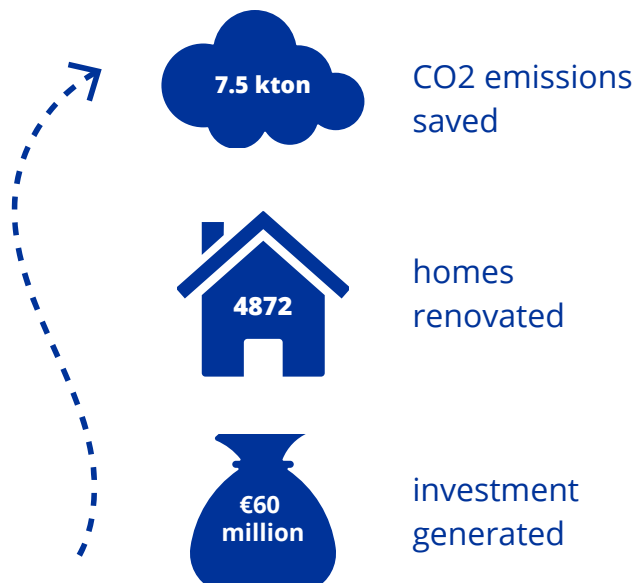
[Read the success story of DRYPORT](#)



Stronghouse ramps up private energy renovation

Stronghouse empowers homeowners to invest in energy renovating their houses. The project works with the entire "customer journey", from raising awareness of the benefits and understanding the options to planning and making informed investment decisions.

How well do these approaches work in practice? Let the numbers talk! By January 2021, the pilots had already reached the following achievements. And they have kept growing...



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We translate EU climate policy into the concrete situation of homeowners to create real, bottom-up renovation momentum. - Hein Braaksma, Project Coordinator

COBEN unlocks the power of civic energy

COBEN empowers local communities to get involved and benefit from local green energy production. This removes obstacles to expanding renewable energy and speeds up the green energy transition.

In 2021, the COBEN project brought community energy forward in leaps and bounds. For example, in Eeklo, Flanders, a new heat cluster was set up and 32 wind turbines were launched with 35% citizen involvement. And in villages in Ringkjøbing-Skjern Municipality, Denmark, two shared mobility schemes were officially inaugurated. Also, COBEN released a [position paper](#) addressing the implementation of the EU Energy and Electricity Directives.



On 8 September 2021, the COBEN team celebrated the inauguration of the Eeklo Heat Network together with the Flemish Minister of Energy, Zuhal Demir.

TOPSOIL goes from strength to strength

TOPSOIL uses advanced technology to uncover the structure and dynamics of the top soil layers. This enables the experts to predict local impacts of climate change and protect precious groundwater.

The project successfully encouraged policymakers, regional authorities, and practitioners across the North Sea Region to adopt TOPSOIL's approach and proposed policy changes.

[Read TOPSOIL's capitalisation report](#) capturing the impressive impacts of this project!

German MEP recognises TOPSOIL

At the final TOPSOIL conference, MEP Lena Düpont stressed the benefits of TOPSOIL in her region, saying their work "forms a very important part of our political work."



[Watch the video](#)

Accolades from regional players

Many decisionmakers applaud TOPSOIL's work as it helps them get to grips with the new reality. One of them is Hans Kuipers, Board Member of the Dutch Province of Drenthe.



[Watch the video](#)

WaterCoG inspires agricultural policy in Denmark

WaterCoG tackles water management by taking a stakeholder-inclusive approach. Part of their work revolves around farming and its impact on water quality.

In Denmark, a new political green deal for agriculture was adopted in 2021, including a new initiative inspired by WaterCoG: A national pilot programme for testing a more bottom-up and locally based approach to developing water actions plans.



HyTrEc2 presses on for a clean hydrogen economy

The Aberdeen Hydrogen Hub became a reality in 2021, thanks to ground work laid down by HyTrEc2. The hub is Scotland's first commercial green hydrogen production plant. In the Dutch city of Groningen, HyTrEc2 launched a waste collection truck powered by green hydrogen. The truck proves green hydrogen is suitable for fuelling trucks with heavy loads and for powering onboard machinery.



Councillors from Aberdeen City and their joint venture partner mark the launch of the Aberdeen Hydrogen Hub.



A green hydrogen-fuelled truck now collects waste in Groningen without dirtying the air!

The CATCH approach to climate resilience catches on

More erratic weather patterns may lead to both floods and droughts for city dwellers. There is an urgent need for midsize cities to get to grips with these scenarios, despite limited resources.

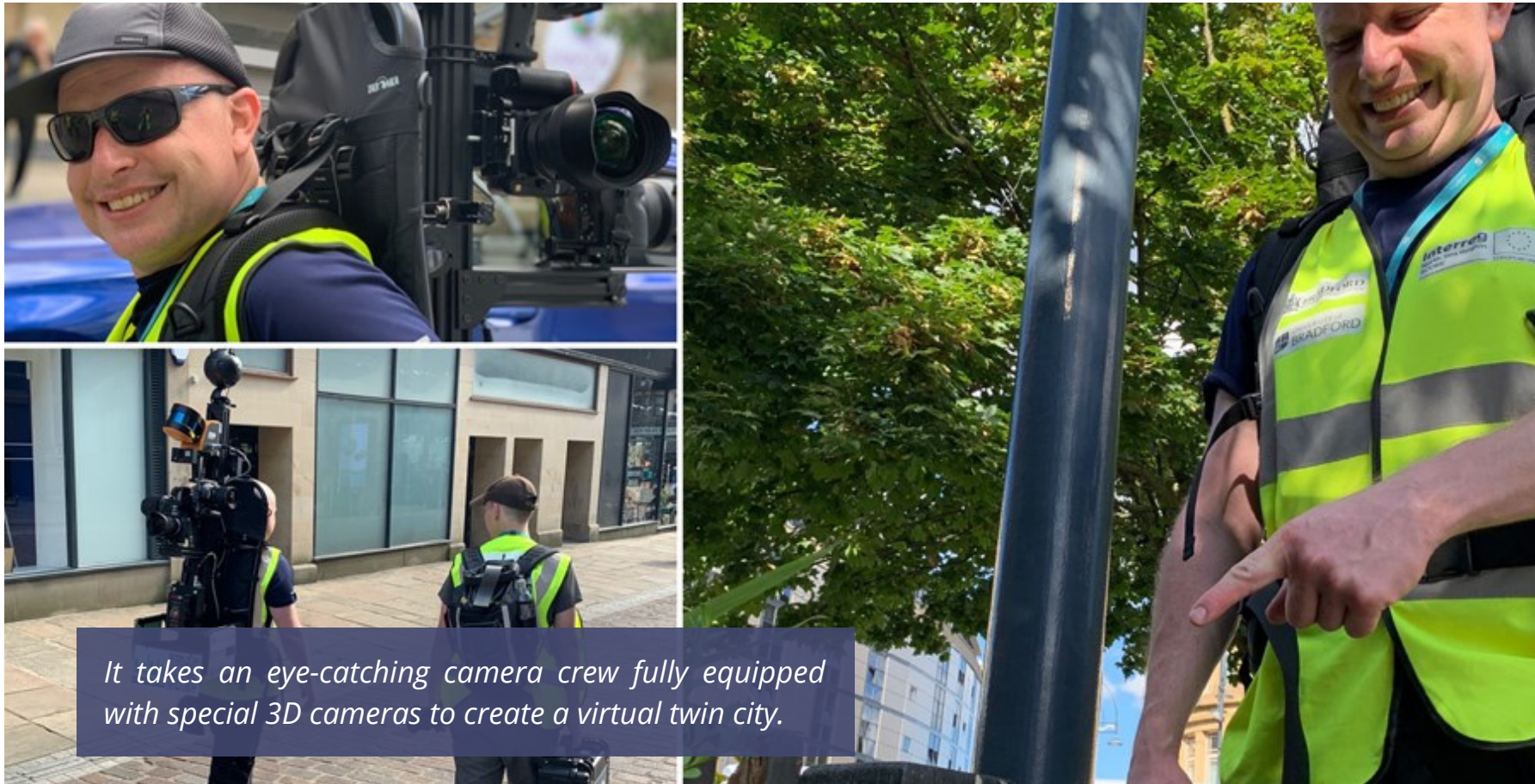
CATCH launched its [Decision Support Tool](#) to help midsize cities to become water sensitive and build climate resilience. In addition to tips and guidance, the tool includes seven city stories showcasing how they handled specific challenges that many other midsize cities are facing, too.



CATCH partners on a mission to tackle water issues in mid-size cities.

SCORE virtual city receives coveted prize

SCORE designs open data driven solutions that make cities healthier and more attractive to live in. In 2021, the University of Bradford received the Queen's Anniversary Prize for their SCORE pilot on Virtual Bradford, a virtual twin City of Bradford. The virtual twin makes it easier to tackle city planning, air pollution, and traffic. It can also be used to create virtual heritage trails and showcase cultural assets in 3D.



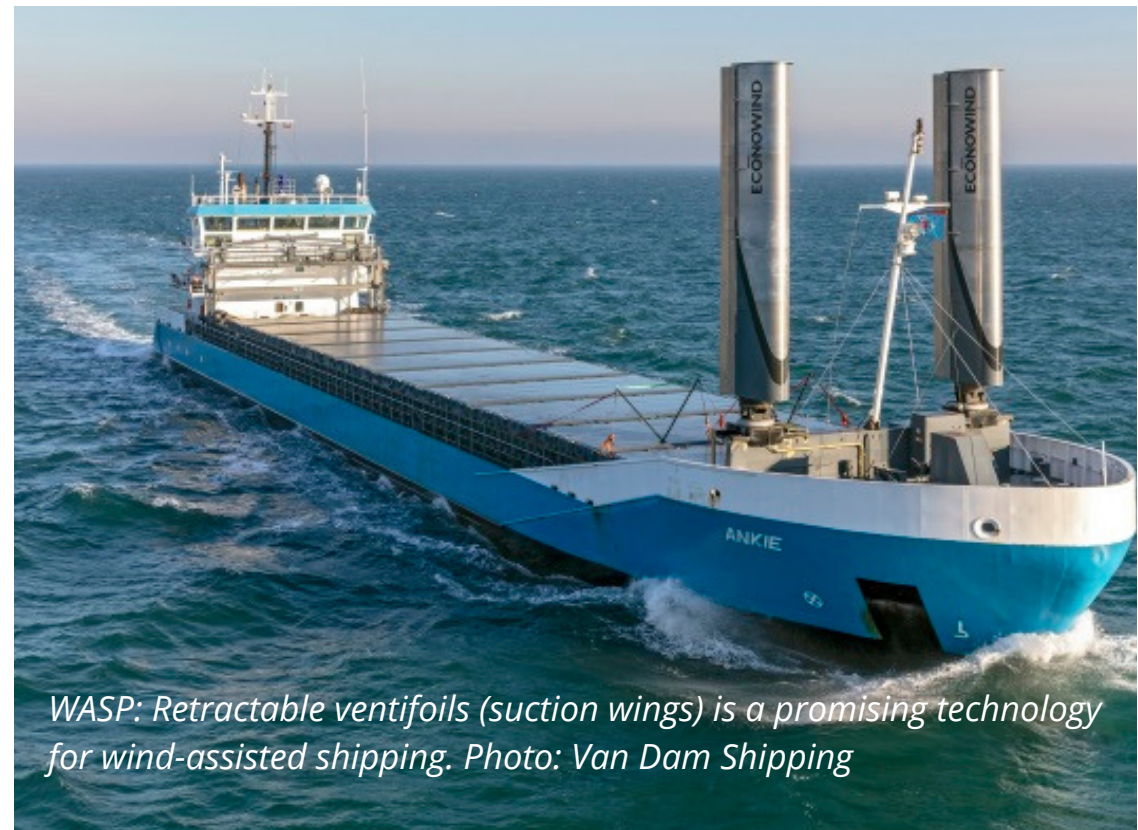
It takes an eye-catching camera crew fully equipped with special 3D cameras to create a virtual twin city.

WASP & #IWTS2.0: Sailing towards carbon-free

The IWTS2.0 project's electric barge started operating in the City of Ghent, transporting goods and waste to and from the city. Meanwhile, the WASP project made strong progress enabling modern ships to harness the wind. Following the successful testing of rotor sails on the hybrid ferry M/V Copenhagen and the MS Annika, Scandlines has prepared the ferry M/V Berlin for rotor sails as well. Trials of suction wings or wing sails onboard the M/V Ankie, the M/V Frisian Sea, and the M/V Tharsis led to additional orders for eight vessel installations.



#IWTS2.0: The electric barge Green Wave now navigates the waters of the City of Ghent.



WASP: Retractable ventifoils (suction wings) is a promising technology for wind-assisted shipping. Photo: Van Dam Shipping

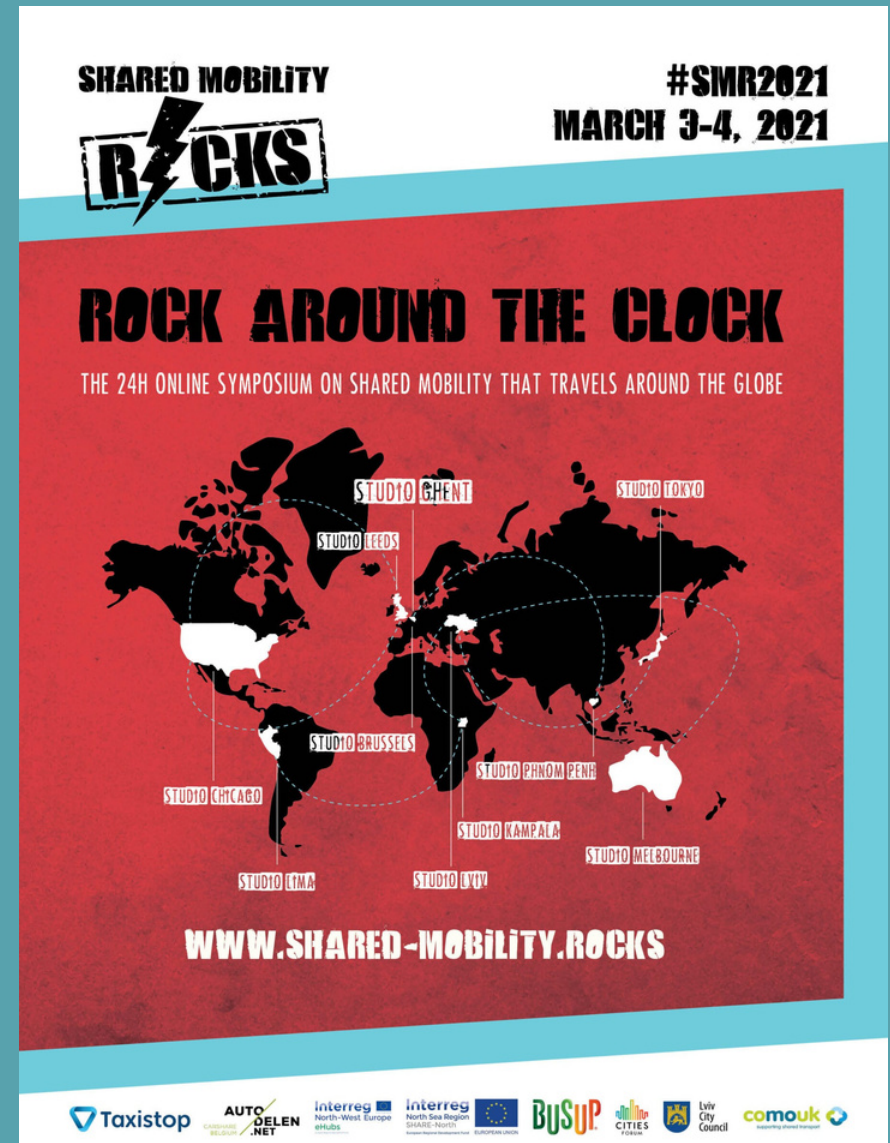
Share-NORTH: The (rock) show must go on

Promoting shared mobility in a zillion creative ways, Share-NORTH has even created a new tradition in the North Sea Region: The annual Shared Mobility Rocks event, which is a cross-over between a symposium and a rock concert.

When Covid-19 restrictions made physical events impossible in 2021, Share-NORTH simply turned Shared Mobility Rocks into a 24-hour round the clock digital event spanning the entire planet.

Starting in Ghent at the heart of the North Sea Region, it went to Brussels, Leeds, Lima, Chicago, Melbourne, Phnom Penh, Tokyo, Kampala and ended in the Ukrainian city of Lviv. The event enables shared mobility all around the world to connect with each other.

The only continent without a Shared Mobility Rocks event in 2021 was Antarctica, where the need for shared mobility is presumably rather limited anyway.



North Sea Video Contest 2021

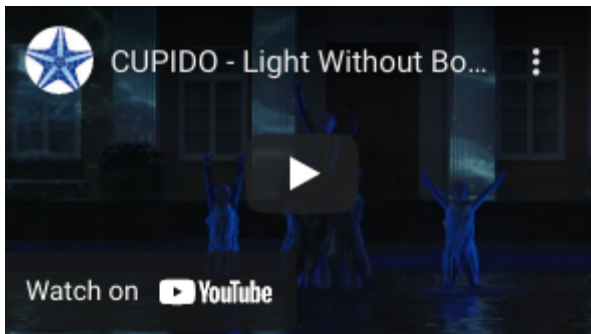
Once again, we were blown away by the quality and inventiveness of the videos received for the annual video contest. The jury had a hard time selecting the best ones!



Explainer video: EXSKALLERATE

Workers in the construction and manufacturing industries are at risk of developing serious disorders due to excessive strain on the body. Exoskeletons ease the burden and make jobs safer.

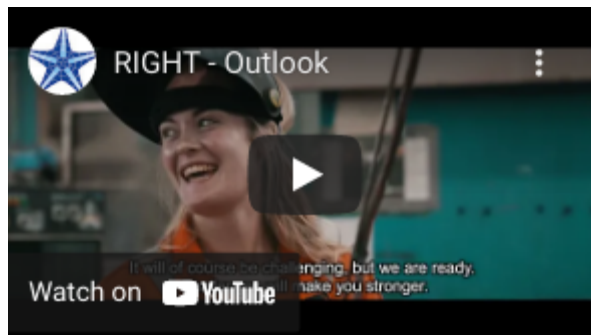
[Watch the video](#)



Teaser video: CUPIDO

CUPIDO created this evocative trailer for the outdoors show Light Without Borders. The show was immensely popular during the Covid-19 restrictions on indoor gatherings.

[Watch the video](#)



Outlook video: RIGHT

How can people in former oil industry areas stay in job? Meet the undaunted co-workers who are more than ready to become a part of the green transition and acquire new skills for their future jobs.

[Watch the video](#)

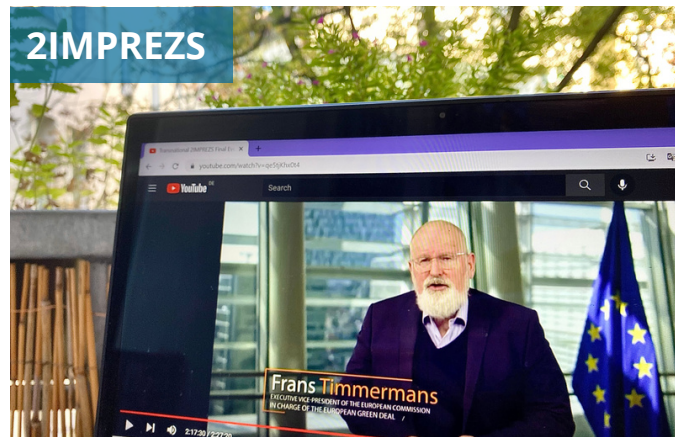
North Sea Photo Contest 2021

Our National Contact Points selected the winners among several excellent shots from North Sea Region projects. The winning photos showcase virtual communication during two years of lockdown, creativity in adapting to climate change, and the EU supporting young people to take a strong role in reducing emissions.



Umbrellas against heat stress in a Swedish town.

Category 1: A better place



Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President of the European Commission, addressed 700 pupils at the transnational 2IMPRESZS Energy Challenges online event.

Category 2: The EU Factor



During the Covid-19 pandemic, COM³ helped local SMEs stay connected with their customers by promoting their products and services online.

Category 3: Joining up

Project achievements by end-2021

103



climate adaptation
methods

183



sites applying
new solutions

2531



enterprises in
new partnerships

216



green transport
solutions



4882



organisations
adopted solutions

145



business support
measures

144



public service
support measures

857



joined virtual
programme events

Interreg North Sea Region VB 2014-2020

PROJECTS

Priority 1: Thinking growth

BLING	I2I	North-Tick
COM3	In For Care	PERISCOPE
CORA	Inn2POWER	PROWAD
Create Converge	Inno-Quarter	LINK
CUPIDO	Lean Landing	REFRAME
EXSKALLERATE	Like!	RIGHT
FBD	Northern	SCORE
GrowIn4.0	Connections	SHINE

Priority 2: Eco-innovation

2IMPREZS	EMPOWER 2.0	SOILCOM
ACCESS	INDU-ZERO	Stronghouse
BIOCAS	NON STOP	WASP
Carbon Farming	OESA	
Circ-NSR	ProCirc	
COBEN	SalFar	
DecomTools	SCALE-UP	
Dual PORTS	SMARTGREEN	

Priority 3: Sustainable NSR

BEESPOKE	GEANS	TOPSOIL
BEGIN	IMMERSE	WaterCoG
BwN	Jomopans	
C5A	NorthSEE	
CANAPE	NSW	
CATCH	NuReDrain	
FAIR	PARTRIDGE	
FRAMES	Sullied Sediments	

Priority 4: Green transport

IWTS 2.0	PAV
ART-Forum	SEEV4-City
AVATAR	SHARE-North
BITS	SURFLOGH
G-PaTRA	ZEM Ports NS
HyTrEc2	North Sea CONNECT
MOVE	Stronger Combined



**Keep in touch
& stay safe!**



northsearegion.eu