"Accelerating Western Balkans University Modernisation by Introducing Virtual Technologies"

VTech@WBUni

WP4 - Deliverable 4.1

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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05	08/05/2020	Final version	Ornela Vladi; Albana Halili	UET; UAMD

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I. Brief description of the project

1.1 Project background

At Digital Assembly held on June 2018, the European Commission launched the Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans (WB), calling for capacity building on ICT, for building a digital society, aiming for training for a new generation of researchers and engineers that will promote interdisciplinary collaboration across Europe. The key to unlocking the economic potential of Western Balkans countries is considered an investment in the quality of education, teaching, learning, and innovation, especially in the area of ICT. Possessing specific ICT skills has an effect on economic competitiveness, especially in small countries such as WB countries (Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo), with high unemployment rates, whereas one of the solutions to survive is active participation in the lifelong learning process (European Commission, 2011), by upgrading current competences and obtaining new competences, needed in the local, regional, European and global labour market.

The forecast for Virtual Technologies Market is a 52% growth rate for the next five years. Virtual Technologies are considered one of the tools to transform and modernize Higher Education. Students today are already familiar with various technologies, which is why computerized tools and apps make sense in a classroom setting. In WB countries the rate of possession of smartphones and other smart equipment is comparable with the rate presented for European countries. Therefore, the consortium thinks a Strategy should exist and capacities should be developed and upgraded to take advantage of the opportunities offered by incorporating emerging digital technologies into university culture.

1.2 Project aim and objectives

The project's general aim is to introduce for the first time at Western Balkan universities the concept of virtual technologies as a tool for accelerating university modernization while contributing to developing a knowledge-driven society.

By incorporating Virtual Technologies in the academic culture of universities we aim to increase the quality and level of efficiency in teaching and knowledge retention through interactive learning methods, thus contributing to skills enhancement and further building of a digital society in WB countries.
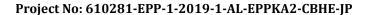
In the mid and long term, the project will enhance the effectiveness of the higher education system in knowledge retention and application. The project's direct beneficiaries are universities, schools, teachers, students, regional industries, and businesses.

The specific objectives of the project are:
- Capacity building of academic staff to incorporate Virtual Technologies in teaching

- Develop teaching methodologies availing of technology and/or ICT tools

- Equip students with competencies to use/access tools, software, and platforms

- Increase interaction between teachers and students

- Increase the level of understanding and reduce the grasping time and the effort that students need to learn information by using 3D concepts instead of 2D ones

- Offer a better delivery of basic knowledge even for complex issues, higher learning efficiency, and better learning experience by AR/VR techniques.

- Establish Virtual Technology HUB for developing teaching materials for basic learning courses and serve as a HUB for other HEIs

- Foster cooperation between the academy and industry by organizing open days, joint product developments, thesis supervision, etc.

- Develop capacities for future joint research and innovative ideas with the support of Virtual Technologies.

1.3 Project partners

The project brings together 11 partners with the University "Aleksander Moisiu" of Durrës as the lead partner.

P1_Aleksander Moisiu Durrës (UAMD)

P2_European University of Tirana (UET)

P3_Polis University (POLIS)

P4_ Epoka University (EPOKA)

P5_ University of Prishtina (UP)

P6_University for Bussines and Technology (UBT)

P7_ Mother Teresa University (MTU)

P8_ South East European University (SEEU

P9_University of Tartu (UT)

P10_Lodz University of Technology (LUT)

P11_University of Ljubljana (UL)

II. Vtech@WBUni Communication Strategy

This section presents the overall approach to the communication strategy for Vtech@WBUni 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 a 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

This communication strategy aims to ensure that the results and activities of the Vtech Project are fully disseminated to the project partner, target group, stakeholders, and the public at large.

The strategy focuses on internal communication and particularly external one, with the aim to gather key stakeholders around the VTech 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 an 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 rollout of key messages while synchronizing targeted outreach with project implementation milestones. In order to ensure the cohesive delivery of project outputs and results, internal communication activities will be performed concurrent with external ones.

Vtech Communications Strategy aims at:

- ensuring effective communication,
- consistent and efficient communication,
- ensuring the visibility of the project and Erasmus+ program,
- contributing to the sustainability of the Vtech 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 the successful implementation of the communications strategy objectives of Vtech.

2.3 External environment affecting communication strategy

The external environment assessment affecting communication is performed through the use of the PESTEL (**P**olitical, **E**conomic **S**ocial, **T**echnological, **E**nvironmental, and **L**egal environments) tool. The use of the PESTEL tool enables the 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 VTech is provided in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. PESTEL Analysis	
Political	• Democratic societies with well-developed information sectors are characterized by a variety of state and non-state media as are: print and broadcast media, many digital newspapers, and many online media. • Societies with democratically elected and appointed officials, established government structures on local, regional and national levels, which should support good communication of the project with various officials.
Economic	• 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 a vested interest in sustaining their operations and growing at national, regional, and global markets.
Social	• Emerging culture among the majority of the age groups in the region which favours two-way / many-to-many communications.

	• New generations who like to actively participate in mass communication avoid 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	• 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	• The region has an enabling legal environment for both, traditional and digital communications. Legal frames for the 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 helps 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	
Strengths	*Weaknesses*
▪ Established organizations in their respective communities; ▪ Established network with a variety of stakeholders; ▪ Established cooperation with a combination of media partners, predominantly in digital media outlets; ▪ Budget for External expertise and creative design.	▪ Limited internal expertise in video and multimedia production;
Opportunities	*Threats*
▪ Low-cost new media, digital communications; ▪ Target groups well-versed in the use of digital media for communication purposes	▪ Lack of attention by the public/stakeholders.

2.5 Principles: Integrated Communications Strategy

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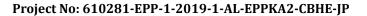
Simple: the project aims to keep clear, consistent, and understandable messages to its different audiences.

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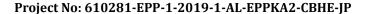
Targeted: a generic approach to communication could lead to important target groups not being addressed. The project will customize its communication efforts for each target group identified in order to ensure that the message reaches the relevant actors.

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 the 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 program

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

3.1 External Communications

3.1.1 Message

The message for dissemination will be developed based on each activity and result of the Vtech Project and will be consulted with UET – 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 universities, schools, teachers, students, regional industries, and businesses.

The listed actors will be involved in the project through the implementation of various activities as are dissemination and communication, awareness raising, educational/training activities, and through access to the Vtech Hub and Vtech Network for WB. The dissemination and communication activities (training, 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 videos, interactive and user-friendly websites, 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 the "forum", and "contact your peer" sections. Such a website goes in line with the main focus of Vtech, 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 of virtual forums and potential meetings.

More specifically, there are four main groups of communication tools that 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, and 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 (USB, pens, bags,)
- Newsletter

Events
- Project kick-off/ Launching event
- Project managerial meetings
- Training and field visits will be delivered both, face-to-face and online.
- <u>Final conference</u> - A final conference will be organized to attract regional researchers and potential network partners from all 6 WB countries.

3.1.4 Plan

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

3.2 Internal Communications

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 the Vtech Project and will be consulted with UET – Leader for WP4 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 up 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 consists 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, project managers, students, and 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 the 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 during 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 documents - Google Drive or Dropbox
- Bilateral Skype meetings with project partners on demand and every issue of concern.

3.2.4 Plan
The plan for internal communication will follow the plan of activities of the project implementation and be 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 recognizable 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' minds.

Figure 1-1 Project Logo

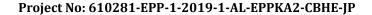All visual identities will adhere to Erasmus+ Guidelines and the project communication strategy.

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+ program can appear with the flag. The preferred option is to write "Co-funded by" or "With the support of", then "the Erasmus+ program of the European Union" next to the EU flag. E.g., "Co-funded by the Erasmus+ program of the European Union" or "With the support of the Erasmus+ program of the European Union".

Figure 1-2 Programme Logo

More details are available here.

Annex List – Project templates

1. Meeting agenda template

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MEETING AGENDA

Date:
Venue:

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Coordinating University: Aleksander Moisiu University (UAMD)

Representatives of the following institutions:
European University of Tirana (UET)
Polis University (U_Polis)
Epoka University (EPOKA)
University of Prishtina (UP)
University for Business and Technology (UBT)
Mother Teresa University (MTU)
South East European University (SEEU)
University of Tartu (UT)
Lodz University of Technology (LUT)
University of Ljubljana (UL)

DAY 1		
Time	**Activity**	**Presenter**

2. Event Planning Checklist

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EVENT PLANNING CHECKLIST

Before the event	Person(s) Responsible
Tasks are allocated to all organizers	
Invitations and registration	
Budgeting	
Welcoming participants	
Venue, coffee breaks, and catering	
Agenda (Speakers/Moderators defined)	
Photographer planned	

During the event	Person(s) Responsible
A reception desk is available for registration	
Attendance sheets prepared	
Name badges arranged in alphabetical order	
Event packs (if applicable) and promotional materials (if any) prepared	
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	

During the event	Person(s) Responsible
Access for people with disabilities is ensured	
All activities comply with the publicity requirements (e.g. EU flag on display)	
Conclusions made based on feedback forms and debriefing	
All costs and fees are taken care of	

After the Event	Person(s) Responsible
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	

3. Attendance list

ACCELERATING WESTERN BALKANS UNIVERSITY MODERNIZATION BY INCORPORATING VIRTUAL TECHNOLOGIES

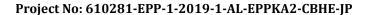# VTech@WBUni

PROJECT MEETING ATTENDANCE LIST*

Meeting Dates:

Meeting Venue:

MEETING INFORMATION			
MEETING TITLE			
ORGANIZER		**LOCATION**	
DATE		**TIME**	

No.	NAME	INSTITUTION	EMAIL ADDRESS	SIGNATURE
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

4. Event evaluation form

EVENT EVALUATION FORM*

PROJECT ACRONYM	VTech@Uni
PROJECT FULL TITLE	Accelerating Western Balkans University Modernization by Incorporating Virtual Technologies
PROJECT NO.	610281-EPP-1-2019-1-AL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP
GRANT AGREMENT NO.	2019 - 1941 /001 - 001
COORDINATING INSTITUTION	Aleksandër Moisiu University (UAMD)
PROJECT COORDINATOR	Dr. Albana Halili
OTHER PROJECT BENEFICIARIES	Epoka University (EPOKAUNI) Polis University (POLIS) European University of Tirana (UET) University of Prishtina (UP) University for Business and Technology (UBT) Mother Teresa University (MTU) South East Euroepan University (SEEU) University of Tartu (UT) Lodz University (LU) University of Ljubljana (UL)

GENERAL INFORMATION	
EVENT	
ORGANIZER	
VENUE	
DATE	

Please complete the following questionnaire and help us improve the quality of our next events:

SECTION 1 - Personal Information

⇒ **Your name** *(optional)***:**_____

⇒ **Age:** _____

⇒ **Country of origin:** _____

⇒ **Professional occupation/title:** _____

SECTION 2 – Event Evaluation

How satisfied you were with (1 = not satisfied, 5 = very satisfied):

- ➢ event programme   1 2 3 4 5

- ➢ presentations   1 2 3 4 5

- ➢ discussions   1 2 3 4 5

- ➢ event administration   1 2 3 4 5

- ➢ the venue and facilities   1 2 3 4 5

SECTION 3 – Material Evaluation

Please, mark your agreement (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) **with the following statements:**

- ➢ information shared during the event was new, useful and clear   1   2   3   4   5

- ➢ the event met my expectations in terms of offered topics   1   2   3   4   5

- ➢ interaction with other participants was fruitful   1   2   3   4   5

- ➢ distributed material was clear and useful   1   2   3   4   5

- ➢ disscusions were relevant for the participants   1   2   3   4   5

- ➢ time management was fully satisfied   1   2   3   4   5

- ➢ working methods were appropriate   1   2   3   4   5

- ➢ the overall organisation was professional   1   2   3   4   5

OTHER COMMENTS (please indicate how can the event quality be improved in the future):

Thank you for your feedback!

5. Project partner dissemination report

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TEMPLATE FOR REPORTING PROJECT DISSEMINATION EVENTS*

1. Event title, venue, time/dates	
Seminar/ info day/ bilateral meeting/ etc. City, Country; DD/MM/YY	
2. Event aim & purpose	
Write a short info to describe the objectives of the event and link to the project objectives	
3. Speakers/Trainers and institution	
Write here.	
4. Impact of the event on the project	
Write here about the impact of such activity on the project, e.g. create awareness about the project's outcomes, encourage involvement, create synergies with organizations or projects, collaborate agreements with third existing parties, strengthen links with public bodies, consolidate exploitation position, etc.	
5. Type of audience	Write the type of audience that attended the event
6. Target audience reached	Write the type of audience that you reached during the event
7. Size of audience	Write the number of all people that attended the event
8. Partners involved	Partner acronym
9. Photo/Video	[Attach photos as .jpg Video send via WeTransfer link or else]

6. Project Partner Dissemination Report

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PROJECT PARTNER DISSEMINATION REPORT – INDICATORS

This Document has the scope of the provision of Dissemination Information by the Partners to the WP4 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						
4						
5						

6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					

7. PPT Template

8. Partner Presentation Template

9. Deliverable Cover Page Template

Accelerating Western Balkans University Modernization by Incorporating Virtual Technologies

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WP - Deliverable

Name of deliverable
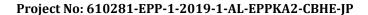
Project duration: 15/11/2019 - 15/11/2022

Due date of deliverable: DD/MM/YYYY

Actual submission date: DD/MM/YYYY

Dissemination Level: Consortium (Confidential, only for members of the consortium)

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01	DD/MM/YYYY	Document drafted	……..	……..
02	DD/MM/YYYY	First edition	……………..	……..
03	DD/MM/YYYY	First revision	………………	………
04	DD/MM/YYYY	Second revision	……………..	……….

10. VTECH Newsletter