



# StoryLab: Advanced Digital Storytelling & EU Policy Communication

---

From isolated messages to strategically framed, platform-sensitive, and measurable digital campaigns

**Dr. Dawid Stadniczeńko**

VISUAL-EU Summer School



Grant Agreement 101235890  
ERASMUS-JMO-2025-HEI-TCH-RSCH

---

Navigation

# Lecture Overview

This lecture block focuses on three advanced areas: strategic framing of EU topics for different audiences, building coherent multi-format campaigns across platforms, and measuring engagement to improve communication outputs.



Funded by  
the European Union

01

## From Messages to Strategic Campaigns

Understanding the shift from isolated outputs to integrated communication systems

02

## Strategic Framing & Audience Design

Framing EU topics strategically and designing for different audience personas

03

## Building Format Stacks

Creating coherent multi-format sequences that reinforce key messages

04

## Platform-Sensitive Communication

Adapting content to different digital platforms and their unique strengths

05

## Measuring & Improving Effectiveness

Using metrics and feedback to continuously optimize communication outputs

# From Winter School to Summer School: The Evolution

## Winter School Focus

- **Principles of digital storytelling** — foundational concepts and narrative structures
- **Visual formats for EU communication** — infographics, carousels, and basic video
- **Ethics, transparency, and countering disinformation** — responsible communication practices

Building the foundation

## Summer School Focus

- **Campaign design** — moving from single outputs to integrated systems
- **Advanced audience targeting** — personas, segmentation, and tailored messaging
- **Platform orchestration** — coordinating across multiple channels
- **Measurement and optimisation** — tracking effectiveness over time

Mastering the craft



Funded by  
the European Union

## Central Question

How can EU-related communication move from **isolated messages** to **strategically framed, platform-sensitive, and measurable digital campaigns**?

The Shift

# Why Advanced Storytelling Matters

A single infographic or video may **inform** an audience.

A campaign can **transform understanding** and drive action.

**For EU communication, this shift is essential**

Policies often feel distant and abstract—strategic storytelling makes them tangible, relevant, and actionable.



Funded by  
the European Union



## Build Awareness

Multiple touchpoints ensure your message reaches diverse audiences across contexts



## Sustain Attention

Sequential messaging keeps audiences engaged over time, not just momentarily



## Reinforce Key Messages

Repetition across formats strengthens recall and understanding



## Encourage Participation

Clear pathways from awareness to action drive real engagement



## Connect Information with Action

Bridge the gap between knowing and doing through strategic sequencing



# What Makes a Campaign Strategic?

## 01 Defined Communication Objective

What specific outcome do you want to achieve? Awareness, understanding, participation, or behavior change? Without a clear objective, you cannot measure success.

Example: "Increase student awareness of Erasmus+ opportunities by 40%"

## 02 Specific Target Audience

Who exactly are you trying to reach? Generic messaging fails. Personas help you understand audience needs, knowledge levels, and communication preferences.

Example: "First-year students unfamiliar with EU mobility programs"

## 03 Clear Message Architecture

What is your core message? What supporting messages reinforce it? Too many messages reduce coherence. Focus on one central idea with 2-3 supporting points.

Example: "Erasmus+ transforms academic experience" + supporting evidence

## 04 Appropriate Mix of Formats

Which formats best serve your message and audience? Infographics for structure, videos for emotion, carousels for step-by-step explanation. Each format has strengths.

Example: Infographic + carousel + short video + micro-blog

## 05 Platform Logic

Where does your audience spend time? Different platforms serve different purposes. Match platform strengths to communication goals for maximum impact.

Example: Instagram for awareness, website for detail, LinkedIn for legitimacy

## 06 Plan for Evaluation

How will you know if you succeeded? Define metrics before you launch. Quantitative data (reach, engagement) + qualitative feedback (comments, interviews) = full picture.

Example: Track views, saves, and conduct post-campaign surveys

⚠ Without strategy, communication becomes fragmented.

# Strategic Framing of EU Topics

## What is Strategic Framing?

Strategic framing means **deciding how a topic will be presented** in order to make it meaningful for a specific audience.

The same policy can be understood **completely differently** depending on the frame chosen. Good framing shapes what audiences notice first, how they interpret relevance, and whether they see EU initiatives as abstract or practical.

### Key Insight

Good framing improves both **clarity** and **engagement** —it determines whether communication sounds institutional or personally meaningful.

## EU Topics Can Be Framed As:

### Opportunity

EU programs as pathways to personal and professional growth

### Support

EU as a partner providing resources and assistance

### Inclusion

EU initiatives that ensure fair access and participation

### Mobility

Freedom to study, work, and explore across borders

### Participation

Opportunities to engage in democratic processes

### Innovation

EU funding for research, creativity, and new ideas

### Regional Relevance

EU impact on local communities and regional development

### Student Benefit

Concrete advantages for academic and career success




Funded by  
the European Union





# Audience Differentiation & Personas

## Different Audiences, Different Needs


The same message should **not** be communicated identically to everyone. Each audience has different expectations, interests, and levels of prior knowledge about EU policies.


 Students


 Academic Staff


 Administrative Staff

 Local Communities

 School Teachers

 NGOs

 Local Authorities

 Regional Authorities

## Audience-Specific Goals

- **Students** → Awareness and participation
- **Lecturers** → Pedagogical relevance
- **University Leadership** → Institutional value
- **Local Stakeholders** → Cooperation potential
- **Public Audiences** → Visibility and trust

## Personas in Campaign Design

A **persona** is a communication model of a typical target audience member. Personas help you move from generic messaging to targeted, relevant communication.

### 1 The First-Year Student

Unfamiliar with EU opportunities, overwhelmed by information, seeking guidance

Needs: Simple language

Visual storytelling

Clear action steps

### 2 The Seeking Lecturer

Looking for usable teaching resources, wants to integrate EU topics into curriculum

Needs: Practical examples

Downloadable content

Pedagogical value

### 3 The Local Official

Interested in HEI-community partnerships, wants to see mutual benefits

Needs: Data and evidence

Partnership models

ROI demonstration

# The Communication Arc: Building Sequences That Work

## Six Stages of the Communication Arc

A campaign should not consist of **random materials**. It should follow a deliberate sequence—this sequence is often more important than any single design element.

1

### Attract Attention

Use compelling visuals, intriguing headlines, or surprising facts to stop the scroll

2

### Explain Relevance

Connect the topic to audience needs, interests, or values—why should they care?

3

### Provide Detail

Offer substantive information, evidence, and context for those who want to learn more

4

### Encourage Interaction

Create opportunities for engagement—comments, shares, questions, discussions

5

### Reinforce the Message

Repeat key points across formats and platforms to strengthen recall

6

### Offer a Next Step

Provide clear, actionable pathways—links, forms, events, resources

## Problem–Solution–Impact Logic

A useful structure for EU campaigns that keeps communication focused and action-oriented:

?

### What is the issue?

Define the problem clearly

R

### What EU response exists?

Present the policy or program

!

### Why does it matter?

Explain relevance to audience

★

### What impact can it have?

Demonstrate concrete benefits

→

### What can the audience do?

Provide clear action pathway

## Example: Framing Inclusion for Students

**Issue:** Some students don't fully access opportunities

**Response:** EU and institutional inclusion measures

**Relevance:** Fairer learning conditions for all

**Impact:** Stronger participation and belonging

**Action:** Engage with available support initiatives



# Format Stacks: Creating Repetition with Variation

## What Are Format Stacks?

A **format stack** is a combination of formats used together as one communication system. Instead of creating isolated outputs, you design interconnected pieces that reinforce each other.

### Example Stack:

- One infographic
- One carousel
- One short video
- One micro-blog post
- One follow-up story

## Format Roles in Campaign Logic



### Infographics

**Best for:** Explaining structure, summarizing evidence, visualizing processes, giving credibility, serving as reference points

Structure Evidence Processes Credibility

Works best paired with formats that add narrative or emotional reach



### Carousels

**Best for:** Step-by-step explanation, myth-versus-fact clarification, visual storytelling in sequence, low-threshold awareness

Sequential Educational Clarification

Especially useful for audiences with limited attention time



### Short Videos

**Best for:** Grabbing attention quickly, adding emotional perspective, simplifying topics, increasing reach, humanizing institutional communication

Attention Emotion Simplification Reach

Require sharp message focus—every second counts

## Why Combine Formats?

- ✓ Different audiences prefer different modes—some read, others watch
- ✓ Not every platform rewards the same format—adapt to channel strengths
- ✓ Repetition strengthens recall—seeing messages multiple times improves retention
- ✓ Each format serves different purposes—introduce, explain, mobilize

### Micro-Blogs

# Platform-Sensitive Design: Matching Platform to Purpose

## Website

- ✓ **Stable information** — authoritative source that doesn't change
- ✓ **Detailed explanation** — space for comprehensive content
- ✓ **Institutional credibility** — official presence builds trust

**Best for:** Explanation, legitimacy, deep dives

## Instagram

- ✓ **Visual narrative** — image-first storytelling
- ✓ **Quick attention** — scroll-stopping content
- ✓ **Sequential storytelling** — carousels for step-by-step

**Best for:** Awareness, visual campaigns, student engagement

## LinkedIn

- ✓ **Professional framing** — serious, career-focused tone
- ✓ **Institutional relevance** — showcase projects and impact
- ✓ **Project visibility** — reach academic and professional networks

**Best for:** Professional audiences, project updates, legitimacy

## Campus Displays

- ✓ **Short attention span** — people walk by quickly
- ✓ **High need for visual clarity** — must be readable at glance
- ✓ **Message compression** — distill to essential information

**Best for:** Awareness, event promotion, quick messaging



**Funded by  
the European Union**

## Matching Platform to Objective

**Awareness** → Social and visual platforms

**Explanation** → Website or educational formats

**Legitimacy** → Website and LinkedIn

**Activation** → Visual and mobile-friendly formats

**Events** → Short-format, repeatable assets

One message may need multiple platform versions. Adapt, don't just copy-paste.

# Visual Consistency & Style Guides

## Why Consistency Matters

A campaign needs **visual consistency** across all formats and platforms. Without consistency, a campaign looks disconnected and weak—even if individual pieces are well-designed.

- **Colours** — recognizable palette builds brand identity
- **Typography** — consistent fonts create visual harmony
- **Icon style** — unified visual language
- **Tone of voice** — consistent personality in writing
- **Terminology** — consistent language reduces confusion
- **Visual hierarchy** — predictable structure aids comprehension
- **Project identification** — clear branding reinforces recognition



Funded by  
the European Union

## The Role of a Visual Style Guide

A **simple style guide** helps ensure campaign coherence. It doesn't have to be complex to be effective—even a basic one-page guide can transform campaign quality.

✓ Recognisable campaign identity

✓ Visual coherence across outputs

✓ Easier collaboration in teams

✓ Better quality control

✓ Reduced design inconsistency

## What Should a Style Guide Include?

- 1 Title styles**  
How headings should look
- 2 Preferred fonts**  
Primary and secondary typefaces
- 3 Colour palette**  
Primary, secondary, accent colours
- 4 Icon rules**  
Style, size, and usage guidelines
- 5 Image principles**  
What types of images to use
- 6 Tone-of-voice notes**  
Formal vs. informal, institutional vs. personal
- 7 Logo placement**  
Where and how to use logos
- 8 Do's and don'ts**  
Common mistakes to avoid

 This is especially useful in project-based communication where multiple people create content.



# Measuring Communication Effectiveness

## Why Measurement Matters

A campaign is stronger when it is **evaluated**. Measurement is not optional if effectiveness matters—it is essential for learning and improvement.

- Whether the audience noticed the message
- Whether the format worked
- Whether the message was understood
- Whether participation increased
- Whether adjustments are needed

## Metrics Must Fit the Goal

Not every campaign needs the same indicators. Match metrics to objectives:

**Awareness campaign** → Reach and visibility

**Educational campaign** → Understanding and clarity

**Participation campaign** → Registrations or involvement

**Visibility campaign** → Stakeholder uptake and reuse

Bad evaluation often begins with irrelevant metrics

## Basic Quantitative Indicators

Useful simple metrics that are easy to track:

Views

Clicks

Saves

Shares

Comments

Time on page

Participation rates

Downloads/sign-ups

The choice of metric must match the communication objective.

## Basic Qualitative Indicators

Quantitative data should be complemented by qualitative evidence:

- Comments and reactions
- Participant feedback
- Short interviews
- Focus-group reactions
- Informal classroom discussion
- Stakeholder responses

# A/B Testing & Continuous Improvement

## What is A/B Testing?

A/B testing means comparing two variants of a communication element to see which performs better. The aim is not overcomplication, but **learning what works better**.

**Variant A:** Original version

**Variant B:** Modified version

**Measure:** Which performs better?

## What Can Be Tested?

- Titles and headlines
- Images and visuals
- Layout and design
- Calls to action
- Caption length



Funded by  
the European Union

## Testing Examples

### Title Test:

- A: "EU Funding Opportunities for Students"
- B: "How to Fund Your Dream Semester Abroad"

### Layout Test:

- A: Text-heavy infographic
- B: Minimal visual with key stats only


### Opening Test:


- A: Data-led opening with statistics
- B: Story-led opening with personal narrative


 Testing helps avoid intuitive but weak design decisions.


## Improving Through Feedback

Visual improvement comes from multiple sources. A campaign improves when **revision is built into the design process**.

 **Analytics**  
Track performance data

 **Instructor feedback**  
Expert guidance

 **Peer review**  
Colleague perspectives

 **Audience comments**  
Direct user input



# Common Weaknesses & Ethical Boundaries

## ⚠ Common Weaknesses in EU Campaigns

These are **strategic weaknesses**, not merely aesthetic ones. Recognizing them is the first step toward improvement.

- 1 Too many messages at once**  
Dilutes focus and reduces impact

- 2 No clear audience**  
Generic messaging fails to resonate

- 3 Weak connection between formats**  
Materials feel disconnected

- 4 Poor platform fit**  
Wrong format for the channel

- 5 Unclear call to action**  
Audience doesn't know what to do

- 6 No evaluation plan**  
Cannot measure or improve

- 7 Visual inconsistency**  
Campaign lacks cohesive identity

## 🛡 Ethics and Quality in Advanced Communication

Even advanced campaigns must remain **ethical and responsible**. Strategic communication should not become communicative distortion.

- ✓ **Accurate**  
Factually correct information

- ✓ **Transparent**  
Clear about sources and intent

- ✓ **Non-manipulative**  
Respect audience autonomy

- ✓ **Inclusive**  
Accessible to diverse audiences

- ✓ **Respectful**  
Value audience intelligence

- ✓ **Privacy-minded**  
Protect personal data

## ⚖ Reading Performance Critically

**High numbers do not always mean high impact.** Ask critical questions when evaluating campaigns:

- Did the right audience engage?
- Did they understand the message?
- Was the engagement meaningful?
- Was the outcome aligned with objectives?
- What was visible vs. invisible?

# Key Takeaways & Next Steps

## Today's Main Conclusions

- 1 Audience-Specific Framing**  
Strong EU communication campaigns begin with understanding who you're talking to and what matters to them
- 2 Coherent Format Stacks**  
Single messages become more effective when organized into interconnected, multi-format sequences
- 3 Platform-Sensitive Adaptation**  
Essential for real communication reach—adapt content to each platform's unique strengths
- 4 Mixed Evaluation Methods**  
Combine quantitative and qualitative indicators for a complete picture of campaign effectiveness
- 5 Continuous Testing & Revision**  
Light testing and feedback loops improve both clarity and engagement over time



## ☰ Suggested Follow-Up Activity

**Mini-task for participants:** Design a mini communication campaign for one EU-related topic relevant to Polish HEIs.

- ✓ Target audience
- ✓ Communication objective
- ✓ One core message
- ✓ 3–4 linked formats
- ✓ Platform choices
- ✓ One visual consistency rule
- ✓ Two evaluation indicators

“

"The best campaigns don't just inform—they transform understanding and inspire action."

Thank you for your attention