Organizația Tinerilor cu Inițiativă
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Portugal

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Communicate at your best

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Communicate at your best

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Chapter 1

Getting started

A short introduction into the basics of communication

1. Staff development

Why do we need to improve our staff's communication skills?

Communication skills are very important as, whether or not, the receiver or receivers understand what we intended to send will have an effect not only on the perception of the message but also on the relationship between us.

When employers (both from business and non-governmental sector) are asked what today's workers lack most they often say communication skills. E.U.'s "Flash barometer on employers' perception of graduate employability" revealed that more than 60% of European employers consider communication skills of their employees as very important for their business.

The reason for which employees and youth workers are having difficulties in accurately conveying their message is caused mostly by the fact that, especially in some countries that have not managed to update their educational system to the current requirements of the modern society, the formal education concentrates on the graduates using a correct form of the language but fail to prepare the future employees in using it for real situations. The formal education often doesn't consider addressing communication with respect to the needs that appear while working in a team, public speaking, using social media or using other forms than speaking or writing (trough videos, photo-voice, etc.). These require a special set of skills and attitudes that the formal system has a limited ability to develop and for which a non-formal approach could be far more effective. For NGOs to work better and for youngsters to use their talents at full potential there is a need for a non-formal approach in order to develop their teams in terms of communication.

In a professional environment, in public relations or in stakeholder management, the stakes are even higher. It probably happened to your organization also, a very good initiative that had the potential of bringing significant positive impact to the community did not reach its full potential as it missed engagement from its target group. Analyzing the causes it is often found that it had poor promotion, as its PR was not effective (posters did not draw attention as they had a poor design, press releases were not published as they were poorly drafted, the social media campaign was completely useless, etc.). Also, you may have not considered stakeholder engagement as important or found that the team didn't have the skills to start such a process and ended up with lacking the interest of the target group (thus limiting the project's outcome), lacking confidence of the community (thus missing its support) or even got in conflict with different entities. For using your resources with maximum efficiency and also for empowering young people and giving them a more significant role in their community, your NGO needs to develop its professionalism in terms of communication and stakeholder engagement.

Last, but not least, Europe is changing, becoming more interconnected than ever. Still, the process of cooperation at European level is quite complex given the multitude of different systems present and the cultural differences that exist. Needless to say, communication is one of its key elements and for NGOs to be able to bring an European dimension to the work they, their members need to have the right competencies to communicate with partners that don't necessarily share the same values and social norms. In extent to this, the skills of working and communicating in a team, which are anyway of great importance for any NGO, become far more necessary in this new context. Only by educating our staff about the intercultural aspects of teamwork and professional communication we can hope to achieve a tighter European cooperation and a more unite E.U.

2. Personal development

What do you personally gain from developing your communication skills?

Developing your communication skills will have a significant impact on you and on the ones you are working with. It will make you a better professional and will give you the skills needed to improve the services that your organization provides for the target groups it works with, contributing to their well-being.

As this manual addresses topics that are in line with the current trends in society (e.g. extended use of social media, the need for adding an updated design dimension to services provided, new means of communication), your professional competencies will be updated, satisfying your need of self-actualization. Moreover, you will be better prepared for your professional activity and that will allow you to use your potential at its top in order to bring a positive change in your community.

We have structured this manual so that it will develop the exact competencies that the organizations currently need (as the learning outcomes are derived by the current requirements of NGOs from three countries and two continents). In this way your contribution to the work of your organization will be appreciated at a higher level, increasing your self-esteem and contributing to your state of well being. Furthermore, similar benefits will be achieved trough the fact that the manual develops your competencies related to teamwork and communication, but also offers you tools needed for stakeholder engagement, thus allowing you to take more responsibilities in your organization, bring higher added value to the overall work and to climb the hierarchal structure of the NGO you belong to.

It is also worth mentioning that European studies revealed that employers highly value communication and team working skills when selecting future staff (ranking 1st and 3rd as importance when hiring new people). Developing the skills that this manual is addressing will also increase your future employment and promotion opportunities. Better chances of getting a new or better job translate to .... But we don't really need to point out how important finding a job is, do we? :)

And we cannot end this section without mentioning that the positive impact of this manual will not show only in your professional life. By developing your communication and relationship skills you will be improving your social life also, as most of the skills can be easily translated to relationships outside work, given that basic needs with respect to human interaction mostly remain the same no matter the environment.

3. New trends

How is communication changing?

The development of multimedia, the higher penetration of Internet and the increased number of mobile devices that allow us to stay connected anywhere and anytime have significantly changed the way we communicate. And this change is not just about the channels we use for sending our message. It is true that now there are several ways in which we can exchange information, ways that could not have been even imagined few years ago. Still, the big change is a different one: by experiencing these new channels of communication people have started to reject information presented in a linear, traditional way. They don't just want to read about something; they want to experience what they are reading about. And this can only be done trough photos, video, interactive applications or even multi-sensorial experiences.

Given the abundance of information that we can now access via Internet, a simple text has great chances of being ignored if not accompanied by a representative photo, a video or some kind of interaction. Newspapers are loosing a great amount of readers that are now more interested in reading the information on the Internet, where they can find an enriched, interactive content, that is easily accessible anywhere.

Moreover, the Internet and social media are offering virtually anyone the possibility of communicating to the masses information that is not filtered anymore by the editors of different mass-media companies or, sometimes, by the interests that were hidden behind them. Not only that this has put pressure on communicators to be more transparent and honest, but it also allowed small entities to be more public about their work, extend their reach to a higher number of people and even to initiate structural changes in their society. It can now be observed that almost each behavioral revolution, big demonstrations and even uprisings around the globe have now a social media component.

This higher reach of a message brings also a different element to the equation. The target group is more heterogeneous, more diverse. As a consequence, messages conveyed trough these new media now have to be formulated as simple as possible so that they can be understood by anyone, no matter their background. Moreover, videos, photographs, info graphics, animations, are useless if they don't connect to the viewer by offering authenticity. We should no longer share information, we should share a story.

The same accessibility of mass media has also another important effect: it allows stakeholders to be more vocal. What was before a small group of people that were unhappy with a project, turned into large masses of people fighting for what is right and defending that group. It is not uncommon now that even huge projects are being cancelled because of not properly engaging their stakeholders.

In professional communication, more often than not, in the competition between two different projects, it happens that the one with a better presentation and with a better communication strategy is winning the support, even if the other would have had a better outcome. This occurs because this outcome of the better project was not presented to decision makers in a way in which they can understand its value. Moreover, referring to the same environment, given the globalized world in which we live now, team communication has to take into account not just the message but also the cultural differences that exist between members.

What can be a short conclusion of the above findings? "Communication in the 21st century is no more about a one-way delivery of texts or speeches; it is about an interactive delivery content!". This could be of the simplest ways to express it. For doing an effective work we need to use as much of the technologies existing at this point, to integrate video, audio and interactive features into it and to communicate in an authentic, transparent and honest way, with a strong emphasize on the emotional aspects!

Communication in the 21st century is no more about a one-way delivery of texts or speeches; it is about an interactive delivery of content!

4. Basic elements of communication

What is communication all about?

Elements defining communication

Communication is basically a transfer of information, usually between different individuals or groups. It involves a:

- sender (the one who has the information and wants to transmit it),
- receiver (the one who gets the information),
- message (the information that is meant to be sent),
- channel (medium trough which the information is delivered e.g. by phone, by paper),
- code (a set of rules that are known by both the sender and the receiver which are used to send the message e.g. language),
- feedback (a response from the receiver after getting the message e.g. an emotion triggered by receiving some news).

Verbal and non-verbal communication

We usually refer to communication as an oral or written exchange of information. The use of sounds and language to transmit a message is called as verbal communication.

Still, more than 70% of a message is sent by non-verbal means (tone of voice, expression, gestures, clothing, proximity to the receiver, etc.). Try to imagine that the cat in the picture is saying, "*I am so happy about this!*". Is your impression the one sent in a verbal way (about really being happy)? Or is the non-verbal message just too strong for you to believe that she is happy?

It is often considered that communication is inevitable. It is impossible not to communicate. Even if you are not saying or writing anything, your behavior, the way you dress, the way you are sitting or standing, everything sends some message. Even if you completely isolate yourself from the rest of the world you are still communicating, saying: "I don't want to meet anyone!". The things you do, the way you behave, the expression of your face, they eye contact, and the tone of your voice, each of these "says" something to the other. And more important, they all can be misinterpreted.

It is not just what you are saying that matters. How you say it is equally or even more important!

Keep in mind that it is not just what you are saying that matters. How you say it is often more important!

Moreover, even referring to verbal communication, if we take a minute to analyze the process, we will notice that whenever we communicate something we are not sending just one message. Take, for instance, the following communication, happening at work, between a superior and an employee:

It may seem like quite straightforward: one person is noticing that another has arrived late. Well, this is just the objective part of the message. Getting deeper into the meaning, we also observe that the person is also sending some other information. Firstly, by scolding him, she is emphasizing that she is the superior, so something about the relation between the two is transmitted. Secondly, by saying this, she also states that she is not pleased with this so it should not happen again, so a call for action is sent. Last, she is also saying something about herself, that she is not very tolerant with people not being punctual.

What we generally think of being "one message" is actually four messages:

- an objective one: "I have observed that you are late again"
- a self-disclosure: "I am not happy when people are running late!"
- a call for action: "Please don't be late again!"
- something about the relationship: "I am your superior!"

Why is it important to know about these things? Well, knowing that in communication is never about one message and that we are sending a lot of messages, even if this is not really our intention, makes us more aware about what mistakes can happen, where errors can occur and why.

Let's imagine that our attitude towards a new colleague is neutral and we don't engage with him in any conversation. Nothing bad can come out of this, right? Well, not quite! This person can interpret the silence as a sign of hostility and get the impression that we don't really like him, so he will behave accordingly. We basically did nothing wrong, but because there are so many aspects involved by communication, there are now tensions between us.

Thinking of another example, we are asking one of your organization's volunteers to bring us a stapler. Simple, right? Well, again, not quite! Even if the message we are sending is that we need a stapler, we are also saying something about our relation. Given that he is a new volunteer, he can understand from our message that, as he has just joined your team, we are considering him as our inferior. And again tensions are rising without the sender knowing why.

Let's think of something that probably we all did at one point: running late to a meeting. We can arrive there with the best intentions but this will not prevent the other from thinking the he is not important to us, as we did not even bother to show up on time. Without even being there, we have communicated to that person a negative thing, and this will probably affect the following interaction.

Always take into account the "hidden" aspects of communication

For all these and many more aspects that were not approached here, it is really important that when we communicate we take into account all the different faces of the process and we make sure that all the messages we are sending cannot be misinterpreted.

5. Communication and teamwork

What rules should be considered while communicating with your team?

Before going trough different rules, tips and tricks that you should be aware of in order to communicate in the best way with your team, it is really important that you also understand why these are important. For this, we have prepared a questionnaire in which you will have to reflect on how different interactions make you feel. In order to get the best results, please think about real circumstances in which you have faced those situations or try to imagine them as accurately as possible.

1. Is it disturbing for you when, in a meeting, the person to whom you are speaking ...

Is not paying attention to what you are saying?	□ Yes	□No
Is not looking at you and it is distracted by other things (e.g. telephone, a conversation with another colleague)?	□ Yes	□No
Is using the chair like a bed, almost falling from it	□ Yes	□No
Doesn't let you speak, interrupting you or not offering you the space for speaking	□ Yes	□No
Refuses to participate, saying that he doesn't know anything about the subject or he is not interested in it	□ Yes	□No
Is rude to you, even offensive	□ Yes	□No
Concentrates too much on one subject, so you loose precious time and the other topics on the agenda are not approached	□ Yes	□No

2. Did you enjoy it when, in a meeting, the person to whom you were speaking ...

Showed interest by nodding, asking you questions and answering to your requests	□ Yes	□No
Got involved in the conversation and contributed to it with his/her knowledge and experience	□ Yes	□No
Was open to other opinions	□ Yes	□No
Managed the time properly, setting up priorities	□ Yes	□No
Had a positive attitude, smiling, saying "Thank you!", encouraging others, being polite	□ Yes	□No

By answering the previous questions, you have also answered the big question: "What rules should be considered while communicating with your team?". It is as simple as that! The things that are disturbing for you, for which you answered "Yes" in the first part of the questionnaire, will also be disturbing for others if you will act in that way. Respectively, the things you enjoy when others are doing will also be enjoyable for the team when you will start behaving like that.

To make things simple for you, on the next page we have provided a list of some of the rules you should consider while interacting with your team. But we will start here by giving you the most important of them all: "Put yourself in the other's shoes!". Do you enjoy it when the other person is showing interest in what you are saying, leaves you space to contribute, is also contributing himself, is polite, positive and smiling? Then you should also act the same when interacting with your teammates!

Process check

Sure, things sound great on paper and you are probably thinking that anyway you are following these rules all the time. They come as natural to most of us! Well, not exactly. It often happens that team members, for lacking time or skills or for being too concentrated on the topic, ignore these and the whole meeting turns into chaos. For these situations, we are providing you with a simple yet effective tool for insuring that your team is doing its best at having a good interaction: the "**Process check**".

It works in a very simple way: whenever you are in a meeting freeze the discussions, take your list of rules that should be followed while working in a team and ask the members to answer to the following questions:

1. Which of the rules is each of us managing to follow?
2. Which of the rules is each of us not managing to follow?
3. Which of the rules should the others pay more attention to?

Do a "Process check" during the meeting

Answering these questions will give your team members the opportunity to self-asses their own behavior in the group and also the chance of offering feedback to others with respect to the interactions that are taking place.

After the "Process check" the meeting can be resumed, not before asking the participants once more to pay more attention to the results of this short evaluation moment.

Rules you should be aware of when interacting with your teammates.

Rule no. 1 – Showing interest

- Sit up straight;
- Listen, don't just hear;
- Answer questions addressed to you and ask questions for clarification;
- Nod to show interest;
- Track the speaker (eye contact & no distractions);

Rule no. 2 – Take turns speaking – Give turns speaking

- Get involved in the conversation;
- Let others speak too and encourage others to share their ideas;
- Do a **Process check** when it is needed;

Rule no. 3 – Thinking is more important than knowing

- Don't get stuck with "I don't know." It is not just about the result, it is also about the process;
- You are not expected to "know" but to "think". You can speculate, guess or give the best answer you can. ("*I'm not sure about that, but I think _____.*");

Rule no. 4 – Offer constructive feedback

- How else can you say that without being hurtful? - "*I think what you are saying is really stupid*" vs. "*I don't necessarily agree with that, as I think that …*". Give examples when your suggestion worked better;
- Be open to other opinions;
- Think from the other's perspective before you challenge what he/she is stating;

Rule no. 5 – Make a discussions plan

- Know your objective and stick to it; avoid secondary discussions;
- Set your priorities;
- Manage the time (e.g. have a time-keeper or a discussion facilitator);

Rule no. 6 – Be positive ☺

- Have a positive attitude, see things as an opportunity for learning, not as a problem;
- Never forget so smile;
- Say "Very good!" or "Thank you!" when valuable input is provided;

6. Intercultural communication

How to handle work in a multicultural environment?

A matter of perspective

How would you feel if you would meet somebody for the first time and that person would spit at your feet? For a lot of people the answer to this question would be "Angry, maybe even aggressive!". Spitting has a very negative and offensive connotation. Well, there is a group of people in Africa who would answer: "Oh, very happy! It means that I just made a new friend!". This is because, for them, spitting at each other's feet is the way to greet somebody. If you find this strange, think what would be that group's reaction when somebody they meet would try to shake their hand. Same as yours now!

Greetings, distance between people, ways of touching the other, eye contact, the way people drink, eat or talk, all these are governed by different norms in different cultures. Sometime in the history of each culture it was decided that some gestures are desirable in given contexts, some are acceptable, some should be avoided or some are even offensive or aggressive, even if they don't actually physically hurt anyone. A man shaking hands with a woman is courteous in some societies, somehow accepted in others and even totally unacceptable by the norms of different cultures.

Different cultures around the world have not always been so connected as they are now and their evolution was quite different. For this, each society decided or was forced to decide because of different external factors on different rules that members were supposed to follow. The important thing is to be aware that this huge diversity of norms exists and to be ready to accept them as a normal element of life.

So, for next time, try not to directly feel offended or aggressed when somebody with a different cultural background is getting too close to you, speaks louder than you consider normal, is reluctant to shake hands or even spits at your feet. Instead, take a second to understand if this is not actually a normal behavior by that person's social norms and, if it makes you feel uncomfortable, explain this to that person in a polite way.

Chapter 2

Professional communication

Using different media for communication

1. Email

How to write a proper email?

Emails are the basic means of communication between organisations. They are free, quick and very versatile, giving you the opportunity to include various types of content. Even if, more or less, anyone can say that they have used emails in their work, there are some basic rules that need to be taken into consideration when addressing your partner or other stakeholders by email.

1. Is email the right choice?

Emails arrive almost instantly to their destination but this doesn't mean that they are also instantly read or that you can get an immediate reply. The frequency one checks its email varies from several times a day to several times a month, so it can be a very short or long wait for getting an answer that you need. Moreover, you do not have the certitude that the email has actually arrived to the inbox of the other person, as different issues can occur, from server problems preventing the arrival of the email to SPAM filters rejecting your message. Have this in mind while sending an email and take into consideration all the aspects involved while choosing this type of communication.

2. Think about the recipient of your email

When addressing someone, try to have in mind that the other person is most likely:

- Busy, without too much time to read the email through and with limited time to answer, so be as short and concise as possible, while still including all the needed information for a relevant reply;
- Having own perceptions and interests on things, that can be different than yours, so you need to find a common point about this;
- Enthusiastic about being thanked for the work you are asking to do;
- Happy to receive a compliment. Your words will be appreciated (as long as you don't overdo it);

3. Choose a proper subject for the email!

With inboxes getting filled with emails, a lot of them unsolicited, important email can easily get ignored. Try to fill in the subject line with a topic that means something to your reader and that states in just a few words what is the communication about. Don't just use "*Important!*", "*Proposal*" or "*Questions*", but be specific about what you are addressing in the body of the email (e.g. "*Question regarding the volunteers of the Future Capital project*").

Also, given the limitations of various emails, keep in mind that only the first words usually appear in the subject line of the recipient, so try to keep things short (e.g. from the previous subject, one can see just "*Question regarding the volunteers…*").

It is generally considered that one email should address one single topic (e.g. if you need to write about two projects, you should send two different emails).

4. Always start with a greeting!

Even if you are sending email to a close partner or close teammate, it is always polite to start it with a typical greeting. If you are addressing a person with whom you have a formal relation, you can use "*Dear Sir/ Madam,*", "*Dear Sir or Madam,*", "*To whom it may concern*:" or "*Dear Mr/Ms Clark,*". Keep in mind that you should always use family names when addressing in a formal way (for Ms. Emily WATSON, you should use "*Ms. Watson*" and never "*Ms. Emily*"). Also, when addressing women, always use "*Ms.*" instead of "*Mrs.*" or "*Miss*" as, no matter if the woman you are addressing is married or unmarried, has changed her name or not, Ms. is always correct.

For informal relations, you can use – *"Hi Victor,"*, *"Hello Joana,"*, *"Dear colleague,"*, or even a simple *"Hey," or "Hello,"*. No matter the situation, you should remember that salutations are always followed by a comma *","* (except for "To whom it may concern:").

5. Be sure to state your purpose or the subject you wish to refer to from the beginning!

The fact that you know what you wish to write about does not mean that the other will also know. If you are referring to a project, make sure you clearly state which is this project from the beginning, using the common reference that you have (e.g. *project name* for discussions with partners or *project identification number* for discussions with financing agencies). Whether you are addressing a partnership proposal, complaint or enquiry, you should state this from the beginning in order to create the proper context for your communication (in this way, all that follows will be connected to the specific topic of communication and things will be more clear in the mind of the person reading).

Typical ways of starting an email can be "*I am writing in reference to (about) …*", "*The* *reason I am addressing this email is to get some clarifications about…"* or anything related.

Keep in mind that, for more informal emails, before stating your purpose, you can also include some pleasantry, just to restate your close relation and the fact that you are interested not only in the professional aspects of the other but also in more personal ones (e.g. "*Long time no heard! How are things with your organisation?", "Hope you are well!*" or "*How are you? How have things been lately?*").

6. Have in mind the limitations of verbal communication

As you found out in the first part of this manual, more than 70% of a message is sent by non-verbal means (tone of voice, expression, gestures, etc.). Still, in writing, non-verbal communication is almost inexistent. Keep in mind that the other person cannot feel your tone of voice, cannot see if you are smiling or being angry, so different messages can have different meanings.

Take this simple example: What do you understand when reading the following sentence: "*In the end, are you coming?"*

Did you think that it is a simple question related to what was your final decision about coming to one place? Or maybe you perceived it as the upset remark of someone angry about your hesitation whether coming or not.

People usually don't think this so much and tend to fill in the missing information (in this case the tone of the speaker) with their personal impressions or even with their prejudice related to you or the topic, which often can be inaccurate. Always think about possible misinterpretations with regard to what you are writing!

Also, even if in professional communication emoticons are not accepted, in more informal communication you can sometimes use them in order to express different emotions (again, with the condition of not doing it too much).

7. Try to give all the relevant information but also to be brief while describing what you want to communicate!

We live in an age where we are assaulted by information on a daily basis and this has severely decreased our attention span. People are no longer enthusiastic about reading long letters because this would simply take too much of the time that they don't have anymore. Sticking to two or three paragraphs is a good idea, as long as the relevant information can be properly compressed. If not, try to create a structure in your email so that it will be easier for the other to follow (like addressing a more complex issue by different aspects, point by point).

On the other hand, do not forget to include all the relevant information with respect to the topic of the email (dates, venues, deadlines, people involved, duration, prerequisites, fees, etc.)

8. Ask what you need while being polite! Same for closing the email

"*Please*" is always a good way to start asking for something from the other person (even if the thing you are asking is the strict responsibility of that person) and will create an overall atmosphere that is more positive and open. Of course, this is true if you actually mean it and the "*please*" doesn't appear to be out of context.

Moreover, before you end your email, it's polite to thank your reader one more time as well as add some courteous closing remarks, like "*Thank you for the time taken to analyze our proposal*" or "*Thank you for your consideration related to our situation*". Also, don't forget to express your availability for future inquiries related to the topic: "*If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to let me know*" or "*If there is any need for further clarifications, I am at your disposal from Monday to Friday, anytime between 9.00 and 16.00* ".

9. End with a closing

The last step is to include an appropriate closing with your name. *"Best regards,"*, "*Kind regards,*", *"Sincerely,"* or *"Thank you,"* are all professional. "*Best wishes,*", *"Yours truly,"* or *"Cheers,"* are more appropriate in casual, more informal or even personal emails.

10. Add your signature

It is mandatory that following the closing, you also include at least your full name, in order for the other to have a clear image on who was writing and who is taking responsibility for what is in the email. Your family name should always be written with uppercase, in order for the recipient to know how to address you in the reply (e.g. Mr. Andrew SMITH).

Signatures can also include:

- Your job title and the entity (organization) you are working for;
- Your other contact details (telephone number, Skype account, social media pages – if relevant);

Review your email

It is important not to forget to read your email again to see if everything is clear and the spelling is appropriate, in order to have the perfect email!

Not only the spell check is important. Try to review what you have written, thinking from the other person's perspective, asking yourself:

- *"How would I interpret this sentence, if I got such a message?"* and
- *"How would this make me feel if I had received it?"*

For everything to be clear, we have also added, in the next page, one sample email, including also a description of all the necessary elements.

Here is a typical structure of an email:

Subject:	**Invitation to the "Future Capital" presentation of results**
Greeting	*Dear Andrew,*
An optional pleasantry	*How are things with you? Hope everything is well!*
The purpose for your email	*I am writing you about the "Future Capital" project. As you may remember from the initial meeting, next week we will have the presentation of our results. It will be next Monday in the National Theater of Arad, from 18.00 to 20.00.*
A call to action	*Given this and the contribution you had in the project, I was wondering if you could participate and also if you could present your organizations' work in this. There will be around 4 people presenting for no more than 5 minutes each, just no to be too long.* *Would you or any other member of your organization be available to participate?*
A closing message	*Thank you for your time and we are looking forward to your answer by Thursday, 21st of September! If you need more information about the event, I am at your disposal, weekdays from 10.00 to 15.00!*
Signature	*Kind regards,* *Chris JOHNES* *Communication manager* *O.T.I. Arad Association*

Now it's your turn!

Try to identify what is wrong about the next e-mail that was addressed to Ms. Joanne SMITH:

Subject: invitation
"Dear Mrs. Joanne For our project, i would like to invite u to participate to the meeting where we will present the results. You can also have a presentation about what your organisation did. Tell me if you can be there! Cheers"

There should be at least 12 mistakes in this e-mail. Can you spot more?

Answer:

Bad subject; using "Mrs." instead of "Ms."; Using the surname instead of the name when addressing Ms. Smith; not placing a comma after the greeting; not placing a blank line between greeting and body of the e-mail; not stating the purpose in a correct form; not giving enough information related to the event (location, duration, time and date, etc.); not being polite when asking for the presentation; not having a proper ending; using "Cheers" when addressing Ms. Joanne (a more formal approach);not including a signature; having spelling and grammar mistakes in the text;

2. Photographs

What to take into consideration when using photography for communication?

"A photo is worth 1000 words!". This is the most common quote we get in relation to photography. This is why it is important that when addressing the topic of communication to also address photography and filming as they are not only a great tool of expression, but can also support other P.R. tools, like the social network pages, website or even press releases. Photos or videos can bring significant added value to any form of communication.

Still, not any photo (or video) is a good one. Here is what you need to take into consideration while taking a snapshot of something you want to communicate about:

Rule of thirds

Although we are used to the fact that the central item of our view is the most important, a great trick for having a more expressive photo can be to split the photo in three pieces and to have the subject's centre on one of the two lines, as you can observe in the following example:

Check and use the focus!

Most of the cameras will focus on the centre of the photo. Be sure to either first lock the focus on the subject (by gently pressing the shutter button) and then move the camera so that you respect the rule of thirds or, for touch screen cameras, click directly on the subject.

Focus is also used to draw attention on different items in your photo and creates really interesting effects so use this technique whenever you find it suitable.

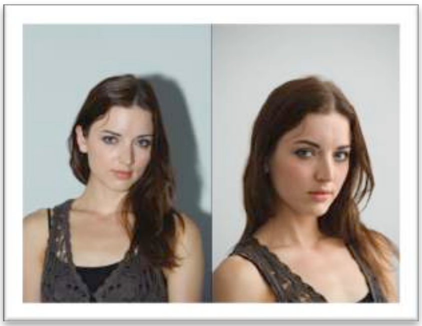
Use focus in a smart way!

If the camera allows it, focus on one item that symbolizes the work you are promoting. For example, if you are working on repainting a hospital (as we did :)), take a photo where you focus on the paint roller.
Moreover, in the following photo you can also see the effect of having the edges of the photo not aligning with the subject. (the roller is at an angle compared to the bottom edge instead of being parallel).

Make sure you have good light!

Good light is very important in a photo (as you can easily see in the photo below). Check how the light is falling on the subject of the photo and try to move it or change the angle. If this is not possible, activate the flash even if you are shooting during daylight.

Also, check how the shadows are showing in the photo and try to avoid them.



Check you photo for blur!

In case you are shooting in a low light environment or some moving items, you may expect some blur. Check your photos after shooting (by using the preview of the camera) and zoom in on them to see if this happened. If true, then retake the photo, trying to keep the camera still.


Get closer!

In some cases, especially for smaller subjects, getting a snapshot from a close distance can transform a normal photo into a very expressive one.

Take a photo when the subject is not concentrating on the camera!

Don't always warn people that you will take a photo of them. Getting a snapshot on the right moment can offer you more that the best prepared photo and subject.

Choose the right background!

Having a trash bin in the background, some obscene message or something that will draw the attention away from your subject (like something very colorful or eye-catching) will have significant impact on your photo, lowering its impact.

Be creative!

Try to move out from the typical standing position that you find in most of the photos. Have people gather, create a figure with their body, use the tools that they are working with and show them in a creative way. Do anything so that you change the standard (and sometimes boring) position.

Photograph something with a message!

Use anything you see around you that sends out the same message as the one you are trying to send out and take that perfect snapshot. If it doesn't exist, create it!

Use all of the above!

Especially when thinking about a photo gallery, combine all the tips from above. The constant variation in angle, subject, focus and the increased creativity will keep the viewers interested.

Now it's your turn!

Review the different tips you got on how to make more appealing photos and try them out!

Here is your checklist: take some photos in which...

- ☐ you are using focus to emphasize different objects;
- ☐ you get closer to your subject;
- ☐ the subject is not concentrating on the camera;
- ☐ people are standing in a funny and creative way;
- ☐ there is a message;
- ☐ you mix the different ways of taking a photo;

3. Videos

What to take into consideration when using videos for communication?

In the era of multimedia, videos are being used more and more. To imagine the scale, on YouTube alone, one of the most popular platforms for video sharing, 300 hours of new videos are uploaded every minute. That's 12 and half days of continuous videos being created every minute.

While professional video making requires quite a lot of skills and also the right hardware and software, there are some very good results that can be obtained by amateurs, as long as some basic aspects are taken into consideration.

1. Make a good script

It all starts with a good script, which is basically the plan of what you will do next. Take plenty of time and use the creative energies of each member of your team, as this is one crucial step that can make the difference between a good and a bad video.

First, choose the theme of your movie. Then think how you will transform this theme into a logical flow of scenes. Ask yourself: what will be the story, what is the experience you want to create, how will you attract people? What will they benefit from watching this movie?

Decide what you want to shoot and in which logical order, whom will you include and what will be your setting. If you are recording an event, choose which are the most important areas that you need to cover and the most important happenings.

Decide who is saying what, while making sure that the text is still simple enough to be understood by your audience. Remember that a message is sent not only verbally but also non-verbally, so make sure that you have all the communication covered (body language, background, clothing, visual aids, etc.). Also, don't be afraid to use a little bit of humor.

Keep in mind that the best presentation movies are of maximum 2 minutes, while the best attention is obtain in the first minute. It is advisable that in the first 30 seconds your message is already delivered.

2. Choose the style of video you will make

There are various styles of making one video. Some are more familiar: we have all watched interviews, documentaries, presentation videos or reports. On the other hand there are some others which are not so familiar but can be very effective by the creativity they introduce:

- Stop-motion video – It is created from different photos of the same scene with small changes between each take;
- Whiteboard animation – The story is created with pictures that are drawn live on a whiteboard by artists who record themselves in the process;
- Video slideshows – are very similar to a Powerpoint presentation that is recorded, of course with some voice over;

> There are various styles of making one video

Internet is full of different examples of these styles and many more, so don't be afraid to use it as a source of inspiration.

3. Make sure you use the hardware properly

You don't necessarily need fancy or expensive cameras, but you should use the ones you have in a proper way. Make sure you know the limitations of your camera and that you are not exceeding them. If the camera doesn't deliver good results while shooting in poor light conditions, then find scenery with enough illumination. If you don't have a dedicated microphone and your camera is capturing all the background noise or echo, then choose a location that is free of all these. Also, take into consideration the use of a tripod when possible so that your images will be as still as possible.

In general it is best to try out your camera in each location to see if the quality is good enough for your video.

4. Use different camera positions

Depending on what you are shooting, different shooting lengths and angles are more appropriate than others.

For example, for presenting the scene setting, you can use an extreme long shot, up to 400 meters away from your subject. To present interaction between characters or some more details about the scene you can go for a long shot, which means positioning or zooming the camera such that the full body of the actors is captured. Medium shots, which show the upper half of the body of the character, are used for a more detailed presentation of the action or for dialogues. And, if you want to emphasize a character or some particular emotion, you can use close-up, showing just the face, different body parts that are relevant (for example eyes, hands or legs) or items about which details are important (e.g. for a letter you should go close enough so that the text can be read easily).

Moreover, the height at which the camera is positioned can be used for various effects. The normal and most common way to shoot is at eye level, offering the same sensation as if we would be watching the action ourselves. Shooting from above will offer a general perspective of things, moving the attention from individuals to the whole scene. Filming from below eye level, down to the floor, will offer the viewer a sense of height for the items being shot, of dynamics or powerlessness.

Just like with photos, there are several effects you can use and multiple ways to set-up the subjects and the camera. Be aware of the light, the background, introduce artificial elements to the background and make the best movie!

5. Get the right elements

Choosing an appropriate background is very important. It is not just the characters of the movie that are sending a message; the background is also doing this.

Persons speaking should know very well what they are saying. Moreover, they should say it not just through words, but also through their whole body, their expression and the tone of their voice. The section about presentations contains several tips about this.

Last, but not least, don't forget to use different visual aids that will help you deliver the right content.

6. Edit the movie

While specialized software for video editing is quite expensive and needs significant hardware resources, each of the major operating systems provide free software to help you with the basics (e.g. "Movie maker" in Microsoft Windows, iMovie in MacOS). While they lack the professional effects of high-end software they provide the basic functions that, along with the following tips, will help you create a quality movie. Here they are:

- Take the best scenes and bring them together along with the appropriate music. Music can further increase the emotions associated to a movie.
- Cut out the mistakes from the initial shots or even replace them with something else, while keeping the sound.

- Add different transition effects, but make sure that they are suitable. Don't overuse them unless your script requires them.
- Make sure that there is a good dynamics in your movie. If it is about an event, you can start by showing the scenery. Don't include two consecutive shots that have the exact same camera set up and a difference in the subject. If you need to do this, add some transition or some other scene between the two cuts. Try cutting when motion occurs. Cutting from a person while looking towards an opening door is better than cutting from that person in a still position, while looking at the camera. Alternate between close and far shots of the same character and between shots taken from different directions (which should be around 45^0 apart).
- It takes about 5 to 10 seconds for the human eye to observe the details of a picture so, if these details are important, try not to cut a clip before. On the other hand it is best that, unless there is something really important about that shot (like a person speaking), to change after 10 - 15 seconds in order to bring more dynamics.

Now it's your turn!

Get together with your team and brainstorm about different ways in which you could make a video that presents the most important service that your organisation is offering to its target group. For starting, you can use the Internet to get inspiration from other similar projects, or videos using different styles and techniques.

Decide about:

- ☐ The service you wish to advertise, the interest that potential viewers may have in it and the main message of the video;
- ☐ The style of video you will use;
- ☐ The script you will "bring to life", including the action, the scenes, actors involved, necessary backgrounds, etc.;
- ☐ The locations in which you will be shooting;
- ☐ The resources you will need;

Keep your video under 2 minutes, taking into account the tips you have just received about making it.

For practicing but also for having more materials when editing, shoot the same scene from different angles and distances.

After editing it, share it with your friends and ask for their honest opinion, make necessary changes and publish it on your website and/or social media page.

4. Press releases

How to draft a press release that will get published?

Nowadays, the relationships with the mass media are very important, because it is a very powerful and effective way to spread a message and to present an association or a project. Therefore, it is fundamental to know how to write an effective press release.

Mass media can be a great channel for promoting your activity and presenting relevant information to your target group. One the other hand, not any new thing that you have to share is media worthy, so the first thing you should ask yourself before issuing a press release is "*Why is this important?*", "*What new information does it provide to the audience?*", "*Is it relevant for them?*", "*Is there something unexpected or unusual about it?*". Have you found the answer to these questions? Great, then you are on the right track!

To continue you will also need to find an answer to the following questions and after to include it in your release:

- Who? – who are the events presented including and, equally important, to whom is this information addressed to?
- How? – how did things happen?
- When? and Where? – what was the time and the space of this?

More or less, after finding out the answer to these questions, your press release is close to be ready, all you need to do being to present the answer to these questions in few short paragraphs.

How to start? Here are few steps you should follow:

1. Find a title

The title and the first paragraph are the most important. If you can find a title that will grab attention and encourage people to continue reading (but first, the journalist), then the second step towards the publication is done. It should be "strong" and catchy, revealing the subject, but, at the same time, creating a desire to read in the potential reader.

2. Summarize your story.

After finding a title, draft your first paragraph by summarizing into around 50 words (one or two short sentences) the essence of your story (e.g. "*The United Nations delivered 62 metric tons of humanitarian aid to Donetsk today. This includes essential hygiene items, warm clothes, blankets, condensed milk powder, drinking water, and medical supplies procured by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF and the World Health Organization*"). In a simple way, try to answer the above questions (what?, who?, how?, and when?) in the given limits.

To make sure you did a god job, imagine that this would be the only paragraph that gets published. Is this information enough to give people a good idea about what you are trying to share? If yes, then you can continue to the next step!

For example, this is from a press release of the WWF:

"*The number of wild giant pandas has increased nearly 17% over the last decade, according to a new survey conducted by the Chinese government.*"

What information are they providing in 24 words?

- What? Something relevant to the public: the conservation efforts for the panda bears are working. Notice also how the subject is of interest, as the general audience loves panda bears. The same info is also available about some unknown fishes (for example, efforts are also made for the protection of the gar, the pike and the shad fishes), but this has less chances of getting published in general media, simply because they are not that appealing to the public as the cute panda bears;
- When? Over the last decade;
- Where? In China;
- Who? The Chinese government is the one to address this issue;
- How? This is new information revealed by a survey;

3. Offer further information

Continue with presenting, paragraph by paragraph, the answer to the above questions, providing useful information and clarifying what you just mentioned in the first paragraph. In this step, think about your audience (people reading a daily newspaper have different interests and expectations than people reading a magazine specialized in a certain area of interest) and choose the best way to address them. Remember to put yourself in the shoes of your potential readers. Would you be interested in what it is presented? Can they understand the message and the language you are using? In this context, you can even consider issuing different press releases for different types of media.

In extent to this, you should present the facts from an objective perspective and not as a personal story you are sharing about your organisation's activity, with personal perceptions and personal influences on the text. Write in third person (e.g. *"The Audele Association will be offering new services to the community, starting 12th of May 2016. These include (...). All the persons interested in developing new skills can benefit from this opportunity by ..."*). Don't use hyperbolizing adjectives or adverbs (e.g. "*The Audele Association will be offering new services to the community with an impressive impact on its development, as never seen before*").

Nonetheless, be as concise as possible. Although there is no ideal number of paragraphs you should include, the best number is the lowest that still gives enough relevant information to the journalist to write the article. Don't forget to always present the information about when and where things are happening (or have happened), the parties involved and even some reference to how this information can be used by a general or specific public.

4. Include a quote from one of the persons involved

Often, in the third or forth paragraph, it is recommended that you also include a quote from someone who was involved in the news, giving it a more personal touch and also stating the organisation's or the beneficiaries' point of view on the matter (e.g. ""*The rise in the population of wild giant pandas is a victory for conservation and definitely one to celebrate," said Ginette Hemley, Senior Vice President of Wildlife Conservation, World Wildlife Fund (WWF)"*). It works best if one of the persons you are quoting is considered to be a credible source on the matter (expert, person with experience in the field or having a positive image in the community etc.).

5. Signal the fact that the press release ended

This can be done in several ways, one of the official ones being to include the word "***Ends***", in bold, after the last paragraph. After this, always include "For further information, please contact ..." and offer your details or those of a person who is available to provide extended information to an interested journalist.

6. If necessary, add "Notes to editors"

If further information is needed (e.g. background information about the organisation, the partners involved, availability to send photos, a website where more information can be accessed, etc.), you can include this at the end, after a "Notes to editors" subtitle.

About the content, as presented above, it should be as concise as possible, while still providing relevant information. Sentences should be around 30 to 40 words in order for the reader to be able to follow the idea presented. If you feel you need more than this, try to split your sentence into two or more shorter ones. For example the sentence "*Since March 2014, over 1 million people have been displaced within Ukraine out of which more than 134,000 are children*" can be split into "*Since March 2014, over 1 million people have been displaced within Ukraine. Of these, more than 134,000 are children.*"

At the end, don't forget to make a revision to all the text to ensure that there aren't any orthographic or grammatical errors. The correction and the easy comprehension of the language is fundamental in any press release and can make the difference between obtaining the wished success or being ignored by the receivers.

Sometimes it is also useful to add few photos to your release, especially now, when most of the media also uses Internet to publish relevant news. Try to choose the most meaningful photos (3 to 6, usually, for offering the reporter a choice), which also have a good quality (good light, focus, etc.). For printing, the recommended resolution is around 300dpi.

To make things more clear, in the next page you can find an example of one press release by U.N.I.C.E.F., in which it is quite easy to identify the above-mentioned rules. You can also use the column on the left as a framework for your future press releases.

Example of a press release and its framework

Framework elements	How they appear on UNICEF's press release
Title	***Ukraine: United Nations delivers 62 metric tons of humanitarian aid to Donetsk***
Summary in the 1st paragraph (46 words)	The United Nations delivered 62 metric tons of humanitarian aid to Donetsk today. This includes essential hygiene items, warm clothes, blankets, condensed milk powder, drinking water, and medical supplies procured by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO).
Details about the topic	Among the estimated 5 million civilians affected by the crisis in Ukraine, those living in zones of active fighting are particularly vulnerable, due to limited access to humanitarian assistance. This inter-agency convoy is only one of the many initiatives the UN and its humanitarian partners are undertaking to provide relief aid to those in need.
A quote from a partner of U.N.I.C.E.F. in this matter	"The conflict in eastern Ukraine has displaced more than 1 million people in Ukraine. However, many remain in the areas affected by fighting where infrastructure and housing are damaged and basic services collapsed," said Vanno Noupech, UNHCR Deputy Representative for Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. "We hope that the assistance provided will alleviate the suffering of the neediest, in particular, those staying in the makeshift shelters."

A quote from an U.N.I.C.E.F. representative	"Children living in or displaced from conflict-affected areas continue to bear the brunt of the conflict," said Giovanna Barberis, UNICEF Representative in Ukraine. "It is critical to have continuous humanitarian access to deliver aid to as many people and children in need as possible. Lack of food, water shortages, hampered access to medical facilities in the areas of ongoing fighting put children's lives in danger, especially the most vulnerable – children living in bomb shelters and institutions, children with disabilities, children affected by HIV."
Another paragraph with extra information regarding the topic	Together with the humanitarian organizations operating in Ukraine, UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO are concerned with the absence of secured humanitarian access to deliver aid to children and families affected by the conflict across the country. Since March 2014, over 1 million people have been displaced within Ukraine. Of these, more than 134,000 are children. Displaced people affected by tuberculosis remain unmonitored and HIV-positive patients have no access to medication. In addition, disease surveillance is broken and diseases outbreaks could reach catastrophic consequences. With the continuing flow of the displaced population from the conflict-affected areas, the United Nations is scaling up assistance in areas of difficult access as well as in other zones that have already been reached.
A set of characters indicating that the content is finished ("***END***" can also be used)	###

Notes to editors explaining about UNHCR and UNICEF	The **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**, also known as the UN refugee agency, was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. It is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. It also has a mandate to help stateless people. In more than six decades, the agency has helped tens of millions of people restart their lives. http://www.unhcr.org - @refugees - @refugeesmedia. UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: www.unicef.org. For photo, B-roll and other multimedia assets, please visit: https://weshare.unicef.org/mediaresources. Follow UNICEF on Facebook and Twitter.
Contacts for more information	**For more information, please contact:** Dan McNorton, UNHCR Geneva, + 41 22 739 8658, mcnorton@unhcr.org Nina Sorokopud, UNHCR Kyiv, +38 044 288-9710, sorokopu@unhcr.org Kristen Elsby, UNICEF Geneva, +41 22 909 5286, kelsby@unicef.org Veronika Vashchenko, UNICEF Kyiv, +38 044 254 2439, vvashchenko@unicef.org

Extra tips for insuring better media coverage for your organisation:

Contact journalists in advance

Like with any other form of impersonal communication, press releases are often binned if they don't quickly manage to capture the interest of the journalist reading them, sometimes even before being read. Create a contact list of some of the journalists who are responsible for your field of work and try to contact them personally before issuing the press release, presenting your news and your opinion on why it is important. Have a personal and direct contact with the journalists will also provide you the chance of getting their feedback and maybe adjust the release a bit in order to make it more news-worthy.

On the other hand, keep in mind no to use this too often. Imagine that they receive tens of releases per day. What would happen if everyone would call about them? Keep in mind to always ask at the beginning of the conversation if they are available for having a short conversation with you about recent news that you have for them.

Have journalists be part of the news

Even if they are busy, from time to time journalists can be interested in participating to an event, especially if it is something they haven't experienced before or something very appealing. When possible, ask them to join your events or offer them a test run (e.g. if you are showcasing a device that simulates a car crash at 5km/h, invite them to try it out and see how the demonstration impacts people's perception on the seatbelt).

When sending a press release by e-mail, copy the title in the subject line

E-mail is the most popular way in which press releases are sent. When sending one, copy the title of your press release in the subject line, to make sure you draw the attention on the subject itself. Don't make it look like SPAM, by adding extra words like "IMPORTANT!!!" or "You must read this!". They will have the opposite effect to what you are trying to do.

Try to include the text in the e-mail, not the attachment

When publishing a release, journalists copy and paste most of the info in the article, so you should provide it in a format that makes this process as easy as it can be. Attachments have to be downloaded, and this uses up from the journalist's time. Moreover, there are many text editors on the market, so it can even be that a journalist cannot even open the format you are providing him with. Worst thing you can do: attachments in PDF format; they are very difficult to copy and paste, so they will likely discourage any publication attempt. E-mails, on the other hand, can be easily accessible to anyone and are presented in a format that allows stress-free copying.

Not being a political organisation does not mean you are neutral to the political life

Your press releases should not only be limited to projects that your organisation is part of. Decisions taken at local, national or international level affect us all, some more than the others. If one of these decisions is affecting your target group or is relevant to your mission, then it is normal to state your organisation's opinion. Journalists are very interested in politics and the reaction of the civil society is even more appealing to them and the public, so such releases have a high chance of getting published or at least included in one report. On the other hand, don't go sharing views about everything and anything! Try to stick to your area of interest and of expertise.

Use free press release websites or even professional submission services

By searching the Internet you can easily find websites that provide you with free submission of your release that is instantly made available to thousands of journalists. Moreover, there are even professional services that will help you with publishing your press release and even monitor how the news was covered by the media. While this is a great way to share your news, having your text in the same place with several tens of other similar materials means that you have to do extra work in presenting it as newsworthy information.

Practical exercise

Now, it's you turn! Find the errors and rewrite this press release in a correct way!

"***Volunteers will help association to restore an old building to receive a new project***

The building of an old school is being restored by the ProAtlântico – Youth Association *with the help of many volunteers.*

ProAtlântico – Youth Association *is restoring an old building, with the collaboration of many volunteers, to start a new project called Casa Europa.*

In the future, Casa Europa will be a place where the association will join efforts to promote an active life for the elderly people and the interaction between youngsters and elderly people. This great place will also serve to join youngsters and elderly from all over Europe.

The restoration of the old school is being done with the help of volunteers of many different associations and nationalities, as also with the support of many companies, which provide some specific materials and products to those works."

Errors:

- The title is too long and is not very objective. It should be shorter, catchier and maybe include the name of the association.
- The first paragraph should say where the building is located.
- The text is too short and there is lack of information. For instance, it would be important to indicate the estimated dates of the end of the works and of the inauguration and the start of the activities of Casa Europa.
- The use of quotes could also enrich this press release.
- The identification of the author and/or of the association is missing.

5. Social media

How to make your social media page more engaging?

In these days, more or less, anyone can post on Facebook. This is the social network that we will be referring to, as it is the most popular, but the information here can apply to any other social network that you use. All of them are free, accessible and very appealing to youngsters. But how should you use this great resource in a smart way? Here are some tips:

Text + (photo or video) is more appealing than simple text

Photos and videos are much more appealing than simple texts, so they will get more attention. Facebook has algorithms that assess this interest, so these kind of posts will be active for more and reach more people. Also, try to keep text associated with the posts to 100 to 200 characters. Most of the people lose interest in reading more.

Photos are more appealing when they include:

- People (makes people see the human side of your activity, which for NGOs is very important);
- Viral images, which share messages that fit into your mission or even make people laugh (that will be shared easier);
- Artistic photos from your activities;
- Statistics relevant to your target group;
- Quotes relevant to your target group;
- References to awareness days (e.g. "International mother tongue day");
- A call to change something;

Update your page regularly

Whenever your organisation has something to share, do it! Having a constant and interesting activity on your page will maintain a constant interest of your audience. On the other hand, try not to be too boring or, even worse, flood your wall with irrelevant information.

Use testimonials from the people your are working for

From time to time, the testimonial of one person who benefitted from your organisation's services (accompanied by his/her photo) will be highly appreciated, while in the same time generating an emotional connection with your audience. Still, don't overdo it! You are doing your work for creating a better world, not for the image you get from this. Too many of these kind of posts will have an exact opposite effect, making your audience think that you are interested more in your "likes" than in providing quality services for your target group. Facebook likes are not your goal, but just a way to increase the impact of your work.

Interact with your audience

Social networks are interactive, so make the most of them!

Ask your audience to share their opinions and even contribute to the design of some initiatives. People will pay more attention to future posts and you will get some really important feedback from the community or other interested people. When you choose to integrate some of the feedback in your projects, don't forget to share this. Again, using your social network page.

Go one step forward! Make a regular discussion plan.

For example, every week, you can introduce a discussion topic that is interesting to the community ask your audience to share their opinion about it. Start with more approachable subjects, which are appealing to more people. Again, if you decide to use this information in any way or to forward it to some decision makers, don't forget to share this on-line.

Share exclusive information

If you want Facebook to be one of the main communication channels that you use for your organization, then it can be useful from time to time to share some information that will be available exclusively on this social network. People will get to be more interested in following your page.

Use Facebook Insights to get to know your audience (or any other similar tool that your social network provides)

Facebook offers a very interesting tool for analysing your audience, called as Facebook insights (available at https://www.facebook.com/insights/). You will find out which are the most popular posts, how many people are reached by your posts, how many of them visit your page, when do these things happen and what is the profile of your audience (by country, city, gender, age, etc.). Posting when most of your fans are on-line or for specific target groups that are more active or, on the contrary, not that engaged, will boost your Facebook page.

Remind your fans to like and share

It is very easy for a user to like or share a post on your page, but people usually forget or don't pay attention to this. Just adding a simple reminder at the end of your post can significantly increase the reach of your posts (e.g. "Please share this if you find it useful" or "Don't forget to like the activity of our volunteers").

Ask your staff, volunteers & friends to help boosting up page

Likes, shares but also comments to your posts, especially by people with a lot of friends, are a great way to increase your page's popularity, so it wouldn't hurt to ask the people who are closer to you to have such activity related to your posts.

Integrate Facebook to your website

Nowadays, Facebook and other social platforms offer easy tools for being able to share the content of your social page through your website. Make the most of it and use the two public relation tools for increasing the impact of each other.

Organise competitions on your Facebook page

Organising small competitions on your Facebook page (even photo or video competitions, best idea for something) is a good way to get interaction and shares from your audience and will increase the ranking according to which Facebook is assessing how popular (thus visible) your posts are.

Promote your online page... offline

Offline promotion (through posters, flyers, banners, etc.) can be a good way to have people visit your profile. Still, keep in mind that people will not access your page just because they see a flyer with its address. Whatever promotional you decide to use, make sure that it associates visiting your page with some kind of incentive for your target group (e.g. "For finding out about the latest volunteering opportunities, Like Us on Facebook").

Be funny and happy

Funny and happy content is more likely to get a higher engagement among your audience. Still, creating funny content in not a straightforward thing and it does require some talent, not to mention that some jokes may be seen as offensive by one group or another, so use this carefully.

Now it's your turn!

Try out these tips on your organisation's social media page, add a new post each three days (remember, your page should be regularly updated) and see which is the most effective by checking the analytical tools that you can access. Don't forget to ask your fans, from time to time, to like or share your content.

Here is your checklist:

- ☐ Select some interesting photos from your activity (like the ones you learned about in the previous section of this manual), draft a short text about it (like the one you would use in the beginning of a press release) and post these;
- ☐ Get a testimonial of one member of your target group, take a photo of him, get his approval to publish these and post them online;
- ☐ Consult with your audience on a future initiative that you are planning;
- ☐ Share some exclusive information about an available opportunity that you are offering to your target group;
- ☐ Find one viral photo or video connected to your work and share it on Facebook;
- ☐ Find and share something funny that is connected to your work;

6. Websites

How to have an effective website?

Websites can be a great PR tool, as they are available anytime, can be accessed from wherever in the world, offer instant, on-demand information to the ones interested in your activity and allow you to integrate a great variety of communication elements (articles, documents, press releases, photos, videos, interactive content, etc.).

The first thing you need to take into consideration while building your website is the structure. While there can be some national legislation that you need to follow (for example, in some countries, it is mandatory to include your contact information on a specific, easy accessible page), here are some other specific pages that you can include in your website:

Home – the main page of the website, that includes information about your organisation and what types of services it is committed to providing. Also, it can briefly present the other sections of the website and the nature of the information available there.

Contact us – there are two choices here: either you give away your contact information (postal address, e-mail address, phone number, on-line messengers IDs, social networks page) or you create a special contact form. While the first choice does make you more vulnerable to SPAM, it also provides the persons/entities interested in contacting you with more methods of doing this. Also, often people get discouraged by contact forms, as they are not sure that they get checked as often as e-mail or even prefer the phone, as it is an urgent matter that they wish to address you.

Projects (or "Our activity") – projects are the most important "products" that you are offering, so you should properly advertise them. Keep in mind that this page can be accessed by people looking into your organisation for partnership, offering funding, making donations or volunteering with you. It is very important to provide information about your work in order for the viewers to see which are your areas of expertise, what kind of projects are of interest to you, how experienced is your organisation in working with different categories of people or how deep is your involvement.

Still, while presenting your projects (or for that matter any other information in the website), try not to get too technical or write a text that is very monotonous. For example, don't just present the objectives and a short summary (often copied from the project application or some similar document) but also give it a more personal touch, maybe even including one or two relevant photos, some testimonials of the beneficiaries or a quotation from one of the responsible persons. NGOs address problems of living things so make sure that you emphasize this aspect of your project and not just some technical data.

Organisation's blog – blogs are easy to be created and a very effective communication tool. Blogs allow you to quickly share information about current activity or your press releases, offer expert opinions on a topic or interact with your stakeholders (as they also provide commenting opportunities). While you cannot include a project's page each small activity that takes place, you can create a post about it and make your work more visible.

Photo/video gallery – a picture is worth 1000 words. Imagine what a video is worth! Photos and videos are great ways to present the work you do as visual means of expression have greater impact and they are better at capturing emotions and a trustworthy source of information (you can easily write that you did something without actually doing it exactly in that way, but it is more difficult to show a photo of something that happened differently than you are claiming). On the other hand, keep you galleries clean and include just few relevant photos (up to a maximum of 10 would be great). Also, videos, unless they are documentaries, should be of no more than 2 minutes, as people usually lose interest if watching for longer. Be sure that you are respecting the legal right to personal image and child protection laws while posting this kind of content. Also, add a short but revealing description to each gallery or video in order for the normal guest to be able to understand better what the content is about.

Resource centre – in the work your organisation does, it often produces various dissemination materials (training kits, good-practice guides, brochures, etc.), which can be of great help to others interested in similar topics. Moreover, search engines index your page and whenever someone is searching for resources on a similar topic, he or she can be redirected to your website. In this way not only that you will get a good promotion of your work but also you can further increase the impact of the work you have done.

Volunteering opportunities – most of the NGOs worldwide rely on volunteers to get their job done, so it wouldn't hurt to present to the public your recruitment procedure and what kind of volunteering opportunities you are offering. Again, the way in which you present the information can make the difference between an interested person applying or moving on. Concentrate not only on what could be the available placements or your procedure for joining but also on what could be the benefits of a person joining your organisation.

E-mail sign-up – if people want to be updated about your work, then offer them this chance. Have a short form (that can even be included somewhere on the main page) that allows people to share their e-mail address with you in order to receive newsletters and other important info.

Donations (or any similar support) – if someone would like to donate or support your organisation in any other way (e.g. by offering used items that will later be donated to persons in need), then make sure that the steps, which that person should follow are available and easily understandable. Also, try to offer several donation opportunities (e.g. by bank transfer, by PayPal, by a direct cash donation, etc.) and make sure you offer all the necessary information required for using each of these methods.

Activity report – especially when working with private donors or with other types of persons or entities supporting your work, it is good practice that from time to time (usually each year) you present your activity and the way in which the resources you received have been used. This will increase your transparency and will make your organisation trustworthier for future support initiatives. There are a lot of resources related to how to insure transparency for your organisation, so once you have decided to do this, the website can help you use them at their full potential.

Media coverage – the fact that your organisation has been presented in a nice article or your representatives have been invited on its behalf on a TV or radio show can significantly boost the level of confidence in your professionalism. Include all media publications referring to your activity, as websites easily allow you to do so.

Testimonials – Just like a picture is worth 1000 words, what one of your beneficiaries, your partners or your volunteers has to say about your organisation's work can be an excellent way to boost the public trust in your organisation. Testimonials can be written (best accompanied by a photo of the person) or even in video.

Some other tips on improving your website:

Have a clear structure - after deciding on the pages you will include, think how you will include them in the website. The easiest way is through a navigation menu (that can also have submenus, so you can include two different types of information under the same menu item). Make sure that things stay intuitive and even ask somebody unfamiliar with your work to check it our and provide you with quality feedback.

Use a clear style – People want to get the maximum information in the minimum time. Think about yourself! Do you often, while checking for information on a topic, find yourself just scanning through the page for keywords ("landmarks" pointing to what you are interested in) rather than reading the whole content? If yes, you are not the only one doing this and your website should be prepared for such a reality. For this, it is important that when adding content to your website you should use:

- clear headings (titles of pages or of sections that should briefly present the content);
- subheadings (to give even more "landmarks" to a viewer scanning the text);
- shorter paragraphs (haven't you ever been in the position where you saw a half page paragraph and decided that it is not worth reading it? Try to avoid a similar thing on your website);
- numbers or bullet lists (that structure the information in a more scan-friendly way);
- highlighted text (again, a landmark inside a paragraph, giving some quick information to an eye in a hurry);
- a very user-friendly language (that can be understood and read without much effort by your average reader);

Have a mobile version – with a lot of the Internet traffic now originating from smartphones, it can be a really good idea to have also a mobile version of your website. On the other hand, this can prove to be a little costly so make sure that you will go through a cost/benefit analysis before you make this decision, taking into consideration the number of mobile visitors that your website has at this point and what it is expected to have, your communication strategy or the target group you are addressing to.

Have guest writers – remember the project blog we were talking about? By having popular guests with a good image in the community write for your organisation (of course, connected to your organisation's goal), you can easily draw visitors to your website and further promote your work.

Don't add irrelevant information or widgets – all the possible pages that were presented above can be very useful for your public relations or can dilute the important information that you are trying to share, turning the attention from it. Don't overcrowd your website with irrelevant pages or, even worse, with all kind of widgets or photos that can seem as very cool but are actually just making it way too full for somebody to concentrate on what is really important.

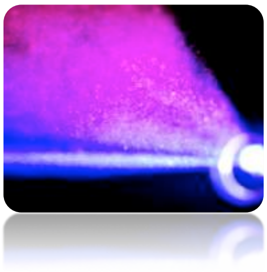
Use your social media pages to get people on the website (and vice versa) – social media provides a slightly different environment than websites, so the two can be a complementary source of PR. You can easily integrate social media in your website (like having a Facebook Like button for your social page appearing on the homepage of your website). Just as easy, you can use social pages to promote your website by sharing relevant resources that can be found on it and directing people to get more info on your website (e.g. by posting the first paragraph of an article and inviting people interested in the continuation to access the dedicated page).

Use your website to interact with people – you can interact with people visiting your website by organising a photo competition, a photovoice project or any other kind of initiative that gets people to deliver content to your website. Also, this can bring you even more benefits if it later makes them promote it (for example the winning photo can be the one getting most votes, hence all the participants will be interested in promoting your website to get more votes). Moreover, by the discussion opportunities your website can provide, you can get relevant feedback from the community or your stakeholders.

Include "How to?" posts, relevant to your target group – posts that teach people what to do or how to act in a given situation are likely to get attention, when properly promoted. Teach your audience to be better while in the same time creating a positive image for your NGO and drawing attention to your work.

Let's practice!

- ☐ Check if your website is properly structured and if information is clear. Ask some friends who are not familiar with it or with your organisation's work to find different information that is available on your website and to tell if it is clear for them. If they can identify it easily, then your website structure should be ok, if not, some changes should be made. Review the previous tips and start making the needed changes;
- ☐ Go through the list of specific pages that you can include in your website and check if some of them are also appropriate for your organisation. If so, add them and create specific content for them;
- ☐ Check again your website. Is all the information there useful? Are there any widgets you don't really need?
- ☐ Connect your website to your social media page by embedding it;
- ☐ Create a "How to?" page for a topic relevant to your organisation, publish it and use your social media page to promote it;



7. Presentations

How to make presentations that will engage your audience?

Public presentations are a very effective way of both internal and external communication. They are great for introducing new concepts to your team's agenda, presenting your work for your stakeholders or educating your target group. Still, as common and as useful as they are, often presentations are seen as really boring time-wasters simply because the ones presenting don't dedicate enough time to make them appealing, don't know how to do that or don't bother prepare for them.

Most of us probably felt this on our own. It is not very difficult to remember a presentation in which the speaker was so monotonous that it was impossible to stay focused. Or a time when he or she had all the information crowded on each slide and he read them instead of making eye contact with us. Or when there were so many unknown fancy or technical words that it was impossible to get a clear view on the topic. Not a nice memory, isn't it? So, what should we do in order to save our future audience from the same nasty experience?

Presentations are about 3 things: what you are going to present, how you will present it and what kind of visual, audio or other kind of aids you will use to convey your message.

Step 1 – Know what you are presenting

If you can't understand what you are talking about, how can you even consider presenting it to others? Before you decide on making a presentation make sure you are very familiar with the topic. And this does not mean only the text and the topics of the presentation. It means to also know extra information about the context of that work, about its content and about future plans. Often you will receive questions regarding your presentations that will need answers that are not found in the text you have decided to make public, so it is a good thing to be prepared. On the other hand, when asked about something you have not enough knowledge about, don't be afraid to say that at the point of the presentation you don't have all the necessary information and offer to stay in contact with the person asking to forward the answer when you will have it.

Step 2 – Know your audience

Different persons have different interests so, because of this, no two presentations should be the same. It is one thing to talk about your project to some sponsors and another to present it to volunteers who will be working in it. Besides the activities, sponsors will be interested in the visibility that they are getting or in the ethical principles you are promoting. Volunteers will be interested in the opportunities that they have for getting involved and care less about the visibility of the project. For each group you need a different presentation.

Moreover, the vocabulary that you should be using, the graphical design of the presentation, the level of interaction and all the other elements of your presentation should be adapted to the persons you are delivering it to. If you present too complicated text to volunteers with a lot of technical information, they will not understand it and get bored. If you present just simple information to people coming from the business environment, they will think it is not serious and ignore it.

Before preparing your presentation, the first question you should ask yourself is: "What is the interest of my target group in this work?" and focus your presentation on that. The second one: "How can the public benefit from this information?" and include this also. People will pay more attention to things about which they are aware that can improve their life in some way. Then, make sure you take into account their age, cultural and professional background, level of education and any other aspect that can be relevant for what you will share.

Step 3 – Choose the relevant information

People have limited capacity of acquiring new information so if you will bombard them with too much you risk that at the end they will not remember it. Presentations should be kept at a minimum of information that still delivers what you want to but does this in the simplest and shortest way possible. After you make a plan of what you want to include, take the content item by item and ask yourself if each of them are relevant and how much would the presentation suffer if one or another would be missing.

Step 4 - Think about the experience, not just the content

Think about the experience, not just the content

As mentioned in the first part of this manual, communication in the 21st century is no longer about delivering text; it is about delivering content, it is about delivering an experience to the receiver. You definitely need to consider the aids that you can use for creating such an experience. Photos send out a strong message, far stronger than simple text, so they are anytime welcome. What will convince you that there is a pollution problem in an area? Some statistics about some average pollutants or a photo of animals that are suffering from it? They are widely available online and there are plenty of websites offering them for free. An effective photo can dramatically improve how the audience perceives the information you are trying to transmit.

Furthermore, presentations are not just about PowerPoint. Find ways to interact with your audience to create that experience. Exemplify the things you are talking about through samples. Give more meaning to numbers and allow the viewers to understand more about the context or to visualize what can be for them random numbers through info graphs. Bring guest beneficiaries that can share about their work with you. Explain how the thing about which you are talking can be used in practice or create strong emotions with the help of videos. Introduce short exercises to make your audience more aware of their feelings or to give them the opportunity to contribute to the presentation by providing input. Use music to create the atmosphere you aim for. Use flipcharts to create content as you go. Shortly, forget about just delivering text. You are delivering a whole experience and anything that helps you do that is welcome.

Step 5 – Develop simple slides with minimum text

While visual aids are good and the use of effective imagery is highly recommended the slides we are preparing should not be too packed with text or visual aids. This will distract the viewers from the essential information and make them lose focus of what is really important.

The first thing to remember: slides are only *part* of the presentation! Not even the main part. If slides are the most important part of your presentation then why aren't you just sending them by e-mail to all the persons? Remember, you don't deliver text; you deliver a whole experience and emotions. Slides alone cannot do that, they just back up what you are saying.

In terms of numbers, it is often considered that there should be no more than 15 slides in one 15 – 30 minutes presentation and each slide should have no more than 3 lines, each of these having maximum 5 words. On the other hand, different presentations addressing different target groups require a more diverse approach, but it is advisable that you try to stay around these figures.

A slide should have no more than 3 lines, each of maximum 5 words

For the font, try not to change it during the presentation. Two fonts (for example one for the titles and one for the content) should be enough. Also try to preserve the font size and color, having the same one for titles, content and respectively annotations.

People like creativity and variety, but also enjoy a little order.

If you want your slides to get the attention, you can also try using other fonts than the ones typical for your slide software. Internet offers a large variety of fonts, most of them available for free. On the other hand, make sure that they are readable and that the letters don't have too many decorations. It is often considered that Sans Serif fonts, the ones without the little "tails" on the letters are more appropriate. Also, remember that if you download fonts from the Internet they will be available just on your computer. As soon as you will open the slide on another one that doesn't have them installed they will be replaced with a standard one so you will have to install them there also.

Make sure that there is enough contrast between the font and the background for the text to be easily readable. Also, you should check that the size of the text is big enough so that persons sitting in the last row (or being farthest from the screen) can still read.

For making the presentation more appealing you can also add some graphical elements for decoration, as long as you don't clutter the slide with it. Transitions are also used for the same purpose, but often they just distract the audience, so don't add more than some simple ones (not too bouncy or too long) and also keep the same one throughout the slideshow.

If there is more text that you would like to add, some reports or anything else that cannot fit in the 15 slides, you can create a handout that you will distribute at the end of the presentation. You should avoid offering it in the beginning, as people will start reading it instead of paying attention to your presentation. Keep in mind to announce that such a document is available from the start.

Step 6 - Practice your presentation

It is not for nothing that Steve Jobs, with all his experience in delivering presentations that were seen by millions, practiced them for months in advance. He knew what any good presenter knows: the best way to show confidence, to be fluent enough and to transmit the right emotions is through practice. And this is not the only benefit: by rehearsing your presentation you can also make changes to it when you feel that things are not quite right, thus improving it further.

Whether you rehearse alone with your computer, in front of a camera in order to review you presentation after and see what needs to be improved or in front of a test audience, moments spent on this are moments invested in a perfect presentation, which often can mean the difference between the success and failure of your work. Remember not to use this just for rehearsal but also for getting feedback about your job.

Step 7 – Deliver the presentation

This is by far considered by many to be the most complicated part, involving sometimes overwhelming emotions and fears. Still, with enough practice and previous experience, things should be quite straightforward.

Here are some things that should be considered while presenting:

- **First and most important – Don't be monotonous!** – Never deliver your message with the same tone or the same pace from the beginning to the end. Change pitch, emphasize different words that are important in the sentence, use pauses, change pace, show enthusiasm or tell a joke! Whatever it takes to bring the much needed change so that your audience will not fall asleep from the constant tone of your voice.
- **Be loud enough and clear** – To make sure that you are being heard but also not too loud, imagine that you are speaking to the last person from the room and adjust the volume accordingly.
- **Don't speak too fast** – Being anxious can sometimes make you speak faster. It is a defense mechanism of your brain, as the faster you speak the shorter you will be in that position of stress. Try to control this. Moreover, when delivering the presentation to an audience not speaking that language as native even a normal pace can be difficult to be followed, so also keep this in mind.
- **Don't read from your slideshows** – If you have made the mistake of adding an abundance of text on your slideshow, you will also see that you will be drawn toward reading it instead of speaking freely to your audience. Keep in mind that they can also read and that you role is not to recite the text for them but to use this text to back up new information and emotions that you are delivering. Furthermore people cannot both read and listen at the same time so if you have too much text their attention will be directed to one of the two, more often towards the text than towards you.
- **Use an appropriate vocabulary** – As stated before, you should first know your audience and adjust your presentation to it. This is valid not only for the content but also for the words you are using. Not everybody can understand different technical terms, or, even worse, slang or jargon. Diverse audiences may not understand slang from a given country. Moreover, when delivering in a language that is foreign to your audience, most of the expressions or the words that do not belong to the commonly used vocabulary are often difficult to be understood.
- **Have an appropriate body language** – For body language we could even create a new manual that refers just to it. So many of our gestures mean so much. Still, there are some aspects that are more important and also most commonly ignored.

First: eye contact. Always keep eye contact with all your audience. Don't look at the floor, at the ceiling, at the projection screen or at just one or some of the participants. Always try to maintain eye contact with each member of your audience.

Second: have an open posture. This means that your hands should be in such a position that the trunk of the body is open and exposed. By doing so you indicate friendliness, openness and willingness. Don't keep your arms together, crossed at chest level or behind your back, like an old-fashioned schoolteacher waiting to punish someone!

Third: don't show your stress. Don't play with the ring that you have on your finger, with your fingers, hair, pen, phone or anything else. People's attention gets distracted to areas where the eyes notice motion; so if your hand will be always moving don't expect someone to pay attention to what you are saying. Moreover, these also tend to make you look insecure and your audience will not trust anymore what you are saying.

Fourth: don't move too much! While changing your position, especially when introducing new elements into the presentation, can be advisable, constantly moving from one place to another will make people more focused on your direction than on your words.

Fifth: smile and show enthusiasm! Your audience will not be more enthusiastic than you! If you show that you are not excited about what you are presenting, why should they invest their attention to it?

- **Start with a short summary, end with a review** – in the beginning let people know what you will be talking about, in order for the right context to be created in their mind and for creating a connection between their interests and the content you will deliver. End with a review in order to remind people what they have learned about.
- **Interact with your audience** – after listening and listening and listening ... most of the people will disconnect from what you are saying if something doesn't catch their attention. Interaction with them is one of the best ways to do it. Ask your audience about their opinion regarding a certain topic. Create short surveys among them (e.g. "All those who have been before in a youth exchange, please raise your hand"). Offer them the chance to intervene: if a question pops up in the middle of your presentation, that's great! It means someone is listening! The best presentations feel like conversations, so, as much as possible try to foster this kind of interaction.

Sounds simple and great, right? But there is one factor we haven't talked about, the one that makes everything so much complicated: fear of public speaking. Whether it is because we are afraid of embarrassing ourselves, of forgetting what we should say or of being judged, for speaking in front of an audience we really need to make a big leap out of our comfort zone. Fear is a natural response of our body when placed in a stressful situation and there is little we can do to prevent it. On the other hand, this doesn't mean we cannot master it and even use it to our own advantage.

The first step in mastering fear is to understand where it comes from and create for you the comfort that that situation will not appear. When being assigned with the task of making a public presentation, several dark thoughts rush to your mind. Here are some of them, accompanied with the positive thinking that should be associated to them in order for you to realize that the fear you have is either irrational or can be easily overcome.

- "I will forget what I should say!" – this is a more common one, as people in stress usually have so many things on their mind that they can lose concentration on what is important. First thing to remember: there is no problem in forgetting your lines. It happened in more important occasions and there was no big issue about it. Just smile, take a break, excuse yourself, explain to people that there are so many things you want to share with them that you just lost track. Then move on. People will show a nice smile and will ignore this. What is also helpful in these situations is to either have some cue cards that will help you keep track or to connect different words on the slides with things you want to talk about.
- "I will make a mistake!" – this happens for the same reasons as forgetting what you have to say and it can be overcome in the same way: admit it, correct it and move on. Your audience will appreciate your honesty and will not even remember it.
- "Everybody will be watching me" – well, you are right and that is the whole point of presentations, isn't it? Mostly, after your first few presentations you will realize that people are not watching you in order to catch any mistake you make, they do this for learning something new from you. They are your partners in this, not your opponents. But, for you to understand this faster, one trick is to interact more with them or even start with some jokes. Or start with something unexpected; create a "WOW!" moment. You will see that they will enjoy this and their smiling faces will give you the comfort you need.
- "I will not be able to answer the questions asked by the public" – well, you are there as a speaker not as a living encyclopedia. Not having the answer to all the

questions is expected and the best way to deal with this is, again, to be honest. "At this point, I don't have the necessary information to give a correct answer to this as it is not in my area of expertise" or "I cannot give you an answer to this right now that I am convinced is 100% true" and that is it. If you can research it for later, even better: "I will research this during the break and come back on that" will keep everyone happy.

- "The technical stuff will not work properly" – "If anything can go wrong, it will" is one of the so-called "Murphy's laws" that is the most quoted. Yes, things can go wrong and we should be prepared for this. How? Firstly, by arriving in advance to the presentation room and checking that all is in order: the projector is working, the computer has the software needed to read your presentation, the light is good, the air conditioning is working and so on. What if something fails? Well, for some there are back-up plans. For your presentation, you can export your slides also in JPEG format, which any computer can read. Or even print them for the situation in which the projector is not working. You can anytime bring extra pens, have a flipchart to replace your slideshow, download your YouTube videos in case internet is not working and so on. It all depends on what are your plans regarding your presentation. On the other hand sometimes it is impossible to have a Plan B for everything and, when this comes, again, honesty is your salvation: just explain the technical difficulties you face, joke about them and introduce the new context in which you will be working.

Regarding public speaking there is a lot more to say, as the theoretical aspects don't stop here. A whole manual could be delivered just about presentations and there are many available that you are invited to consult. Still, there is one thing that no manual or any other kind of material can provide for you: the experience!

Dale Carnegie, one of the most successful authors on public speaking and self-improvement, wrote in one of his books that, just like you cannot learn how to swim without getting wet, you cannot master public speaking without actually speaking in front of a group. No book in this world can compensate for the actual experience. We will take this one step forward and add the following: just being in the water doesn't make you learn how to swim! Just being or speaking in front of an audience will not make you a good public speaker. You must always self-evaluate your performance and improve whatever does not seem to be right. And remember, what you have here is just the foundation for your work! It is up to you to decide what is best to build on it and how you will do it!

Now it's your turn!

You probably have an idea in your mind about a new project that your organisation should initiate. For sure you will need the engagement of different stakeholders to put it into practice, right? Try to convince them to be a part of it through a presentation! Of course, taking into consideration all the aspects mentioned before.

Ask some members of your organisation or even friends to be your audience. The presentation should not be longer than 5 minutes, so you will not use too much of their time.

To have proper feedback about this, ask your audience to fill in the evaluation form on the next page.

Evaluation of the presentation

Regarding the presentation you just saw, please rate the following statements from 1 (I disagree) to 5 (I agree), by ticking the corresponding box, offering suggestions for future improvement.

The speaker was familiar with the subject he was presenting	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion:					
It was easy for me to follow the presentation	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion:					
The information was presented in a way that captured my interest	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion:					
I got enough information to make a good image about the topic that was presented	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion:					
I found that there was also irrelevant information presented	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion:					
I felt that there was a good interaction with the audience during the presentation	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion:					

I liked the way in which the slides were designed (font, images, colours, sizes, readability, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion:					
I think the slides were easy to understand and had a positive contribution to the presentation	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion:					
I enjoyed the visual aids and the rest of the elements, other than slides, used during the presentation for allowing us to further understand the topic	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion:					
The speaker was confident while making the presentation	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion:					
It was easy to follow what the speaker was saying	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion:					
I enjoyed the speaker's body language (posture, eye contact, tone, smile, movement etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Suggestion:					

Chapter 3

Communication with staff and partners in the context of the E.V.S.

Techniques and tools for office communication

1. Basic principles

What should we take into consideration while communicating at the office?

Communication at the office is neither complicated nor very simple. Each of us has basic skills of interacting with the other. On the other hand things are not always great and easy and this causes conflicts. People are more or less satisfied with the others, some do their job better while others still need to improve their work, what is normal for one person is not necessarily right for the other. Moreover, when working with volunteers there are some particularities that need to be taken into consideration, as their interest and motivation are somewhat different than those of the organisation's staff. It is in this kind of situations that communication becomes very important in preserving a good group dynamics and in keeping people involved in their work.

While each situation requires different approaches, there are some aspects that should be taken into consideration in order for a discussion to end with results rather than with conflicts.

Smile and show appreciation!

A smile is welcome at any meeting that you will have with your teammates. If you meet to discuss positive aspects or to work on something, it helps people relax, enjoy the work you are doing together and feel good about cooperating with you. If you meet to discuss negative aspects about the performance of one of your team members, it will give confidence to the other that you are still on the same side and you are meeting together to find a solution. Otherwise, these kinds of meetings are often interpreted as confrontational and they end up focusing on who is right and who is wrong, rather than on a constructive solution.

Whatever is the purpose of the meeting don't forget to show appreciation for the individual's work. If you enjoy the work one person did, one idea that he presented, the way he handled some situation, don't forget to mention this. Everyone is searching for appreciation. If you are unsatisfied with some aspects about it, you can still bring into discussion the positive ones. For example, if one staff member that is otherwise very competent is not respecting the deadlines that he was supposed to, you can start the discussion by "Your work here has been appreciated until now and it could even better if you would pay more attention to deadlines" or "You show great motivation in your work and it is a great pity for mistakes like missing deadlines to cast a shadow on it". It again shows that your goal is not to create a conflict with him but to help him achieve better results, which are in both of your interest.

It is not just what you say that counts. How you say it is equally important!

Communicate in a way that captivates and motivates, show that you believe in what you are saying and in the positive impact of what you are proposing. Treat the others with respect and try to engage them in finding a solution instead of directly ordering them what to do. People who feel they are being approached with respect will be more reasonable to requests. Moreover, when decisions are taken with the participation of all parties involved, people are more motivated to put them into action. Also, explain on each occasion why the things are the way they are or what are the objective factors that make you decide one way or another. The goal of your meetings is not to criticize but to find solutions together.

Remember: it is not just about what you say! How you say it is equally important!

Some phrases you could use in order to put all these in practice are:

- "This is why I am turning to you to try to find a reasonable solution so that it will be in both your interest and the interest of the project";
- "Do you think that we could find a solution to this?";
- "Let's think. Isn't there any other way to solve this, as at this point we are in a lose-lose situation";
- "I was wondering if you could help me solve this challenge that we are facing";
- "Do you find this a reasonable request for you?";
- "Does this make sense to you?";
- "Let's not see this as a problem for a while";
- "It is important both for the project and also for you, personally";
- "We all have to work together to make some adjustments in order for everyone to be confortable and the project to achieve its objectives";

Whatever you say, always be polite, no matter the discussion! Politeness will help avoid unnecessary conflict.

Make sure that you have a participatory approach in solving the issues you are dealing!

Involve all interested parties in finding a solution! Asking a person to get involved in finding a solution for a problem in which the person is part of will help more than telling that person what you personally and in a non-transparent way decided that he/she should do.

Avoid saying "NO"!

"No" has a very negative impact and also closes the path for further communication as it implies that you are not willing to listen to any other arguments for the proposal and that you made a personal decision regardless of the other's interests. Make sure to make the other acknowledge that you have understood their proposal and, if you disagree with it, that there are some objective aspects that do not allow you to agree with it (e.g. "I understand your point of view and I could totally agree to this, but we have to take into consideration that…" or "I know that you would very much enjoy it but we must also consider that").

Show that you care!

If the other feels that you show in interest in his matter he will be more open for also caring about your interest and it will be easier for all of you to find the common grounds. Showing that you care is not just a "single day" process ("today I care, tomorrow I don't"), it is a way of thinking and of acting that should guide you throughout the project and the facilitation process. Avoid phrases like "I don't care" or "it is not my job" but instead give advice in any of the matters that you are being addressed, even if this is just politely explaining that a more suitable person to handle this would be our colleague, "X". Also, promising that you will solve something and not doing it doesn't help and has the negative effect of making the other lose his confidence in you thus blocking future reasoning together.

Try to put the other person in your or a colleague's position so that he gets a clearer image of what is happening!

Also, when reaching some key points with respect to the other's perception, be sure to emphasize them (e.g. "Just like you need your personal space, imagine that he also needs his own space. Does this seem reasonable to you?" or "I would like to ask you to imagine that you could take all the decisions about this project. How would you handle this situation?").

Show empathy!

The reverse of the previous tip also works. Don't forget to think at things also from the perspective of the other person and think also about his interests. For a negotiation to be successful, each party must win something, so in any discussion it is best to know not only what you want but also what will make the other person happy.

Make sure that any decision that you take together is stated into an action plan!

A simple "Yes, I will change this!" will not do it. After deciding on the basics, work together on developing an action plan in which both the other person and you take responsibility on what you are doing and until when this needs to be done! This is also helpful in tracking the changes and approaching the situation again if, for one reason or another, things are not improving. Write the plan on paper in order to have a clear reminder of what needs to be done and also make sure that the other reads it, acknowledges it and even make a copy of it, in order to have these guidelines with him at all time. There is no need for having signatures on the plan or anything of that matter, especially if it is the first time that the situation is addressed, but make sure to have the plan with you and to refer to it if you see that the necessary steps are not taken (e.g. "Last time we discussed about this, we made this plan. Do you remember about this paper?").

Don't concentrate on proving you are right!

In a discussion the important thing is the result, not who was right or wrong about it. If the other is opposing your idea, which at the end is proven to be the right one, don't make a big deal out of this, just enjoy the fact that the conflict was avoided and that you have reached an agreement that is beneficial for both parties.

Don't talk just about work!

Even if you meet just at work and most of your interaction is about this, your communication should not refer only to professional aspects. Talking about other personal things like interests, hobbies, views, aspirations or even private problems that one of you is facing will create better connections between you and your teammates that will help the professional relationship and the overall atmosphere at work.

Prepare in advance!

A lot of the issues can appear spontaneously, but for the others you more or less know in advance that you will be facing them. Try to gather all the relevant information regarding the topic (by finding about the opinion of others, reading the reports or the CV/motivation letter of the volunteer, his Facebook profile, etc.) and think about the best strategy to approach the things, developing a discussion plan.

Evaluate yourself!

It is impossible to fully change your approach after reading this manual once, twice or even ten times. It takes a lot of practice to do this but you must show commitment to it. Evaluate yourself after each conversation you have, check the manual or have a self-reflection and see what you have been missing. Write it down and try to include it in your next meetings. Also, when hearing the others speak, listen to them and analyze what they are doing right and what doesn't sound so good.

The most problematic cases you will be faced with are also the best sources of learning!

Treat each difficult situation that will appear not like a problem but like a source of developing yourself and of improving your leadership skills, which will make you a valuable asset to your organization.

2. Pre-conflict communication in E.V.S.

How to deal with tough conversations or even conflicts?

As stated before, things are not always milk and honey and eventually you will have to approach one colleague or a volunteer to explain that there are things that he should change about himself. When this will happen, it is good to have in mind the following tips and also to check the examples provided to you for seeing how different tough conversations can be approached. This will prevent turning a simple call for action into a conflict from which everyone will lose. Moreover, even if the next examples will refer to E.V.S. volunteers, the same approach can be just as effective in relation to the organisation's staff or the local volunteers.

Before you start!

A matter of "perception"

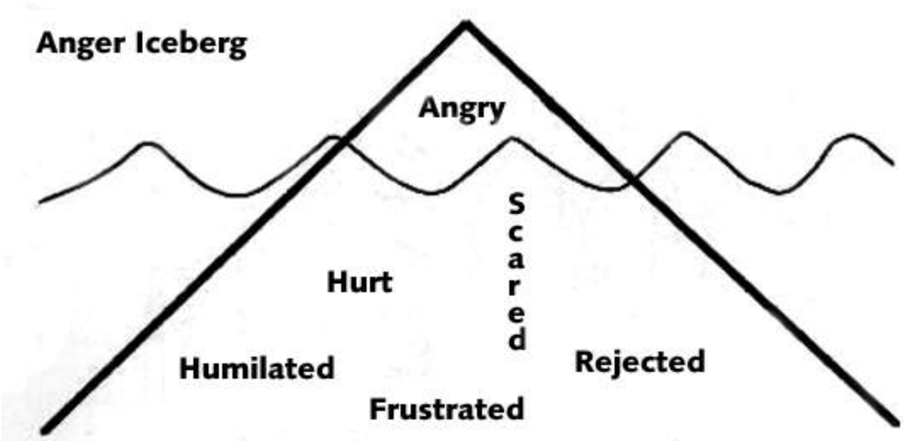
"A negative perception is seen as true until proven otherwise. It appears either because something is not happening properly or something appears not to be happening properly, but in any of the cases something must be done to change it."

Starting from this you can more easily approach volunteers or staff on delicate topics. You are not judging that something is happening but rather pointing that there is a general/personal "feeling" or "impression" that something is not right. By using "feeling" or "impression" you do not show a judgmental approach. Rather, you are bringing into discussion a matter of "perception" regarding one situation that should be handled, either because there is a real problem which needs to be fixed in a way or because a wrong perception of the real situation exists and should be corrected. Also, by approaching this from the matter of perception and offering to provide support in changing this perception, you have more chances of getting to the actual source of the problem, as the volunteer will not act in a defensive way, trying to excuse himself. This happens because in this way you are not positioning in two opposite sides but rather you are offering your support and you are showing you are ready to understand what is really the issue. Examples of this will be analyzed in the following sections.

The "iceberg" model

Just as the only visible part of an iceberg is the tip, which is less than a third of all, what is visible from a problem or from a conflict can be just what surfaces while the causes can be deep under and invisible in the beginning.

One example of this is the "Anger iceberg", a representation of how anger or conflict represent just what shows up, while the causes, the ones that should be addressed, are not so obvious at a first look. When dealing with a conflict the point is not just to separate the parties involved and keep them separated or to make them promise that they will not fight. You must seek for what is the source or the cause of the conflict and try to solve that.



In the same way, when dealing with the problems of a volunteer, it can be that he will not always tell you what is actually wrong. Sometimes even he is not really aware of what is bothering him. Your role is to get to the source of things and to make sure you fully understand the problem and the context.

Approaching volunteers who are not getting involved in their activities

Using the "perception" approach is one of the best ways to handle such a situation. For example, Alice is a volunteer who is not really involved in her activities. One way to address this could be as follows:

"Hey Alice! I want to discuss with you about something!

….

I am getting the feeling that there is a problem in the group regarding your involvement in the activities of the project, in a sense that the other volunteers are having the impression that you are not as involved as they are. Also, from your reports, I

could observe that you are not writing so much about your activities. **This can be either because this is actually the situation or because there is a wrong perception about how much you are actually involved, but, in any of these cases, it is something that we should find a solution to**. This is why I wanted to have this discussion with you, so that together we can first see what is really the situation and then make it better. It is not about judging what you are doing; it is about finding the source of this. **Maybe it is something about your motivation, your inspiration in working with youngsters or just how "visible" you are** while working, but in any of these cases **it is important both for the project and also for you, personally**, to find a way to improve things."

Why go for this approach? Here are several key aspects that we have taken into consideration:

1. "**I am getting the feeling that there is a problem in the group**" – this starts the discussion in a way that you are not showing judgment, but perception;
2. "**I could observe that…**" – to make things more clear and to emphasize the fact that this is not just the perception of others (as the volunteer can just say that the others have something against her), it is good to bring into discussion some other **objective** aspects, which cannot be disputed. Again, you are talking about "observation", not judgment;
3. "**This can be either because this is actually the situation or because there is a wrong perception about how much you are actually involved but, in any of these cases, it is something that we should find a solution to**" – in this way you are showing that this is not a discussion for judging, but for finding solutions. Also this closes the way so that the volunteer cannot say that this is not true in order to end the discussion. Even if he is in fact active in his job, the perception is there and we must find why this is happening and change it;
4. "**Maybe it is something about your motivation, your inspiration in working with youngsters or just how "visible" you are**" – this shows that you have not already made a decision about the situation and that you are taking into consideration a lot of potential causes which you are willing to approach together. Also, it can be a beginning of a reflection process for the volunteer in order for him to understand the source of this problem;
5. "**it is important both for the project and also for you, personally**" – like this you can emphasize the fact that you are not focused just on your own needs, to

have the project working in a good way, but also you are interested in the volunteer;

The discussion can continue in various ways, like:

Lack of motivation - in this situation you should try to understand what is motivating the volunteer, what were his/her initial expectations when joining the project and compare them with the project's objectives and activities. Check if he actually knew what he was getting involved into and what other activities could be interesting for him. Also, try to find other similar topics that can help you adapt the activities in order to better suite the volunteer's need and help him become motivated again. Check his/her CV and motivation letter that were submitted for applying to the project and relate also to the interests and the motivation mentioned there but also try to identify new ones.

A general lack of interest from the volunteer – in this situation the discussion should head towards two directions: the development opportunity that he/she has by participating in the project and the responsibilities that were assumed when joining the project. A way to approach this could be:

"OK, from what you are telling me, I am getting the perception that this project is maybe not so interesting for you. **Let's not see it as a problem for a while and let's think about the opportunity that you are provided with…**"

By mentioning that you will not start your solution-finding quest from the perception that the situation is a very problematic one you divert the discussion from a negative one to a constructive one.

The discussion can continue, depending on the project, on the benefits that a participation in such a project may have, **with examples for each situation**. The most useful benefits that you refer to are connected to getting a job: the skills on communication, working in a team, working in an international environment, learning English, experimenting new fields of interest, can prove very useful and we have very good examples, it is not just that we are saying this to make anyone feel confortable. **You should refer to real stories about past volunteers** whom the organization hosted who got a job in the country, who are now working in another country, who discovered working with children to be very enjoying even if they had no interest in this before, who are now very good in English even if they were without any skills before, etc. Related to working skills, do not forget to emphasize the fact that this experience can be very useful in the context of working abroad, not only referring to the added value to the Curriculum Vitae but also in actual skills, **as this is a real experience where he can actually learn how it is to be in a foreign country and have a job**.

In this context, there are two important things to take into consideration. First, check his/her CV and motivation letter that were submitted for applying to the project and relate to the interests and the motivation mentioned there. Second, make sure to present the situation in such a way you can convince the volunteer that these benefits are totally real and not something you are inventing for them to feel confortable. Don't forget to take into consideration that **the first step for this is for you to believe and to be convinced that this opportunity is real** in order to convince others also.

On the other hand, the volunteer must clearly understand that he had the **privilege of receiving an E.U. grant and this comes with a great responsibility**, especially if you notice that the motivation described in his application is not fully reflecting the reality. The E.U. is paying money for the volunteer to develop himself and the local community and, by applying to this project and signing all the legal agreements, he took the responsibility of using this money in a proper way. Moreover, another European was denied this privilege because this was offered to him. In this situation it must be emphasized, also in connection to the benefits described before, that the only thing the volunteer can do at this point is to think about how to **"restart" his experience** and make the most of it. **This will offer him increased opportunities for development and, very important, it will keep him away from paying any financial penalties for breaking the agreement.**

No interest in sending the reports – in this situation the volunteer must clearly understand the purpose of the reports. These reports are created and submitted not for the fun of the organization or because we enjoy a bureaucratic process.

They are used first in order for the volunteer to have a reflection of what he is doing and how this is working for him, for insuring a good flow of the project and its evaluation. One typical response in this case could be:

"Alice, I can understand that these reports use up your time. On the other hand, they are a very good way in which you can reflect on what you have done and what you have learned by doing this. Also, think that at the end of the project you will have to write the volunteer's report which is a mandatory part of the project and the way in which you justify the grant you have received. By having these reports, that will be a really easy task for you as you will just have to copy from these to the final one. Also, think that at the end of the project it will be really hard for you to remember all the things you have done. Does this make sense to you?"

If the volunteer is still not convinced about this, you can also refer more to the reporting and financial aspects:

"Please understand the you are receiving a grant from the European Commission and that for this you must provide some documents to prove that you have used this grant accordingly to its destination. If there are no such documents then you are at risk of being asked for the money back and I'm sure you don't want this. What we are doing here is a serious job with serious implications. If there is no proof of your activity how can you justify the amount and the support that you receive each month? Do you find this as a reasonable way of proving to the European Commission that the grant offered to you is used accordingly to its destination?"

Some other problems related to the project – in this case, having in mind the "Iceberg model", that what you "see" can have a more important invisible source, try to find which is this source and, together, solutions for the problems that exist. In this case a reverse role-play could be useful, asking the volunteer to imagine that he is the decision maker of the project and to take some decisions on how to handle the current situation. For example:

"Ok, I can observe that there are things which make you unhappy. So, in order to make an impression about what you need, I would like to ask you to imagine that you could take all the decisions about this project. How would you handle this situation?"

While in this role-play, the facilitator should help the volunteer understand also which limitations exist. For example if the volunteer says that he would let each volunteer have his own apartment the facilitator must explain about the financial limitations: "Yes, this could be a way to solve things. But with the total budget, this would mean that you would have to cover the extra costs from your own pocket. Would you do this?".

In any case, all the feasible ideas with a potential to handle the situation, should be written down for future discussion with the management team of the project or the association.

Money issues

One of the issues that appear often in E.V.S. projects is the one related to the money that is allocated for the project costs. A typical question could be "Why am I not personally getting the whole amount allocated for organisational support and what are you doing with my money?".

The first thing you need to do when working with public money is to be transparent, and this applies to this case also. Still, financial aspects can be complicated sometimes and it is important for the volunteer to understand that in this situation the grant is not destined just to cover his personal expenses but also the organizational expenses which can be very high and which are not necessarily so visible.

"Antonio, regarding the "Organisational support", the first thing we should clarify is that this money is being offered by the European Commission to cover project costs and not just volunteer costs. Project costs include, of course, the costs related to your accommodation and food, but from these funds also other costs are supposed to be covered, costs which are necessary for the implementation of the project. For example the costs related to renting the office where you work, buying the office equipment, computers, printers, cameras, costs for buying the things that get damaged while the volunteers are using them, cost for replacing, repairing and refurbishing different equipment or locations that you are using, transportation and so on. Also the salaries of the staff involved in working with you are covered by the project grant, as there is no other source of financing for this that the organization can use. And when talking about the staff, we don't just refer to me, as your facilitator, we refer to mentors, language teachers, accounting, people doing the paperwork related to the project and to the organization. Also, we are not talking just about salaries; we are talking also about the taxes related to these, which are not at all negligible.

So don't think just in terms of costs directly related to you."

If necessary, you can also offer a practical example:

"For example, when you are buying something from the supermarket, you are not paying just the raw materials. If you are buying bread, you are not paying just for the flour and the water. You are paying for the energy that is needed to bake it, you are paying for the salary of the baker, for the car transporting the bread to the supermarket, for the supermarket building, for which the costs are divided to each article they sell, for the cashiers, for the accountants and so on. It is the same with the project costs, they are not just for accommodation and food."

In any case, you should assure the volunteer that the way in which money is spent is subject of auditing both from the National Agency and the national anti-fraud institutions, so there is no way that we could just take the money and put it in our pockets. People of the organization don't receive the money personally, the money is being received by the organization and there are strict rules by which this money can be spent, not just imposed by the European Commission but also by the laws on accounting.

Embarrassing situations

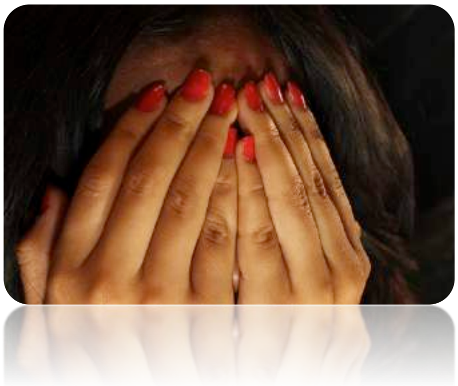
There are several embarrassing situations you can meet during an E.V.S. stage, which can be difficult to approach. For this, given the fact that there is no easy way to discuss these issues, here is a good way to start your discussion. For example:

"Hey Pavel, there is something I would like to talk to you about. It is very delicate matter and there is no confortable way of addressing this. Or at least I couldn't find one (smile). Before we go on with this discussion, I would like to ask you to trust that the reason I initiated this conversation is to insure a good experience for you here and not to put you in some delicate situation. Can I have your trust on this? (Smile)

…"

After you will get a reply on this, you can directly start to address the issue. For example if the other volunteers complain that **Pavel is not taking a shower** as often as he should, you could continue like this:

"Some of your colleagues found it difficult to come to you so they addressed me about the fact that they would find it more confortable if you showered more often. I know this is not a pleasant thing to hear, also I am not the most confortable with this. Besides, I don't know if this is really the situation or if it is just that the deodorant that you are using is not working for you type of skin or it is a medical issue or something else. But this is the perception and we should do something about it. This is why I wanted to have this discussion with you, to try to find out what should be improved. Again, I know that this is not the most confortable discussion and sorry for putting you in this situation, but, at least from my experience, it is better to have it than to ignore it."



One other problem can be the **outfit or any other habits** of the volunteer, which are not suitable for the activities that he/she is involved in. The discussion could continue like:

"I don't want to offend you or limit your choices in style as I also feel that freedom of expression is an important aspect of our life, but I would like to let you know that I got some remarks that your choice in outfit for the activities could be a little offensive for some of the teachers you are working with. I am perfectly aware that this is your style but, in the given circumstances, it is important to take into consideration the opinion of our beneficiaries, as a bad relation with them could harm the project and the activities in which you are involved. This is why I am turning to you to try to find a way to handle this so that neither you nor the teachers would feel offended (or: Do you think we could find a solution to this?)".

Further discussion could go like "This discussion is not about repressing your individuality, it is just about finding a way to express yourself while respecting the cultural vision of the ones we are working with" or "The thing that I would like you to know is that there is a fine line which we have to take into consideration between the right to express yourself and other's needs to feel confortable in working together".

Working with different cultures means also that sometimes these issues create problems or confrontations within the group. For example, if it is brought to your knowledge that **one of the volunteers is pushing the others into following different religious or other cultural approaches**, you should explain clearly that we are an organization working independently from religious or other cultural interference, for example:

"Johan, there are two things that I would like to clarify about the complaints of your colleagues. First, we totally support freedom of expression and the right of each volunteer to believe and to act according to his/her culture. Still, this means that we are also respecting the same rights of the other volunteer and this means that neither we, nor you, can force anyone in acting according to our beliefs and values. And this takes me to the second thing which I wanted to address you about: the fine line that we have to take into consideration between the right to express yourself and other's needs to feel confortable in working together. This means that as people respect your right in this matter you should also respect theirs on having different views than yours."

If one of the volunteers **addresses the others, usually of opposite gender, in an uncomfortable way or even gets involved in uncomfortable physical contact**, this issue could be addressed like:

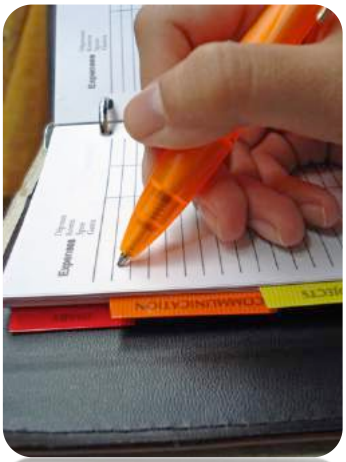
"Hey Vincent, I would like to talk to you about your colleague Sara. I know that you have a good relation with her and from what she tells me she also has a very good working experience with you. On the other hand, she was a little bit uncomfortable coming to you with an issue and this is why she asked me. Apparently, she feels that the way you address her is not very enjoyable for her and makes her feel uncomfortable. I know you probably didn't realize that, but could I please ask you to take this into consideration for the future and avoid doing the same?"

Also, in general, after these more delicate discussions are over, if they were started from what the other volunteers were complaining about, it is good to make sure that there are no hard feelings because of this. You should properly restate the fact that the only reason for which the discussion took place was in order to make things better and not embarrass anyone. For example, a good ending could be:

"Now, about Sara, I know that your next meeting with her could be a little awkward after the conversation we just had. But don't stress too much on the topic or be resentful. She came in good faith, trying to solve this thing that was an issue for her, not to embarrass you or because she had something personal against you. Yes, maybe you preferred that she came directly to you but please understand also her perspective, that she wasn't very confortable to approach this topic in a face to face conversation as she was a little embarrassed of the situation, and I think we could understand her, no?"

Volunteers not following the agreed plan

It is not uncommon that, even after understanding the problem and being given full support to solve it, the volunteer will not do much in that direction. First, it is important for you to keep an open mind as there is a good possibility that the volunteer showed good faith but the decisions you took together are simply not the right ones, they were impossible to be put to practice or don't have the foreseen impact. This is why the tone of discussion you set from the beginning should not be one showing that you are directly blaming the volunteer but should rather be one showing that you are willing to offer further support as, in the end, this is part of your responsibility.



A very important thing to have on your mind is the importance of the action plan that you should create after a decision is taken. By having this plan you can anytime refer to it to prove to the volunteer the he is not respecting his part of the problem-solving agreement. For this it is useful to bring the situation to the attention of the volunteer as soon as you see that the steps are not taken and one way to approach this could be:

"- Hey Kevin, I would like to have a private discussion with you about the things we agreed on last time. [-Ok!]. - Listen, Kevin, as you remember, we had a discussion about

…, when we also made a plan to improve things. Do you remember this paper where we wrote the steps? [- Yes! Of course! I am doing it!] – I am not saying that you are not doing it but I notice that there is no visible improvement as, until now I … (e.g. still get complaints from the others, still see no activity that you are involved into)…. Let's go through this plan once again, see what you managed to do and if there is maybe something we need to change about it to make it more effective, as until now the effects are not so visible."

This should be continued by a step-by-step check of each responsibility that the volunteer had and it will give you the opportunity to question him about what he did and, what he didn't do and why and what is the impact that these improvements are having. This way you have the opportunity to make the necessary changes. If you have any objective proof showing that actually the volunteer did not do his part of the agreement keep it at hand, as including it into discussion can save unnecessary debate on what was actually done or not.

If you see that actually too little was done by the volunteer in order to achieve what was planned, then you should refer to the responsibilities of him regarding the project, like:

"- So, Kevin, as it can be observed, you didn't quite stick to your part of the agreement. I don't know why this has happened, could you tell me?"

This gives the opportunity to the volunteer to reflect a little on the reasons for which things are the way they are. After getting his/her feedback and maybe even making some changes to the plan, you should emphasize once again the responsibility and the seriousness of this:

"Ok Kevin, we will try it again! But this time I want you to understand better the importance of what we are doing and the level of seriousness you have to dedicate to this. Do you see this as a serious thing that you really have to change? [-Yes!] – Ok, I am very glad we are on the same page. Because I would really not want things to escalate and to discuss about the negative things that could happen if you still show no sign of improvement. Your experience here is not about this, so let's not reach that point, Ok? [-Ok] For next week I want YOU to come and tell me what improvements you made, because this will show me how motivated you are to make things better! What do you say? [- Ok!] Perfect, I'm waiting for your call by next Friday! [- Ok!] Don't forget! ☺"

3. Partnership agreements

How to set up clear expectations between partners?

In the previous section you have seen how to manage different situations so that they don't end up in conflict. On the other hand, a lot of these situations can be avoided from the very beginning through a thorough preparation phase, during which the expectations and the rules that should be followed are clearly expressed.

First of all, it is very important that the partners communicate even before the project is submitted, deciding together on its theme, joint aims and objectives. Moreover, several other aspects should be addressed, in order for future problems to be avoided, like:

- The period of the stage – duration and dates;
- Division of tasks – who is doing what?
- Number of participants from each side;
- Expectations from the volunteers;
- Timetable of the activities;
- Methods of communicating;
- Preparation and support for the volunteers;
- Dissemination activities, etc.

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for some of these topics to be ignored, because of lack of time or because they are being considered irrelevant. Still, addressing these at the right time will not only save you from unnecessary problems but will also insure the fact that the parties involved are truly interested in the cooperation.

The European Commission recommends to all participating organisations involved in a youth mobility to sign an internal agreement between them. Such an agreement has the purpose of clearly defining responsibilities, tasks and financial contribution for all parties involved in the project. It is up to the participating organisations to jointly decide on how the EU grant will be distributed and which costs it will cover. Even if this is a recommendation, having such a document will help you insure a solid and smooth cooperation with your partners and to avoid or manage potential conflicts.

Different projects imply different responsibilities, which a manual cannot fully foresee. Still, the following list of potential topics about which you should decide who is responsible for what can be a good starting point for your agreement.

Topics to address when setting up partnership agreements

- ☐ Grant application: drafting and submitting;
- ☐ Periodical exchange of information between the partners;
- ☐ Support for the partners in terms of documents and other relevant paperwork;
- ☐ Budget: defining and managing; division of grant; documents needed for reimbursement of different costs;
- ☐ Risk prevention measures and crisis management;
- ☐ Quantitative, qualitative, financial indicators and deadlines;
- ☐ Recruitment and selection of the volunteer;
- ☐ Preparation / training / guidance / support for the volunteers before, during and after the stage;
- ☐ Participation to the EVS training cycle provided by the National Agencies or responsible structures;
- ☐ Vaccinations;
- ☐ Support for travel;
- ☐ Medical insurance;
- ☐ Insuring that the volunteers have all the necessary travel documents: a valid passport, visa and also the travel tickets towards and from his hometown;
- ☐ Obtaining residency permits;
- ☐ Support person to accompany recruited young people with fewer opportunities;
- ☐ Rules and recommendations which will apply during the stage (EVS Info KIT);
- ☐ Rules to respect in the hosting communities and hosting places;
- ☐ Conditions about accommodation, meals and local transportation in the hosting community;
- ☐ Monthly activity plan and safe working conditions for the volunteers throughout the project's activities;

- Access to local volunteering opportunities, as described in the project;
- Facilitation for the activities;
- Personal supervision, mentoring, and work-related support and/or training to enable full integration into the project;
- Language course for the EVS volunteers;
- Mediation of conflicts;
- Evaluation/reports and support for volunteers;
- Responsibilities about the Youthpass certificate;
- Exchange of experience, support for dissemination and exploitation of results;
- Project visibility;
- Plan for action in case a selected volunteer decides that he will not participate in the project anymore or that he will quit before the end of the stage;
- Guidance for reintegration of the volunteers in the community of origin and within the family after the stage;
- Changes in the project partnership structure when in the interest of the project;

4. Promotion of E.V.S. vacancies

How to recruit the right candidates?

In the previous section you have seen how to manage different situations so that they don't end up in conflict. On the other hand, a lot of these situations can be avoided from the very beginning through a thorough preparation phase, during which the expectations and the rules that should be followed are clearly expressed.

Leaving your home country for volunteering up to a year is not an easy thing to do, and our job is to support this process, not to complicate it with unexpected situations. When recruiting volunteers, those interested should really be aware about what this new experience will imply (especially as, given the E.V.S. rules, the volunteers will most probably be for the first time in such a project). We should pay special attention to:

- The type of activities that the volunteer will do;
- Working hours;
- The profile of the person who would be best fitted for such a project;
- The type of preparation that will be offered;
- The costs that will be covered;
- The financial contribution that may be required from individuals, if any (e.g. covering for the cost of plane tickets that exceeds the lump sum);
- The 'rules' that will have to be obeyed during the stage (e.g. during working hours, in the hosting place);
- Level of autonomy that will be offered;
- Language that will be used throughout the stage;

Having a good promotional strategy for a vacancy of a mobility project is really important. It's the key for a successful project.

First of all, we need to emphasize that EVS is not a job, training, an internship, a summer camp or a language course. So, when we promote a vacancy this should be really clear for the volunteer. Moreover, we should find the best ways to reach the young people who can be interested in the project. Nowadays, social networks have an important role in this task and the organizations should be prepared to use them.

What kind of information should be included?

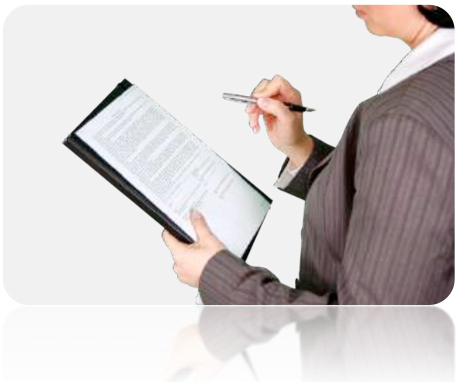
The youth worker responsible for the recruitment process should prepare together with the hosting organization the useful information that is important for the volunteer. The vacancy promotion should include all the relevant details in order for the volunteer to be ready to decide whether to apply or not.

Depending on the place chosen to promote the vacancy, there is some general information that is common and needed all the time. Therefore, the vacancy should include the following items:

- **Dates of the activity and duration**

It's important not to confuse activity dates with project dates. The project starts before the selection process. The activity will follow the selection and it is the actual time that the volunteer will be spending abroad. The volunteer must know when will be the start date of the activity, in which day he/she is supposed to travel and return.

- **Location**



It's important that the volunteer knows where the project will take place, not only the country, but also the location. It's completely different to work in a small village in the countryside or in the capital, for instance. However, the youth worker should always remind the volunteer that he/she should apply for a project and not for a country or city. This is really important to help the volunteer to adjust to the new conditions.

- **Summary of the project**

The vacancy should include a summary of the entire project. Here can be included the goals, the activities, the ideas behind the project, the description of the hosting organization, countries involved in the project, etc.

- **Profile of the volunteer**

This is one of the most important points because by reading this the volunteer can understand if he is a suitable candidate or not. One important aspect when recruiting EVS volunteers is making sure that the profile you want the volunteers to match will still keep the process open to all young people, including people with fewer opportunities, regardless of their ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, etc. Moreover, be aware that in EVS no previous qualifications, educational level, specific experience or language knowledge can be required, so you cannot include such criteria in your selection. While there are situations in which a more specific profile of the volunteer might be drawn up if justified by the nature of the tasks of the EVS activity or by the project's context, unless this is clearly stated in the application and approved by your National Agency or E.A.C.E.A., it cannot be included.

Given these, the profile of the volunteer you are searching for should refer more to the motivation and desire to get involved in the activities than to specific requirements about skills. For instance, if the project is about organising sport activities for children, it's important that the volunteer has interest in sports and outdoor activities. If it's a project connected with music, maybe the knowledge of instruments can be a request, but only if it was approved by the financing agency.

- **Description of the activities**

The volunteers will usually get involved in a lot of activities during their project. These must be presented in detail so the potential volunteer will know exactly what is expected from him. For instance, it's not enough to say that the project is about working with kids. It's needed also to write what kind of activities he can do with the kids, where, the profile of the kids, etc.

It's completely different to work in a school, in a foster home, in a social neighbourhood or in a summer camp. Also the same applies to other target groups. If possible it would be interesting to have an example of a schedule. In this way the working hours can be understood better.

- **Description of the conditions**

This part should contain all the practical information regarding the conditions: accommodation, holidays, food, access to Internet, practical arrangements, etc. This part should be very detailed for the volunteer to have access to all the information that he needs to be informed regarding the conditions.

- **Information about the application deadline**

Finally, it's important for the volunteer to know if the project is already approved or if the organization is going to apply in a future deadline. If the project is not approved yet, the volunteer must be ready to understand that it's possible that it won't happen. If the volunteer doesn't have this information *a priori,* it can be a big disappointment if it's not approved.

- **Documents needed and application forms**

Some organizations have proper forms for the volunteers to apply. Others just need the CV and motivation letter of the volunteers. It's important to be sure that the volunteer sends all the needed materials in order not to be excluded.

It's also important to inform the volunteer in which language should these documents be prepared, otherwise he can send documents that no one can understand.

If it's needed to attach presentations or something else, the volunteer should know the maximum size of those documents.

- **Additional information**

In certain cases, there is more information needed. Imagine that you are promoting an EVS vacancy on a website of jobs and professional trainings. In this case it's important that is written what is EVS and the support of the European Commission. The most important is that the person that is reading knows exactly what kind of project he/she is applying for.

> **Offering complete information during the EVS recruitment process will help you select more suitable candidates and will save you from future problems**

Where can we promote an EVS vacancy?

To promote a vacancy the youth worker can use:

- Website or blog of the organization;
- Social networks: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google +, Youtube;
- E-mails to the youngsters;
- E-mails to partner organizations that may have contact with young people (e.g. City Councils, departments of youth, NGO for youth...);
- Newsletter directly sent to the young people;
- Website of the official entities (National Agencies, European Commission website, City Councils, etc.);
- Websites of mobility projects (e.g. Youth Networks);
- Websites for promoting EVS projects;
- Local media;
- Visits to schools, universities, etc.;

There are different places to promote EVS. The most important is that we choose the options that fit more with the project. For instance, if we are promoting a project that is about working with animals, probably it makes sense if we use the channels connected with this issue. To contact local NGOs that have projects in this field can be an option as well as to present the vacancy in our or their Facebook page. If we are promoting a vacancy to work with old people, we can contact, for instance, schools in the field of social care.

The main idea is always to address the information to target the youngsters we are looking for. As seen in the previous chapters of this manual, please remember that promoting through Facebook is different than through your website or Twitter. Also if you want to make a presentation, make sure you prepare it in a proper way.

Now it's your turn.

Please find the errors in the following vacancy promotion for an EVS, published on the website of the sending NGO:

EVS in England

Dates: from 01-07-2016 until 01-04-2017

Number of vacancies: 1

Apply until: 25-03-2015

Summary: One association from England is searching for volunteers who are interested in learning more about the environment and to promote an ecological lifestyle. The Association is no profit, apolitical, founded in 2008. It's a big organization that works with local communities in the field of environment. They promote social campaigns to alert the population about ecological problems.

This project will allow the volunteers to work with the organization.

Profile: The volunteer should:

- be aged between 18 and 30 years;
- be enthusiastic to learn more about the environment, ecological agriculture and also to get involved in environmental and ecological activities living in the rural area from England;
- have English knowledge to be able to communicate with the staff and the other volunteers;
- have the capacity to work in teams;
- be open minded and sociable;
- have minimum experience in agriculture and not be afraid of working in agriculture and with animals;

Tasks:
The volunteer's origin, home culture and personal experiences will be included in one of the projects which will be developed during their stay. The volunteer will be introduced to all the activities that our organisation has to offer. We will later include them in whatever activities they prefer.

Practical arrangements:

The volunteer will live in the institution, with the other volunteers.

Documents needed: CV and Motivation Letter

The errors are presented on the next page.

Errors:

1. It's written just in the title that it is an EVS vacancy. It starts from the premises that the people who visit the website already know what is EVS. Information about the European programme should also be included;
2. There is no information about the location. Will the volunteer work in a city or a small village? Is it in the countryside? This can be useful information for the volunteer;
3. The tasks are not described. The person who is reading only understands that he is supposed to work in the environmental field. However there is no information about what kind of work the volunteer is supposed to do;
4. The profile requires that the volunteer has previous experience in the field and knowledge of English, which is not allowed by E.V.S. rules;
5. There is no practical information. Where the volunteer will live? What kind of facilities he will have? Will he cook? Will he have all the weekends free? How much is the pocket money?
6. There is no information about the language of the documents requested;
7. There is no information if the project is already approved or if the organization is going to apply;

5. Selection of the volunteers

How to select the right volunteers for the project?

The volunteer selection is the process of choosing the right volunteer for a specific placement from a range of candidates who have applied for it. Previous to this, as presented above, the organisation has to draft a participant profile and to promote the vacancy.

As we are talking about EVS, there are some particular aspects that need to be taken into consideration. First and most important, keep in mind the fact that the recruitment and selection process must be open to all candidates, including people with fewer opportunities and regardless of their ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, etc. Moreover, be aware that in EVS no previous qualifications, educational level, specific experience or language knowledge can be required, so you cannot include such criteria in your selection procedures. While there are situations in which a more specific profile of the volunteer might be required (if justified by the type of tasks or by the project context) this cannot be requested unless it is clearly stated in the application and approved by your National Agency or E.A.C.E.A.

It is true that your first reaction is to search for and select the volunteer who demonstrates the skills and experience necessary to fulfill the job's responsibilities and to design the selection process according to this. This is one of the biggest errors that you can do and you should avoid it by all means! EVS volunteers should be chosen according to their interests and personal development needs and the project addresses firstly to them and only after to the community. Often, between a very experienced person and one who is just starting but wishes to get experience in the field your project is addressing, it will be that the second one is a more suitable candidate as he has more motivation and the project will have a stronger impact on him.

The recruitment and selection process requires a lot of communication, as it implies exchanging information about the needs and expectations of the organisation and of the candidate and also about what each of the two parties can offer. Most of the principles related to communication presented in the previous sections also apply in this case. Still, there are some particularities that should be addressed.

1. Concentrate on interests and motivation

There is no need to further explain why: EVS is mostly about the volunteer's development so this is what you need to evaluate before anything else. No matter the tool you will use for assessing the candidates (e.g. interviews, application forms, motivation letters, etc.), you should provide a framework that will allow the volunteer to talk more about his interest and motivation in the project rather than his previous experience. Some of the questions you will need to find an answer to in order to properly assess the candidate can be:

- What motivates the candidate to be part of the project?
- What are the candidate's personal development goals and how do they relate to the project?
- Why does the candidate think that he would be a good addition to the project team?
- What are the candidate's plans for the period he will be a part of the project?
- What does the candidate think about working in an international team?
- How does the candidate feel about leaving his/her home country for the period of the project?
- How prepared is the candidate for living on his/her own?
- What is the candidate's opinion about the activities of the project?
- How prepared is the candidate for getting involved in the activities of the project?
- Is the candidate ready to fulfill these activities until the end of the stage?
- Does the candidate have other ideas for improving the activities and any personal initiatives that he would like to follow during the project?
- Are there any obstacles that the candidate needs to overcome in order to be part of the project until the end?

Opposite to that, there are some questions that, even if included in the assessment method (for really good reasons), should not count or should have very little importance in the decision for selection, like:

- ✕ What is the candidate's experience related to the project?
- ✕ What skills does the candidate possesses that would make him suitable for being part of the project's team?
- ✕ How good are the candidate's language skills?
- ✕ What are the candidate's sexual, religious, political views?

2. Try to keep the process as objective as possible!

It is true that it is not an easy job to make the selection process of future teammates 100% objective and that different personal and professional interest are biasing the evaluation. Still, this should be reduced to a minimum and the usage of different tools can help you do that. One of the easiest is the weighted scoring method, a relatively simple approach that will help your assessment to be as even as possible.

First step is to define what are the criteria according to which you will evaluate all candidates. For example, in a project which implies that volunteers will be working with children in the pediatric ward of a hospital, you might consider that important criteria for choosing the future volunteers will be:

1. Their interest in the social animation field;
2. Their desire to follow a career in childcare, animation or social sector;
3. Their willingness to work in an international team;
4. Their willingness to work with children;
5. Any obstacles they are facing;

After these have been established (preferably together with the project team), each of them should be evaluated according to their importance for the project.

To give an example, let's think that the maximum score the "perfect" volunteer will get is 100 points. How should these points be distributed among the 5 criteria? Well, first, it is important that the future volunteer is willing to work with children, as they will be the main target of the project, so this should have a high weight in the final assessment. We can agree that it counts for 30 points. Also, because the work will be done in the social-animation field, the interest in this is also important for a future teammate, so it is weighted at 25 points. The project will have a great impact on a person who will later follow a career in this field as it will provide that person with valuable experience, making the project achieve high learning outcomes. For this we agree that the "desire to follow a career in childcare, animation or social sector" should get 15 points. It is important for the volunteer to be open to working with other persons from different countries due to the specific of the project, so another 10 points should go to this. Because we want to offer more chances to candidates with fewer opportunities, they should get an advantage if they are in one of the situations described by the Program Guide, so this should weight also 20 points. Overall, your criteria and weights should look like this:

Their interest in the social animation field	25
Their desire to follow a career in childcare, animation or social sector	15
Their willingness to work in an international team	10
Their willingness to work with children	30
Any obstacles that they are facing	20
TOTAL	**100**

You can notice how the weights are totalising 100. This is not by accident, as we agreed in the beginning that a perfect volunteer should get 100 points. In practice, when choosing the weights of each criterion, it will happen that the total will not be 100. This will require that you make some adjustments to them by distributing the difference according to their importance.

The third step is to assess the candidates, according to these criteria. This can be done in a number of ways (e.g. through a Skype interview where you ask about each of them, through a form that the candidates will fill online or will send by e-mail, through a direct interview). Having 5 criteria does not mean that you should have 5 questions in your form or that the questions should be the same as the criteria. For example, if you are interested in the candidate's desire to follow a career in childcare, animation or social sector, you should not just ask: "Do you wish to follow a career in childcare, animation or social sector?". It is a closed question and, by the fact that one can simply answer to it with "Yes" or "No", it will not allow you to fully understand what are the actual plans. One person may consider answering "Yes" only if he or she has well defined future plans that include working in the field and has started following these plans. Another may think that if he or she is just considering this as an option for future, is it ok to answer "Yes", even if there is no real plan for this. In this situation, if the first person is actually truly interested in the field but did not start any initiative about this will answer "No" and get no points. The second may be just considering it as a far option, in case nothing else will come up, and will answer "Yes", getting the 15 points. In such a situation we see how a person who has more interest in the field receives less points because the question was not addressed properly.

To avoid the previous example from happening in real life, more open questions should be addressed. Open questions usually start with "How...?", "Why...?", "What...?", "Could you describe ...?". So, in order to get more info on this we could ask: "What are your career plans?", "Could you connect your career plans to this project and, if so, how?" and "How does a career in childcare, animation or social sector sound to you?". Like this you can evaluate better how the candidate fits into your criteria.

The points for each of the criteria can be awarded in two ways. First option is to score each criterion from 0 to its weight (in this example, from 0 to 15) and to add the scores. The second option is to assess each criterion according to a standard scale (for example, from 0 to 5). Once you are done, in order to get the total score of a candidate, you should multiply the score one gets for each specific criterion with the weight of that criterion and divide the result by the maximum of the scale you used. It may sound a little complicated but the next example will make things clear: if for his desire to follow a career in childcare (which weights *15* points) one candidate gets the score of *3* on a scale from 0 to *5*, in the final assessment he will receive (15 x 3) : 5 = 9 points. Whereas this second method may seem a little bit more complicated, in practice you will se that it will be easier to assess the different characteristics using the same scale.

The following figure will present the two scoring options for one candidate:

Option 1 – zero to weight

Criterion	Max. points (weight)	*Candidate's Score*
Their interest in the social animation field	25	22
Their desire to follow a career in childcare, animation or social sector	15	12
Their willingness to work in an international team	10	10
Their willingness to work with children	30	16
Any obstacles that they are facing	20	0
TOTAL	**100**	**60**

Option 2 – standard scale from 0 to 5 (max = 5)

Criterion	*Max. points (weight)*	Candidate's Score	Final (weighted) score
	C1	C2	C3 = (C1 x C2) / max
Their interest in the social animation field	*25*	4	20
Their desire to follow a career in childcare, animation or social sector	*15*	3	9
Their willingness to work in an international team	*10*	5	10
Their willingness to work with children	*30*	3	18
Any obstacles that they are facing	*20*	0	0
TOTAL	***100***	**52**	**57**

After evaluating each candidate, based on the total scores, you can make the selection starting from the highest ones. Still, keep in mind that even with this system the evaluation is not 100% objective as candidates with similar qualities can be evaluated in different ways. For this, it is advisable that when you have to choose one candidate over another and the score difference between them is not significant to try to assess them one in comparison to the other to make sure you made the right decision. Moreover, the selection can continue with other methods that will give you more info needed for making the right decision, but, at least as a starting point, this can prove to be a very useful tool.

3. Be transparent about the selection and the results

Transparency is very important in the selection process, as it is essential to offer equal opportunities to all the persons involved and also to prove this to the public. It is very important for the public to have confidence in the impartiality of the selection decisions both for your organisation's image (which is very important for an NGO) but also to avoid potential complaints from the candidates who may feel that they have been intentionally under evaluated.

For this, first make sure that whatever information you provide about the selection process it is equally accessible to everyone (e.g. the persons with whom you are working more closely should not have more information than the ones who are getting information about the vacancy from your website). Moreover, the criteria that will be used in the assessment of the applications should be publicly disclosed from the beginning. Don't forget to offer the contact details of the person/department that can offer further information about the process or even to publish a list of Frequently Asked Questions (that arise most often) and to make it available to any interested person. In extent to this, at the end of the selection period you should not only publish the list of accepted candidates but it is advisable also to briefly present the reasons behind the selection and rejection of the participant, of course if this is possible.

4. Summary

In terms of communication in the recruitment process, more or less, these are the main issues connected to volunteer selection and especially to the communication that has to be done during this step. As mentioned before, these principles and tools can be applied in different ways. You can use them in interviews (following the same principles as when communicating with your staff), in application forms (following the same principles as when communicating in writing) or in any other way. Still, no matter what your choice will be, one thing remains unchanged: it is of outmost importance to define the selection criteria in a correct way and to be as objective and transparent as possible in your decisions!

6. Volunteer agreements

How to clearly express your expectations?

As mentioned before, especially when working in a multi-cultural environment, different persons work by different norms. What is appropriate, correct, ethical or suitable for one person can be totally opposite to what is right for another. For this reason it is recommended to state the norms that you expect the volunteers to obey from the very beginning of the project in a clear and concise way.

One of the documents in which you can include your expectations from the volunteer and where his or her duties can be explained and be agreed is the Volunteering Agreement. We will take this one as example, as it is the most common one, but you can draw up similar agreements for any kind of volunteering activities. Whereas different projects require that the volunteer will have different tasks and responsibilities, here are some examples of what these may be and how they can be presented, so that the volunteer understands better the expectations the organisation has from him:

Roles and tasks of the participant:

- Taking responsibility on accomplishing all the objectives of the project through the activities foreseen;
- Contributing with time, energy and enthusiasm towards the aims and objectives of the project's activities for the whole duration of the agreed stage;
- Carrying out the project's duties as described in the project's description;
- Attending to all scheduled activities, arriving on time and staying for as long as the volunteer's presence is required by the activity/event/session;
- Attending EVS training and meetings with partners and the National Agency;
- Attending trainings on project related topics organised by the coordinating and hosting organisation
- Handing in all travel documents, in original, to the coordinating organization (e.g. travel ticket, travel reservation, boarding pass);
- Working together with the coordinating and the sending organisations in order to receive the visa and vaccinations, if needed;
- Informing the coordinating organization of special needs that need to be taken into consideration in the context of the project (e.g. diet, disability, illnesses for which precautions need to be taken) and agree on the information which can or should be forwarded to other interested parties;
- Taking responsibility for his/her actions, both in the project's activities and in the community;

- Conducting himself/herself in a courteous and respectful manner and being a positive role model for all he/she is working with.
- Treating the other volunteers or youngsters of all ages, genders, religions, and cultures with respect and consideration;
- Treating everyone with respect at all times and not degrading anyone;
- Not engaging in any activity that can harm the image of EVS, Erasmus+ Program, the organizations that are part in the project, hosting country or any other country, the partner institutions of the project and other stakeholders, both during the working hours and the free time;
- Dividing and sharing tasks related to the maintenance of the office, accommodation place or any other common places and following them throughout the project;
- Keeping low noise levels in the accommodation place and other common places, especially later in the evenings;
- Demonstrating maturity, honesty and open mind for discussion when there is a divergence of views (conflicts between two or more volunteers), for avoiding conflict situations by determining the causes and finding ways to solve them;
- Acknowledging that participation in the EVS stage is a privilege, not a right, that all involved in the project aim at the same objectives and that it is needed to find the ways and resources to reach those objectives;
- Acknowledging that abuses, threats, intimidation or physical or verbal harassment in relation to any other stakeholder of the project will not be tolerated at any time;
- Acknowledging that lying, cheating, or stealing will not be tolerated at any time;
- Acknowledging that any behaviour or activity outside the project that affects the volunteer's work performance is not acceptable in the context of the project;
- Acknowledging that the volunteer must not use, posses or be under the influence of alcohol during any activity;
- Acknowledging that, as participants in the activities can also be under 18 years old and that volunteers should be role-models for their beneficiaries, smoking or using tobacco products in the presence of the participants during their activities is not allowed;
- Acknowledging that using or possessing any weapons or illegal drugs during the stage is strictly prohibited;
- Acknowledging that if, for any reason, a volunteer will not follow the stated rules, the following steps can be taken, unless the severity of the offense requires further actions:
  - Verbal or written warning addressed to the one responsible for light violations;
  - Verbal or written warning addressed to the responsible volunteer together with a notification addressed to the sending organization

and/or the National Agency;

- Termination of the volunteer's stage in case of repeated or severe violations. If such situation will occur or if the volunteer decides to terminate the project before the agreed end date for reasons not imputable to the hosting or coordinating organisation, any expenses caused by the early termination of the volunteer's stage are to be covered by him.

- Acknowledging that in case he or she will not be fulfilling the responsibilities and duties mentioned in the agreement, the coordinating organization in liaison with the sending organization is entitled to interrupt the volunteer's stage and make the necessary preparation for the departure of the volunteer;
- Acknowledging that the applicable law is the hosting country's law and any disputes concerning the interpretation, application or validity of the agreement are to be addressed to national courts of the country;

In extent to this, organisations have the option of specifying in a more clear way their expectations related to the conduct of the volunteer throughout the stage. For this, a document called as Code of Conduct can be presented and agreed with the volunteer, providing further details about what is considered to be acceptable or not. Here is an example of such a code:

Code of conduct

Dear volunteer, the following pages contain some rules that will help you and us, the hosting organization, have a good cooperation and avoid some potential issues that will not bring any benefits to any of us.

1. *Accommodation*
   - *You will be hosted in rooms with other persons. The rooms will be provided with all the furniture/objects needed: beds, wardrobe, desk, covers for bed and pillow, sheets. Please take care of the objects from your room, without damaging them. If you will damage them you will have to cover the costs for repairing the damage;*
   - *At the beginning of the EVS stage you will receive all the objects in the room based on an inventory. At the end you will have to present all the objects, in a good shape, the same shape as you receive it;*
   - *You will share with the others all the common objects (e.g. pots, broom, appliances);*
   - *Do not borrow, sale or pawn any objects from the accommodation place to people not living there;*
   - *Do not vandalize the accommodation place; do not paint the walls or make holes in it. If you want to create a cosy atmosphere you can decorate them with photos, paper, etc. and we really support you in this; for other modifications in the apartment please ask for our permission;*
   - *In the hosting place you are not allowed to host guests (e.g. friends, family, other volunteers); if you want to invite someone to visit you we can help you find a cheap hotel/hostel;*
   - *You are not allowed to keep pets at the accommodation place;*
   - *There will be a resting schedule in the accommodation that you will have to respect and during which you have to keep silence: keep quiet after 10 p.m. until 8 a.m.;*
   - *Please respect your colleagues and neighbours and their resting hours;*
   - *You are not allowed to organize parties at the accommodation place;*
   - *Before leaving the accommodation place always check if windows are closed, water is not running, if the stove is on, if the iron or other electric objects are plugged; check all the lights before leaving the house or going to sleep and turn them off;*
   - *Please try to get used to the idea of recycling: recycle the paper, cardboards, plastic bottles, metal and also organic garbage. Do not waste water;*
   - *Always lock your door (especially before going to sleep or leaving the house);*

we are not responsible for thefts that may occur. In case of theft we will announce the authorities responsible with dealing with your situation;

- *You are allowed to smoke only in smoking areas and is forbidden smoking in the rooms, bathrooms, kitchen or lobby; do not let matches, cigarettes or candles burning without supervision;*
- *Do not leave your personal objects outside of your room; You are responsible for them;*
- *If some of the volunteers will lose/destroy/damage some of the organization's objects they will have to repair/replace the objects with their own money;*
- *If, from the volunteer's mistake, he/she will be fined, he/she will have to pay the fine from his/her own money;*
- *Cleaning: You will have to clean every week the accommodation place, the bathroom and the kitchen. We will provide you cleaning supplies (e.g. broom, shovel, cleaning products) and you have to clean the private and common areas. Also, you have to clean the fridge and the stove at least 2 times/month;*
- *Before leaving on vacation or ending your EVS stage you will have to clean and disinfect the accommodation place;*
- *You can donate your personal objects/items/clothes that you don't need any more to the persons in need;*
- *If a problem occurs, no matter how bad it is, you have to announce the coordinators immediately because only by communicating we can solve the problem together;*
- *The hosting/coordinating organization members are allowed to make spontaneous visits to the accommodation, of course under exceptional situations and while still respecting your privacy, and we can take actions according to the situation they find there;*
- *You have to understand that you are responsible for all your actions.*

2. *Activities*
   - *You have to participate in all the activities (planning the project activities, coming up with ideas, activity itself, mentorship session, language course etc.) and meetings organized by the hosting organization, respecting the time table and being punctual;*
   - *As you will be part of the local community and all the activities are depending on other institutions or events, changes in the timetable can appear. This is because we depend of different people and institutions from the local community (partners, resource persons, stakeholders etc.). Our advice is to be tolerant and flexible;*
   - *You have to involve in organizing and implementing all the project's activities*

and also you have to be responsible for your actions;

- *You have to respect the hosting organization's members and its partners;*
- *You have to understand the difference between organising and facilitating: the hosting organization can facilitate an activity (by providing the resources, finding a partner or coming up with suggestions, for example), but the group of volunteers has to plan the activities and to ensure that everything is well organized;*
- *You have to show respect to the other volunteers, both during the activities and the free time;*
- *We will teach you, if necessary, how to work in a team, as this is how your activities will take place. By being a team of mixed cultural backgrounds you have to consider that there can be different ideas and differences. For a good cooperation we strongly recommend you to show tolerance and understanding to other cultures;*
- *You have to be serious regarding the project's activities and to understand that for the people from the local community your implication is very useful;*
- *It is very important to have an appropriate behaviour towards people from the local community with whom you have contact; also, try to take into consideration some aspects of cultural differences between you and the locals and not to make anything that could harm/offend them;*
- *You have to expect that in some periods of the year there will be more intense working periods (especially during the spring) and you have to be tolerant and open for a full schedule and small changes in the initial plan;*
- *For a better organization of the activities you will have an activity calendar in the working place;*
- *We kindly ask you to understand that you can show your respect towards others even through your aspect: that's why we ask you to wear appropriate clothes at the events organized in your new community and to act accordingly to the context of the event;*
- *If there will be a certain activity that comes against your religious/cultural beliefs, we will not force you to take part in it, we just ask you to announce this before the activity, as soon as possible, and together we will try to find another activity that will replace the first one;*
- *If you are not feeling comfortable doing an activity, you have to tell us and together we will discuss about it, find a solution and try to change something in the activity; still, this shouldn't happen very often;*
- *If you want to borrow different materials from the hosting organization you have to give them back in exactly the same condition as you received them; if any damage appears it has to be covered by you;*
- *If a problem occurs, no matter how bad it is, you have to announce the coordinators immediately because only together and by communicating we*

can solve the problem;

- *Before or during the activities you are not allowed to drink alcohol.*

3. *Office rules:*
   - *You have to clean the office (desk, floor, garbage, toilette) every week based on a cleaning schedule that will appear on a wall from the working place;*
   - *Also, on a wall form the working space will be displayed the volunteers' free days calendar of every month;*
   - *The office is open between 9:00 – 17:00;*
   - *At the office you will have access to computers with Internet connection so you can prepare your activities, edit movies or photos and also communicate with your friends and families. On the computers provided by hosting organization you are not allowed to download music, movies or other unlicensed content or software; try to use the programs that already exist.*

4. *Community & conduct:*

You have to take into consideration that any behaviour of yours can influence the whole group of volunteers and your integration in the community. That's why we recommend you to take into consideration the following aspects:

- *Always remember that it is a difference between your native country, its customs and traditions and this country, where you will be an active citizen during few months. Maybe an action that in your country is considered quite normal, here can be interpreted differently;*
- *You are not allowed to smoke and to drink alcohol in front of the children and other people with whom you are working with;*
- *During the activities that involve children, please try to discuss and communicate with them at their "level" (example: to be patient, tolerant, to use body language etc.);*
- *Once you enter into a new community don't forget about the cultural differences and customs of the people and always be aware at their needs;*
- *You always have to respect the other volunteers' privacy and also ask for permission if you would like to use some of their personal objects;*
- *You should be aware of your decency in front the your colleagues, organization members or other people you are meeting;*
- *Concerning the common objects (pots, broom, clothes dryer, plates, etc.) please do not keep them for yourself, as you have to share them your*

colleagues;

- *We strongly recommend you to be responsible and vigilant, much more responsible than you are at home;*
- *Any intimate relationship between a volunteer and the activity beneficiaries, minors and organization members is strictly forbidden;*
- *Even in case of personal problems, you have to understand and be aware that the project's activities need to be accomplished;*
- *You are not allowed to harm the image of the hosting organization and its members; if you don't like something about us, come and tell us in a private discussion; we will do the same if it will be necessary;*
- *Due the fact that our organization is non-political and non-religious, it promotes understanding between people and fights against discrimination, promoting different political, religious or xenophobic views is not allowed during the project;*
- *Any form of violence is forbidden;*
- *Any problem that will appear must be treated calmly using non-violent communication;*
- *Please take into consideration that, here, in your hosting country, we, the hosting organization, are one of your closest friends. So, no matter what problem appears, if something happens to you, you make a mistake, or you have an idea for an activity, please come and tell us. We are here to help you!*
- *Communication is the key for everything!*

5. *Free time*
   - *In addition to weekends and legal holidays you will benefit each month form 2 free days*
   - *We will not act against your beliefs and creeds by forcing you to take part into an activity if this is organized in an important religious or national day for you, but we ask you to tell us about it from the beginning, as soon you find out;*
   - *There might be a possibility for some activities to be organized in weekends; in this case you will have to work in the weekend, but you will receive free days during the week, established before through a mutual agreement (between you and the hosting organization).*

6. *Vacation*
   - *For your safety and for a good cooperation you always have to announce your hosting organization about your plans, where and when you want to take a holiday;*
   - *Every time you want to leave somewhere abroad you have to fill in a declaration which states that you will return in time for the next activity and you will not leave the country for more than 3 days;*
   - *At every beginning of a month you will inform your hosting organization about the plan for the free days. This is necessary because it is very important to have good communication and to check if free days are not interfering with activities of the project; it is almost impossible to accept a free day request in a short time (less than one week);*
   - *Our suggestion is for you to be aware that even in the free days (but especially during activities) you represent your country abroad and it's up to you how you present your cultural heritage. Be aware that an inappropriate behavior may create stereotypes about your country!;*

We will always try our best to help you, to come up with ideas and solutions for all the issues, but we need to communicate!

To finalise this section, we will remind you again that, depending on the context of your work, things can be changed, removed or added. What is essential about such a document is to draw it up in a clear way so that you properly explain your expectations from the beginning.. Like this, a lot of future problems that would originate from different perceptions about what is expected can be avoided, saving a lot of time and a lot of brain cells from dying :).

Chapter 4

Communication with stakeholders

Techniques and methods for stakeholder communication

1. Basic principles

What is stakeholder engagement and why do we need it?

As you probably already know, your organisation is part of a big community with which it has a lot of interactions. No organisation can fulfil its mission by being isolated from its environment, target group or any other entities it encounters in its activity. These interactions are beneficial and useful for all parties involved, but it can be that sometimes they also generate conflict. Also, while members of the organisation may have a thorough knowledge about the organisation's environment and the needs of its target group, it can happen that this knowledge is not accurate, being biased by different factors.

Different initiatives that organisations have (let's call them projects from now on) will create interactions with different persons or entities and will generate different interests from them. Let's think at a charitable concert that you want to organise for the cause of youngsters with disabilities. Whom will your project interact with and who will have an interest in it? The first answer can be "youngsters with disabilities and the spectators" and this is true, at least partially. But, for sure, the artists performing will also have some interest related to the concert (in terms of schedule, sound equipment, the songs you wish that they play, payments, etc.). If you have sponsors, they will also have some interest in the way you are organising, how you promote them and what will their sponsorship be used for. Moreover, if the concert is done in a public space, you will also interact with persons passing by (your concert can be in their way or they can be interested in joining it), so even they share an interest in your project. All these parties (plus any other that for some reason will be impacted in a positive or negative way by your project) are your stakeholders. When planning and organising your event you should also take them into consideration by informing them about your initiative, by consulting with them about it and even by including them in the actual implementation, this process being called as stakeholder engagement.

Stakeholder engagement is not a new thing, as it is already common for successful businesses and social enterprises to engage their employees, customers, suppliers or host communities and to make changes according to the needs of their stakeholders. Still, this is something that often happens just with the big companies or more developed NGOs, while a lot of the smaller ones either don't find it important enough or don't even think at the process as an option. This happens not only as a consequence of lack of knowledge, but also because leaders fail to acknowledge different advantages that the process brings to their organisations, like:

- Being in contact with your stakeholders will provide valuable input that will help you adapt your plans so that you will fit their needs better, making your projects more appealing and less problematic. It is true that you may guess some of your target group's needs, for example, but didn't it happen to you to plan something and then to find that people were not so interested in what you did? Don't you think it would have helped to ask them also about their interest or even to make them be part of the whole organising process?
- Engaging your stakeholders will generate more ideas that will help you prepare much better a project. Haven't you even found yourself saying: "Oh, I didn't think of that!"? The more persons you ask who have some interest in the topic of your initiative, the more ideas you get and this will help you get different perspectives and solutions for your issues, helping you become more creative in your work.
- Making your stakeholders part of the project will give them a sense of ownership and will make them more involved in the activities. Often people enjoy more getting involved in things that they have helped create rather than being directed into things with which they have no connection to.
- Different risks associated to your activity can be better identified, as you will benefit from the experience of more persons who are connected to your initiative.
- Being in direct contact with its stakeholders will help the organisation create a more positive image in the community, thus increasing the support it gets from it.

To make things a little bit more clear, let's think about three situations. The local authorities have planned to organise some activities for the youngsters in your city or village. Which of the three options would you enjoy more:

1. The local authorities will create and implement a plan and you can participate in the activities they think are best for you, if any;
2. The local authorities consult with the youngsters and youth associations and together you will create a plan for the activities that the local authorities will implement;
3. The local authorities consult with the youngsters and youth associations about the plan and will also offer interested parties the resources they need to put this plan into action and organise some of the activities that target the youth?

Usually most people will prefer number 2 or number 3 as it does not only take into account their opinion but also allows them to get actively involved in the whole process and direct it in the way they think is best. You enjoy it more when you are also contributing to the decision-making and what is happening is also taking into consideration your opinion, right? Moreover, it is also nice when you can get to participate and even coordinate some of the activities, as you can use your experience and own resources for creating a better experience for your target group. Well, all these lead us to another important aspect related to stakeholder engagement: the different levels of engagement.

Usually, people consider that they have enough interaction with their stakeholders if they manage in some way to inform them about what is happening or maybe consult them. While these are also useful in the process, stakeholder engagement is more than this, as the level of participation can be even higher than this. The next examples will clear things a little bit more for you. Let's think that you want to organise some workshops with the youngsters in your community. How can you engage your stakeholders in this? Here are some different levels:

1. Information (providing objective and accurate information that will help the stakeholders understand the plan you have foreseen, the alternatives that you have not followed, the reasons for this and the opportunities that the activity brings to the stakeholders) – in this case you, alone or together with few other colleagues, will create a plan for the activities and implement it. Before or during the implementation you will inform your stakeholders about what will happen, when, what were the aspects you took into consideration when you chose these activities, how can others participate and what benefits they may have.
2. Consultation (getting feedback from your stakeholders about the plan, alternatives and results) – in this case you don't create the plan just with your colleagues but you also involve different stakeholders, by asking for their opinion and taking it into consideration. The stakeholders you consult should not be only the ones in your target group but also any other persons or entities on which your activities will have some impact.
3. Involvement (working with the stakeholders throughout the planning and implementation process and making them part in the decision-making) – You will not only consult your stakeholders, but you will also include them in the decision-making bodies that will coordinate the activities. Still, the final decision about what will happen is yours.
4. Collaboration (both you and part of your stakeholders are taking responsibility for different parts of the project) – In this situation your stakeholders become partners in the whole project and you will not only plan together but will also divide the tasks with them, each being responsible, deciding and implementing parts of the whole project.
5. Empowerment (the decision-making is entirely of the stakeholders) – This is the ultimate in stakeholder engagement: it is not only that you work together with your stakeholders for implementing the activities but you give them the lead,

meaning that they are the ones to decide and your role is just to guide and offer support.

Of course, different stakeholders will be interested to engage in different ways. While it can be that your target group will like to be more than consulted and some will even want to be part of the whole organising process, the people who are living next to the places where you want to set-up some events will probably be satisfied if you just consult with them about the best way in which your activities could have the least impact on them. Still, if there is one thing that you should have in mind after reading this chapter, that would be to always take into consideration the stakeholders of your projects, not only by informing or consulting them, but also by using different tools for engaging and even empowering them. This is the best way to be sure that your plan reflects their needs and that different problems will not occur later on throughout the implementation.

Information repository

Methods of stakeholder engagement

Information repositories are used for stakeholder information and represent centralised public places, which can be both on-line (e.g. website) and off-line (e.g. infopoint) where stakeholders can access relevant information about the project.

Depending on the project and on the stakeholders you are targeting, the information you should share can be about different aspects, like:

- Information about your organisation, aims, objectives, regular activities, staff, etc.;
- Foreseen activities in the project;
- Locations where the activities will take place;
- Consultations that will take place;
- Opportunities for offering feedback;
- Target groups and foreseen benefits;
- Plans and actions for insuring:
  - the protection and comfort of the stakeholders;
  - the protection of the environment;
  - the protection of human rights;
  - fair working conditions;
  - an ethical behaviour;
  - the sustainability of the project;
- The alternatives you had and the reasons you have chosen this approach;

While the process of setting up an information repository is not very straightforward, as it should be carefully adapted to the specific of the project and the profile of the stakeholders, here are the basic steps you should take:

1. Select the information that you want to make public and create the materials that are best to be included in the repository (e.g. brochures, leaflets, posters, videos, presentations, articles, infographs, etc.). Don't forget to apply the knowledge and skills you got in the previous chapters;
2. Select the suitable way to share the materials. First, given the stakeholders you are aiming, decide if it should be on-line, off-line or both. If it is also a physical location, choose the best place for it, one that it is easily accessible for your

stakeholders. The repository also needs appropriate staff that can properly present the information in a friendly way and interact with the stakeholders. Keep in mind that not all the stakeholders will have a positive attitude towards you and the staff of the repository must be ready to deal also with this kind of persons. Also, think about an appropriate schedule (e.g. if your stakeholders are working from 9 to 5, then the repository should also be opened earlier or later than these hours, in order for them to be able to get the needed information);

3. Inform your stakeholders about the availability of the repository and how it can be reached both by advertising it and by referring to it during other meetings that you have with them;
4. It is advisable to have a log of visitors and also a way in which you can record any feedback you get from them;
5. Be sure to update the information regularly. Out-of-date information can do more harm than good, as it gives the impression you are not being honest;

Brainstorming

Methods of stakeholder engagement

Brainstorming is a consultation process that aims at identifying different creative solutions to problems and choosing the most appropriate, in a democratic way. It starts from an identified problem, it involves a group of people that can provide relevant input related to it and allows them to share common but also unusual solutions, pushing the limits of the resources they have at their disposal.

Brainstorming is a two-stage process. Firstly, people share potential solutions that can (and even should) be as wild as possible, without anyone being able to criticize them (the objective is to bring into discussion as many options as possible and to break down preconceptions about the limits of the solutions). In the second stage the proposals are analysed, adapted to the possibilities of the organisation, new ones can be created starting from the initial suggestions and, in the end, the best one is chosen.

Setting up a brainstorming session is not very challenging but is should still be done with a lot of attention as it involves a lot of debates and people defending their ideas, which can turn into conflict if not managed properly. Here are the basic steps:

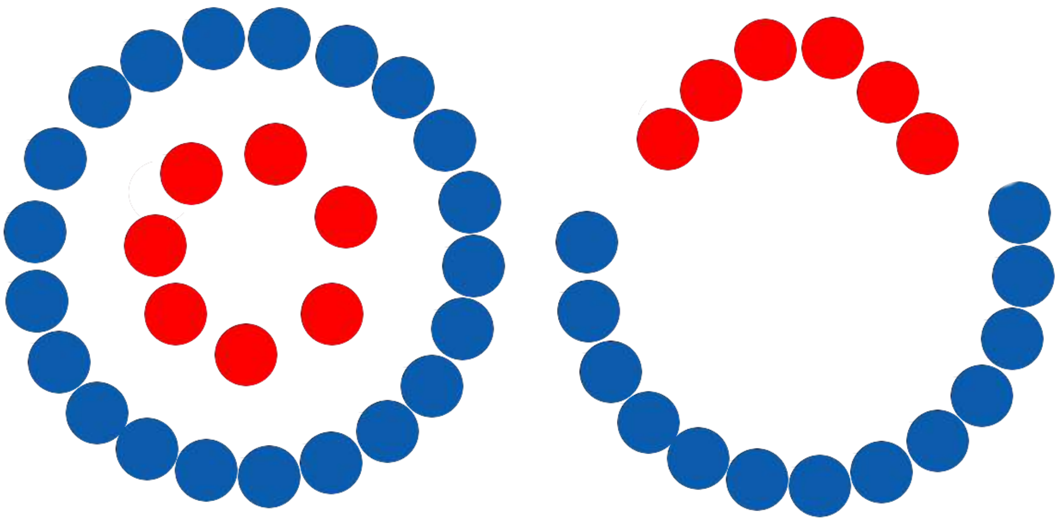
1. Choose carefully the participants: as much as possible, they should have different backgrounds, interests and experiences. Like this you can insure that the solutions will be as creative as possible.
2. Choose the moderator of the discussion. He/she will not contribute with ideas and will not engage in the debates, but will have the following roles:
   - To present and explain the process to the participants;
   - To present the problem for which a solution is searched;
   - To make sure each person is offered the space to contribute and even to encourage this contribution;
   - To prevent people from criticizing ideas in the first stage;
   - To make sure the discussion stays on course;
   - To write down the ideas that will be generated;
3. Start the first session by asking people to share their potential solutions. In this stage, the proposals should not be evaluated or criticized.
4. Record the ideas no matter how unrealistic they may seem. This stage can last either until there are no new ideas coming or for a designated amount of time (that is presented from the beginning). Ideally, the proposals should be presented in a way that will allow everyone to see them (e.g. on a projector).

5. Start the second stage, where the proposals are being presented evaluated, adapted or even combined in order to find the best solution. The idea is to find the best solution having the previous proposals as inspiration points.
6. Choose the best option in a democratic way. If this is not possible or required, generate a list of potential solutions (with pros and cons for each) and forward it to the decision makers.

Samoan circles

Methods of stakeholder engagement

The Samoan circle is a tool that can be used for approaching more delicate topics that are more likely to generate intense debate. There is no official "leader" of the discussions and each participant is welcomed to join and express a personal opinion, but there is a facilitator that will explain the rules of the meeting, will manage time and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak. The name of this tool comes from the fact that people are arranged in two circles, an inner and an outer one. It is only those people sitting in the inner circle whom are allowed to speak and present different viewpoints while the others must remain silent. Still, when one person from the outer circle wishes to engage in the discussion, that person can show this by a given "code" (for example by standing up) and one person from the inner circle can exchange places. Also, the setup with two circles can be adapted to your needs and the room and, for example, transformed into a half circle (people that are not allowed to speak) that is opened towards a U layout of chairs. In the next figure, you will see two potential chair set-ups (just people sitting in the red chairs will be allowed to speak).



Here are the steps for organising a Samoan circles meeting:

1. Set room up as described in the above figures. If the room is too big or there are too many people, you can also think about using microphones.
2. For the initial seating, you can choose one or two representatives for each of the views present to sit in the inner seats (the ones that give the right to speak). You can also leave some empty central seats, for other wishing to join the discussion at a later point.
3. Have the facilitator announce the rules:
   - People in the outer group can listen, but there should be no interference from them, verbal or non-verba;
   - Anyone from the outer group who wishes to join the conversation may do so by either coming forward at any time and taking one of the free chairs or, if none are available, they can signal this in a given way (for example by standing up) and as soon as a member of the inner circle considers that at the time there is nothing he wants to add, he can offer his place;
4. You can start the discussion by asking each participant to briefly state his point of view on the matter or by directly opening the debate.
5. Keep a log of everything that was discussed, the points of view that were expressed, friction points, agreements and potential outcomes.

Open Space Technology

Methods of stakeholder engagement

The tool offers a radical participatory approach that allows the participants themselves to decide on the topics for discussion and to participate to the discussions that they are interested in. Although it may seem a little bit chaotic, if managed properly the outcomes can be surprising, as it offers total freedom of expression for the participants.

There are four principles guiding the method:

1. Whoever comes are the right people.
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.
3. Whenever it starts is the right time.
4. When it's over, it's over.

Basically, what you as organiser are doing is just getting people in the same space offering different time slots for them to discuss whatever they consider to be relevant.

An example of a set-up can be the following: four rounds of discussions of about 45 minutes, each round comprising in three parallel sessions (the topics of the sessions will be chosen by the participants).

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Round 1 (10.00 – 10.45)	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3
Round 2 (11.00 – 11.45)	Topic 4	Topic 5	…
Round 3 (12.00 – 12.45)	…	…	…
Round 4 (13.00 – 13.45)	…	Topic 11	Topic 12

Each participant can propose one topic for discussion (in this set-up a maximum of 12) and can choose a time slot for it. The ones proposing the topic should also facilitate the corresponding discussion while the others are free to join any of the three parallel sessions and even to move from one to another during the discussions.

Here are the steps for setting up such a method:

1. Select an appropriate location;
2. Publicise the event and even directly invite different stakeholders;
3. Start the event by presenting the rules and the time slots to the participants;
4. Each person who wishes to, announces their name and topic they would like to introduce to the event and chooses one time slot (session) for it;
5. All the topics along with the hours and the location where the meetings will take place will be presented on a wall and participants will decide which session to sign up to;
6. Those who proposed the topics will facilitate the individual discussions and can appoint people to keep a log of the discussions;
7. After all discussions are finished, the reports can be either presented for the whole group in a group meeting or just disseminated later on to them. Also, following the event the results should also be disseminated to other stakeholders and to the decision-makers;

Civic journalism

Methods of stakeholder engagement

Civic journalism is a method that allows people to get accurate information about community or project-connected issues that will later allow them to make informed decisions related to different topics in debate. It can take the form of a community blog, news website, newspaper, on-line or offline radio or television station. Still, the main point is that stakeholders are the ones generating the content, with your support.

Although it needs some more resources than other methods and not every stakeholder can become a journalist and participate in this method, this approach can be extremely useful in engaging your stakeholders and empowering them to be the ones coordinating part of your engagement efforts. Information coming from within the community will be better received than information coming just from your organisation, which may be considered to be biased by your interests. Moreover, unlike traditional journalism, civic journalism does not rely on advertising for being sustainable, so it can concentrate less on the topics that bring in publicity and more on what is really important for the community.

The basic steps for setting up community journalistic initiatives are:

1. Finding volunteer or paid journalists from the community that are willing to coordinate or participate in this.
2. Decide on the best platform for them to disseminate the news (e.g. community blog, news website, newspaper, on-line or offline radio or television station). Set it up and gather the necessary resources (e.g. computers, cameras, recorders, microphones).
3. Have others join this initiative, even if they are not professional journalists. Offer them training and mentor them in the process.
4. Promote the new civic journalism platform.
5. Create the content and make it available to the public.

Photovoice

Methods of stakeholder engagement

Photovoice is a method in which stakeholders are asked to present their needs and interests by photographing different scenes that highlight these and adding text to them to further explain the message they want to convey. The theme of the initiative is given from the start and organisers can also support the participants by providing them with trainings on photography, cameras and by printing the results and presenting them to the decision makers.

Photovoice is a very effective tool of engaging stakeholders as it is not only very flexible but it is also very dynamic, which can be quite appealing for various target groups. Moreover, as the communication is not a direct one but through photos, stakeholders can be more confident is expressing how they truly feel and also the message will be better transmitted as photography is much more expressive than text.

The main steps of a photovoice project are:

1. Defining and presenting the theme (problem);
2. Identifying decision-makers to which the results will be presented;
3. Finding interested participants;
4. Providing the participants with cameras and training them in using photography for conveying a message;
5. Taking the photographs;
6. Selecting the photographs for presenting to the decision makers and adding necessary text to further explain the message;
7. Presenting the results to decision-makers, media, and other stakeholders;

Chapter 4

Final remarks

Before we end...

The presented methods are only a small part of the more than 100 different approaches that exist. We will not go and present more of them as the objective of this chapter is not necessarily to train you in becoming an expert in stakeholder engagement but more to present you with different creative tools of communicating and interacting with your stakeholders. Our intention was more on opening you and your organisation into being more participative in your interaction with different stakeholders that you are working with, be them your staff, your beneficiaries, your target groups, donors, local authorities or any other entity or person with which you will be interacting in the future. Moreover, we wanted you to see that communication with stakeholders can be more creative and engaging than how is usually considered to be.

By using this new attitude as a starting point, the notions acquired until now about communication but also different resources that are freely and widely available on the Internet, we think that you will not only be able to engage your stakeholders more but you will also improve the quality of your projects, as you will be able to adapt them better to the environment in which you are working and to the needs of the people you are working with.

As said before, the main thing we are hoping you have learned by reading this chapter is that in the development and implementation of your projects is not only useful but also necessary to stay in close connection to your stakeholders, to consult with them and to engage them in each of the steps you will take. As seen, this can be a very simple and effective process by using the right tools.

Communicate at your best!

About the project

Future capital –

an Erasmus+ Key Action 2 initiative

Future Capital

About the project

Future Capital – Erasmus+ KA2

"Future Capital" is a joint initiative of 3 youth NGOs from Portugal, Romania and Uruguay, which aimed at developing the cooperation and exchange of good practices in the field of international mobility projects and at developing the necessary competences required for using the IT&C in youthwork, especially in terms of communication.

In extent to the manual you are now reading, a Training Kit was also developed during this project. This T-Kit includes different methods, techniques and deliverables related to communication and also a curricula for a training course. All these can be used by any NGO who wishes to train its staff in the field of communication. The T-Kit is available at http://communicate.oti-online.ro.

Furthermore, to make sure that the methods we are proposing are practical and helpful for NGOs, these have been tested during a training course that we have organised in Arad, Romania. Trough this event we have managed to further improve and adapt them, according to the evaluation that was conducted at the end.

We really hope that the learning materials that we have provided you with will prove helpful to your work and the you will enjoy the results of our initiative.

Erasmus+

The new EU programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport for 2014-2020

Erasmus+

The "Future Capital" project was co-financed trough the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission.

The Erasmus+ programme aims to boost skills and employability, as well as modernising Education, Training, and Youth work. The seven year programme will have a budget of €14.7 billion; a 40% increase compared to spending levels between 2007 and 2013, reflecting the EU's commitment to investing in these areas.

Erasmus+ will provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad.

Erasmus+ will support transnational partnerships among Education, Training, and Youth institutions and organisations to foster cooperation and bridge the worlds of Education and work in order to tackle the skills gaps we are facing in Europe.

It will also support national efforts to modernise Education, Training, and Youth systems. In the field of Sport, there will be support for grassroots projects and cross-border challenges such as combating match-fixing, doping, violence and racism.

Erasmus+ brings together seven previous EU programmes in the fields of Education, Training, and Youth; it will for the first time provide support for Sport. As an integrated programme, Erasmus+ offers more opportunities for cooperation across the Education , Training , Youth , and Sport sectors and is easier to access than its predecessors, with simplified funding rules.

You can get more information on the programme and the financing opportunities it provides by visiting :

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm

Project partners

Organizația Tinerilor cu Inițiativă – Arad (Romania)

O.T.I. started its activity in 2007 and since then is an active and growing promoter of the European values in its community. The organisation is providing youngsters from Romania, Europe and beyond with alternative educational opportunities, mostly in the context of non-formal education. The guiding principle of the organisation is that the youngsters' situation should be improved also by involving and empowering them and by adding a global perspective to their work.

Normal activities of the organization are strongly connected with non-formal education and aim at improving the life of the youngsters. Main fields approached are education, social work and environment but also matters related to Europe and the European Union.

🌍 - http://www.oti-online.ro

ProAtlântico – Associação Juvenil (Portugal)

ProAtlântico is a non profit youth association, founded in 2001 that carries out projects with children, youngsters and disabled people. Today, ProAtlântico has more than 10.500 members all over Portugal and gives special attention to people in need and to those with fewer opportunities, aiming to give them the chance to establish contact with other cultures, in order to help them to find ways to deal with their own problems and to break the existing prejudices.

ProAtlântico – Associação Juvenil promotes active participation in society based on voluntary work among young people and aims to develop their personal, social and professional skills through non formal education.

Based on this principle, ProAtlântico decided to jump to a European level in 2003 through the Youth Programme, especially taking part on Youth Exchanges, Seminars and Training Courses mainly as participants. In 2004, ProAtlântico became coordinator of youth exchanges in Portugal and took part in approximately 150 youth exchanges in the past 10 years. Since 2007 ProAtlântico started to send, host and coordinate EVS projects, facilitating the participation of 600 volunteers.

- http://www.proatlantico.com/

AUDELE (Uruguay)

AUDELE, the Uruguayan Association for the Promotion of the Spanish as a Foreign Language, is a nonprofit organization that brings together different people who want to promote and disseminate the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language. Our main objectives are:

1- The protection and active dissemination of Hispanic-Uruguayan culture and especially the Spanish language.

2- Encourage and promote the use of Spanish outside of Uruguay as a means of creating linkages and cultural exchanges with countries in various languages and cultures.

3- Encourage the opening of Spanish Language Schools in Uruguay.

4- To promote the organization of courses and continuous trainings and seminars for Spanish teachers with the cooperation of national and international institutions.

5- Carry out educational activities, cultural activities and events that may help achieve these goals.

- http://audele.org.uy/

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