

D1.5.1 – Lesson learnt from the communication campaigns to engage SMEs



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Introduction

The manufacturing sector in the Alps is meeting several challenges for its ecological transition, which include decreasing the environmental impact of the production processes and enhance digitalisation. SMEs face a pressing need for transformation to ensure environmental, worker, and societal well-being. RECENTRE addresses this need by developing region-specific models and involving decision-makers. By drafting a green and digital transformation strategy and testing it in SMEs across various countries, RECENTRE provides expertise, technologies, and tools for transforming the manufacturing sector.

Activities

For this deliverable “Lessons learnt on communications campaigns to engage SMEs”, it is important to keep in mind that communication is done by the whole consortium and not only by ConPlusUltra GmbH (CPU) as communication manager of the project. CPU created a dedicated RECENTRE LinkedIn account. In monthly regular meetings communication activities play an important and recurring point. In the communication tracking file, each PP reports its communication activities. There you can find all communication activities PPs did for dissemination and promotion for project.

All project partners (PPs) as persons and as institutions are active on LinkedIn. In European (social and) business life, people mainly communicate via LinkedIn. It was clear from the outset that social media (SM) campaigns only work if project contributions are distributed via the channels of the PPs. Furthermore, RECENTRE project has a YouTube channel where you can find the webinars which are part of the project. In the long run it is intended creating 9 short video films about pilot actions.

A project internal questionnaire was sent to the PPs. The answers were analysed to gain an impression of how the campaigns of each PPs work and which target groups they reach and which they do not



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Outputs

Beside the central CPU-lead RECENTRE communication activities, all PPs had an own communications campaign in the first 2 periods of the project. The campaigns raised awareness on the RECENTRE project itself and on the topics of RECENTRE. Overall the communication campaigns from all the project partners and the digital only project specific communication campaign culminated in the very successful attendance of 346 participants for all the RECENTRE 5 webinars in the first 2 periods.

Aims and target groups of communication campaigns

The communication campaigns are part of RECENTRE communication activities and generally aimed in two first project periods at raising awareness by SMEs for the green transformation and engaging local actors to support their transformation.

Furthermore, the campaigns aimed at strengthening the involvement of SMEs from mechatronics, automotive and bioeconomy sub-sectors for their needs assessment and for training activities and raising interest of relevant stakeholders.

The targeted stakeholders were as follows:

- SMEs
- Regional public authorities
- National public authorities
- Sectoral agencies
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Higher education and research organisations
- Education/training centre and schools
- Business support organizations
- Enterprise, except SMEs

In the upcoming periods experts for the transition of the SMEs will be an explicit communication target group.



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Tools of the campaign

The communication campaigns started already in the first period of the project implementation. During the communication campaigns partners reached their stakeholders through diverse channels:

- Telephone
- Email
- Social media
- Newsletter/mailing
- Personal contact/meetings
- During virtual and physical events
- Regional networks/communities
- Institutional communication channels

Lessons learnt

a) Increasing followers on LinkedIn and YouTube

Concerning social media, the approach taken until now is very successful. The Communication leader created a RECENTRE project LinkedIn account, which has more than 200 followers. (Personal and/or institutional) Project Partner accounts supported the RECENTRE project specific and all the other project partners accounts/posts by liking or resharing posts. On LinkedIn Super admins can invite their personally contacts to follow the account.

A potential for improvement is seen in

- **For reaching more stakeholders give super admin rights to more or all partners to invite their contacts to follow the project LinkedIn account**
- **Online campaigns: themed weeks, or participatory campaigns on social media increase reach**

Another important communication tool was the YouTube channel, where videos from the webinars are posted and reshared on LinkedIn.

b) Mix of communication tools

Some partners rely on their (online) existing communities, which are focused on, e.g., smart



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manufacturing, green technologies, life sciences, agrifood, and digital transformation). For example, they might be clusters of companies, research centres, and other stakeholders that collaborate to drive innovation, competitiveness, and sustainable development within specific sectors and/or regions. On the other hand, some partners, which are institutions do not participate in online communities and rely more on face-to-face meetings, phone calls, talks during events and professional contacts. Partners share the view that an exchange of experience on the development of campaigns by other partners might be useful.

Some organisations claimed that activities (e.g., webinars in English) could not reach some stakeholders due to language issues. However, they expect more interest from local stakeholders, when the regional workshops in local language take place. This will be communicated on the already established communication channels.

Another difficulty was as well contact with some regional authorities: getting their attention, making them interested in the project goals and activities and involving them so that the project can reach more impact. Partners will continue contacting these actors and present them ongoing activities.

➤ **Webinars & online workshops in local language: Ideal for knowledge transfer, stakeholder involvement and dissemination of results.**

Some partners see another possibility in reaching more stakeholders by making more specific event topics and by giving interested stakeholders more time for registration since companies have very often busy schedule.

The project partners have already discussed the learnings and integrated them in the planning of the RECENTRE project itself as in the communication for the project by the all project partners and the RECENTRE project specific channels. The partners perceive communication also as a regional responsibility and therefore, have planned future communication activities depending on the stakeholders targeted and organisation type (e.g., news on website, weekly newsletter; press release before local workshops, social and online advertising activities, banner visibility on website homepage, WhatsApp channel, direct mailing and companies' involvement via phone, events).

c) Good and timely planning of the project activities

The ramp-up phase of the project was very short and communication activities or special thematically campaigns could not be planned with a big lead time at the beginning of the project. As the RECENTRE project itself and all the project partners have already evolved communication wise more alignment (within the institutions of the project partners and as a whole project) has been achieved. Dedicated/special thematically communication campaigns are more and more progressing .



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As the planning and the organisation and the information about upcoming activities start earlier, project partners have more time to spread information and promotion by integration in their own communication channels.

- For promotion of events, webinars, workshops, at least 6-8 weeks lead time

Activities for the upcoming periods

The partnership remains committed and will further monitor communication activities and will discuss them during regular online meetings and partner meetings.

- **Communication manager will design a new template and give instructions for a LinkedIn campaign**
- **Communication manager will design a template for multimedia products for the regional events**
- **A next step for reaching more stakeholders is providing rights to partners accounts (and/or accounts of employees) to share the project LinkedIn account with their contacts**

