Promotion and External Communication Report

Final report
Version 1.0

Priority 1: Innovation

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Executive summary

This report combines and summarizes all promotion and communication activities done and materials utilized throughout the duration of the project to inform target audiences about the project activities, implementation progress and outcomes and invite potential BalticLSC system end-users to take part in the action.

The report also provides insights into promotion and communication challenges while attracting target audiences and dwells on possible strategies on how to deal with some of the issues encountered.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Objectives and scope

Promotion and External Communication Report serves as a set of communication and promotion activities applied and materials utilised throughout the implementation of the Baltic large-scale computing (BalticLSC) project issued within the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020. It incorporates actions taken by the communication manager of the project as well as actions implemented by separate partners and their representatives while presenting the project to target audiences and involving them in the project activities. The report covers quick evaluation of promotion and communication goings-on and provides general insights regarding their effectiveness.

1.2 Relations to other documents

Promotion and External Communication Report stems from the Promotion and External Communication Strategy and incorporates materials that have been utilised throughout the implementation of the project, including documents such as BalticLSC Handbook (BalticLSC Output 6.3), BalticLSC Knowledge Transfer Guides (BalticLSC Output 6.4) and all the other project outputs that have been published on project's website. However, the report itself serves as an independent document rather than a supporting one to any of the other outputs of the project.

1.3 Intended audience and usage guidelines

The report is the Output 2.4 of the project entrenched in the application form. It is envisioned for summarising promotion and communication activities and materials to be available for and active use after the project ends to further extend the positive impact of the project on the Baltic Sea region countries. The report is intended for both internal and external use, allowing all parties interested to apply its insights for the benefit of Baltic Sea region countries.

2. Communication materials and activities

2.1 Promotion and communication strategy

In order to attract various end-users, developers and suppliers for the BalticLSC system and disseminate knowledge about BalticLSC among stakeholders, including decision makers and innovators, the Promotion and Communication strategy has been developed. It provides a framework for all promotion and communication activities within the project, including internal communication activities among project partners and external communication activities implemented by project communication manager and other partners.

The strategy sets promotion and communication goals for the entire duration of the project, applicable to communication manager as well as partners separately. These goals include:

- informing potential end-users of BalticLSC system about the possibilities the system is about to provide them, including providing them confidence in the safety of using BalticLSC, and engaging them into the activities of the project;
- creating positive attitude towards LSC services and common BSR identity through a trans-national LSC network by spreading all project's outputs and results and promoting their durability and transfer to project territories and relevant European public authorities and innovation stakeholders;
- raising awareness about the importance of LSC technologies for the BSR;
- supporting the communication of everyday work within the partnership and keeping project partners and stakeholders' groups updated regarding the project progress;

Promotion and communication objectives are set to be implemented in accordance with Interreg BSR visibility rules and project's visual identity materials.

The strategy also covers target audiences of the project, promotion and communication channels, communication messages for potential end-users, stakeholders, associated organisations, partners and society and sets preliminary timeline for the duration of the project. It also establishes monitoring and evaluation criteria for promotion and communication course to be tracked.

Promotion and communication strategy is an internal document available in an online workplace chosen by the partnership – DropBox.

2.2 Visual identity

To achieve its goals and distinguish itself among other Interreg BSR projects, BalticLSC has created its visual identity, which consists of project logo, poster, leaflet and templates (for documents and presentations). The project has decided to include the extract of Baltic Sea region map and use the combination of light blue, orange, white and black for its visual materials. The combination fully complies with the Interreg BSR visibility rules.

All project partners are required to keep up with the visual identify of the project while presenting it to any of the target audiences. Partners have also placed a minimum A3 size compulsory poster at their premises in the location readily visible to the public and devoted a section of their websites to the project with the visual identity elements included.

All project visual identity materials are available in an online workplace at DropBox, whereas project logo, leaflet, major pictures and colour solutions could be also seen on project's website.
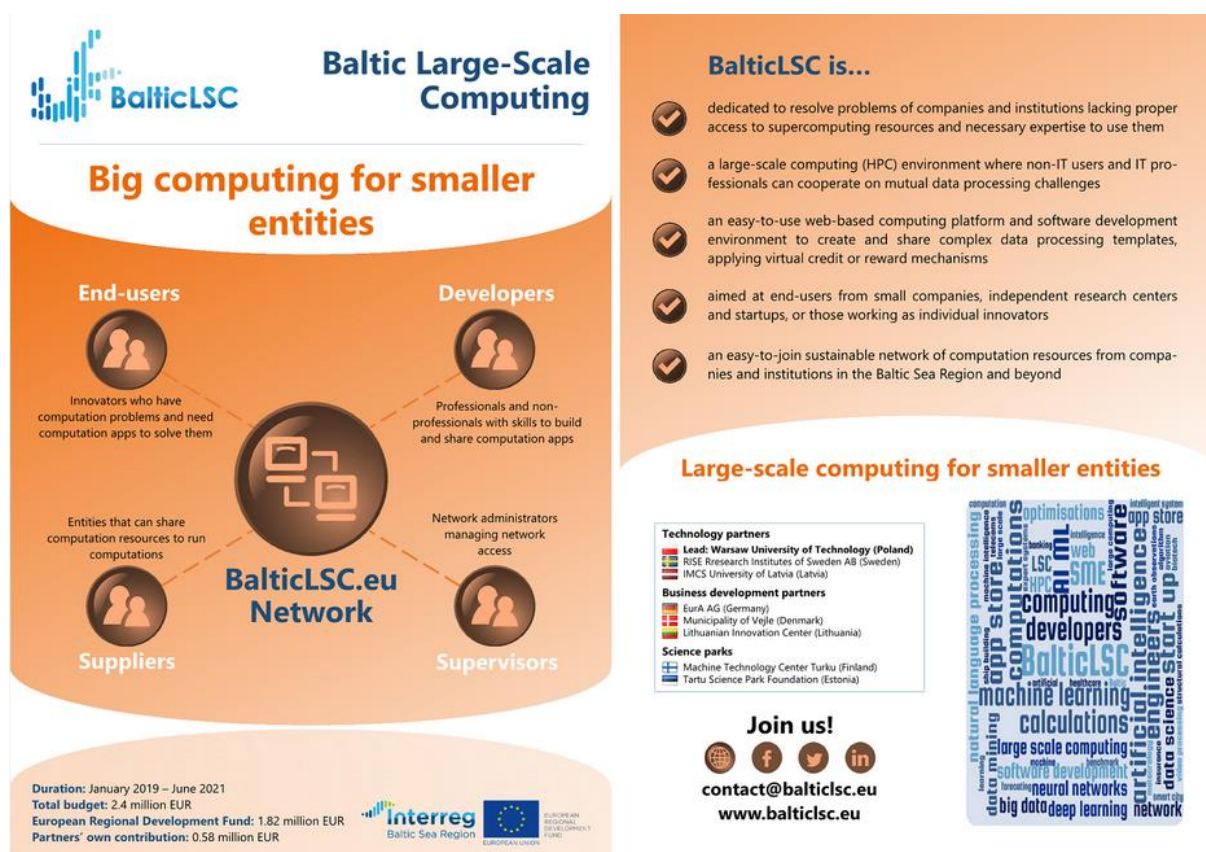
Figure 1 Example of project's leaflet.

2.3 Project's website

Website is an essential part of any promotion and communication activity these days, therefore, the priority was given to developing this major communication channel from the get go. The website could be reached at https://www.balticlsc.eu/.

Project's website includes not only the visual identity of the project, but reflects the whole essence of it. It provides information about project's goals, activities, implementation level, invites target audiences to take action and shares all the outcomes of the project. The project also provides regular news updates regarding the development of BalticLSC system.

Project's website serves as a vessel for all the outputs the project provides to be easily downloadable for anyone who is interested in either the implementation of the project or the subject of supercomputing and data processing. It also invites interested parties to provide their feedback at any given moment by leaving a comment or filling in one of the online surveys available on the website. Website users can provide their insights and feedback by contacting any of the partners directly as well, as major contact details are provided in the contact section of the website.

During the second half of the project, the website has been slightly renewed to make it more attractive for possible end-user to test BalticLSC platform. The platform has been incorporated into the website as well as the information on how to operate within the platform with additional demo version added. The updated version of the website serves as a gateway to the platform; however, it still has all the necessary structural parts to present the information about the project.
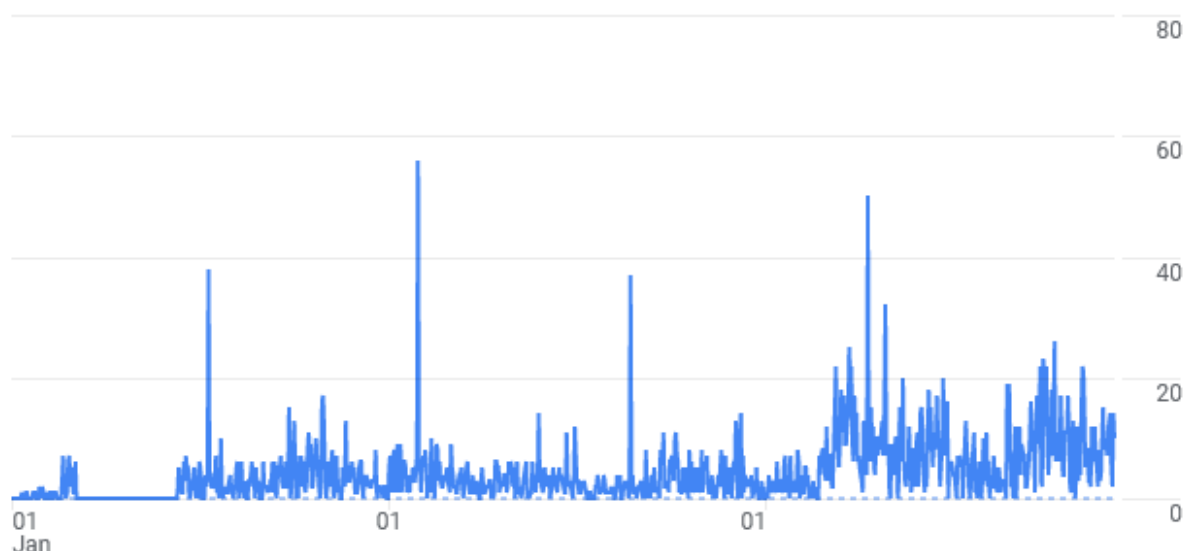
Figure 2 BalticLSC website visitors' overview.

During the implementation of the project, there were [32 news updates](#) on the website, making it at 5,3 news updates per one semester on average, or at around one per month. The news updates cover everything from partners meetings, to workshops, to major components of the system being developed, to the platform being available to end-users, to status of the project during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Though the initial start of the website was rather slow, by the end of 2021, it has had 2 600 unique users with the consistent flow of visitors established in May 2019. This means that the project has started generating interest, which constantly grew with the further development of the BlaticLSC platform.

2.4 Social media accounts

Living in a world where social media has become the tool, the mean and the channel of communication, the project has created accounts in four social media channels ([Twitter](#), [Facebook,](#) [LinkedIn](#) and in later stages of the project – [YouTube](#)) to increase its reach among target audiences.

Posted by **Vitalija Kolisova** · 10/8/2021 · · ·

BalticLSC
45 followers
2mo · Edited · 🌐

Our project is heading 🚀 towards the end but we still have some empty slots for pilots left 👌. We are looking for SMEs with huge data sample or data that requires high computation power to test our #BalticLSC ...see more

🔵🟢 Vilma Vilutyte and 14 others

👍 Like   💬 Comment

Be the first to comment on this

Organic impressions: 645 Impressions   Show stats ⌄

Figure 3 LinkedIn post reach.

Having social media accounts allows the project to engage with the potential end-users of the BalticLSC system and to strengthen connections with the established partners. The partnership with Golem as well as Danish company interested in testing BalticLSC system have expressed their cooperation with the project by social media, thus generating additional reach of our efforts to create a system based on the network of supercomputers and developable computations for data processing.

It is worth mentioning that none of the project's social media accounts have generated great numbers of followers. This is mainly due to a very specific topic of the project that is currently interesting only to a limited number of potential end-users. In general, the reach per post or tweet has not exceed 100, but on several occasions a much higher reach of more than 200 has been achieved, with the highest one being 643 on LinkedIn. Out of all four social media channels used, for this particular project and topic LinkedIn has been the most successful one.

2.5 Events and workshops

One of the most effective way to promote the project and spread information about it as well as invite potential end-users to take part in BalticLSC system, is by attending and organising events that have any of the target audiences present. What is more, once the demo version of the platform was ready and also the platform was available for potential end-users to test it, the workshops served as a way to interact with potential end-users, gather their feedback and improve on the services provided by the consortium. Unfortunately, due to coronavirus pandemic and multiple restrictions introduces by various countries, live workshops have become a rarity. That is why the majority of workshops and meetings during the second stage of the project were held online.

Throughout the first three semesters of the project, partners' representatives, including the lead partner, have attended several international events dedicated to high power computing, supercomputing, data processing etc. issues. For instance, project manager has displayed BalticLSC poster at the International Conference on Enterprise Information Systems in Poland, EuroHPC Week conference in Poland, the Interreg conference in Lübeck 21st and the International Conference on Enterprise Information Systems 2019 in Heraklion and presented a paper on BalticLSC system during the 21st KKIO Software Engineering Conference. Project's communication manager has participated in Interreg BSR Communication workshop in Tallinn where some good communication practises of the project have been introduced and got noticed by the officers. They have been later conveyed in some documents published by the Interreg BSR. Swedish partners have participated in OpenCompute Regional Summit in Amsterdam where the BalticLSC idea has been introduced to potential future partners to act as a supercomputing resource providers.

During the second part of the project, the lead partner has participated in VLHCC conference where they presented our poster showing the BalticLSC Platform and the CAL Language. The conference started with a short video presentation of our poster. Then the lead partner moved to an online platform called Gather Town (Gather | A better way to meet online.), where online participants could "walk" over the virtual poster exhibition and talk to the poster presenters.

Figure 4 BalticLSC poster displayed at the International Conference on Enterprise Information Systems 2019 in Heraklion.

Figure 5 Project manager is discussing the project during the meeting of the Consultation Committee for Transnational and Interregional Projects in Warsaw.

National and regional events should be also taken into account. The project manager has discussed the project during the meeting of the Consultation Committee for Transnational and Interregional Projects in Warsaw, whereas Danish partners have engaged with Danish Green Tech companies looking for volunteers to test BalticLSC system. Lithuanian partners have participated in the XXV LITNet conference to attract possible supercomputing service providers to join BalticLSC platform.

The workshop for partners to attend, including local companies to provide their insights and feedback regarding the BalticLSC system in development, was held in Hamburg during the second semester of the project.

Another workshop for gathering partners' ideas on the best business model to be utilised for our project, was held in Warsaw with most of the project partners present. The partner in Estonia has participated local data community meetups organised by University of Tartu, where both business as well as scientific data cases are regularly discussed in an open environment. The seminars are mostly recorded and available for wider community at: https://www.cs.ut.ee/en/industry-collaboration/data-science-seminars.

Figure 6 The partner in Estonia presents the project at the local data community meetup organised by University of Tartu.

Moreover, every partner has held some sort of the workshop for a target audience to either share their expectation and needs regarding the BalticLSC system or attract potential testers and end-users of the system, or solve technical challenges. This allowed not only to gain the missing information for the development of BalticLSC system, but also introduce the project and its planned outcome to the target audiences. During the second stage of the project, partners have joined events/ workshops and conferences organized by other entities, in order to introduce the BalticLSC platform to wider target audience.

Figure 7 Local workshop in Vilnius organised by Lithuanian partner.

Figure 8 Partners' meeting in Tartu, 2020.

Partners have been meeting once a semester in person as well to solve any occurring issues and challenges that could not be otherwise addressed by only an email or conference call. This tradition has been broken during the third semester due to the outbreak of coronavirus and limited opportunities to travel. However, during the final semester one more live partners' meeting was organised in Vejle, Denmark. Though during those meetings, the target audience is not directly addressed or involved, meetings themselves provide ideas for promotion and communication materials.

2.6 Press releases, articles in the media

Considering the topic this project is engaged in, getting a regular media coverage on BalticLSC system or on the activities of the project would be extremely difficult. Nonetheless, an article prepared by the lead partner has been published by Warsaw University of Technology, National Chamber of Digital Economy "Digicom", The Polish National Energy Conservation Agency, Polish Agency for Enterprise Development and Chamber of Digital Economy. Also, more than 10 press releases issued by the Lithuanian partner have been published on a national news portal inovacijos.lt.

Additionally, partners are planning to do the final media push till the end of the project to attract more potential end-users even after the project ends as the consortium is going to maintain BalticLSC platform and allow end-user to do data computations on it.

2.7 Scientific activities

Project activities are closely interlinked with science, therefore, scientific communication efforts have been foreseen already in the application form. During the first half of the project, one academic paper has been issued by Warsaw University of Technology – "Towards a Unified Requirements Model for Distributed High Performance Computing". It is available on Springer. The paper has been also presented at the 21st KKIO Software Engineering Conference and featured on project's website.

By the end of the project, the lead partner has submitted one more paper to be presented during the scientific conference, yet the evaluation process has not ended yet. It is possible that the paper will be published after the end of the project.

2.8 Demos and engagement

During the first three semesters of the project, the prototype of BalticLSC system has been in development. Once it was ready, it was supplemented with various demonstration videos, instructions and other materials that would help potential end-users to engage with the product. These videos were not only uploaded on project's YouTube channel, but also were placed on project's website and were used as a promotional and tutorial materials during the workshops at the final semester of the project. Demonstrating these videos along with the chance for potential end-users to test the platform themselves with the step-by-step guidance from the technical partners allowed not only to introduce the platform to the target audience and better understand its functionality and purpose, but also enabled partners to gather some essential feedback for further improvement of the platform.

2.9 Internal communication

In terms of internal communication, several tools have been applied for better implementation of the project and management of information. Open project has been employed as a major online workplace for communication, information and progress sharing between the partners. It has been supplemented with DropBox as a major source for all project documentation,

pictures, publications and other materials to be used throughout the implementation of the project. Partners also utilise emails for all important or extremely urgent issues to be disseminated to make sure all project partners are informed about them. Also, regular conference calls were organised among partners to make sure smooth implementation of the project. Once a semester a full day or two-day partnership meeting was organised to discuss any issues related to the implementation of the project, some of these meetings were held live, others, due to coronavirus situation, were carried out online.

2.10 Partners' communication

Besides various communication activities implemented by project's communications manager, the partners have been contributing to the project's communication through their own media channels. Partners were using their own social media accounts as well as their websites to promote the project, find potential end-users, communicate about the BalticLSC platform.

In a way, a communication by the partner is a more efficient way to reach certain target audiences as partners already have a well-established audience, which is interested in the topics and services provided by the partner and there is a trust connection between the partner and its audience. However, despite a better head start, partners still struggled to attract necessary audiences as the topic in itself is not for the masses and it is hard to find the niche-like audience, which is directly interested in the matter.

3. Evaluation and recommendations

3.1 Promotion and communication activities in numbers

In order to evaluate promotion and communication activities throughout the implementation of the project, a number of KPIs has been set in Promotion and Communication Strategy to keep track of the effectiveness of materials and actions applied. These KPIs as well as their means are represented in the table below.

Table 1 Promotion and communication activities in numbers

KPI's	1st semester	2nd semester	3rd semester	4th semester	5th semester	6th semester	Total
Realisation of the online workplace	Open project DropBox Skype, Teams, emails, phone calls						
Partner's meetings (physical)	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
Posters displayed	9	2	0	0	0	1	12
Project's website users	32	386	352	37/7	756	705	2608
Followers / posts on Facebook	21/4	33/10	36/7	37/6	38/6	41/3	41/36
Followers / tweets on Twitter	3/4	13/8	16/8	16/4	16/3	16/2	16/29
Followers / posts on LinkedIn	12/4	26/8	34/7	38/4	43/4	45/3	45/30
Press releases	2	2	2	2	1	2	11
Appearances in media	5	2	2	2	1	2	11
International events	2	5	0	0	0	1	8
National events	–	2	0	0	2	5	9
Workshops	7	4	1	0	2	6	20
Scientific publications	–	1	0	0	0	1	2

3.2 The efficiency of promotion and communication activities

BalticLSC is a project dedicated to developing a system that enables either smaller and independent actors to use supercomputing services for data processing or allows bigger players to provide supercomputing power for those in need, or attract programmers to develop different

algorithms for a modest fee to be utilised for requested data computations. In plain sight, it is a very hard audience and topic to communicate.

On one hand, the project aims for smaller companies, independent research institutions or start-ups that are well aware of the subject, yet are unable to engage in it due to the lack of resources (either financial or human) or some other reasons. In order to communicate to them, a specific and somewhat technical language should be employed – something only technical partners are familiar with, yet, they are not necessarily the best people to communicate or attract potential target audiences.

On the other hand, there are a lot of smaller companies that would like to utilise data for the business growth, yet they are less knowledgeable on the subject and they require additional efforts both, from the technical partners and the ones directly involved with the companies. Technical language might be too complicated for the them at first, therefore, they require a more casual approach, making it especially hard on communicators as they have to be able to convey extremely difficult subject in a very casual, ordinary way so that everybody could understand it and make assessments whether or not they should get involved.

In this regard, there is a limitation of companies that are well aware of the subject and would like to engage in the project and there is an excess of those, which have very little or no clue at all about data processing, supercomputers and high-power computations. Since the project is limited in terms of time and financial resources, the major focus has been put on the former. Thus, most of the early test cases have been gathered based on individually approaching potential users of the platform. This is what explains low numbers of website users and followers on social media. Nevertheless, the numbers also show a rather consistent growth in both categories, meaning that promotion and communication activities were heading in the right direction. Engaging with existent partners also helped to promote the project and its major outcomes to additional target audiences. Interaction on social media with these partners contributed to greater reachability of projects' post and tweets.

What is more, during the first three semesters of the project the pilot of BalticLSC system has been in development, thus limiting the possibility to attract more companies to test the system and become dependent on it. Once the pilot was ready, more promotion and communication materials were prepared and disseminated among partners to engage with potential target audiences in the regions respectably. This was a time when promotion and communication activities intensified engaging in some marketing activities as well.

3.3 Recommendations

1. Invite target audiences to test BalticLSC platform and get their feedback to promote the project and its outcomes;
2. Encourage project partners to establish their own target audiences and work with them closely while updating them on the news related to the implementation of the project and development of major outcomes, such as BalticLSC system;
3. Participate in more specialised events, dedicated to such topics as supercomputing, big data, artificial intelligence (AI), high power computing, data processing etc. with a lot of participating experts in the field This has proved to be very successful for finding test cases;
4. Explore the opportunities provided by various business networks, business consultants and business agencies while reaching out to a potential target audience;
5. Prepare more promotion and communication materials to use them on the most valuable touch points for the target audiences to attract.

6. Utilise the early case studies in the promotional activities to showcase potential of this kind of system in the end-users' perspective.