



DRIVE

DEVELOPING RESEARCH
AND INNOVATION CAPACITIES IN ALBANIA AND KOSOVO

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

March 2020

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I. Brief description of the project

1.1 Project background

Research and innovation are fundamental for the development of any country in today's globalized and knowledge driven economy, and higher education institutions hold an important role in the innovation system of a country. The higher education system in both Albania and Kosovo saw a robust increase of student participation and institutional expansion of the system within less than a decade (2006 – 2015). This proliferation of student intake and institutions has brought about increased access, but it has also posed numerous challenges for the student population, academic staff and new institutions in both the public and private sectors. Due to the young age of most institutions as well as the limited legacy in terms of research capacities from the past (for historic reasons), these challenges pertain largely to the research activity as well. It is not surprising therefore, that both countries score poorly in almost all indicators regarding research, innovation and competitiveness. Considering the identified limitations at national and institutional level for capacity building in research and innovation, it becomes imperative to rely on the expertise of HEIs in programme countries, and an integral support for 3 years in the form of a targeted CBHE project.

DRIVE – “Developing research and innovation capacities in Albania and Kosovo”, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and led by Polis University brings together 8 partners. The project adopts an integral and systemic approach towards the capacity building process for research and innovation in Albania and Kosovo, identifying several target groups and their specific needs, and tailoring the project activities to such needs. In addition to capacity building and exchange of experience with EU partners, the project foresees establishing new structures in 4 HEIs that will focus on research and innovation adopting an inter-disciplinary approach and eventually a close cooperation with partners from businesses and industry in line with the quadruple helix goals. Other HEIs will reinforce existing structures in place. Furthermore, the openness of HEIs towards other partners, local and international, will be further enhanced through the development of a network, supported also by a virtual platform that will ease the interaction and synergy among the members.

1.2 Project aim and objectives

The general objective of this project is to contribute in the development of the research and innovation capacities of HEIs in Albania and Kosovo by enhancing their institutional capabilities, staff skills and networking.

Specifically, the project intends to:

1. Enhance the teachers' capacities and their methodologies so that they effectively equip the students (graduate level and beyond) with the skills to conduct independent research.
2. Enhance the mentors' capacities to effectively guide the students in their research activity.
3. Enhance the research capacities of the academic and managerial staff through study visits and tailored trainings.
4. Strengthen the managerial capacities for research activities and innovation in institutional level by setting or strengthening dedicated research and innovation support structures (RISS).
5. Promote research excellence and innovation by developing a network that eases the interdisciplinarity and cooperation among local and international actors.

1.3 Project partners

DRIVE – “Developing research and innovation capacities in Albania and Kosovo”, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and led by Polis University brings together 8 partners:

P1 - Polis University – Lead Partner

P2 - Polytechnic University of Tirana – Project Partner

P3 - European University of Tirana – Project Partner

P4 - University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” – Project Partner

P5 - University of Gjakova “Fehmi Agani” – Project Partner

P6 - Universum College – Project Partner

P7 - Hamburg University of Technology - Project Partner

P8 – Politecnico di Milan – Project Partner

P9 – Aalborg University – Project Partner

II. DRIVE Communication Strategy

This section presents the overall approach to the communication strategy for DRIVE Project. It is based on the assumption that all project partners are willing to disseminate the results of the project within their institutions and network, also including all other events they participate. There is a slight risk of lack of attention to the importance of dissemination, but partners are experienced in project development and appreciate the relevance of dissemination and communication.

2.1 Communication Strategy Aim

The aim of this communication strategy is to ensure that the results and activities of DRIVE Project are fully disseminated to project partner, target group, stakeholders and public at large.

The strategy focuses on internal communication and particularly external one, with the aim to gather key stakeholders around DRIVE agenda and ensure that all project outputs and results are transferred outside the partnership and disseminated and used in the most effective way. In order to achieve such objective, transparent instruments of communication will be used, as well as adequate and timely inclusion of the targeted audience for the project.

The Dissemination Strategy ensures a smooth roll out of key messages, while synchronizing targeted outreach with project implementation milestones. In order to ensure cohesive delivery of project outputs and results, internal communication activities will be performed concurrent to the external ones.

DRIVE Communications Strategy aims at:

- ensuring effective communication,
- consistent and efficient communication,
- ensuring the visibility of the project and Erasmus+ programme,
- contributing to sustainability of DRIVE Project and embeddedness of results in all project partners.

2.2 Internal project environment affecting communication strategy

All project partners are bound by the Erasmus+ rules regarding communication and dissemination. In addition to that, all project partners are experienced in project development and thus in utilizing communication and dissemination tools. More so, PPs have existing cooperation with media channels in a combination of digital, print and broadcast outlets, which can adequately be used in the communications plan in order to ensure successful implementation of the communications strategy objectives of DRIVE.

2.3 External environment affecting communication strategy

The external environment assessment affecting communication is performed through the use of the PESTEL (Political Social, Economic, Environmental, and Legal environments) tool. The use of PESTEL tool enables identification of key societal drivers which open up new opportunities for more effective and efficient communication or pose certain threats which need to be considered when designing the communication plan of the project. The PESTEL analysis for the needs of the communications strategy of DRIVE is provided in Table 1.1.

Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic societies with well-developed information sectors which are characterized with a variety of state and non-state media as are: print and broadcast media, many digital newspapers, many online media. • Societies with democratically elected and appointed officials, established government structures on local, regional and national level, which should support good communication of the project with various officials.
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberal economies, where the traditional participants in the information sector are gradually disappearing (print newspapers, broadcast TV and similar) due to low market demand and due to the entry of companies with new business models based on technology. Price is the key driver; • Market oriented participants in the economies, predominantly SMEs who have vested interest in sustaining their operations and growing at national, regional and global markets.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging culture among the majority of the age groups in the region which favors a two way / many to many communications. • New generations which like to actively participate in the mass communication avoiding the role of a mere spectator i.e. just receiver of the information typical for the traditional print and broadcast media. • Clutter of information, information sources and types;
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High penetration of Internet and use among all age groups, and among all business entities in the region, which facilitates digital two way/many to many communications.
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The region has an enabling legal environment for both, traditional and digital communications. Legal frames for protection of privacy and identity are in force in all countries of the EU and also to a certain extent in WV.

2.4 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis help us in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the consortium and the opportunities and threats existing in the external environment when it comes to the communication of the project and its results. This is named a SWOT analysis.

Table 2.1 SWOT Analysis	
<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Established organizations in their respected communities; ▪ Established network with a variety of stakeholders; ▪ Established cooperation with a combination of media partners, predominantly in the digital media outlets; ▪ Budget for External expertise and creative design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited internal expertise for video and multimedia production;
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low cost new media, digital communications; ▪ Target groups well versed in the use of digital media for communication purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of attention by public / stakeholders.

2.5 Principles: Integrated Communications Strategy

In the case of DRIVE, the concept of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) will be utilized. The IMC is defined as a concept of communications planning that recognizes the added value in a program that integrates a variety of tactics, for instance general printing, direct response, and public relations, and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communications impact. IMC is based on the use of a combination of media drivers, which deliver the message to the final target audience. Each element of the IMC mix integrates with the other communication tools so that a unified message is consistently reinforced at each contact point with the target audience.

The communication strategy of the project is based on the following principles:

Innovative and forward-looking: new media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Youtube, Twitter Instagram.) provide many opportunities for communication both with the general public as well as with specific target groups and intermediate and final beneficiaries. The project will utilize new media as an integral part of the communication strategy, creating integration with traditional communication tools.

Simple: the project aims to keep to clear, consistent and understandable messages to its different audiences.

Cooperative: in order to make best use of the available resources, the project will try to involve the different partners as well as beneficiaries in the communication strategy as much as possible.

Interactive: the project will make an effort to listen to and incorporate feedback from its target groups and beneficiaries in order to increase interest in its activities and achievements and fine-tune its messages.

Targeted: a generic approach to communication could lead to important target groups not being addressed. The project will customize its communication efforts for each target group identified in order to ensure that the message reaches the relevant actors.

Inclusive: PPs are from different countries. It is therefore important to provide access to information about the project to different target groups.

Accountable: the communication plan itself will be monitored and evaluated according to the project activities plan and specifically to the relation between communication goal, target group/beneficiary, message and communication timing. Furthermore, the focus on communication strategy will change depending on the stage in the project implementation, reflecting the priorities relevant to that stage.

III. External and internal communication mix

According to the European Commission (2004), in order to ensure a successful Communication and Dissemination Strategy, the following actions must take place:

- Define the message
- Target the audience
- Select tools
- Plan the programme

These four elements are examined in the context of the project and within the External and the internal communications.

3.1 External Communications

3.1.1 Message

The message for dissemination will be developed based on each activity and result of DRIVE Project and will be consulted with P2 – Leader for WP7 Dissemination and P1 – Leader Partner and in charge of management. All partners can contribute to the definition of the message, particularly so if they are organizing activities and preparing reports and other outputs.

3.1.2 Key Target Audiences

The main target audiences of the project are lecturers and academics, researchers and scientists, innovators, project managers, students, public authorities at central and local level, NGOs, interest groups, SMEs, research centres, higher education institutions, development partners, donors, general public.

The listed actors will be involved in the project through implementation of various activities as are dissemination and communication, awareness raising, educational/training activities and through the access to the Network. The dissemination and communication activities (info days, conferences) will target all of the aforementioned groups as shown below.

3.1.3 Tools

The dissemination plan aims also to give partners an overview of channels of communication for the implementation of communication activities. The Consortia will apply an Integrated Communications approach. The project will have its logo, creative strategy and message which will be placed at every point of contact with the target group and the public in general. The consortia will apply a combination of traditional and digital media channels and tools to reach the target group along with the standard direct communication at project activities.

Based on the Dissemination Strategy the project will develop the following activities:

- Project visual identity materials like flyers, posters, roll-ups, brochures, promotional video, interactive and user-friendly website, modular learning and information materials will be developed. The materials will be tailored to the context and the preferences of the target groups, also materials like postcards or film clips will be used to attract young learners.
- Newsletters will be published every six months announcing and reporting about relevant achievements and events.
- Tailor-made publications will inform and attract different target and user groups, e.g. students, enterprises, HR-experts, researchers, networks and administrations.
- A project website shall be dedicated to the project results, with a special corner using interactive features such as “forum”, “contact your peer” section. Such website goes in line with the main focus of DRIVE, to create an innovation and research network in the Western Balkans. The website will also contain a subscribe section where new researchers express their interest in being part on virtual forums and potential meetings.

More specifically, there are four main groups of communication tools which will be used in the external communication of the Project:

Digital media:

- Project webpage;
- Project partners' websites;
- Social Media avatars: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube;
- Electronic newsletters following project implementation.
- Video.
- Online articles, blogs, reports and publications.

Traditional publications and broadcasts:

- National studies, reports, training materials
- Publications of articles, interviews in newspapers or specialized magazines in each of the PP countries;
- Interviews for radio programs.
- Interview for television programs.
- Interim dissemination evaluation report
- Final dissemination evaluation report

Traditional promotional sets:

- Project informational leaflets
- Project poster
- Project roll up
- Promotional material (folders, notebooks, pens)

Events

- Project kick off/ Launching event
- Project managerial meetings
- Trainings and field visits will be delivered both, face-to-face and online.
- Info days - National info days will be organized for each of the participating partner countries with pilot presentations. These info days will serve also for the participation of third parties. Representatives from local and national businesses, industry, and governance will be invited, introducing to them also the Research and Innovation Network
- One Conference will be organized in Albania in the first year of the project implementation and the next one in Kosovo in the second year of the project implementation.
- Final conference - A final conference will be organised to attract regional researchers and potential network partners from all 6 WB countries; or researchers who are not from these countries but who focus in studying the region. It aims to regionally disseminate and discuss project results. It will be held in the premises of the Coordinator (POLIS University), and all the partners of the Project Consortium will attend this event. Since

the research and innovation network will be launched during this Conference, stakeholders like local and national businesses, representatives from industry as well as National/ State bodies, responsible for the policies and quality of research, will attend this activity.

3.1.4 Plan

The plan for external communication will follow the plan of activities of the project implementation.

3.2 Internal Communications

The internal communications define the communication among the project partners and between the project consortia and the Lead Partner. The main premises on which this communication will be based are:

- Transparency;
- Openness;
- Participation;
- Inclusion in the decision-making process.

3.2.1 Message

The message for dissemination will be developed based on each activity and result of DRIVE Project and will be consulted with P2 – Leader for WP7 Dissemination and P1 – Leader Partner and in charge of management. All partners can contribute to the definition of the message, particularly so if they are organizing activities and preparing reports and other outputs.

3.2.2 Key Internal Target Audiences

The project has a Steering Committee and a Project Team. The steering Committee is made out of representatives from all project partners. Members are officially appointed by the legal representative of their institutions. In line with the guidelines, grant agreement and partnership agreements, the Steering Committee decides with all votes on important project implementation matters and monitors its progress.

The Project Team consist of the Project Manager, the Financial Manager, contact points at each PP and the work packages coordinators. The Lead partner communicates with the EACEA on all issues related to project implementation, while Project Partners communicate on all issues with the Lead Partner.

The main internal target audiences of the project are lecturers and academics, researchers and scientists, innovators, project managers, students, senior management.

3.2.3 Tools

The Communication mix and tools for the internal communication among the project partners and between the lead partner and EACEA will be facilitated through the use of following communication direct and electronic communication tools:

Direct communication

Project meetings and Steering Committee meetings. The project team will have official project meetings and two half day project meetings held in the period of both Project conferences. The Steering committee will have project meetings during the project duration. The project meetings are organized by the Lead Partner and the hosting partner.

Electronic communication

- Day –to-day electronic communication by e-mails on a daily base
- Regular video or skype call
- Document sharing platform implemented to facilitate the exchange of project document - Google Drive
- Bilateral Skype meetings with project partners on demand and on every issue of concern.

3.2.4 Plan

The plan for internal communication will follow the plan of activities of the project implementation and organized as per the needs of each partner during project implementation.

IV. Visual Identity

4.1 Project Logo

A strong visual identity is essential to a wide and effective dissemination of the project results. This is why a consistent and recognisable visual identity has been developed. It will be used across all products to guarantee a common look and feel and ensure consistency in the targets' mind.



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Figure 1-1 Project Logo

All visual identity will adhere to Erasmus+ Guidelines and the project communication strategy.

4.2 Programme Logo

The European Union emblem (flag) must be used and the name of the European Union displayed in full. The name of the Erasmus+ programme can appear with the flag. The preferred option is to write "Co-funded by" or "With the support of", then "the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union" next to the EU flag. E.g. "Co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union" or "With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union".



Figure 1-2 Programme Logo

More details available [here](#).

Annex I Project Partner Dissemination Report – Indicators

This Document has the scope of the provision of Dissemination Information by the Partners to the WP7 Leader in every three months. The input will be used for the preparation of the General Dissemination Reports. Please, in case you provide further evidence about your activities (photos, documents or other files), please attach them with reference to the Dissemination Activity Number and Partner Number as per template provided for news item and website update.

Partner's Name: _____

Partner's Number: _____

Month of Reporting: _____

Dissemination Activity Number	Date	Scale (Regional, National, International)	Target Groups	Number of People Reached	Description of the dissemination action	Evidence (Links to articles, Videos etc)
1						
2						
3						

Annex II Event planning checklist

Before the event

- Tasks are allocated to all organizers
 - Invitations and registration
 - Budgeting
 - Welcoming participants
 - Venue, coffee breaks and catering
 - Agenda (Speakers? Moderator?)
 - Photographer
- Set up script or roadmap of all details of the event
- Invitations sent out in time (speakers, media and participants)
- Social media and website are updated before the event
- Make a block reservation at a recommended accommodation, that are included in practical information for participants
- Upon registration, participants receive a confirmation email with the final version of the agenda + practical information / info pack
- All organisers are briefed to answer frequently asked questions
- Speakers (and the moderator) are briefed
- All presentations are compiled and checked
- Check technical equipment

During the event

- A reception desk is available for registration
 - Registration sheets
 - Name badges arranged in alphabetical order
 - Conference packs (if applicable) and promotional materials (if any)
- Place labels and water are available for speakers
- Conference room equipment is checked
 - Laptops with presentations
 - Multimedia Projectors and screens
 - Cables and electricity sockets
 - Microphones, sound system; persons available for handing out microphones
 - Air conditioning and lights
- Enough toilet facilities are available
- There are recycle bins in the conference room
- Access for people with disabilities is ensured
- All activities comply with the publicity requirements (e.g. EU flag on display)

After the event

- Event documents and photos are uploaded to your website
- all social media are updated with results / photo of the event
- Thank you notes sent to all participants and guests
- Conclusions made based on feedback forms and debriefing
- All costs and fees are taken care of