Welcome!

Sandra Vlasic, president of CROSOL (the Croatian National Platform), and Johannes Trimmel, president of CONCORD Europe, opened the fourth edition of the Learning and Exchange Forum. Johannes introduced Fotis Filipou, the campaign strategist, trainer and facilitator who led the first day of the Forum.

**Tips for better integration of advocacy and communication strategies**

- Take into consideration time and resources when planning
- Limit the number of outputs
- Change the focus from quantity to quality
- Plan ahead instead of ad-hoc responses
- Bring communication early enough to orient the content of the advocacy to be successful and identify the targets
- Have a joint strategy for advocacy and communication, or at least aligned strategies
- Have joint spaces for exchange
- Dialogue between teams
- Organise cross-department trainings
- Mapping of targets and clear objectives for the work
- Work together towards a common goal
- Simplify but not oversimplify

Further reading: [The Mobilisation Integration Toolkit](#) – Lessons from Greenpeace, Mobilisation Lab

**System thinking**

Participants were invited to dig deeper to identify the pattern and trends behind the events we want to influence, the underlying structures these trends are connected to and the mental models that enable these structures.
We need to address the root causes of the problems instead of the symptoms. This is not always easy as it can push us out of our comfort zones.

Further reading:
- ‘When changing laws isn’t enough’, Mobilisation Lab
- ‘Using story to change systems’, Ella Saltmarshe, Stanford Social Innovation Review
- Thinking in Systems: a Primer by Donella Meadows and Diana Wright (book)

**Hope Based Communication**

Civil Society talks a lot about how bad the world is but we are not so great at showing how we can change things for the better. We need to acknowledge the problems but focus on the solutions and the role people can play in moving us towards the solutions. To engage people to support the solutions we propose, we need five shifts in our messages:

- **From Fear to Hope**
  When we focus on fear we trigger the part of the brain where survival instincts lie: we trigger fight or flight instinct. If instead we focus on empathy we trigger the part of the brain where rational thinking focuses. Using fear might lead to a short term reaction but it will not lead to long term changes in people’s thinking as we did not create real empathy.

- **From Threat to Opportunity**
  When we ask people to put themselves in the situation of those more oppressed, it plays in the frame of threat. People want to be part of something successful, to join efforts that will lead to a win. So we need to show how when we come together we can make a difference, and win. We need to highlight opportunities for actions to get them to engage with solutions.

- **From Problem to Solution**
  Instead of naming and shaming we need to name and frame. When those we fight again are framing their issue as a zero-sum issue (for example with austerity), instead of fighting within their frame we need to change the frame to show that different solutions are possible.

- **From Against to For**
  We tend to respond in the same frame that our opponents are using. The problem is that by doing that we are actually re-emphasizing their frame. Instead of talking about what we are against we should have a clear narrative of our vision for a better future.
From Victims to Heroes

We should celebrate the humanity in people. How can we make our audiences the heroes in the story?

When we answer tough questions we have to ask ourselves: are we sticking to a frame someone else has set up for us? Or are we using a new frame to move in the direction we want to go to?

Further reading:
- ‘A guide to hope-based communications’, Thomas Coombes, Open Global Rights
- Messaging this moment: A handbook for progressive communicators, Anat Shenker-Osorio
- ‘Why the future of human rights must be hopeful’, Thomas Coombes, Open Global Rights
- ‘Hope, not fear: A new model for communicating human rights’, Thomas Coombes
- Bluffer’s guide to framing, by Sho Konnon
- Innovation Report 2019, International Civil Society Centre

CROSOl night

Gordan Bosanac, CROSOl’s Communication Coordinator & Advocacy advisor, presented the work of the platform on integrating communication and advocacy strategies for the Presidency Project. Among other things, Gordan shared some videos linked to the Croatian EU Presidency:
- TV News on a poll developed by civil society
- A performance entitled “Delirium Interuptum”
- The song “Oda Radosti - Anegdote Evrointegracija” by Rambo Amadeus

Practical Exercise: hope-based messages for the special EU Head of the State Summit on the next EU Budget (MFF)

As the Heads of State were to meet for a special summit on the next EU budget on 20-21 February (a few weeks after the Learning and Exchange Forum), participants were invited to form small groups and developed hope-based messages on the next EU budget. Participants then voted on the message they liked the most.

Here is the list of messages, with the three top ones receiving the most votes:
- Keep 10%: the world is our neighborhood - and it needs a future
- EU [EU flag] is the principal donor of aid. Together we have a duty to continue our longstanding commitment of saving lives. #Solidarity #SocialJustice #ODA0.7% #EUBudget @CONCORDEurope @eucopresident
- You/EU have the power! You/EU/We have 7 years to build a better world and continue being a global leader for peace
- Decent life and livable conditions for all
- Our 10% will make a better future
- #EURO for #Budget4Solidarity to build a common future to #LeaveNoOneBehind. 10% of #MFF to external aid!
- So that everyone in the world can go to school [or other area than education] as well. Estonia [or other Member State] is up to steer the EU to do what’s best for all of us.

Open Space
Participants were invited to propose and host discussion on the topics of their choice.
One group focused on communicating on technical issues, such as ODA. They felt the communication on ODA could be more impactful by showing the human side of this complex and technical issue.
A second group discussed fundraising and highlighted the importance to form coalitions and of maintaining good communication towards constituencies and stakeholders.
Another group discussed how to engage with audiences via social media. The group found one of the learnings from the Forum, being for something instead of against something, to be very relevant for using social media to engage audiences.
The last group discussed how to use communication strategies to mobilise members. The discussion focused on working on long term goals, looking for opportunities and threats, using collaborative methods and analysing data on membership engagement.

Conclusions
Tanya Cox, Director of CONCORD Europe, closed the event by thanking all the participants and all the people involved in organising this fourth edition of the Learning & Exchange Forum.

Further ressources
- Hope-based Communications
- Mobilisation Lab
- Heartwired for Change
- Public Interest Research Centre
- Hope-Based videos, compilation by Thomas Coombes