

Tool 23: How to organise communication

Communication is key to smooth and successful collaboration. It is therefore important to create a clear picture of what to communicate and to whom at the very beginning of a collaboration project. It is important to balance up what to communicate; too little communication involves the danger of conflicts and misunderstandings whereas too much information (or irrelevant information) may confuse project partners or result in them losing interest.

The internal information flows should not solely be limited to the people who are directly involved in the CBHC project but also other professionals of the partner organisations should be regularly informed about the project and its progress. This may help to create a general positive atmosphere towards the collaboration project among all involved. It is the role of the project manager to decide who receives what information (see [Tool 25 \(Project information flow\)](#)).

Face-to-face communication: a limited number of such meetings is essential for effective project communication (e.g. kick-off meeting, interim meeting(s), closing meeting). However, in order to monitor the progress of a project, it is advisable to organise regular phone calls or e-meetings. In multinational projects, face-to-face meetings usually involve travelling, so their frequency needs to be planned at an early stage in order to account for them in the budget.

Virtual communication: phone and email are still the most commonly used forms of virtual communication tools. However, multinational projects may rely on more sophisticated platforms, which may save costs without sacrificing effective communication. Examples are the online storage of documents, shared working environments, internet calls and conferencing, and project management platforms.

Regardless of the chosen communication channel, special attention should be paid to language. Especially for multinational cooperation projects, it is important to find a **common language**, which might be more difficult, the more partners/nationalities are involved. However, language should never be the reason for partners to participate less actively in the project. It is therefore important to consider the following aspects, in case no common language can be found:

- Ensure adequate translation at meetings and for other communication channels
- Ensure translation of written materials
- Include translation and interpretation services in your budget – not only in terms of financial resources, but also the time needed for translation/interpretation.

A **communication strategy** might be useful in order to develop further a common understanding of communication and related activities among partners and how they will be delivered in practice.

External communication to citizens: Keeping citizens informed is a crucial element in territories' cross-border integration efforts. The involvement of citizens may take place through the organisation of a forum and also the implementation of concrete projects for the inhabitants of cross-border territories. These initiatives contribute to building a cross-border civil society, based on understanding and trusting one's neighbours [1]. Examples are:

- [European Cross-Border Grouping](#) (GTE) – Maisons transfrontalières européennes (European cross-border centres)
- [Partons](#), Interreg V (France-Wallonia-Flanders) project for the development of services in rural areas
- [GFGZ](#) (German-Swiss association for cross-border cooperation)



Why a communication strategy?

- To convey the project purpose to external actors
- To make things happen, as projects are not isolated; communication helps to move the project forward
- To make project priorities transparent
- To identify where resources should be concentrated
- To inform stakeholders, whose agendas are busy, about activities in good time

Reference:

[1] Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière. Cross-border territories. Europe's laboratory. Paris: Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière, 2017.

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