

COMMUNITY
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INTRODUCTION

The three-year Erasmus+ project 'Build European Solidarity Today - Let's replay the fraternity card in Europe!' takes place in cooperation with partner organizations from Spain, Croatia, France, Italy, Slovenia and Poland.

The aim of the project is to work with students on solidarity, poverty, inequality, discrimination, human rights and contemporary world challenges through photo analysis and writing reviews, and to provide some students with the opportunity for active and solidary engagement in their local communities.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project was originally designed in 2002 in France and has since been successfully implemented as an educational response to negative social phenomena such as racism and exclusivity. The project emphasizes the importance of coexistence of different ideas, religions, races, status groups, etc. through a simple activity of sending student messages to strangers in their community, a bit like "messages in a bottle".

Namely, the photos that the students analyse are the front part of the postcard that they will send to their fellow citizens. After analysing the photo, students write their impressions in the text of the postcard and choose an unknown person to send it to. In practice, the work on this activity takes place through two to three school hours - the first part of the time is dedicated to the analysis of photography, and the second to writing messages.

The age of children can vary. Project activities are promoted through social networks and websites of all partner organizations.

Through the duration of the project, 1885 teachers will be trained in topics of HR, discrimination, solidarity, inequality and HR values. Schools open towards their local communities – 1090 participating schools will send approx. 53,500 postcards with messages of solidarity and fraternity to randomly chosen citizens.

The activity itself, with its goals and themes, fits perfectly into civic education classes. The same activity, with the same photos and materials, will take place in parallel with students in schools in Croatia, France, Poland, Italy, Slovenia and Spain, which enables the connection of teachers/students of partner schools and the exchange of experiences on the same topics. Also, 31 schools each school year will have an additional opportunity to design and implement solidarity actions in their local communities depending on their needs. These solidarity actions will be supported by the coordinating organizations with mentorship and small funds. The project is co-funded from the Erasmus+ programme of the EU.

*Photo by Mike Erskine on Unsplash



WHY SOLIDARITY ACTIONS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES?

Taking an **active stance in their local communities** through envisaged local community actions helps students take a step forward from problem analyses into identifying needs of their communities and developing a problem-solving approach focusing on existing assets rather than deficits.

Students will under the guidance of their teachers and mentors work on identifying local issues and planning the actions, organizing and carrying out solidarity activities thus connecting more realistically with their local communities and addressing real needs. Actions might vary from student-led discussions, plays, cultural and/or sports activities to direct work on recognized issues with local authorities etc.

Through this process, students will also work on promoting their work through cooperating with local media thus brushing-up on their media literacy.

Besides the impact on students, the intention of this type of work is also to motivate schools to open-up more **to their communities**, to start communicating and provide also in some contexts a place where people/neighbours can exchange ideas, where an exchange between generations might happen with the overall aim of creating more open and dialogue-prone communities.

All too often we are faced with the fact that schools and students are doing elaborate and important projects but their results and outputs do not get noticed outside schools. Working with the community through the Erasmus+ BEST project will help change this perspective in 31 communities in partner countries.

Examining and influencing changes in local communities helps shape students towards becoming engaged and skilful citizens in a wider national, international and global community.



STRENGTHENING COMPETENCIES THROUGH DIRECT COMMUNITY WORK

Working on the aforementioned community actions helps students better develop primarily their Citizenship and Personal, social and learning to learn competences, two of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning proposed in 2006 by the European Commission.



*Image by Steve Buissonne from Pixabay

The European reference framework describes these competencies as follows:*

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND LEARNING TO LEARN COMPETENCE

Personal, social and learning to learn competence is the ability to reflect upon oneself, effectively manage time and information, work with others in a constructive way, remain resilient and manage one's own learning and career.

It includes the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity, learn to learn, support one's physical and emotional well-being, to maintain physical and mental health, and to be able to lead a health-conscious, future-oriented life, empathize and manage conflict in an inclusive and supportive context.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTITUDES RELATED TO THIS COMPETENCE

For successful interpersonal relations and social participation it is essential to understand the codes of conduct and rules of communication generally accepted in different societies and environments.

Personal, social and learning to learn competence requires also knowledge of the components of a healthy mind, body and lifestyle. It involves knowing one's preferred learning strategies, knowing one's competence development needs and various ways to develop competences and search for the education, training and career opportunities and guidance or support available. Skills include the ability to identify one's capacities, focus, deal with complexity, critically reflect and make decisions.

This includes the ability to learn and work both collaboratively and autonomously and to organise and persevere with one's learning, evaluate and share it, seek support when appropriate and effectively manage one's career and social interactions. Individuals should be resilient and able to cope with uncertainty and stress. They should be able to communicate constructively in different environments, collaborate in teams and negotiate. This includes showing tolerance, expressing and understanding different viewpoints, as well as the ability to create confidence and feel empathy.

*[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604\(01\)&rid=7](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&rid=7)

The competence is based on a positive attitude toward one's personal, social and physical well-being and learning throughout one's life. It is based on an attitude of collaboration, assertiveness and integrity.

This includes respecting diversity of others and their needs and being prepared both to overcome prejudices and to compromise. Individuals should be able to identify and set goals, motivate themselves, and develop resilience and confidence to pursue and succeed at learning throughout their lives.

A problem-solving attitude supports both the learning process and the individual's ability to handle obstacles and change. It includes the desire to apply prior learning and life experiences and the curiosity to look for opportunities to learn and develop in a variety of life contexts.

CITIZENSHIP COMPETENCE

Citizenship competence is the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTITUDES RELATED TO THIS COMPETENCE

Citizenship competence is based on knowledge of basic concepts and phenomena relating to individuals, groups, work organisations, society, economy and culture. This involves an understanding of the European common values, as expressed in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

It includes knowledge of contemporary events, as well as a critical understanding of the main developments in national, European and world history. In addition, it includes an awareness of the aims, values and policies of social and political movements, as well as of sustainable systems, in particular climate and demographic change at the global level and their underlying causes.

Knowledge of European integration as well as an awareness of diversity and cultural identities in Europe and the world is essential. This includes an understanding of the multi-cultural and socioeconomic dimensions of European societies, and how national cultural identity contributes to the European identity.

Skills for citizenship competence relate to the ability to engage effectively with others in common or public interest, including the sustainable development of society. This involves critical thinking and integrated problem solving skills, as well as skills to develop arguments and constructive participation in community activities, as well as in decision-making at all levels, from local and national to the European and international level.

This also involves the ability to access, have a critical understanding of, and interact with both traditional and new forms of media and understand the role and functions of media in democratic societies.

Respect for human rights as a basis for democracy lays the foundations for a responsible and constructive attitude. Constructive participation involves willingness to participate in democratic decision-making at all levels and civic activities.

It includes support for social and cultural diversity, gender equality and social cohesion, sustainable lifestyles, promotion of culture of peace and non-violence, a readiness to respect the privacy of others, and to take responsibility for the environment.

Interest in political and socioeconomic developments, humanities and intercultural communication is needed to be prepared both to overcome prejudices and to compromise where necessary and to ensure social justice and fairness.

!! To ensure that we really are encouraging this type of personal growth and competence development in students, it is key to involve them as partners in all stages of planning, organizing and implementing the actions as much as possible allowing students to 'practice' their civic engagement within a safe-space of their schools.

PART 1: MEANINGFUL STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

*Image by StockSnap from Pixabay



Democracy within an educational institution indicates the level of participation of all its members in decision-making, emphasizing the responsibility of all towards a common goal. Students must become partners to teachers and principals in school planning. By learning about the rights and responsibilities within the school, they begin to understand their civic role in society, but also become more aware of the fact that they themselves are "pulling the strings" of their educational life.

Roger A. Hart in his Essay 'Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship'* written for UNICEF in 1992 states:

"A nation is democratic to the extent that its citizens are involved, particularly at the community level. The confidence and competence to be involved must be gradually acquired through practice. It is for this reason that there should be gradually increasing opportunities for children to participate in any aspiring democracy, and particularly in those nations already convinced that they are democratic. With the growth of children's rights we are beginning to see an increasing recognition of children's abilities to speak for themselves. Regrettably, while children's and youths' participation does occur in different degrees around the world, it is often exploitative or frivolous".

*https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf.

THE NEXT FIVE LADDERS BELONG TO THE CATEGORY OF PARTICIPATION, AND DIFFER FROM EACH OTHER IN THE LEVEL OF COOPERATION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND INSTITUTIONS.

4) **Assigned but informed** - The students are introduced to the plan and then they are given a task. Teachers assign them specific tasks, and determine how students will participate (telling them what the point of their participation is).

5) **Consulted and informed** - Teachers consult with students. Students give their advice related to projects, classes, activities that are designed and led by teachers. They are then informed about how their advice will be used and what the results of the teachers' decisions will be.

6) **Adult initiated, shared decisions with children** - Teachers initiate activities and share decisions with students. Students are involved in designing projects, classes, or activities initiated by adults. Many activities, including decision making, lectures and evaluations are done together with the students.

7) **Child initiated and directed** - Students initiate and lead initiatives. Adults have only supporting roles.

8) **Child initiated, shared decisions with adults** - Partnership of students and adults. Students initiate and make decisions together with adults. Student work at all levels is integrated into the school improvement process. Students have the authority to initiate change.

Climbing up the proposed ladder takes time and effort but in the long run changes the school culture towards a learning community of students, teachers, staff.



When planning these local actions, try really to involve students from STEP 1 – identifying the problems in the local community. Rest assured that youth often bring a fresh perspective to our thinking and having them involved from the start can be rewarding to all participants.

The aim of the local actions is to try to hear and learn from students and youth about what they understand as solidarity and fraternity – we can help them get their message across! ALL of the steps proposed in the following text were tested and carried out with students as partners/equals in different schools around the globe so try to be creative and inclusive in your actions!

PART 2: PLANNING COMMUNITY ACTIONS

*Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay



- STEP 1: PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION
- STEP 2: DEFINING THE GOAL/ACHIEVEMENT
- STEP 3: COMMUNITY MAPPING
- STEP 4: COOPERATION PLAN
- STEP 5: ACTIVITY PLANNING
- STEP 6: PROMOTION AND MEDIA
- STEP 7: ACTION PLAN
- STEP 8: EVALUATION
- STEP 9: FOLLOW UP



STEP 1: PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

The key milestone in planning these types of activities/actions is to clearly define the problem you wish to address. This can be done first through a session where different ideas are gathered, it can be done through talking also to people in the community, polling, having focus groups etc.

All these things can be done at least to some extent together with your students, according to their age.

After having the list of different problems to tackle in the community, try prioritizing and choosing the one thing you would like to focus on within the scope of your community action.

Problem definition and analysis

1. Identify the central problem as concretely as possible.
2. Get informed: investigate the problem - data, research, available information, media reports.
3. Check what activities/programs already exist related to the problem - who else is dealing with it, what has been done and achieved so far, is anything being done at the moment, what are the experiences of other groups.



STEP 2: DEFINING THE GOAL/ ACHIEVEMENT

After choosing the problem/challenge you wish to focus on, it is very important to set realistic goals for you and your team!

In the first phase, it is alright to think broader, to dream, but at some point, it is important to become realistic in what can be done through one community action.

Why is this crucial especially in the educational context? To help motivate our students in a way that they really see at least a small change in their community related to their work instead of aiming high with no tangible achievement for them to experience.

Questions that lead us to the definition:

- What kind of change do we want to achieve?
- What can we achieve, what is our reach, what is our goal? - clearly defined
- Set a clear picture of how we contribute to the solution of the problem/broader picture with our goal.



STEP 3: COMMUNITY MAPPING

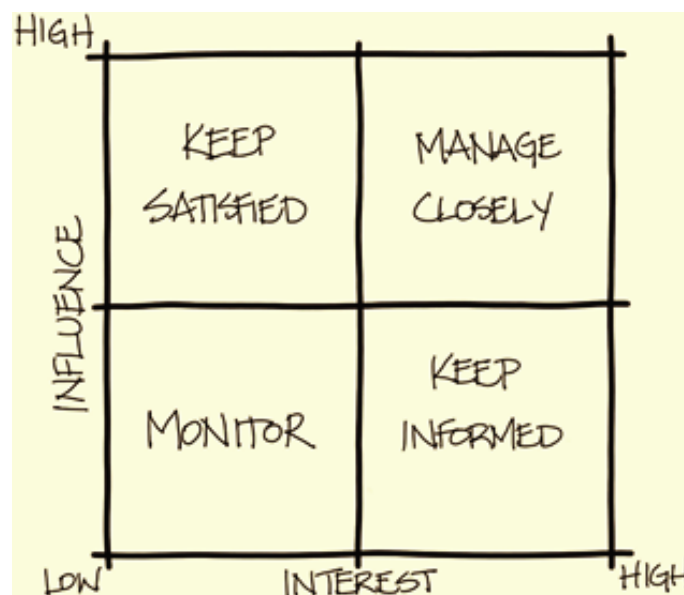
The overall aim of these community actions is to open the schools up towards the community, start an exchange/dialogue with members of the community and provide a space for joint visioning and working together towards a joint cause based on the values of fraternity and solidarity.

Therefore, this step is crucial in preparing local actions that have an impact!

1. **Stakeholders** - list them (people, groups, institutions, organizations affected by the problem) and determine who you perceive as rivals, who as allies, who is neutral
2. **Community mapping** - select the appropriate method

Eg:

a) Graph – insert different stakeholders in a similar graph according to their influence and interest to get an idea of the stance to take towards them



b) Map of stakeholders according to the attitude towards the problem: do you expect certain people and/or groups to act as collaborators, neutrals or opponents to your ideas and activities? Try listing them also according to importance to the success of your action

c) Stakeholder map in relation to: who is directly involved, those who must be involved (competent), those who can help or contribute, those who could be related to the problem (indicate risks for all groups)

3. **Determine which stakeholders** we want to influence

4. **Checking again the definition of our goal and revising it** according to the opportunities provided by the community (from mapping)



STEP 4: COOPERATION PLAN

1. **Create a plan of cooperation** giving guidance to how you will approach different stakeholders, what strategies to choose, how to include them if they are seen as allies or neutral, how to 'neutralize' the potential threats if they are perceived as opponents or possible saboteurs of your activities.

- allies (when and how do we include them)

- opponents (how will we position ourselves, creating argumentation supporting our cause)

- neutral (how to 'win them over'/encourage them to join - argumentation, approach, when do we approach them/at what stage)

- media (how do we involve them)

Special questions:

How to attract influential, respectable and active community members to get involved or be inclined to your cause/goal?

Are some of your students active in social media/have followers/are influencers and can be asked to promote the cause?

What is the benefit of working with all these stakeholders - what do they know, have, how can they help?

What are all the resources in the community?

2. **Set up a team** (with clearly defined roles and tasks)

3. **Agree on the approach** to associates (how, when, for what do we provide support)

Important to know: PREREQUISITE OF INCLUSION ARE INFORMED AND EMPOWERED ASSOCIATES



Photo by "My Life Through A Lens" on Unsplash





STEP 5: ACTIVITY PLANNING

In some situations, our way of thinking is reversed – we think of interesting activities/methods we would like to try out without first defining our goals, our reach and our target audience.

It is important to stress that the methods need to be in line with the goal. It is important to compare the efficiency and applicability of the methods in reaching the goal.

Try envisioning your work following the steps proposed in these guidelines in order not to do activities just for the sake of doing activities without the broader picture/goal in mind.

Steps:

- to whom the action is directed (who do we want to influence)
- in what ways do we want to influence stakeholders/actors
- + choice of methods/techniques/activities
- *methods can be developed for each phase of the action
- what are the main challenges and dilemmas



STEP 6: PROMOTION AND MEDIA

Find more on the work with media in the following chapter. What needs to be done at this stage?

- mapping and strategy (which community media do you have, how can they help, how can we get to them/approach them);

- plan of activities towards the media;
- team/person preparing material for the media;
- choosing a spokesperson - who communicates with the media/who is the public relations person.



STEP 7: ACTION PLAN

The Action plan is a document/table/scheme presenting in a consecutive manner the steps needed to be taken to achieve the overall goal. It is a kind of a checklist for all team members to share in order to have the idea of the broader picture of what their activities/tasks are contributing to. It can be quite simple as the one here:

| WHO | WHAT | WHEN | WHAT resources are needed |
|-----|------|------|---------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

...or more visual and detailed if you need it to be. Also, feel free to add/edit additional columns to your action plan. An important question to pose to your team at this point is how you will inform and coordinate with each other. Decide on this according to what suits your team best. During distance learning we propose you to use online tools (free of charge) designed on purpose to organize and facilitate teamwork. One of them is a [Google calendar](#), where you can organize your work on a timeline and have team meetings very easily on Google meet.

The other one is [trello](#) (www.trello.com), where you can assign every task to a specific section and particular team member. On trello you will also find an additional option which is a calendar to organise your task on a timeline. We encourage you to find the tool which meets the needs of your team.



STEP 8: ACTION PLAN

Steps 8 and 9 are unfortunately quite often overlooked at the point when we finish our activities, the adrenaline settles and we are already looking at other tasks ahead of us.

Having said that, it is important to emphasise the importance of these two steps especially in the educational context where we want to nurture the reflective and learning process of students involved in the actions.

Evaluation, simply put, is a guided process of reflection on what has been done, a process through which

the aim is to hear each other, learn from each other, reflect, give feedback to others and think about joint conclusions/recommendations for similar future activities.

Questions to guide your evaluation:

- how successfully was the goal achieved, what were the strengths;
- what we could have done better, what were the difficulties and obstacles;
- what was above and beyond expectations, what was below.



STEP 9: FOLLOW UP

Don't forget to round things up after the activities finish! It is important to:

1. [inform](#) those involved about the results (associates, supporters, media, institutions);

2. [compile](#) suggestions/recommendations for future actions (based on evaluation);

3. [return](#) to the original problem and consider possible future steps

SIMPLE PLANNING STRUCTURE

A Defining the problem

B Defining the goal/reach

C Defining stakeholders (who are the rivals? Who are the allies?) + Developing a cooperation plan

D Choice of methods/techniques/activities

E Developing an action plan



*Photo by John Schnobrich on Unsplash

PART 3: PROMOTING SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

What do we mean when we say working on promotion with the media? It basically means using communication channels that will reach large numbers of people, such as television, newspapers, and radio. It is important to mention that in the context of these local actions we should also think about different digital and social media.

For example – you could try using the web pages of your school, of your city/county, you could also think about their social media pages like Facebook or other.

Finding local radio stations or newspapers is also often rewarding as they tend to like to talk about activities taking place in the community especially if they are youth led.

Perhaps some of your students are also quite influential on social media like Instagram, Facebook or TikTok – sometimes asking them to share some news about the activities will have more reach than 'mainstream' media! Try being flexible and creative in getting your messages across!

A WORKING WITH LOCAL MEDIA - HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

A **press release** is a written document prepared for the **media/press** - that announces something newsworthy.

The press release is important because it emphasizes what we want to make public, in the tone in which we want to do it. Our goal is that journalists "do not have a lot of work" with it, and what we write can only be "copy-pasted" in the media. That is why we need to use a format that is usually used in the media.

Always know who is your public – to whom are you talking to, and what is the impact you want to have with your press release – what is your goal.

Taken from the [CoSchedule](#) blog:

Find Your Angle

Every good news story has an angle. An angle is the perspective your story will take. Some common angles are:

- Local impact. How is your story impacting the local community?
- Conflict. Is your press release giving another side to a conflict?
- Progress. Is your press release highlighting progress made towards a certain problem?
- Drama. Does your press release evoke an emotional response for readers?

HOW TO FORM THE PRESS RELEASE:

What Information and Content Should a Release Include?

Here's what you should include in your press releases:

- **Headline:** Be sure to make it clear why your story is interesting and important.
- **Press Contact:** How can the media get in touch with you?

ELEMENTS OF THE PRESS RELEASE:

TITLE/HEADLINE – grabs attention of the leader. Make it unique, use hook words, something that is of the biggest importance or can surprise the public

LEAD – the first paragraph of any news story or press release. It should consist of the most relevant information. It should give the reason for journalists and editors to care about our story. It should have answers to journalistic **5W & H**:

1. **Who** is this story about?
2. **What** is happening?
3. **Where** is it going on?
4. **When** will it occur?
5. **Why** is it important?
6. **How** is it going to happen/did it happen?

- **City, State, Location:** Where are you, and where is your news happening?

- **Body copy:** Order information by level of importance.

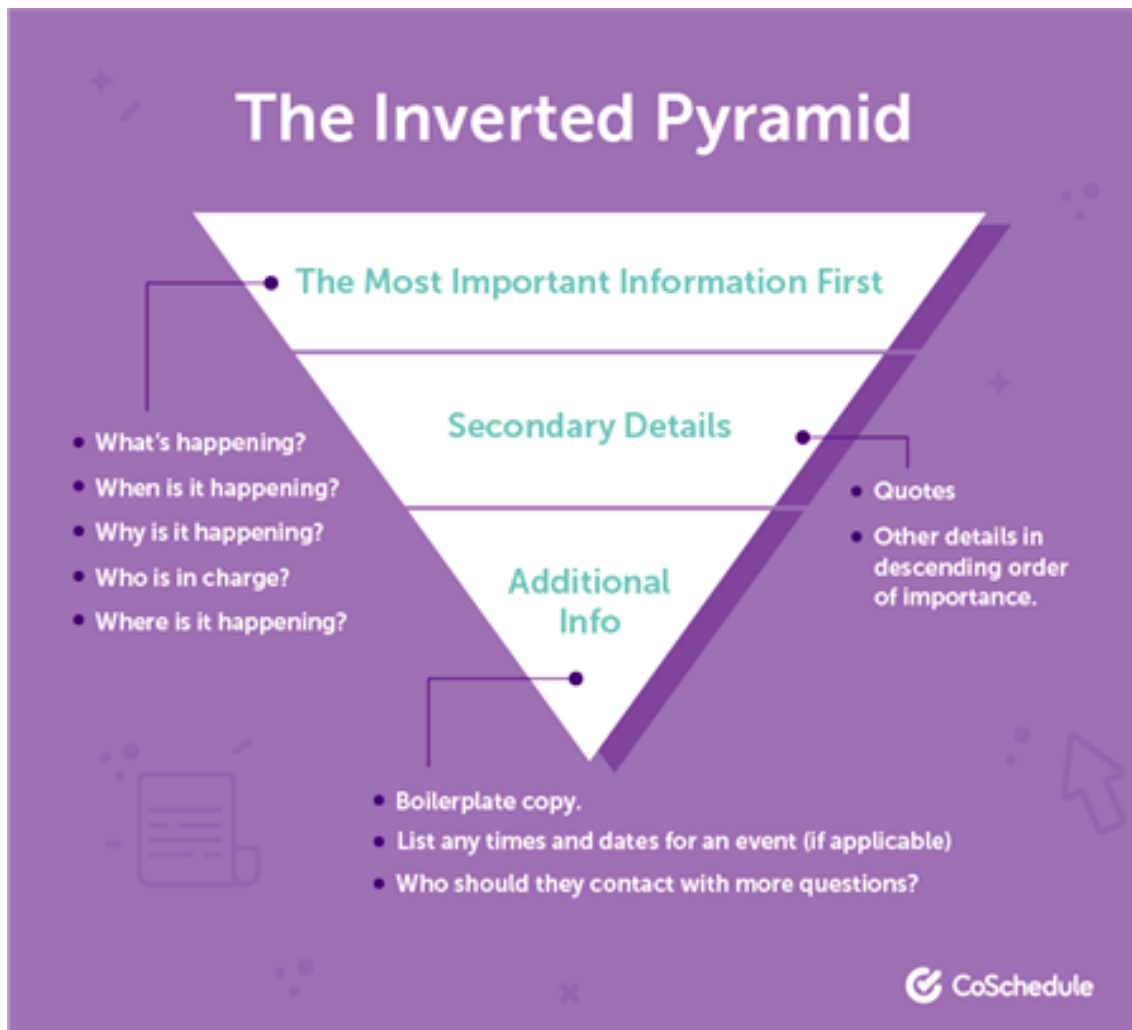
- **Boiler Plate:** What's your organization all about?

TEXT – put more important details first. Think of it as inverted pyramid, in which the most important information come first, and after adding secondary details. If you have important quotes you can add them in the second part of the press release.

At the end add info that are less important but are still relevant for your story. (see infographic no 1.)

LINKS – Always put relevant links in your press release, that lead to your website, videos, fb events... If it is possible, hyperlink them in the lead.

PHOTOS – use photos to illustrate your press release, but put them separately, best on the link that you are going to share in an email. If you send photos in the attachment do not overcrowd it (send max.2).



IMPORTANT! Make the information they need easy to find. Don't bury the lead for your reader. Tell them upfront what the purpose of your press release is.

! Keep your press release short and sweet. Your journalist is busy, don't waste their time with fluff.

! Don't overdo it. Everyone's organization has the best event, the best new product, the best whatever it happens to be. Just don't start your press releases with that kind of clichés.

B USING BEST: BUILD EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY TODAY! PROJECT RESOURCES FOR PROMOTION

Make sure also to make the most of our project channels for promotion! There are different ways to do this:

A) Write a short article with some photos and send it to your national coordinator to include in the 'news section' of the official website - <https://www.fraternity-card.eu/en/news>

B) Promote the action in the project Instagram page - <https://www.instagram.com/fraternity.card/>

C) Promote the action through social media pages of your school and national coordinators

+ don't forget to use our hashtags: [#solidarity](#) [#equality](#) [#erasmus+](#) [#bestproject](#) [#fraternitycard](#)

C CONTRIBUTING TO THE ONLINE EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN

Did you know that photographic material created and gathered from the local community actions will be part of the animated material created for the joint EU campaign on the perspective and view of youth on solidarity?

Encourage your participants to take interesting photos and share them with the coordinators and help your action be seen in minimum six participating countries but also through international networks!

From photos created by students, three two-minute animations/videos will be created and launched on social media in the summer of 2021.

PART 4: FINANCING LOCAL SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

Project coordinators in all partners countries have a small amount of funds dedicated to the organization of local community actions.

So, if for organizing and implementing your community actions you need some materials, for example paint, public address system/megaphone, tools, wood, printing fees, food/drinks, sport requisites, protective equipment, plants etc. – talk to your national coordinator and arrange this according to your national rules and guidelines.

Make sure to keep all original receipts as proof of payment for project reporting.

Besides small grants, national coordinators are here to help you design your action and mentor you through different steps of the planning described above.

GOOD LUCK with your actions, may they be inclusive and impactful!
Try guiding your students with the thought
that we need to act today to build together a better future!

*Photo by Brett Jordan on Unsplash



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
PLEASE CONTACT YOUR NATIONAL COORDINATORS:

SPAIN:
FUNDACION CIVES



SLOVENIA:
Humanitas



ITALY:
ARCI APS



POLAND:
SZKOŁA z KLASA FUNDACJA



FRANCE:
La Ligue de l'enseignement



CROATIA:
Centre for Peace Studies

