



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate-General for Research & Innovation

H2020 Programme

Guidance

Social media guide for EU funded R&I projects

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

This guide shows you how to use social media in Horizon 2020 projects.

More guidance

- [Participant Portal Online Manual](#)
- [Communicating EU research & innovation – Guidance for project participants](#)

You can also take specialised **training** on this topic.

For example: [EASME webinar \(1 hour\) – Increase the impact of your project communication](#)

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
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1. Why use social media?

Social media allow you to reach an extremely wide — but also targeted — audience, maximising the impact and successful exploitation of your research results.

Communicating vs Disseminating

Social media can be used for both communication and dissemination (both of which are mandatory for all Horizon 2020 projects).

But what is the **difference** between these 2 activities?

COMMUNICATION	DISSEMINATION
Covers the whole project (including results)	Covers project results only
Starts at the outset of the project	Happens only once results are available
Multiple audiences Beyond the project's own community, including the media and general public. Multiplier effect.	Specialist audiences Groups that may use the results in their own work, including peer groups, industry, professional organisations, policymakers
Informing and engaging with society , to show how it can benefit from research	Enabling the take-up and use of results
<i>Legal reference</i> Grant Agreement Article 38.1	<i>Legal reference</i> Grant Agreement Article 29

Other benefits of social media

- manage your **reputation** and wield **influence** in debates on science and innovation with a wider audience
- build networks to help you **find new research partners** among colleagues and potential graduate students, accessing additional expertise from all over the world
- **informally pre-review works in progress**, gaining consensus on and/or feedback about your work
- **crowdfund** research
- recruit **volunteers**.

2. First steps

To decide whether or not to use social media for your project, you should properly understand how it works.

So on launching your project:

- **analyse the pros and cons** of using social media for your project ('SWOT' and 'PEST' analysis)
- identify your target **audience**
- ask yourself if you can reach them using social media (which **platforms**?)
- identify which consortium partner would be **best to lead** this.

3. Other rules you must follow

As well as this guide, you should also consult the following articles of the [Grant Agreement](#):

- Article 19 — Submission of deliverables
- Article 20 — Reporting — Payment requests
- Article 29 — Dissemination of results — Open access — Visibility of EU funding
- Article 34 — Ethics and research integrity
- Article 37 — Security-related obligations
- Article 38 — Promoting the action — Visibility of EU funding
- Article 39 — Processing of personal data.

Acknowledging EU funding

All communication related to the project (*including electronic communication, using social media, etc.*) and all infrastructure, equipment or major results funded under the grant must:

- (a) display the **EU emblem**¹



and

- (b) include the following **text**:


¹ High-resolution emblems: <http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/flag>

This project has received funding from the [European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme][Euratom research and training programme 2014-2018] under grant agreement No [number].

Exceptions

When the Commission or Agency in question request (or agree) that you do otherwise, or when it may simply not be possible.

In this case you should find alternative ways to mention the EU funding.

Thus, for instance, since Twitter  has a 160 character limit for profile information, we recommend you use the following sentence as your bio or alternatively pinned tweet/post:

This project receives funding from the [@EU H2020](#) Research & Innovation Programme. Any related tweets reflect only the views of the project owner.

4. Your strategy?

To avoid potentially wasting time with unfocused, open-ended use of social media, decide on a detailed **social media strategy**, as part of your project's communication and dissemination plan.

This should cover the following points:

- **WHERE**
 - which accounts and platforms will you use?
- **WHO?**
 - who in your consortium who will be in charge of social media?
 - who is your target audience?
- **HOW?**
 - what impact do you want to have and how will you assess this?
 - which language(s) will you use for your target audience?
- **WHAT?**
 - which content do you want to share?
 - how much time will you need to commit to this task?
- **WHEN**
 - what is the right time to share your content?
 - how often you should post on your account?

4.1 Choosing your platform(s)

EU-funded projects mostly use Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram and Pinterest (with most preferring Twitter).

Twitter

What can you post?

Text of up to **280** characters. This excludes media attachments (photos, images, videos, etc.) and quoted tweets (displaying someone else's tweet within your own) but includes links (a URL is always altered to 23 characters).

How can you use it?

To share short comments, make announcements that can instantaneously reach a large audience or retweet relevant content.

You can also use **Twitter groups** to cluster a group of projects on a similar topic.

Facebook

What can you post?

Text (no character limit), photos, GIFs, videos, links, etc.

How can you use it?

To showcase your project and results in an informal, highly accessible way.

Instead of using an individual account, Facebook profile, to share project information, we'd recommend one of these 2 options:

- **Facebook page**

The most convenient way to promote your project on Facebook, allowing you to post a variety of content including pictures, videos, event invitations or reports, as well as links to presentations or available multimedia material. Facebook pages have **fans** who like the page, not friends. A page has also the advantage to allow for several nominated users under different types of profiles (admin, editor, reviewer).

- **Facebook group**

Mostly used for exchanges among members (individuals). Unlike Facebook pages, where only the page administrator can post, anybody previously approved can share content with the group.

LinkedIn

What can you post?

Text (no character limit), photos, GIFs, videos, links, etc.

How can you use it?

A networking site for professionals, it can be used for groups and has established networks on specific topics. Several projects have chosen LinkedIn to create new groups, share content and connect with already established groups.

Instagram

What can you post?

Pictures only.

How can you use it?

As a self-standing repository of all the project-related images you want to publicise, separate from your own project website.

On Instagram and similar platforms, the pictures are more searchable and visible, and you have no storage restrictions.

YouTube and Vimeo

What can you post?


Audio-visual content.

4.2 Creating an account

To start communicating with a large audience at the earliest opportunity, set up the social media accounts for your project as soon as it starts. This will also enable you to access and track all project-related messages throughout the entire project.

Alternatively, you could use other social media channels, such as the accounts of beneficiary organisations and institutions, or even the accounts of the researchers involved in the project.

Once the project account is set up, these other accounts can act as multipliers of information. In this case, you should create a **project hashtag** to group conversations related to your topic. For this, it is crucial to work with communications managers at universities and research institutes.

 Don't forget to let your Project Officer know as soon as you open your social media accounts.



Hashtag

Added in front of any word or phrase in a post, this makes it easier for users to locate specific content or themes.

Examples: #innovation, #OpenScience, #H2020

Using a hashtag makes the keyword or phrase in the post searchable. It is like a label that clusters and links similar content, the same way keywords do when scientific papers are published.

Why use hashtags?

- To **increase outreach** — enabling you to join bigger, topic-specific conversations.
- To **capitalise on existing trends** — finding emerging hashtags to boost your research with the right audience.

- To **consolidate and group content** — helping those who took part in an event search for related coverage using the event's hashtag.
- To **encourage interaction** — bringing new opinions and views into a discussion about a specific topic.

Handle @

Unique user name mainly used to identify a person or a project's account.

It always starts with the @ symbol, followed by a name or phrase to identify the account. For example, the European Commission's Twitter handle is @EU_Commission.

How to use handles

- To send a **direct reply** to someone, by starting your message with their handle.
- To **link to someone else's account** (known as a 'mention') by using their handle elsewhere in your post. This will link your post to the mentioned user's account.

4.3 Deciding who is in charge

All beneficiaries are welcome to contribute to the project's social media activities, but you need to **designate one person to oversee** all of this.

We suggest you specify who this is in your communication and dissemination plan. They will set up and manage social media accounts, centralise the information to be shared and communicate with the audience, including replying to messages.

The ideal person for this could be the beneficiary staff member who already handles communication tasks.

Regular exchanges of information between the frontline project staff and the communication and dissemination team can help ensure the project is promoted adequately, by enabling the social media manager to draft relevant content and post it on time.

To reach the widest possible audience, we recommend you identify other individuals in your consortium who are already using social media. Invite them to retweet and share the project's posts and relevant content with the appropriate audiences.

4.4 Identifying & building your audience

Which audience?

You must define clearly the target audience you want to reach through social media — *e.g. researchers, entrepreneurs, policymakers, young people*. This determines the **message** you want to convey, and how.

You need to **adapt your message** to the audience: think of what information your intended reader could be looking for and aim to give them that information, **customising** the language and content instead of posting just for the sake of it. This makes it more likely that people will read and retweet your content, expanding your audience.

Building an audience

Building a social media community that shares the same interests and is involved in similar projects is crucial for boosting the visibility of your content and increasing the number of people who read your posts. You can do this by:

- retweeting
- replying to others' tweets
- quote-tweeting information about your project
- start an online discussion, *e.g. by asking questions.*

Connecting with other Horizon 2020 beneficiaries

Projects under the same call often share goals and are aimed at similar audiences. By connecting and clustering with likeminded beneficiaries — *for example, by following their account, retweeting or replying to their posts or tagging them* — you can attract each other's followers and fans, enlarging your community of interested individuals and organisations.

Follow the European Commission social media channels

We also generally encourage beneficiaries to play an active role in Horizon 2020 communication and dissemination campaigns launched by the European Commission.

European Commission social media channels

The [social media platforms](#) the Commission and its agencies use can help you expand your audience by sharing your posts.

Try the following:

- Add **#H2020** to your tweets. Be part of the online conversation about Horizon 2020 and your tweets become searchable.
- Tag **@EU_H2020** in your tweets. Relevant posts are sometimes shared on EU social media accounts.

[Full list of relevant hashtags/handles](#) (for a selection of these, *see Appendix*).

Align all your communication channels

To avoid confusing your audience, and improve access to your content, and interconnections based on it — be consistent in linking together all your social media project accounts and the project website, also by naming them consistently.

- To improve your **search engine ranking**, create a connection between your social media and your project website, *e.g. by posting 'live' tweets and Facebook posts on the project website.*
- Make sure all your **offline information** on your project (*leaflets, flyers, publications, etc.*) includes prominent reference to all the online sources.

4.5 Risks of social media

When using social media, like with any other means of communication, special attention should be paid to the content shared.

It is up to each consortium to determine which information to keep private and which to publish, where and to what extent.

People who want to 'steal' information might see social media platforms as fertile hunting grounds. However, plagiarism is nothing new, so it's not a reason not to use social media.

That said, you should be aware of the following risks, and take the necessary precautions:

- **Internet bots/social media bots**

Automatically generated messages designed to advocate certain ideas/campaigns aimed at manipulating public opinion and work against a project/consortium.

- **Online trolls**

These spread negative messages, causing other followers/friends to lose interest in/stop following your project.

- **Privacy/data breaches**


This means disclosing any research involving private content without the explicit consent of the data owner. Breaching [online privacy rules](#) can result in liability.

- **Information leakage**

This means a loss of intellectual property. It is for the content owner to decide what to post or share.


- **Security breaches**

All social media platforms have their own privacy and data protection policies. Read them carefully.

 EU-classified information may under no circumstances be used in social media. Special security rules apply.

- **Targeted spam**

Fake messages used to obtain confidential information.

 To protect your project and yourself, all consortium members should agree on an **internal code of social media conduct**, covering all the above points.

4.6 Measure impact and performance

Impact criteria

With social media, you can assess in detail how well your post has been received, from the moment you publish it to days and months afterwards.

We suggest that you **create your own criteria** to measure impact. To do so, you can choose from many free social media analysis tools, such as:

- **Twitter Analytics**
- **Facebook Insights**

You should also build these into **key performance indicators** for your social media strategy, so you can compare the impact you initially expected to have with the intermediate and final results.

Which criteria to choose?

Generally speaking, you can measure dozens of different metrics on social media, but there is still no single criterion that gives a constructive measurement of the impact of using social media.

This makes it particularly difficult to assess the impact of doing so for scientific projects — but you can identify specific indicators that best fit the area of research covered by your project, and keep track of these.

Indicators can include the following quantitative and qualitative aspects:

- **Quantitative**
Number of clicks, likes, shares, tags, video views, new followers, profile visits, engagement rates, cost per result, uses of your hashtag and influence of the accounts that use it etc.
- **Qualitative**
Types of comments received, their tone, the number of people they reached, the types of followers, impressions, traffic data, ratings, word clouds etc.
They can also include new collaborations, product commercialisation, appreciation for research, as well as greater knowledge among specialists and the general public. You can also perform a sentiment analysis, to understand the opinions expressed and their emotional tone.

Monitoring & reporting

Monitoring your social media accounts and assessing their effectiveness — ideally every month — gives you a wealth of data to identify trends and refocus your activities if necessary.

Using your pre-defined criteria, analyse what works and what doesn't, and use this knowledge to adjust your strategy and plan ahead.

When **reporting** on your communication and dissemination activities to the EU (through the periodic reports), include information about your social media accounts, activities, achievements and impacts.

4.7 Appropriate style, content and tone

Below are some tips to help you **hold the reader's attention** (as well as being accurate, fair and consistent) — vital in today's crowded social media landscape.

Style

- Minimise the use of **abbreviations**, except generally recognised acronyms and accepted hashtags.
- Limit the number of **technical words** that only experts are likely to understand. Instead try to use layman's terms.
- Use **visual aids** in your tweets as much as possible, and tag relevant handles.
- Keep your posts **short, clear and catchy** — 3 sentences at most on Facebook.
- Use software to help you avoid **typos and grammar mistakes**.
- Convey **emotions** with your posts (but don't go overboard, or undermine your content's credibility with excessive hype or clichéd promotional phrasing).
- Publish content in other **languages**, to reach local communities.


Content

- Before you post, **ask yourself if you would be interested** in reading this, or clicking the link to know more.
- **Vary the content** — include a picture, video, GIF, infographic, link or poll to enliven the text. The image credit should be put next to the picture.
- **Visual content** (as above) is very effective as it conveys a lot of information in an appealing, easily digestible way.
- **Share information** about your project results and final products, new papers and scientific publications, events, conferences and training courses, breaking news and hashtags relevant to your project, etc.
- Highlight the project's **impacts** and its contribution to society.
- Tag appropriate **handles**, to ensure your content reaches the widest audience possible.
- Make sure everything you post is **accurate** — nobody wants to follow an unreliable information source!
- **Events** – keep in mind that live posts or pictures of events may not necessarily be relevant content for people who did not attend. They are more likely interested in the **outcomes** of such events (*minutes, reports, links to presentations and interviews, etc.*).
-


Tone

- Use **appropriate, inoffensive language** (this is how you will get responses and stimulate debate).
- Be **receptive to your readers' arguments** — if you don't agree, defend your position without being rude.
- Gain/maintain **credibility** by sharing worthwhile, relevant content and show respect for other cultures and ideas, online as well as offline.

- Be aware that **libel and defamation** laws apply.


SOME TIPS FOR TWITTER USERS


- Create your **project handle and hashtag** (if necessary) and use them consistently throughout the overall project implementation.
- Leverage any **existing social media presence**.
If the host institution, researchers, team members or other relevant organisations already have a strong, well established social media presence, get all these parties to **communicate information about your project**, on the basis of an editorial schedule that you create. This will help you reach already existing audiences.
- Use handles, such as **@EU_H2020** in your tweets to maximise your visibility and be recognised as part of the H2020 community.
- Include [emojis](#) in your tweets.
- Twitter is becoming increasingly **visual** — post pictures, videos, GIFs or data visualisations to spark interest.
- Make **Twitter lists** to categorise your accounts into themes, or sign up for already existing lists. These lists can serve as channels for receiving news in your policy area and provide you with pools of people/organisations who can share your posts, if you tag them or message them directly.
- Share images and **tag other Twitter accounts** (up to 10), to build a relationship with your audience and make them aware (the account tagged receives a notification) of content that might interest them, in the hope that they might want to retweet it.

SOME TIPS FOR FACEBOOK USERS


- Distinguish between and **use the different types of page appropriately**: Facebook profile, Facebook page, Facebook group, Facebook event.
- Vary your content** (pictures, videos, polls, links...) and **tag** other profiles and pages in your posts, to reach a wider audience.
- Use **Facebook Analytics** to track the performance of your page.

4.8 When should you post?



Share your news and information as soon as possible


The exact moment when something happens is when you should disclose it


Right at the start, in your strategy, include an **editorial calendar** and plan how often you should post.

Posting for the general public and media

You can share your information and news (*using pictures, (live) videos, short messages, key quotes, etc.*) **at the exact moment they are taking place**, for example:

- when you have a project **breakthrough**, reach a (genuine) milestone or get results
- when your project is featured at a **conference** or **event**
- when you are presenting your project at an **exhibition fair stand**
- when a new **press release** is published

 **Don't wait** until you have all the details or the full story (you can post this later). Acting immediately is vital to gain momentum and get your event, result, etc. into online discussions.

 Tweets cannot replace full articles and press releases about your project's achievements. But they can link to more detailed information available on other platforms, making your content more visible.

Posting for stakeholders/target audience

Alert your followers when your scientific papers have been **peer-reviewed** and **published**:

- use the **@EU_H2020** tag for maximum impact
- **link** to your paper/article
- **tag your publisher**, to reach a wider audience (ask your publisher and repository in advance what specific authorisations and agreements you must adhere to)
- post links to recently-published **related scientific articles** (to reach journalists who might cover the story, or other researchers you can have relevant scientific discussions with).

Timetable for posting on events

Messaging can vary, depending on the event and its target audience, but some standard steps and timing apply to all cases:

At least **6 weeks** in advance: Tell your Project Officer you've decided to organise an event. Decide what hashtags you're going to use and start sharing content alongside them. To make your event more visible, look into using any additional means of communication that the Commission or other EU online platforms provide.


At least **1 month** in advance: Create web content and start promoting it on your project's social media account using the event hashtag. Prepare an event image to share on tweets. Engage in conversations about similar topics and involve your audience by asking questions and using the relevant handles.

Several **days** before the event: Prepare a list of useful, relevant Twitter handles for participants to engage with before and during the event, such as event speakers and

participants. Create a list of posts to tweet during the event. You can schedule your tweets using a social media dashboard such as [Hootsuite](#).

During the event: Live-tweet with interesting pictures, tag/mention people, promote the relevant hashtag and ask participants to join the conversation. Tweet related content, scientific studies, published papers, web content, always including your hashtag.

Live-tweeting provides engaging, concise content for people who couldn't attend an event, either in real time or later by searching for the conference hashtag to catch up on the key moments and discussions (*by looking at photos, videos and links and reading key discussion points from throughout the day*).


 For live-tweeting to be successful, you need to have your **pre-prepared handles and posts** to hand. **Don't sacrifice clarity, accuracy or key messages** for the sake of speed — or you will lose followers.

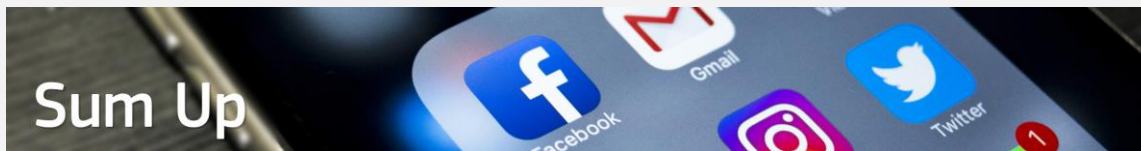
After the event: During the days following the event, monitor your impact and keep tweeting relevant content with your own hashtag (if any).

Tools you can use

Twitter Moments — This gives you maximum flexibility in managing the posts related to your event. Moments are customised sections you can create on your project's Twitter account, to display content related to an event and keep it separate from the rest of the posts. This makes it more visible and traceable.

Facebook event — This is an online platform dedicated to a particular event, where you can share information and invite people.

 When **reporting officially** on your event, it is not enough to just copy-paste your tweets or social media pages. Nor should you replace in-depth reports on conferences, or minutes you are asked for the periodic report, with a list of posts.



Making the best use of social media

- make an **analysis of strengths, weaknesses**, opportunities and threats (SWOT) in relation to using social media for your project
- make a **social media strategy** and plan ahead right from the start
- choose the social media **platforms** and **accounts** that are most relevant to your project
- clarify **who is doing what** in your consortium
- define your goals, target **audience**, policy and **messages**
- plan how you are going to **measure your impact**
- be **consistent** across all your communication channels
- share **project-related content only**, using an appropriate style
- **vary** the types of content you post (*text, pictures, videos, polls, links, etc.*)
- **engage** with your audience using replies, retweets or tags
- **connect** with other EU-funded projects and the European Commission social media channels
- use **@EU_H2020** and **#H2020** in your tweets to maximise their visibility
- follow the news and use **trending hashtags**
- **monitor** your social media channels to measure the impact you're having
- **share** the social media activities and analysis for your project with your **Project Officer**, in the deliverables and periodic reports.



Appendix

Sample Twitter handles & hashtags

Twitter handles:

[@EU_H2020](#)

[@MSCActions](#)

[@Mariecurie_alum](#)

[@mariescurie_ire](#)

[@TNavracsicsEU](#)

[@Net4Mobility](#)

[@FET_eu](#)

[@EU_Growth](#)

[@EUHomeAffairs](#)

[@EU_TrustSec](#)

[@OpenAccessEC](#)

[@DG_Connect](#)

[@DigitalAgendaEU](#)

[@EU_Agri](#)

[@EUClimateAction](#)

[@Energy4Europe](#)

[@INEA_EU](#)

[@EU_ENV](#)

[@EU_MARE](#)

[@Transport_EU](#)

[@ERC_Research](#)

[@EU_EASME](#)

[@IMI_JU](#)

[@cleansky_ju](#)

[@fch_ju](#)

[@BBI2020](#)

[@ECSEL_JU](#)

[@Shift2Rail_JU](#)

[@SESAR_JU](#)

Twitter hashtags:

[#H2020](#)

[#MSCA](#)

[#MarieCurious](#)

[#MSCAjobalert](#)

[#MSCA20](#)

[#EUnionbudget4results](#)

[#Bioeconomy](#)

[#EIPagri](#)

[#ePrivacy](#)

[#cybersecurity](#)

[#SecurityUnion](#)

[#openaccess](#)

[#DSMeu](#)

Sample Facebook & LinkedIn pages

Facebook pages:

- <https://www.facebook.com/Marie.Curie.Actions>
- <https://www.facebook.com/FET.europe>
- <https://www.facebook.com/DigitalSingleMarket>
- <https://www.facebook.com/pages/EGov-Infso>
- <https://www.facebook.com/EUScienceInnov>
- <https://www.facebook.com/EU.Growth>
- <https://www.facebook.com/EUAgri>

LinkedIn pages:

- [HORIZON 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation](#)
- [H2020 MARIE CURIE Actions Fellowship & Research Grants, PhD Careers and R&D Jobs](#)
- [INEA - Innovation and Networks Executive Agency](#)
- [EASME - EU projects & partner search](#)
- [EASME - Environment projects & partner search](#)
- [BBI JU - Bio-based Industries Joint Undertaking](#)

Other channels:

- <https://www.youtube.com/EUScienceInnovation>
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/Horizon2020YourViews>
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/EuropeanResearchArea>
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/JRCaudiovisuals>
- [You Tube BBI JU - Bio-Based Industries](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/c/DigitalSingleMarketEU>
- <https://www.instagram.com/digitalsinglemarket/>
- <https://www.pinterest.com/eucommission/digitalsinglemarket/>

[ALL EU social networks](#)