Interreg
SLOVENIA – HUNGARY
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E-COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE

Advice and tips for project partners

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SI-HU PRO

BEVEZETŐ

Over the past few years electronic communication has been playing an increasingly important role in the communication of EU-funded projects, and in raising awareness of the results achieved and developments implemented. In particular, social media platforms are becoming increasingly popular to address masses of people, whereas using appropriate tools and practices enables us to address a well-defined target group. The aim of this publication is to make project communication via electronic means easier by giving useful tips, and advice, sharing tried and tested practices.

However, before giving practical advice, one should review the regulatory documents that determine the framework of publicity work, and the mandatory elements in relation to the funding. Given its nature and length, this publication is designed to outline the key aspects of online communication, rather than to provide extensive, in-depth insight into methodologies, and present theoretical background documents. In preparing this document, we made a point of including the links and references to access the literature used in the chapters themselves, or in the list of literature, thus ensuring that readers and project partners can access comprehensive information, facilitating adequate communication.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE LEGAL BACKGROUND

The two EU regulations providing for the communication activities across the programming period 2021-2027, laying down the requirements as regards Interreg programmes, are as follows:

1. the Common Provisions Regulation CPR Regulation (EU) 2021/1060), and
2. the INTERREG Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059).

The former provides detailed requirements for the normal use of the emblem of the European Union, whereas the latter lays down the specific provisions in relation to the harmonised, common branding of the INTERREG programmes, both in terms of the implementation of the projects and the project image. We must emphasize the main message of the new INTERREG brand: simplification to ensure the visibility of the funding, and the simplification of the related rules. The key tool to achieve this is the harmonised INTERREG logo.

Source: Interreg Brand Design Manual

The rules on the funding programmes for the upcoming period will be laid down by the above-mentioned regulations, with, similarly to previous practice, the detailed rules laid down in programme-level communication rules, the ERDF grant agreements, and in the case of Hungary, also in national co-funding agreements.

What applies universally to both the applicable legislation and the relevant funding agreements is compliance with rules on basic communication, which is designed to facilitate the settlement of costs. The actual work in disseminating information, raising awareness and ensuring publicity goes beyond mere compliance with these rules, but it is essential to keep to the rules to in order to work effectively.

WEBSITES

Websites are the most essential tools in project communication. This is where most communication processes start from, and this is where visitors arrive prompted by such communication.

A good website provides visitors with up-to-date information, who, in an ideal scenario, will be browsing a website that is easy to navigate, and has a clean and simple design. A website meeting modern requirements can reasonably be expected to have responsive resolution, as images are expected to be displayed in full, and with full usability on all devices with different sized screens

that have appeared over time (which is important not only for practical reasons, but also due to general publicity and visibility requirements, because the logo indicating the funding has to be positioned in a place which is visible without scrolling).

It is important to make sure that visitors can access the contents they are looking for after two or three clicks after landing on the website, because this can be reasonably expected, based on current trends and Internet usage habits.

It makes sense to place visual elements drawing the attention, presenting results such as automatically changing photos and videos on the starting page of your website, and it is also useful to include your social media page here, for example, your latest social media post can be displayed in a social media box.

Various counters showing your results can be equally illustrative like pictures, just quantifying those results. Another useful element of the starting page can be a menu tab or a pop-up window to subscribe to your newsletter.

In addition, it is worth positioning links taking visitors to the websites of organisation and platforms related to your project in the bottom section of the starting page of the website.

Access the recommended training guide here:

NEWSLETTERS

One of the best online communication tools providing direct access is newsletters, although compiling a good list of subscribers is a resources-intensive task. To compile a list of subscribers to your newsletter, it makes sense to use your own e-mail lists, and to include templates or pop-up windows prompting new subscriptions in the appropriate menu points or subpages. In the case of recipients already in your mailing lists, you must make sure to get their prior written consent to subscribing to your newsletter, and to the processing of their data.

The data of the subscribers must be processed in accordance with the applicable data security

requirements, mainly with the rules laid down in the GDPR.

It is important to send online newsletter in two cases: a, when you would like to provide the followers of your website with a summary of the events and news of a given period, or b, you collect and send contents based on previously determined topics.

It is crucial to include visual elements attracting people's attention, and thought-provoking summaries encouraging people to read on also in the email itself.

We will explain how to prepare creative and textual contents in subsequent chapters, including practical tips and recommended editing programmes as well.

We recommend to use the following software to prepare and send newsletters, and to maintain lists of subscribers:

Mailerlite **Mailchimp**

Regardless of what software or what type of newsletter you choose to use, make sure to test your newsletter every time before actually sending it to the intended recipients. Every newsletter programme enables you to send the newsletter to your own email address, or an address of your choice, thus avoiding potential mistakes.

Click here to access the recommended training material:

SOCIAL MEDIA

This is what Amy Jo Martin, American author, speaker, entrepreneur, founder and CEO of social media and education company Digital Royalty (Nevada, Las Vegas) said about social media: ***„Social media is the ultimate equalizer. It gives a voice and platform to anyone willing to engage."*** The company she founded helps individuals and brands build their digital universe in this spirit.

But, of course, you can build the social media site or sites of your own project on your own, without assistance from such a long-standing and prestigious company.

As we all know, social media platforms are highly popular communication areas to provide your target groups with information at a low or even zero cost. You can do so in an interactive way, providing quick and real-time information to your followers. Although social media platforms allow wide access to people, it is up to you to determine what main target group you want to address, inform or call upon to participate in one of your activities.

The potential to reach out to great masses of people, however, carries the risk of missing your target group easily, because you did not delineate it with sufficient details and accuracy. A wide audience is not a target group (!), you need to target a clearly delineated segment with your communication activity. Such previous segmenting off your target group can even help you pinpoint which social media platform to focus your online communication on. The most decisive parameter to narrow your target groups down is age, which helps you select the channel to get your message across, i.e. the most suitable social media platform.

PLATFORM	AGE
Facebook	24-35
Instagram	18-24
TikTok	<18

PLATFORM	TARGET GROUP
Facebook	adult population
Instagram	young adults, university students
TikTok	primary school pupils and secondary school students
LinkedIn	project partner networking
Twitter	stakeholders, decision makers journalists
ResearchGate	scientific communities

Since the spring of 2020 there seems to be a clear shift in the communication of programmes and projects, clearly towards online communication. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have enhanced the importance of presence in social media.

This involuntary shift provided an opportunity to ready ourselves for the communication intentions of the programming period 2021-2027, since EU attaches outstanding importance to the use of social media in presenting the benefits created through the funds to citizens.

A successful presence in social media can be earned by persistent, continuous work. As part of this work, you need to take into consideration several aspects when it comes to the dissemina-

tion of information, and you also need to continuously monitor, analyse, evaluate, and finally adjust your work based on the conclusions drawn.

The most important criteria in terms of social media communication are as follows, without claiming to be exhaustive in any way:

- Tone of communication
- Frequency of posts
- Timing of posts
- Type of posts - using different visual elements

It is advisable to amend and further fine-tune the above aspects in the light of the penetration, reactions and interaction thus achieved with the posts. It is important to dare experiment with the

frequency and timing of your posts, or the type of the visual content carrying your message.

When it comes to scheduling your posts on Facebook, the Planner menu tab of the Business Suite surface can prove rather useful, which can even show you when most the followers of your page are active. It is worth posting several times a week in order to maintain your followers' interest, but you should make sure not to post too often, do not become annoying for them. The Planner menu tab makes you recommendations when to publish a post , which you can do also manually, but scheduling your posts is convenient and saves you time, scheduling the publishing of your future posts down to the minute. Altogether we could safely say that it is worth adjust publishing your posts to the periods when the followers of your social media page are active and are logged in the platform.

In addition to the visual elements we will describe in detail later on, make sure to publish posts that call viewers, followers to action, if possible. Under action we mean liking or sharing your post, participation in the event you advertised, clicking on your website, subscription to your newsletter, on other words, anything that is doable with a single click.

Click here to access the recommended training material:

VISUAL ELEMENTS

When it comes to social media posts, one of the most essential aspects is to use powerful, effective visual elements. The consumers of social media are bombarded with plenty of effects whilst browsing, and will not stop to read a long text during scrolling. Your main message is carried by visual elements, and on top of that, they call the reader to action. Visual elements can include drawings, photos, slideshows, videos, info-graphical elements, or other different elements.

Several free programmes are available online that can help you prepare creative visual contents, whether it is a text, a photo or a video you want to edit.

We recommend the programmes below to edit photos and videos, you can register for free to access a number of easy-to-use functions and a large number of image contents. Among these programme we highly recommend Canva, which combines the features of image and video editing programmes and the functions of stock-type photo galleries or video libraries. After free registration, this website gives you access to templates you can use for the different social media posts, you can use the photos, charts, graphical elements, and countless additional templates to prepare photo collages, publications and brochures. You can also animate your contents to use them as moving images, for example, as GIF files. In addition to the plentiful visual contents available at the site, you can also upload your own photos, logos, graphical elements that will be continuously available in your account, and you can combine them with the contents provided by Canva.

Recommended editing programmes:

Canva **Pixlr X** **Biteable**

Recommended stock photo and video platforms:

Pixabay **Pexels** **Unsplash**

We recommend the online tool Piktochart to create infographics, available at: **Piktochart**

PLAIN LANGUAGE

In addition to contents drawing attention, it is crucial to ensure the intelligibility of your posts for reasons of clarity, getting information relevant for the target group across best as possible. Try to use simple and clear language, get to the point in short sentences, and avoid using sophisticated and complicated terminology with multiple compound expressions in your project. Communicating in far too technical texts will greatly downsize the group of people who can actually understand your message, so this is one of the greatest mistakes you can make when communicating with your audiences.

Even your most committed followers cannot be bothered to read long texts, let alone reach users who do not follow your page. Once you have got the length of your text right, make sure not to use too technical a tone, which often proves unintelligible for laymen, and could even make people lose interest or even put them off. Too long, or too technical textual contents will not help you reach people who come from areas other than your own, thus making it impossible to raise awareness of your results extensively.

In order to get the art of using simple language under your belt, it is worth acquiring the plain language technique (how to use simple language helping you deliver your main message in the clearest way possible), facilitating public communication.

As a preparatory step, Resoomer can be a practical tool, which uses artificial intelligence to highlight the gist in lengthy texts, delivering it as free text. The drawback of the programme is that it does not support either Hungarian or Slovenian, but it is a great tool to shorten English texts.

To learn and practice the plain language technique, we recommend the Interact training material available here:

STORYTELLING

The most essential purpose of storytelling as a technique is to pique interest in your video, and to address viewers emotionally, intellectually and aesthetically ('make me care'). You need to make people want to take the time, and tell others about it, too. This is why you need characters in your story your viewers and followers can identify with. The two links below will take you to trainings that give you a sound theoretical background to storytelling and a ten-step technique to create your own story:

SUMMARY

To sum up this brief publication, we can safely say that you need to take into consideration two main aspects in communicating your project.

First, compliance with basic communication rules, meaning the minimum information tasks, including usage of logo, mandatory image elements, etc., required to ensure that costs are eligible for settlement.

The other key aspect of communication is providing information to the general public, we gave an overview of the online channels. In this mode of communication it is essential to be ready to learn, measure your presence on a continuous basis, and to revamp and change based on your measurement results. In addition to learning and using tried and tested forms and methods, do not shy away from experimenting. Try different types of posts, quizzes and visual contents. Regardless of whether such experiments live up to your expectations, they are enlightening, and will show you whether you have been communicating in a way and with contents appropriate for your desired target group or not.

Please remember that no matter how thorough and foresighted you are, you may still make mistakes, your results may still fall short of your expectations. With sufficient commitment and perseverance, as well as continuous learning, however, you can achieve the targets you have set and reach your desired target groups.

Click here to access the recommended training material:

LITERATURE

CPR Regulation

Interreg Regulation

HIT Application Form

Interreg Brand Narrative

Interreg Brand Strategy Manual

Capitalisation Management Guide

Project Communication Handbook

Communication Toolkit

Communication of capitalization in Interreg

Communicating Cohesion Policy in 2021–2027

Andrew Stanton: The clues to a great story

Practical steps of storytelling

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