**CITIES OF
LEARNING**
by Badgecraft

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document was developed and published within the strategic partnership "Connected Spaces of Learning in Europe" with the co-funding of the European Union's programme ERASMUS+.

The project Connected Spaces of Learning in Europe was implemented from 2017 - 2020 by a partnership of NGO Nectarus and Vilnius municipality in Lithuania, Breakthrough in the Netherlands, Cazalla Intercultural and Regional youth council Lorca in Spain, GOEUROPE! at German Red Cross Sachsen-Anhalt e.V. and Internationaler Bund in Saxony- Anhalt region in Germany, Centraider and Regional administration of Val de Loire region in France, Badgecraft Ireland.

It was aiming to create a sustainable and youth oriented participatory solution for European cities and regions to map, deliver and recognise diverse opportunities for young people. The Project idea was based on the needs of organisations and young people and also responding to the regional, national and EU youth policies, calling for a more connected, diverse and recognised learning opportunities, based on passions and interest of young people, linked with real life and delivered in a participatory and youth friendly way. In this way the project responded to European challenges in education and employment by increasing equity for non-formal and informal learning across different domains and by creating connections among organisations and spaces in cities and regions.

As an outcome of this project the network of Cities and Regions of Learning has been founded and several Cities and Regions of Learning have been initiated, including the development of interactive platforms and tools. More information concerning the project, its outcomes and tools and supporting materials for starting Cities and Regions of Learning can be found at www.citiesoflearning.eu.

COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL/REGIONAL PARTNERS

Badgecraft is a lead technical partner that develops and maintains a web infrastructure for the Network of Cities and Regions of Learning (further in the document - CRoL Network). These guidelines include recommendations on how to build a local communication strategy based on the European communication strategy for web platform and services of Cities and Regions of Learning.

Target audiences:

- Learning providers/educators at local/regional level
- Young people of two age groups: 15-18 years old and 18-24 years old
- Decision makers at local/regional level

Partners may identify more (specific) target audiences at local level.

Key aspect covered by these guidelines:

- Communication to young people will be done on a local level in a local language through digital tools. Depending on available human and time resources, each partner should be present on Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook in their local language.
- All partners will use common visuals and branding materials that will be locally adaptable and will make a project recognizable.
- Once each partner has assigned communication duties to someone, the European communicator will organize a call to discuss the strategy and coordinate its implementation. Coordination calls will be regular and, depending on the need, will take place once a month or two.
- Badgecraft is managing the communication at the European level, reaching out to relevant stakeholders, namely learning providers and decision makers
- Local communication should have branded presence on social media and other channels used by local target audiences. Local partners should use targeted communication to specific stakeholders and live interventions at events and conferences.
- European communication will cover visibility and outreach of project's major events and launches and will provide local communication guidelines for those occasions.
- Local partners will share information and visual materials from their local events with European communication manager in order to integrate what's relevant into European communication.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of these guidelines is to support partners of the CRoL Network in achieving the following impact at the local level:

- Build a sustainable and active network of learning providers that are using the platform and City or Region of Learning:
  - to promote their digital and local learning activities
  - to manage and monitor engagement with learners
  - to verify and recognise skills and achievements
- Make learners interested and involved in using the platform and City or Region of Learning:
  - to find and join learning opportunities nearby
  - to engage in digital and local learning activitiės
  - to build their online portfolio of achievements
- Inform and gain the support of stakeholders for using the platform and City or Region of Learning:
  - to achieve strategic goals for talent development
  - to create more equal distribution of learning opportunities
  - to access data about learning trends and needs

Local partners are advised to establish more specific objectives for their communication strategy.

Communication goal: visibility of innovative learning approach and web solution for cities and regions

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Communication objectives:

1. Getting learning providers on board
2. Making our ideas popular among decision makers
3. Getting young people to participate in our activities

General communication message

Innovative solutions are changing the concept of learning and giving young people an opportunity to grow their potential in a diverse range of spaces across their cities. This benefits not only the young people, who are the primary users of this learning opportunity, but also local businesses and organizations.

Communication #hashtags:

#CitiesOfLearning #RegionsOfLearning #LearningPlaylists #ConnectedLearning #OpenBadges #ConnectedSpaces #ErasmusPlus

Local partners are advised to establish relevant hashtags for their local communication.

LOCAL PROVIDERS OF LEARNING
Goal: show value to an organisation and benefits of involvement

Learning providers play an important role in populating the platform with quality opportunities for learners. This target audience may be a very broad group. Therefore, it is important to have a very clear vision, priorities and goals established for a City or Region of Learning.

Potential channels:

Local partners should make a list of channels which are used by learning providers to carry on with information and communication exchange.

Best ways to reach them:

Social media, targeted messaging/meetings, participating/organising events, speaking at panel discussions

Local partners should adopt specific communication tools for this target group.

Communication has to broadcast the following messages:

- It's a new exciting opportunity and your organization shouldn't miss a chance to be a part of it
- Joining our network is an easy way to hop on the train towards innovativeness, mobility of learning and inter-connectivity
- Your organization will become a part of a growing network of innovators
- It will offer you a chance to give young people the skills that they need

Messages:

How to brand City or Region of Learning in communication?
Cities of Learning: Digital. Innovative. Open. **Regions of Learning: Growing new skills of future careers.** **Cities of Learning: Connecting diverse learning opportunities.** **Regions of Learning: an innovative and forward thinking network.**

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"TO DO" for engagement with learning providers:

- Map local actors that are already active in priority domains of City or Region of Learning and choose those who have what to offer on the platform
- Draft communication messages
- Plan a targeted outreach to most relevant stakeholders
- Establish a strong presence on relevant social media and other communication channels and actively engage with key target audiences
- Screen the calendar of events to see where potential networking and visibility opportunities emerge

YOUNG PEOPLE: 15-18 years old
Goal: to make them interested and get them involved in exploring opportunities

Communication to young people of this age group has to adjust to their communication habits. This age group gets bored very fast and easily, so whatever you have to tell has to be **short, eye catching & simple**. Communicate **an emotion, a feeling, an opportunity**. These age group is not looking for a heavy content, so they are more likely to get interested in some kind of entertainment, a new interesting way to spend their time.

Best ways to reach them:

Instagram, Snapchat, Youtube

Young people of this age group are increasingly moving out of Facebook to Instagram and Snapchat, so it is recommended to focus on these social media platforms in order to reach them. Youtube serves as a replacement for a TV and is a very powerful tool to reach those who would otherwise not look for the information on learning opportunities. Local partners are advised to include locally popular channels of communication to young people.

Communication has to broadcast the following messages:

- It's trendy and cool and young people all around the world are doing this.
- It's a new and fun way to spend your free time.
- This is a way to spend time with your friends & meet new people.
- All you need is your smart phone & the Internet. It's fun and free.

Communication tip:
It might be easier to reach young people of this age in their own language with locally adjusted content.

YOUNG PEOPLE: 18-25 years old

Goal: to make them interested and get them involved in developing their interests and talents

Communication to this age group has to be based on the most relevant issue for them at the moment – **entering university** or **entering a job market**. Since this is their priority, they will look for the following things – official **proof of skills** acquired, **international recognition** and an **additional value** they can't get from formal education.

Best ways to reach them:

Facebook, Instagram, Linkedin

People of this age group are active users of Facebook and Instagram, so it is recommended to communicate to them through these platforms. At this age young people are starting to move to Linkedin as well, because this is where they look for employers, follow schools and influencers. People of this age are also using these platforms as sources of information and news.

Communication has to broadcast the following messages:

- This is an opportunity to get new skills and competences that will help you with future studies & employment.
- This is a future of learning and you can't miss it, because everyone else is already doing it.
- You can impress your future employers with skills and experiences others don't have.
- You can go beyond traditional education limits and still have your skills and knowledge recognized.

Language and tone of communication:

- When you are communicating to young people, avoid a didactic tone. This will remind people of school and, most probably, push them away from following you.
- Speak in a language of young people – use slang and abbreviations, where appropriate.
- Don't sound too serious or too complicated. Your audience, who hears about your project for the first time, should be able to understand you.
- Take into consideration that for the majority of young people, who will read your content, English is not a native language. Don't make cultural references they might not be able to understand.
- Break your ideas into short sentences. Make your posts look light and readable.

If you are concerned about using too much of a word "**LEARNING**" in your communication, you can use such alternatives as:

discovering,
growing your potential
unveiling your talents
improving
challenging yourself
giving yourself a chance
getting better at ….

Messages:

How to brand City or Region of Learning in communication?
Cities of Learning: Your new skill is just around the corner. **Cities of Learning: Your city is your learning playground.** **Cities of Learning: Your city is where your potential grows.** **Cities of Learning: Wander. Discover. Grow your potential.**

How to use recommended social media tools?

Instagram	- Make sure to provide a good bio in your profile. Link it to your website/Facebook/Snapchat. - Post short videos and pictures. - Use #hashtags, filters, smileys and stickers – everything that platform have to offer. - Be an active #hashtag user and use not only your project's hashtags, but general popular ones around Instagram (#learning, #learn, #challenge, #mycity, #digital etc). You can see the most popular # when typing in different words. Type in project-related words and choose what's trending and relevant for you. Through # it will be easier to find your posts. - Tag relevant organizations & people in your posts. - Post consistently 3-4 times a week. Too often might encourage people to unsubscribe. - Post once a day around the launch of a product or an event taking place. - Follow people and organizations, react to their content, comment, like, ask questions. Your account has to be alive and not one-ended. - Launch online competitions: ask for a right answer and choose a winner, launch a photo competition on your preferred topic etc.

	Don't forget to offer a reward: it can be participation somewhere or a souvenir. • Use Instagram stories to report from events/meetings/places related to your project. Use "voting" option on the stories, ask questions and do live streaming to ensure interactivity. • Use Instagram live option to have a conversation with your audience, talk about a certain topic, show how you to use Learning maps or Learning playlist, while they can ask questions. • Introduce characters to your Instagram and tell their stories, related to experiencing "Connected Spaces of Learning". Picture + a quote from a person. This will bring a personal touch. • Work with social media influencers to promote your project through personal experience on their channels. In order to avoid high costs, choose young & local influencers. • Use an option to promote your content to accumulate some audience. It is recommended to do it after you have already posted some content into your profile and it doesn't look empty. • Plan and schedule your posts in advance to ensure consistency.
Snapchat	• Use "Geolocation" option to post your content. This way your posts will be visible to Snapchat users around your location. Since you are targeting people in various places in Europe – rotate and post from different cities to get more viewers. • Use different lenses and filters, stickers & other Snapchat offered featured to make your content more appealing. • Use Snapchat for a fun, light, unplanned communication. • Good examples: [Boston University Snapchat Campaign](#)
Youtube	• Work with Youtube influencers. Young people trust the opinions of other young people the most. • Collaborate with Youtubers to talk about your project & learning opportunities. Invite them to your event or suggest experiencing some learning options and ask to create a video about it sharing their own personal experience. • Collaborating with very famous Youtubers can be pricey, so consider reaching out to local Youtube influencers. Consider also those that create beauty, life-style, travel, gaming related content - it will help you reaching additional audience. • Good examples of brands in education business using Youtube influencers: Lynda, Loot Crate.
Facebook	• Make sure you create a good bio on Facebook and link all your social media accounts & your website. • Always remember whom you are targeting while posting on Facebook. It's very easy to get swamped into general messaging. • Create short videos to tell about your project (max 30 seconds). Videos are the most visible and watched content on Facebook. Use Magisto to make videos yourself. • Make sure your communication is always visual. Use pictures, infographics, gifs along with a text that you share.

	- Always tag people and organizations when relevant in the posts. This will increase your reach. - Use the option to promote your content around the time of the most important project events, product launches or important messages. Since the change of algorithm in Facebook, it has become harder to naturally reach people's feeds. - Use Facebook live option (not Facebook stories) to broadcast your events. This way you will have a video you can use and share after the event as well. Ensure the quality of sound & the picture. - Occasionally share content from other sources related to the topic of your project on your feed. Don't be the only source of information. - Post original content 2-3 times a week. Plan and schedule your posts in advance to ensure consistency. Even when nothing is happening, you need to make sure your communication is still ongoing. - Synchronize your Instagram and Facebook accounts, so that the content from the first one reflect on the feed of the second one.

"TO DO" for engagement with young people:

- Assign communication duties to a specific person, preferably young person
- Create project's social media accounts in your local language (don't use private accounts as a primary source of communication about the project)
- Make a communication plan for at least a month ahead and schedule your messages.
- Consult European communication manager for any issues or help.

LOCAL DECISION MAKERS

Goal: to inform and gain their support

The goal is not to influence policies, but rather inform and make our ideas popular among decision makers, so the best ways to set communication is engagement with specific stakeholders and visibility in places, where there is a high concentration of relevant actors. Local partners are advised to make a list of relevant stakeholders.

Best ways to reach them:

Facebook, Linkedin, targeted messaging/meetings, participating/organizing events, speaking at panel discussions, local channels

The communication has to broadcast the following messages:

- We have a solution to current learning challenges

- Cities of learning can contribute to a long term goals of a city or region
- Our learning methods can help closing skills/talent gap
- We are bringing the best practices from across Europe and US
- Cities of Learning is suggesting innovative and modern ways of learning

Messages:

How to brand City or Region of Learning in communication?
Cities of Learning: Digital. Innovative. Open. **Regions of Learning: Innovative solution to old challenges.** **Cities of Learning: Bringing skills that are needed.** **Regions of Learning: Enhancing mobility and interactivity of learning.**

Local partners are advised to mapped potential target groups and some of the relevant initiatives for potential engagement at local or regional level.

"TO DO" for engaging communication with decision makers:

- Identifying key actors and initiatives, creating a priority list
- Choosing communication tools to reach specific identified stakeholders
- Drafting communication messages
- Setting up a solid presence on channels used by stakeholders
- Drafting a calendar of events and planning your engagement (identifying speaking opportunities, participation in events, meetings with key actors)

How to use recommended social media tools?

Linkedin	- Use Linkedin as a platform to share content-heavy posts. - Make it a space for our blog – write opinion pieces or short articles and share them there. This platform allows us to discuss our ideas and talk about the essence of our project. - Make articles regular, start a tradition. For example, every Monday morning post one original article. With time we will accumulate a group of people that will know it and will look for it to appear. - Since producing content can be time consuming, consider inviting people to contribute to our blog. It can be people representing all our target groups – from young people to Brussels-based organizations. - As an alternative, we can locate the blog on our website, however, in that case, it will need additional promotion and sharing across the platforms to get the reach that Linkedin would bring by default.

Facebook	• Make sure you create a good bio on Facebook and link all your social media accounts & your website.
	• Always remember whom you are targeting while posting on Facebook. It's very easy to get swamped into general messaging.
	• Create short videos to tell about your project (max 30 seconds). Videos are the most visible and watched content on Facebook. Use Magisto to make videos yourself.
	• Make sure your communication is always visual. Use pictures, infographics, gifs along with a text that you share.
	• Always tag people and organizations when relevant in the posts. This will increase your reach.
	• Use the option to promote your content around the time of the most important project events, product launches or important messages. Since the change of algorithm in Facebook, it has become harder to naturally reach people's feeds.
	• Use Facebook live option (not Facebook stories) to broadcast your events. This way you will have a video you can use and share after the event as well. Ensure the quality of sound & the picture.
	• Occasionally share content from other sources related to the topic of your project on your feed. Don't be the only source of information.
	• Post original content 2-3 times a week. Plan and schedule your posts in advance to ensure consistency. Even when nothing is happening, you need to make sure your communication is still ongoing.
	• Synchronize your Instagram and Facebook accounts, so that the content from the first one reflect on the feed of the second one.

COMMUNICATION TASKS

- Establishing and maintaining communication channels with stakeholders at local or regional level (e.g. via social media, mailing lists)
- Achieving presence as contributors at relevant events
- Communicating to leading organisations to develop their interest in becoming a strategic partner for a city or region of learning
- Publishing articles in relevant magazines for city or region
- Creating and publishing content on social media, blogs and newsletters to reach networks and associations of learning providers
- Share project activities, results and developments on relevant platforms and channels locally
- Keeping regular contact and coordination of communication activities with other partners of CRoL network