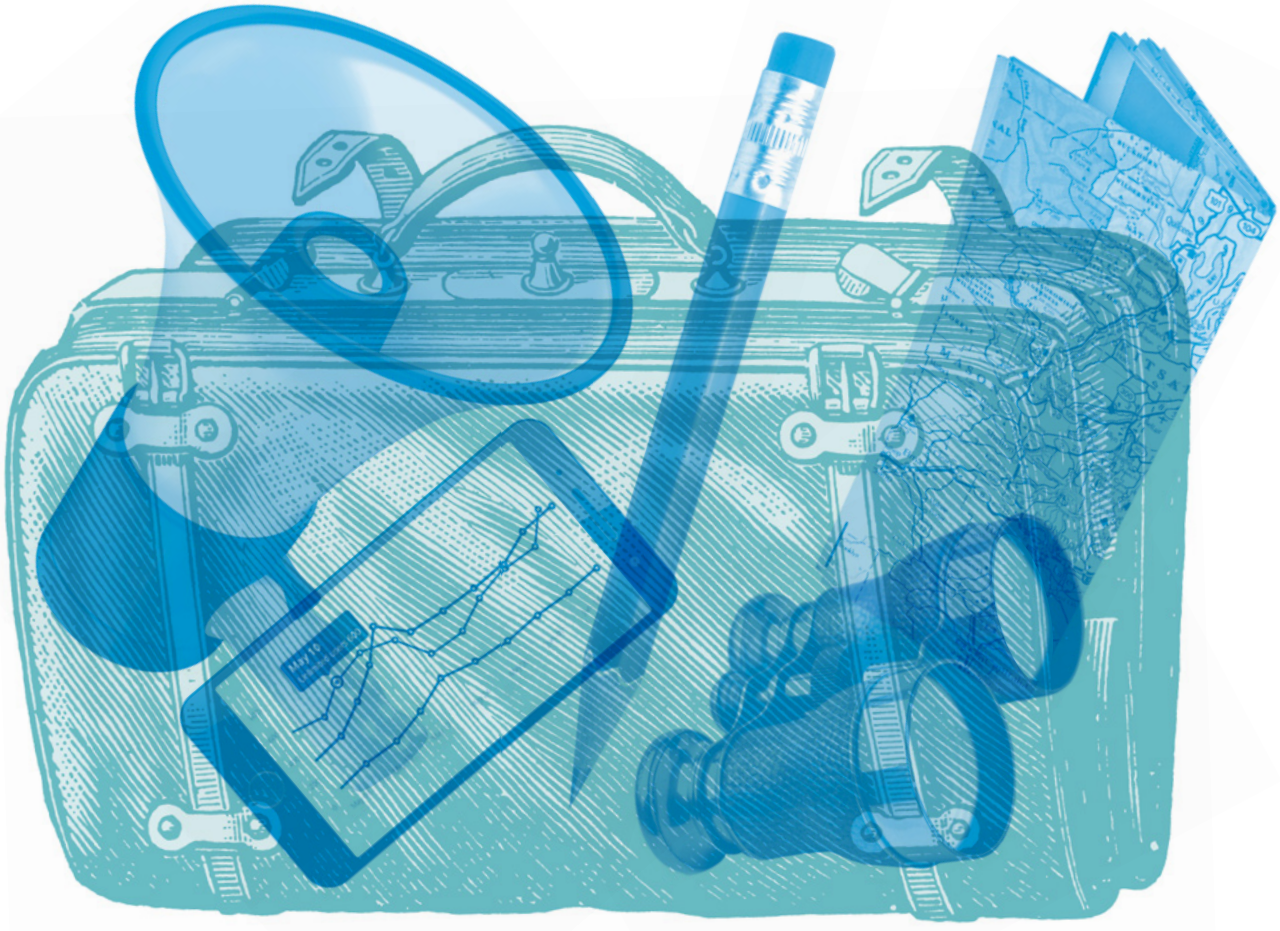
European Commission

How to communicate YOUR PROJECT



#CommsJourney

Tell your story.

Make an impact.

A step-by-step guide

on communicating projects and their results

Acknowledgements
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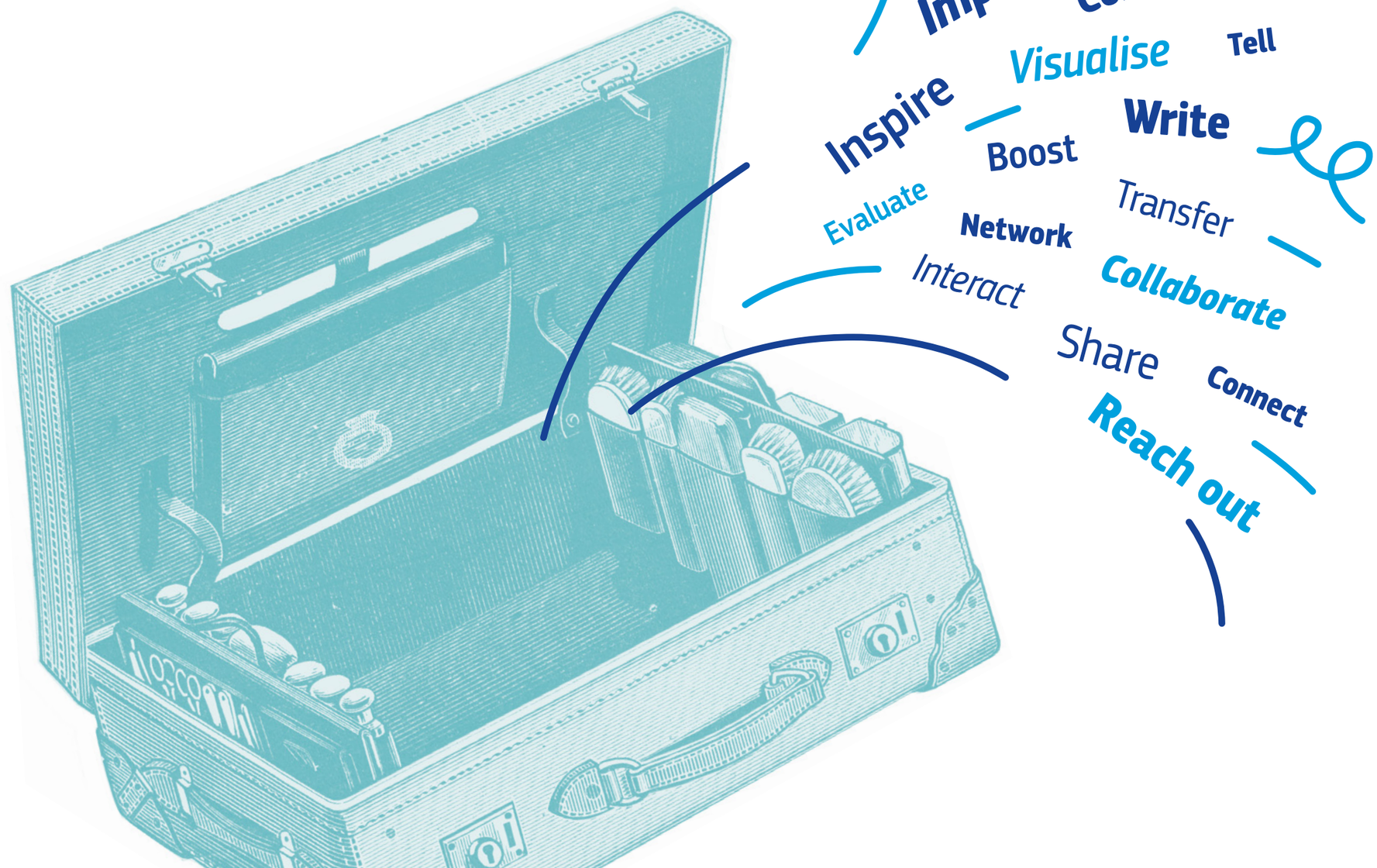
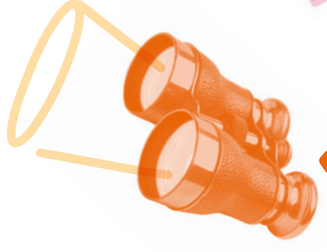


Index

Introduction

6 - - - - Communication? Let's start with the basics
6 - - - - How to use "Your Project #CommsJourney"
7 - - - - We are here to help



Plan your #CommsJourney

9 - - - - **Check** your Programme Guide and calls for proposals
10 - - - **Develop** your communication strategy
12 - - - **Write** your communication plan

Visualise your project

15 - - - **Create** your visual identity
17 - - - **Display** the EU emblem

Write your project stories

21 - - - **Tell** others about your project from day one!
23 - - - **Think** digital

Share your project results

31 - - - **Sharing** is caring
32 - - - **Use** websites
33 - - - **Share** your results on the Project Results Platform
33 - - - **Identify** your social media channels
34 - - - **Reach out** to the media
34 - - - **Share** your results at events

Evaluate your experience

40 - - - **Choose** your indicators
41 - - - **Carry out** your evaluation

Dear beneficiary,
Welcome to Your Project #CommsJourney

A Communication?

Let's start with the basics.

Communication is...

a **two-way process** of sharing information and exchanging ideas, data and messages – through appropriate channels – to reach identified target audiences.

It is important because...

- it enables people to **connect**, **explain** and **share** emotions with others
- it is the **lifeblood** of a project that needs to be known and promoted

Communicating your project will:

- enable you to **engage** with your stakeholders
- show the **impact** of your project and its results on society
- expand your **network** for future collaborations
- support the **dissemination** of your project's results
- raise citizens' **awareness** of how the EU budget is spent
- show the **success** of European Programmes

You can make it happen by thinking of your project as...

- a **journey** to embark on
- a **story** to tell
- a **memory** to share

B How to use "Your Project #CommsJourney"

"Your Project #CommsJourney" is a **step-by-step guide** for the beneficiaries of the Erasmus+, Creative Europe and European Solidarity Corps programmes to support them in their communication activities.

The "What, Why, How" method

These communication guidelines consist of **five sections** organised in chronological steps. Each step is explained according to the "what, why, how" methodology, which aims to show all the details of the actions you will perform.

What. stands for the action itself
Why. explains its importance
How. lists the steps to follow

Follow the steps

Once you familiarise with the "what, why, how" methodology, get your colleagues on board and follow each step chronologically to make your journey more enjoyable.

Use the resources

Click on the hyperlinks directing you to **useful templates** and **external websites** and get inspiration.

C We are here to help!

Questions? Do not worry. Remember you can **ask** for help to be involved in exciting initiatives you may not be aware of.

Depending on the nature of the project (centralised or de-centralised), you can **reach out** for help through your #CommsJourney.

Centralised projects

The 🔗 European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) is responsible for Erasmus+, Creative Europe and European Solidarity Corps **centralised** projects.

De-centralised projects

🔗 Erasmus+ National Agencies as well as 🔗 National Erasmus+ Offices (for Partner Countries) are the main points of contact for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps **de-centralised** projects.

➔ For more information on communication, dissemination and exploitation **rules** and obligations consult:

- 🔗 Erasmus+ Programme Guide (Version 2020)
- 🔗 European Solidarity Corps Programme Guide (Version 2019)
- 🔗 Creative Europe Programme Guide (Version 2020)

Who travels without a suitcase?

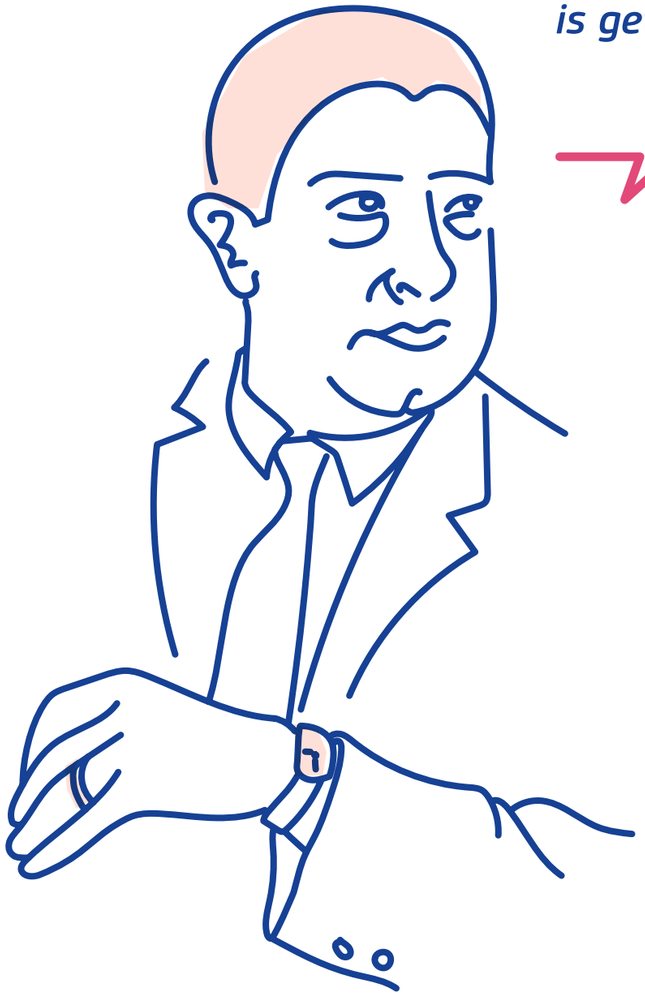
Hop on!

and start your #CommsJourney

"Communication" derives from the Latin word "communis", meaning to **share**.

> *"The two words information and communication are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through."*

Sydney J. Harris
journalist



Plan your #CommsJourney

Your project proposal has been successful and you are overly excited about your new challenge. But remember, your communication journey cannot start without a proper **planning**!

EU-funded projects may have a long-term cycle, made up of different **stages** and different partners involved. That's why it is important to plan your communication activites and **agree** upon tasks accordingly.

Check your Programme Guide and calls for proposals

Check your Programme Guide and calls for proposals and its section dedicated to **communication**, **dissemination** and **exploitation**. If you are wondering about the difference between these recurring terms, here is a quick recap.

Communication:
informing about projects and their results

Dissemination:
describing and making results available for use

Exploitation:
making use of results

Your Programme Guide – as well as your grant agreement and calls for proposals – are the **starting points** of your journey. They illustrate what your communication, dissemination and exploitation **obligations** are and what the European Commission expects from you.

Keep the Programme Guide always beside you along all steps of your journey. When something is not clear, **consult** with it or **ask** your communication/project officer to guide you through it.

Develop your communication strategy

Your Project #CommsJourney will start with a **communication strategy**, which will be your **travel guide** and reference during the whole journey. Take the strategy you have presented in your application and develop it further.

A communication strategy defines your objectives (why you want to do it), target audiences (for whom?), messages (what you want to say), channels (how you want to say it) and actions (what you want to do).

It considers the context of the **programme** where the project sits and helps you identify the **time** and **resources** you need to communicate your project.

The milestones of a communication strategy are:

1. your communication objectives
2. your target audience(s)
3. your key message(s)
4. your activities and channels
5. communication performance indicators

Inclusion is at the heart of EU programmes and so is **inclusive communication**. It seeks to treat everyone in a respectful manner. It helps us challenge harmful stereotypes and unconscious biases. Throughout this journey, we will provide you with tips on how to increase inclusion and diversity in your communication. Make sure to consider this from the start.

A communication strategy lays the foundations of "**what you want to achieve**" in terms of communication and enables you to move from where you are now to "**where you want to be**".

Engage with your project partners

Don't travel solo! Get your travel companions on board and **brainstorm** about your **roles**, long and short-term **objectives**. Identify possible key actors in the project consortium and consider hiring communication experts.

Understand the programme objectives

Don't forget that project and programme go hand in hand.
Browse your programme's website and discuss how the project could reflect its objectives as well as the European Commission **priorities**.

Set your communication objectives

What do you want to **achieve** with your project and its results?
This is the first question you should be able to answer.
Your communication objectives should be **SMART** (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**greed upon, **R**ealistic, **T**ime-bound), long-term and directed to shape your future communication activities.

Define your target audience(s)

Who do you want to reach with your project? Identify your primary and secondary **target groups**, as well as their interests, needs, characteristics and attitudes. Thus, you will determine the focus of your activities and messages.

Be inclusive! Travelling is more fun with a diverse group. Make sure to think of ways to target specific groups of society, for example "groups disadvantaged by inequalities" or "people in situations of vulnerability" that may benefit from your project and its results.

Choose your key message(s)

Each objective and target audience will have a corresponding key message. Messages serve as a **hook** to attract your audiences and address their interests. Therefore, keep it clear, short and easy to remember.

Identify your activities and channels

How are you going to reach your audiences? Brainstorm with your partners about the best and **cost-efficient** communication activities and channels to use.

Here is a list of examples:

ACTION	CHANNEL
Web or news articles	website , social media platforms
Social media posts	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.
Newsletters	direct e-mails, website
Press releases	direct e-mails, news distribution services
Videos	website, Youtube channel, social media platforms
Publications (leaflets, brochures)	website, events
Events	website, social media platforms

Think about performance indicators

Set simple indicators to **measure** your communication work and success. A survey, the number of clicks on your website or social media analytics can help you evaluate your performance.

→ Find out more here or jump to section 5

→ Get inspired with the **Communication strategy template** in Annex 1.

Write your communication plan

Once your strategy is in place, break it into a communication plan. Alongside your strategy, your plan must be **specific**, **time-based** and developed at the beginning of each year. While your strategy tells you "what to do", your plan focuses on "**how to do it**".

A communication plan is your **roadmap** to organize your communication work according to your time, needs and resources. Invest time on it to take **effective** decisions and reach your objectives.

Follow the 5 milestones of your communication strategy

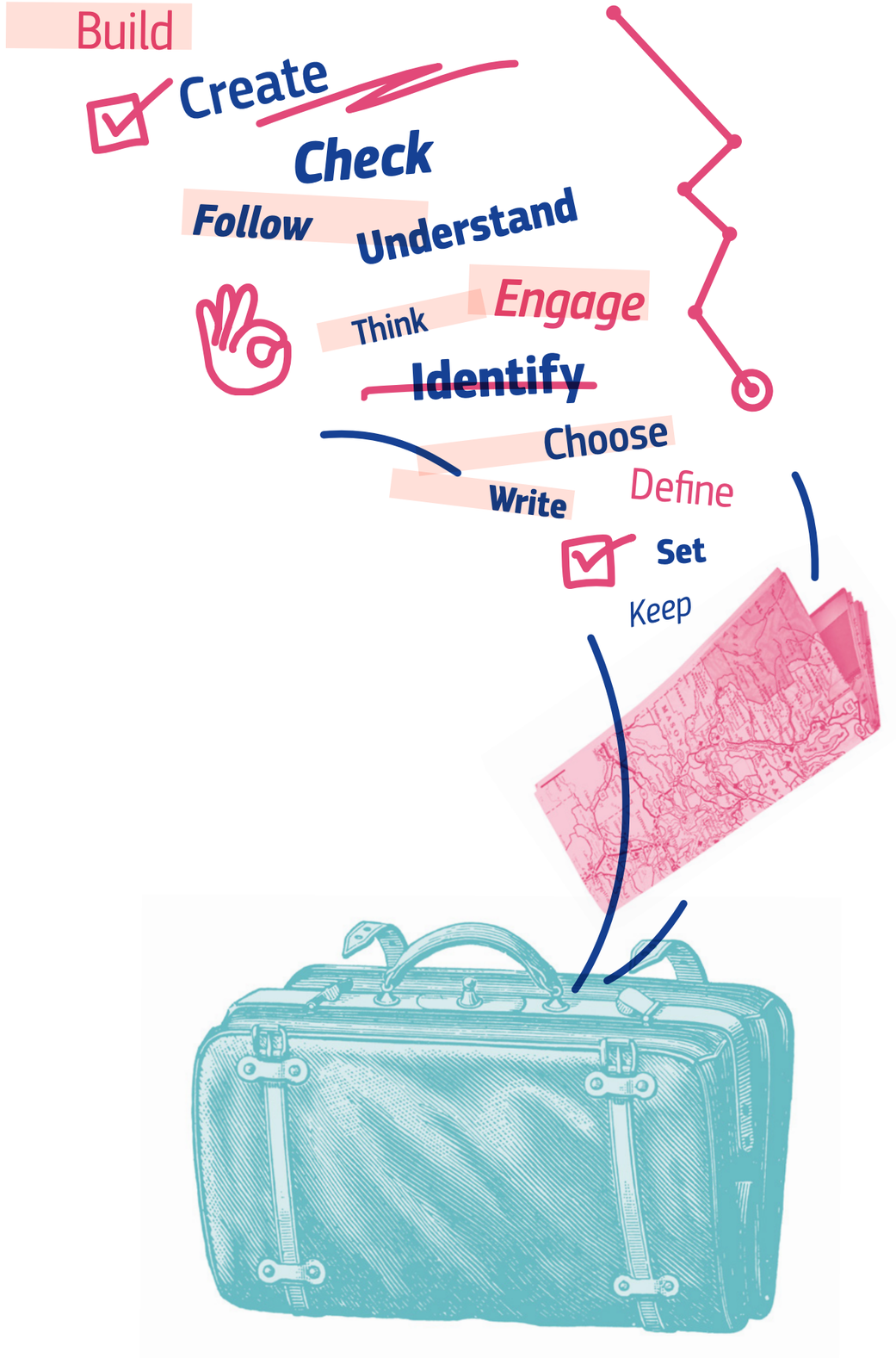
Remember your travel guide? Start by browsing it.
Make sure your plan is in line with the communication objectives you described in your strategy, as well as your target audiences, messages, activities, channels and indicators.

Build your communication plan

Think of your plan as a **calendar** and decide what to do by month.
Prioritise your main objectives and target audiences.
Don't forget to include your annual communication budget and agree on how resources will be spent. Use the template in **Annex 2**.

Keep your plan and partners up-to-date

Be prepared for a **change in direction**: your #CommsJourney may be full of variations and surprises! You will need to keep your plan updated and your partners engaged.



“ Identities are the beginning of everything. They are how something is recognized and understood ”

Paula Scher
graphic designer

Visualise your project

It’s time to decide the **look and feel** of your project. Think of your project as a brand, with its own mission and personal traits. Remember that your project is unique. Be recognisable, but don’t forget to be consistent, across the different channels and tools.

Create your visual identity

A visual identity includes all **visual elements** (i.e.: logo, font, images) that can be associated with your project. It reflects your communication strategy, the context of the Programme and underpins all your communication activities.

A visual identity represents who you are and lets you be easily recognised by your target audience. It visualises your **values** and has an **impact** on how the project is perceived. Your visual identity will be used for:

- your project website
- digital material (Power-Point presentations, documents, e-mail signature...)
- printed material (posters, brochures...) – wherever possible, adopt a paper-free approach
- social media accounts
- promotional material (mugs, pens, t-shirts...)*

Brainstorm with your partners

Discuss together about possible styles, colours and visual elements. Identify one person in the project consortium who will **collect partners’ ideas**. This information will be essential for graphic designers to come up with good proposals. Get inspired @ Design Inspiration, Canva.com

Design your logo

A logo is a symbol made up of text and images that identifies your project. A good logo shows what your project does and why it matters. There is one golden rule to follow: **“keep it sweet and simple”**!

* Sustainability is at the heart of EU programmes. Make sure you “go green” and opt for solutions that are environmentally-friendly. → More info: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/pdf/other/EC_Guide_Sustainable_Meetings_and_Events.pdf

Choose your visual elements

Your visual identity consists of:

a **colour palette**
Useful tools: 🔗 Colordesigner, 🔗 Typeinspiration.com

fonts
Useful libraries: 🔗 Google Fonts, 🔗 Exljbris

illustrations and **images**
Useful image banks: 🔗 Unsplash, 🔗 Pixabay

icons
Useful resources: 🔗 Flaticon, 🔗 Iconsvg

Keep your visual elements harmonised and balanced.
When using images, illustrations and fonts, make sure you are always compliant with the copyright and personal data protection rules applicable in your country. Jump to section 4 and learn more.

As a picture is worth a thousand words, be mindful when choosing your **images**!
Make sure your selection is as **diverse** and **inclusive** as possible. Here are some tips:

DOs

- Use images portraying people with disabilities, people of different genders, ethnicities, age, sizes, cultures and sexual orientations.
- Use images representing women and persons with disabilities in active roles and persons from ethnic minorities working in highly qualified jobs.

DON'Ts

- Avoid picturing typically underrepresented groups in specific contexts only, for example a same-sex family in the context of LGBTIQ rights.
- Avoid images that convey stereotypical views, for example, women as passive, people of ethnic Roma background living in poverty or persons with disabilities as weak or dependent on others.

For more inspiration, check out 🔗 **Images that change the world**, a guidebook by Swedish photographer Tomas Gunnarson.

Ensure accessibility

Accessible design means making sure that as many people as possible can enjoy and benefit from your work! After creating your visuals, make sure they are easily accessible for people with hearing, visual, cognitive or attention impairment.
Remember to:

- Use **patterns** in charts or add **descriptive texts** to enable accessibility for people with colour-blindness
- Avoid **flashing lights** in videos so as not to trigger a seizure in people with epilepsy

➔ For more tips and tricks, have a look at the 🔗 WC3 WAI homepage and the accessibility section of the 🔗 Europa Web Guide.

Get inspired by other EU-funded projects

➔ Browse examples of other EU-funded projects and their visual identities to get inspired!

🔗 Erasmus+ Project Results Platform
🔗 European Solidarity Corps Project Results Platform
🔗 Creative Europe Project Results Platform

Display the EU emblem

Show that “you are doing this thanks to the EU”! Beneficiaries of EU funds must use the European emblem in their communications to **acknowledge the support** received by the European Union.
Have a look at the 🔗 corporate guidelines issued by the European Commission and check the rules to follow.

Displaying the EU emblem raises awareness among EU citizens of how the EU budget is being spent and shows the added value of EU Programmes. Remember that the use of the EU emblem is **mandatory** and constitutes a requirement listed in the grant agreement signed by the beneficiary.

Write “**Co-funded by the European Union**” or “**Funded by the European Union**” as appropriate next to or under the EU emblem, depending on the nature of your funding.

Funded by the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union

The name of the European Union shall always be spelled out in full.

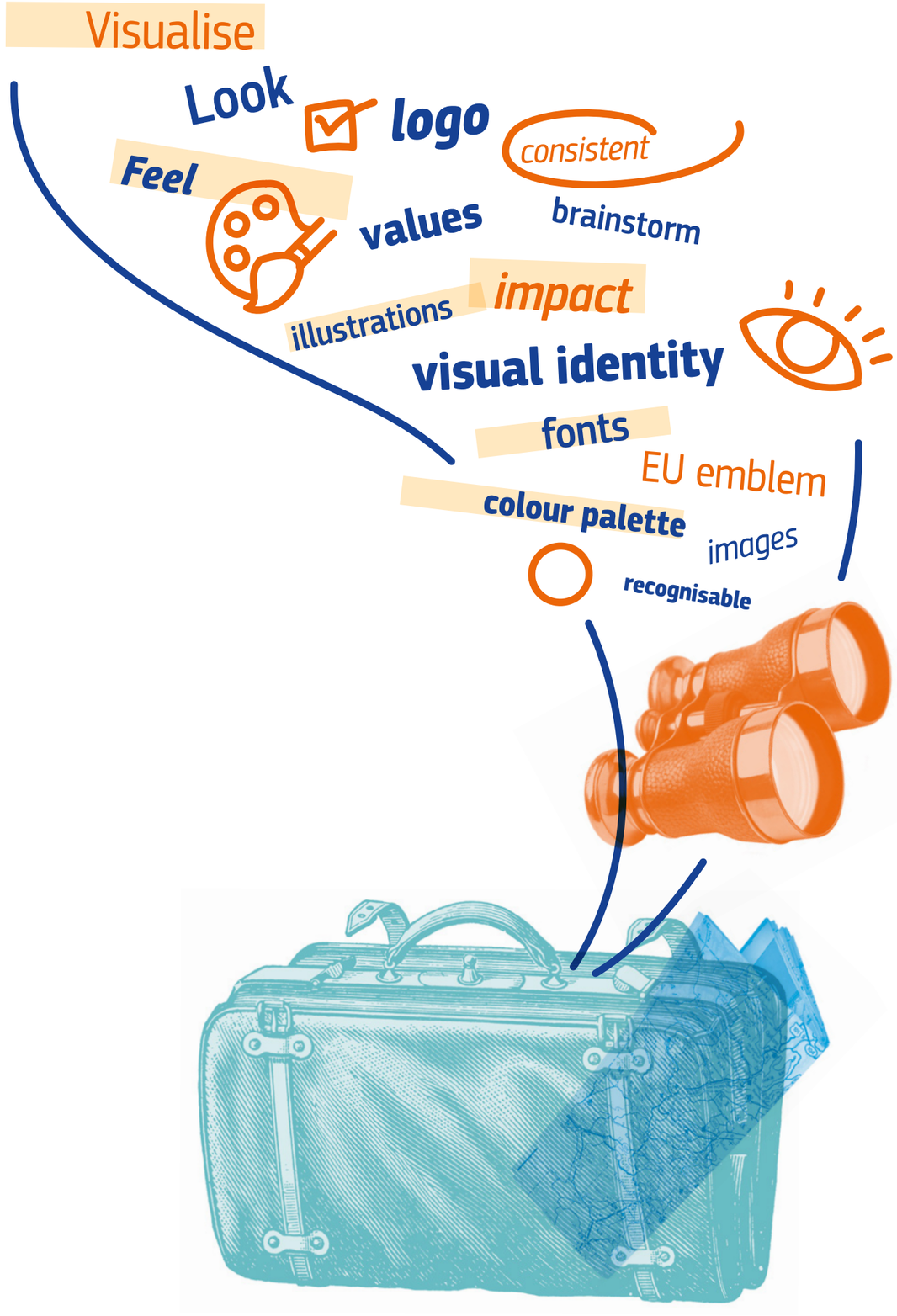
Do not add the name of the programme to the funding statement.

Funded by the European Union
Name of the programme

Do not write the name of the programme in conjunction with the EU emblem.

NAME OF THE PROGRAMME

→ You can check out the complete guidelines and download the EU emblem here.



“ It’s not all about content. It’s all about stories. It’s not all about stories. It’s all about **great** *stories. ”*

Mitch Joel
entrepreneur

Write
your project stories

YOUR PROJECT
#CommsJourney

Tell others about your project from day one!

Document your journey and turn your destination into a compelling read! Let your target audience know what you are up to: from your project goals and partners’ roles to activities or outputs, your project stories can inspire the public, policymakers and organisations that are active in your field.

Collecting experiences is part of the journey itself. Telling your stories will allow your target audience to travel and connect with you across your #CommsJourney. Letting others know about your project will bring you new opportunities and partnerships.

Distinguish between information and storytelling

While **information** involves providing factual data, **storytelling** is the art of building a narrative which **engages** an audience.
Keep this in mind when you set your communication objectives.

→ For example:

Information	**Storytelling**
The project consortium is composed by the following project partners:....	**Meet our project partners! We will introduce you with them on a monthly basis – Today we will start with our project coordinator, Mrs..**

Choose your visual elements

You can display your content in **different formats**. Depending on your communication objectives and target audiences, your content format can carry a more formal or informal **tone of voice**. Some formats serve mainly **information purposes**, others are better suited for a **storytelling approach**.

→ Have a look at the table below:

Content formats

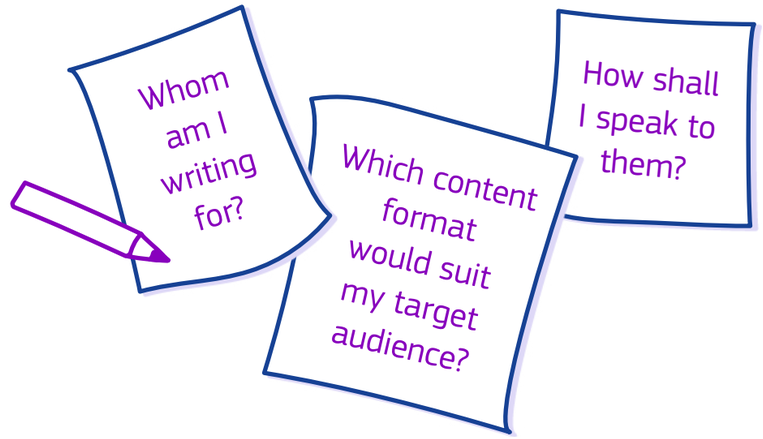
	Web content	**News**	**Press Release**	**Social media post**	**Communication material**
COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE	Information and storytelling	Storytelling	Information and storytelling	Storytelling	Information and storytelling
TONE OF VOICE	Formal and informal	Formal and informal	Formal	Informal	Formal and informal
EXAMPLES OF COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY	Web page "About" describing the project and its goals	Monthly or bi-monthly project newsletter News regarding your project being featured at an important event or by a known media.	Press release announcing the final conference where project results will be presented to stakeholders and media.	Post showing with a photo or video an activity organised by the project.	E-brochures, factsheets or infographics about the project's objectives and results.

Create your content strategy

With this overview in mind, gather your team and discuss **which content format** would serve your purposes.
When preparing your content, think first **who you are writing for**.
This will determine:

- the **content type**:
  a news article, a blog post, a web page, a social media post.
- the **tone of voice**:
  it is not what you say, but **how** you say it. This includes not only the words you choose, but their order, rhythm and pace.
- the **channel** to use:
  website, social media, radio, press, podcasts.

Don't forget that **content production** is part of your communication strategy and plan (jump back to section 1): set your **content timeline** on a monthly basis and integrate it accordingly in your communication plan.



Think digital

When planning your content, think of the **channels** you can use to publish your stories. How can you best reach your target audience? Whether you choose a website or social media channels, your stories will most likely be promoted **digitally**.

Digital is the new normal, and it's also the most environmentally friendly. Web writing has replaced print writing in the majority of cases and has become the most preferred way of communication. It is an **interactive** form of writing, where links and multimedia content appear together with text and your chances to engage with your audience are higher.

The golden rules of digital content writing

- **Keep it short and simple**:
  people tend to stop reading after the first paragraph
- **Prefer active verbs to passive**:
  it makes reading faster and more fluid
- **Use headings and paragraphs**:
  structure your content and improve readability
- **Include links, catchy visuals and multimedia content:**
  make your content appealing and resourceful

Write

1. your **project summary**

First impressions count! Your project summary is likely to be the first type of content your target audiences will read on your website, your communication material and on the European Commission project results platforms. When writing your summary, keep it short and add bullet points to make it clearer. Follow this structure:

- **Background**:
  Why did you apply for this programme?
  What are the needs your project addresses?
- **Objectives**:
  What do you want to achieve with your project?
- **Implementation**:
  What activities will you implement and what is the number and profile of the participants involved?
- **Results**:
  What results and impact do you expect your project to have?

2. your **news**

Make your story sparkle and **attract your readers** to your #CommsJourney! Think of what's new from your project and if it would interest or inspire your target audience. It could be an activity you have recently organised or a result you have recently produced. Consider the following tips:

- Begin with the **most important fact**:
  your intro needs to grab the reader's attention instantly;
- Focus on answering the **five W's**:
  "Who?", "What?", "When?", "Where?", "Why?" in the "lead", the main paragraph immediately following the title;
- Remember that **timeliness** matters:
  an event is more newsworthy the sooner it is reported;
- Make sure your news is **relevant**; is it connected with a hot topic?
- Don't forget the potential of "**prominence**":
  if you have involved a **public figure** in your project (i.e: a Minister, an entrepreneur), your news will look more captivating.

3. your **press release**

A press release is a well-structured text sent to journalists, which carries a formal tone and disseminates clear information. A press release serves to "create" **the news** – its main aim is to be re-used by journalists and be featured in the media.

- Focus on the **five W's**:
  Who, what, where, when, why
- Your title shall **carry the news**:
  "EU project reveals.." or "The Ministry of Education participates in EU project final conference.." or "Two millions of EU funding allocated to EU project fostering sustainability"
- Include **quotes** by your project coordinator or a relevant key player: this is what journalists are mostly interested in
- Add relevant **data**, **links** and **contact information**

All the press releases by the European Commission are available at this link – you could browse the Press Corner to draw inspiration from them for your own press releases.

4. your **social media** post

Social media writing is **short**, **sharp** and **punchy**! It uses a limited number of characters, which makes your communication more engaging but also challenging. Text and multimedia content like images, animated visuals and videos become part of the same narrative.

Find below a few **tips** to write effective social media posts:

- **Identify which social media channel/s you want to use**
  Social media are not all the same – depending on your target audiences and resources, identify your preferred channel/s. (learn more in section 4).

- **Learn to speak your audience/s' language**
  Language differs according to the age of your audience. Learn how your target audiences speak to better connect with them. You could ask them a question, use a quote or a set of emojis and encourage them to comment under your post and share their experience.

- **Use multimedia content**
  Social media is all about **visual communication**. Images, videos or infographics catch the user's attention much faster and effectively than text on its own. They tell a story and can engage the audience emotionally.

- Images: make sure you apply the right dimension and resolution.
- Videos: try not to exceed one-minute duration
- Infographics: visualise numbers and data

→ For links and resources, jump back to section 2.

Be creative with your content ideas
Portray your project participants, feature your event and activities by doing a live stream, showing a set of multiple photos or by organising a poll. Mix it up: a varied and engaging content planning establishes a solid and long-lasting relationship with your audience.

Finish your post with a "call to action"
What would you like your target audience to do after reading your post? This is more commonly known as a "**call to action**". Invite the reader to visit your website, share your post, add a comment, click on a shared link or leave a reaction.

Use the right #hashtags
Hashtags work as **labels** and **tags** on social media which make it easier for the user to find news and content about a specific issue. The user interested in a certain topic can use the search via hashtag (e.g. #erasmusPlus or #SolidarityCorps) and find related content. Make sure to find the hashtags relevant for your project in order to be found by prospective participants – or even create your own! The Twitter Help Centre also provides you with a very brief summary of how to use hashtags correctly and effectively. Free websites like **hashtagify** or **all hashtag** help you identify the best hashtag for your purposes. In case you prefer to use an app, **Hashtag Expert** (iOs, for Instagram) or **Leetags** (Android) could be of help.

5. your **communication material**

Are you organising or attending an event and would like to **promote** your project? Remember to **think digital** and apply the **web writing golden rules**. If you opt for limited printed information material, like factsheets and brochures, or a few gadgets do not forget to:

- apply the **three R's**: reduce, reuse, recycle
- always use your **project's visual identity** (jump to section 2)
- if you offer gadgets, choose them responsibly (i.e. **eco-labelled**, fair-trade and can be reused for practical purposes)
- use eye-catching headlines to make your material stand out

Sustainability and **digital** are core values of the European Commission. This includes the reduction of waste and mindful production. We encourage you to opt for the digital versions instead of printed materials, as this will contribute to a more sustainable and digital approach!

Be inclusive!

It goes without saying that **words matter**! Inclusive language aims to neither exclude nor discriminate against any group of persons, due to e.g. gender or ethnicity. Avoid words, phrases or other linguistic terms that foster stereotypes of any kind such as racist or sexist.

DOs

Apply gender-neutral language which considers people in general, e.g.
"**People** do not fully appreciate the impact **they** have on the environment."

Apply gender-neutral language by not using the gender description, e.g.
"The eco-action group **chair** Moni Patel works closely with the **chair/chairperson** of the social action committee Matthieu Dubois to plan events".

DON'Ts

Avoid gender-biased language which favours one gender over the other, e.g
"Every day, each citizen must ask **himself** how he can fulfil **his** civic duties". Write "**themselves**" instead.

Avoid language that fosters stereotypes of any kind through e.g. using gendered adjectives or irrelevant information about gender, e.g.
"The eco-action group **chairman** Moni Patel works closely with the **chairman** of the social action committee Matthieu Dubios to plan events".

Accessibility in a language context refers to making your text readable and understandable for as many people as possible! People with reading disorders like dyslexia or visually impaired people require the assistance of a screen reader. Remember to:

- Avoid long titles, abbreviations and acronyms
- Use simple language and short sentences

You could also use this 🔗 **free Text to Speech tool** to check the readability of your final text.

➔ Read more about:

🔗 Claire's Clear Writing Tips
🔗 UNESCO Web Style Guidelines
🔗 EIGE Toolkit on inclusive language
🔗 The Publication Office of the EU on Accessibility
🔗 Sustainable meetings and events

Write

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place”

Bernard Shaw
playwright

Share
your project results

Communication goes beyond the activity itself, like writing news about your project or a post on social media. Communication happens when you **effectively reach** your target audiences and manage to **engage** with them.

To do so, it is essential to **share** your stories and results through the right **channels**. This step is a key moment of your #CommsJourney and show how your project can make a difference!

What are “project results”?

Project results are tangible or intangible **outputs** of your project, such as publications (i.e. manuals, reports), new working methods or participants’ experiences. They are ways to generate **impact**, either by the project partners or by other stakeholders. Project results can be reusable and can inspire further work in the same field.

Sharing is caring

Do not keep your project stories and results for yourself - let them **speak** for your project consortium, across different countries and people’s experiences.

Sharing your story and your results is important to:

- acknowledge your achievements
- spread collective knowledge
- build a community and learning culture

Collective knowledge is at the heart of EU programmes’ dissemination principles. EU-funded projects are a **goldmine** of tools, resources and good practices at the disposal of European citizens.

Identify the right communication channel/s.

They help you spread your message or information to a greater audience. Channels have different features and affect the way your audiences receive the message. To choose your channels wisely, follow the steps below.

Use websites

A **website** is the main "house" of your content. It showcases information, stories and results about your project and is the most comprehensive channel to use. In case you manage a medium-small project, you could opt for a **landing page** or a section on the project partners' websites.

A website or a landing page ensures your **project's digital presence**. It is an opportunity to promote your stories and results and leave a trace of your accomplishments.

- → Plan your website/landing page structure and order your ideas in a mind map
- → Make sure you apply your visual identity
- → Decide what content you need
- → Buy the domain name in case you opt for a project website
- → Add the content to your website and optimize the SEO (search engine optimization)
- → Publish and promote your website via the project or partners' social media accounts

As your website represents your central means of communication, make sure to design it as inclusively as possible. This concerns its accessibility, but also the selection of diverse and inclusive stories. Jump back to section 3 to find out more about inclusive writing and to section 2 for tips on how to design and structure your website in an accessible manner.

Share your results on the Project Results Platform

The Project Result Platforms are **databases** that contain descriptions, results and contact information of all projects funded under the Erasmus+, Creative Europe and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

The platform is a **free dissemination resource** to make your project results available to others. You can **inspire** and **get inspired** from the pool of good practice projects that were identified as exemplary in terms of policy relevance, communication potential, impact or design.

Share your project's results on the platforms.
Head back to section 3 and the elements that are of interest for your colleagues.

Identify your social media channels

From Facebook to Instagram, TikTok, Twitter or LinkedIN, there are many **platforms** to choose from. Identify the one(s) that seems to fit your project, purpose and resources best.

Social media are not all the same; it depends who you are trying to reach. It's worth taking some time to choose the most suitable platform.

Research about channels

Every social media channel has its unique features, pros and cons. To decide which channel to use, some research can be helpful. Here are some questions you could ask yourself:

- Which channels do my **target audiences** use?
- Do similar projects already have a social media presence? If yes, which channels are they using?
- Which **resources** do I need to manage these channels?

Plan your outreach

Posting on social media follows two golden principles:

→ **Timing**
Every platform has its **peak time** where it records higher engagement and therefore a higher exposure of your post. Choose the best time to increase your visibility.

→ **Frequency**
Less is more! Research suggests that one post per day is optimal, with a maximum of two per day. On the other side, three posts per week are a minimum.

Consider creating your own **social media calendar** to help you keep an overview of your upcoming social media posts. You can adjust this calendar to your needs, including information such as date, time and content of the post, the platform it is being shared on, links to be included.

Hootsuite provides you with more tips and free templates. You could simplify planning even further by incorporating a tool like Buffer or Falcon to schedule your social media activities ahead of time.

Take advantage of key communication moments

Special occasions such as anniversaries or recognized international days are the perfect moment to increase your project promotion and publicity efforts. These communication moments can serve as **hooks** to attract traffic to your posts .

Reach out to the media

Media outreach means sharing your stories and results with **journalists** who have a platform to tell it to a wider audience and maximize outreach.

Media can **multiply** the power of your message. The goal of media outreach is to earn press or digital media coverage which in turn can help your results' impact grow over time.

Define your media audience

In order to pick the right media to broadcast your story, you first need to know whom you're hoping to reach, and what's the purpose of conveying your key message to this group of people.

Build your media list

Collect journalists' contact information and create your list. Start by browsing through Google and its "News" section, or consider signing up to databases where you can access ready-to-use media lists with a monthly subscription.

Think of how to reach journalists

Like in the case of social media, keep the principles of **timing** and **communication moments** when you send your press release to the media. Remember that a well-written press release sent out at the right time and to the right people is the key to maximise outreach.

Share your results at events

Events are the perfect opportunity to **showcase** your results. They can range from small gatherings organised by project partners to bigger events, jointly organised by several stakeholders or in collaboration with EU Institutions.

An event has endless potential. Events connect you with people genuinely interested in your project and enable **direct interaction** with them. There is a wide range of formats to choose from: online exhibitions and panels, physical workshops and interactive activities, to name a few.

Think of format and timing

You can either organize **your own events** during and after your project cycle or **join events** or initiatives organized by other beneficiaries and institutions. Here are some examples and events you could join:

- events organized by your National Agency or Creative Europe Desk
- events organized by partners, such as universities or schools

Don't forget to prepare a communication plan to promote your event through your web and social media channels or via your stakeholders' own channels.

Make your event sustainable/environmentally friendly

Ask yourself the following seven questions:

- Is a physical event necessary?
- Is the venue sustainable enough?
- Is the printed and promotional material sustainable?
- Are the 3Rs applied? (Reduce, Recycle and Reuse)
- Is the catering sustainable?
- Are the accommodation and transport environmentally friendly?
- Are you sharing environmental awareness?

Read more in this 🔗 pdf guide prepared by the European Commission.

Remember inclusion. Make sure you choose a **venue** that is accessible to everyone and spacious enough, e.g. for wheelchairs or guide dogs. In case of organising a panel discussion or presentations, ensure a **diverse** selection of participants and speakers.

➔ Read more about:

- #CommsWorkout to increase impact communication of your project (video)
- Horizon 2020 Social Media Guidelines
- How to build your Horizon Europe project website
- Interreg Handbook on Media Relations
- UK NA Workshop: Sharing project success on social media

Evaluate
your #CommsJourney

Congratulations! You have reached the **last stage** of your #CommsJourney – but how did it ***really*** go? Was it successful or would there still be room for improvement?

> *"What gets measured, gets improved"*
>
> *Peter Drucker*
> entrepreneur

Evaluation in a nutshell

Evaluating your communication activities and understanding how effective they are is the last step of successful strategic communication.

There are three key moments for evaluation:

1. **Before your activity starts**
   - when choosing your indicators in the communication plan
2. **During your activity** - while monitoring your performance
3. **After your activity** – when your communication has taken place

In order to assess your communication efforts, you need to choose the right **performance indicators** when planning your activities. This will enable you to measure your success gradually and therefore improve the work you do.

What is a performance indicator?

A performance indicator is a **quantitative** or **qualitative** criterion that measures how successful your communication activity is. It can measure "how much" or "how many" or "to what extent" or "what size".

Imagine you have organized your project's final event and would like to understand if it was successful or had the impact you desired. For this, you should first make sure your objectives are **SMART** (i.e: at least 100 people participating in your event – jump back to section 1) and look at the indicators such as:

- **number of participants** who joined your event both physically and online
- **number of people** who liked or commented on the related posts social media or followed the livestream
- **number of unique visits** on the website's article about the event
- results of the **satisfaction survey** you sent after the event

Asking yourself the following questions may help you in your evaluation:

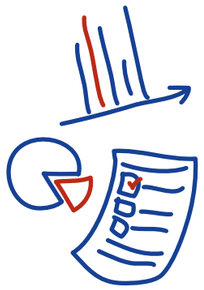
- What are the **best indicators** to measure my communication objectives?
- By looking at what I obtained through my indicators, **what should I change** to improve my communication efforts? Am I speaking to the right target audience? Is the channel correct or should I explore other possibilities?

Follow the steps below and ensure a rewarding #CommsJourney!

Choose your indicators

Depending on your communication objectives, target audiences and channels, you can identify a different **set of performance indicators** to assess your communication success. The definition of **SMART objectives** can guide you towards the right choice.

Here is a short overview of some performance indicators you can use:



Social media
reach (how many people see your content),
impressions (number of times your content is displayed),
engagement (number of interactions people have with your content with likes, comments, shares or retweets)

Website
number of visitors, time spent on the website, topical interests of visitors

Press
press coverage, number of journalists participating in your final event

Events
number of participants, feedback from participants via short surveys

To get a wider overview of indicators per channel, you can check 🔗 this pdf resource by the European Commission.

Indicators tell you if you are **doing it right or not!** Make sure your communication objectives are always consistent with your indicators. Do they really show if you actually achieved your objective? This is important for **meaningful monitoring** of your project's progress and achievements.

For example, if you want to understand whether your project had a positive impact on your target audience, the **number of likes** on your social media posts would not be a suitable indicator. You should rather look at the type of comments you've received on social media or at the results of your survey.

Refer to your communication plan

At the beginning of your #CommsJourney, you created a communication plan that included performance indicators. It is important to remember that the choice of indicators should go hand in hand with the **communication objectives you stated in your plan.**

For example, if your communication objective is to increase public interest in your project, you could check the number of unique visitors on the dedicated page on your website or if the engagement rate of your posts on social media has increased in the last month.

The more specific your communication objectives are, the more effective your evaluation will be.

Plan ahead

Evaluating communication needs **thorough planning** and thinking. Data collection happens both during and after your communication activities. Don't wait until the very last minute; keep the monitoring alive during the whole #CommsJourney.

Carry out your evaluation

Once your indicators are set, it is time to collect your data and analyse them thoroughly. A well-conducted evaluation will provide you with **helpful feedback** and new ideas for your upcoming communication activities or your next #CommsJourney.

Tailoring your activities based on your data will **improve** your outreach to your target audience and maximize the **impact** of your communication activities.

Collect your data

A useful evaluation requires gradual data collection. This will provide evidence of your communication activities' impact: did they contribute to achieving the goals you set in your communication plan?

Monitor your activity

Digital channels such as social media platforms or website providers offer **free inbuilt tools** to monitor your reach and engagement. They give you a direct and almost "live" feedback on the performance of your communication activities.

In the case of events, you could consider sending out a short survey to participants after it has taken place. Some potential questions you could ask are:

- ***How did you hear about this event?***
  – participants' answers will show you which channel worked best
- ***Have you found this event interesting and inspiring?***
  – this will provide food for thought for future formats (i.e: more time for interventions, more interactive moments)
- ***Would you like to receive additional information?***
  – this will tell you if people are interested in receiving more news about your project

Find more inspiration on 🔗 Google Survey or 🔗 Surveymonkeys; they provide good hints on how to write survey questions.

Follow-up on lessons learnt

Once you've started travelling, the journey never really ends! Take your memories with you but leave your footprints too. Celebrate your success with your project partners and note down your lessons learnt. They may come handy in the future, for your **next #CommJourney!**

→ Read more about:

🔗 DG COMM Toolkit on Evaluation
🔗 Communication Network Indicators – Supporting Guide

#CommsJourney!

ERASMUS+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS
The power of together

CREATIVE EUROPE
Push boundaries

Annex 1

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE	TARGET AUDIENCE	KEY MESSAGE	COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY	CHANNEL	INDICATORS

Annex 2

COMMUNICATION PLAN

TIMELINE	ACTIVITY	CHANNEL	OBJECTIVE SMART	TARGET AUDIENCES	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OWNER

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of the European Union