



# Checklist for multilingual and multichannel communications

*Planning  
Creating a Message  
Cooperation*

# PLANNING

## ❑ **Make plans and set responsibilities.**

It is a good idea for an organisation to have communication and preparedness plans. The plans should indicate each person's responsibilities and the action plan for both day-to-day operations and emergency situations. Make sure that everyone in the organisation knows their responsibilities.

## ❑ **Map out resources in advance.**

Ensure that the resources for disruptions and emergencies are mapped out and included in the plans. Resources affect what you can realistically do. Also make sure that financial resources are set aside for planning and crisis situations.

## ❑ **Establish the main principles of multilingual communication.**

Think carefully about the languages your organisation uses in its communications and the criteria for choosing the languages in each situation. Everyone knows the main principles of communication and can rely on them in the event of disruptions and emergencies.

## ❑ **Communicate in a clear and understandable way.**

Clarity and understandability must be the aim in all organisational communications. Clear source texts facilitate the translation process and are understandable to as many people as possible.

## ❑ **Increase the easy language skills in your organisation.**

Are there people in your organisation who know easy language? Could your organisation take part in easy language training and increase its easy language skills? In the event of disruptions and emergencies, information should be available in easy language. Easy Finnish can also be used when translating a text is not possible.

## ❑ **Ensure that the translation process runs smoothly.**

Translation processes should be planned as part of other communication planning to ensure that the translation process is swift. Think about what kind of approaches are best for your organisation. Do you translate your material within your organisation, or do you outsource the translations? Are there any guidelines for translators? Are translations reviewed and proofread?

## ❑ **Have a positive attitude towards multilingualism.**

Multilingualism is sometimes seen as a negative thing that takes up resources. However, multilingualism offers many opportunities, and it is important to maintain a positive attitude towards multilingualism.

## ❑ **Ensure the accessibility of communication.**

Allocate resources to improving the accessibility of your digital media and communications and ensure that your message is accessible. You can check whether messages are readable by reading devices and whether the text in the images is also described in the message. Remember to subtitle your spoken videos and add audio to your text videos.

## ❑ **Observe the imagery of your organisation.**

Different kinds of imagery appeal to different people, and it is good to acknowledge diversity in images. Think about the kinds of images your organisation uses. Who are the people in the images and who can identify with them? What kinds of symbols are used? Are the images understandable in an unambiguous way?

## ❑ **Make sure that everyone is doing well.**

It is a good idea for organisations to plan how to support the coping and mental wellbeing of their employees and volunteers. This applies both in the day-to-day activities of the organisation and in the event of disruptions and emergencies.

## CREATING A MESSAGE

### Check the facts.

Only share verified information. Even if the message is urgent, make sure that the information is correct. Hastily published misinformation is more damaging than verified information that is published with a slight delay.

### Create a situational picture.

Stay informed about what is happening in society. What kind of messages are the authorities and the media sending? What about the communities? What information is needed and where can you find it? What kind of material has already been produced and what is in the works?

### Recognise misinformation.

What kind of misinformation is circulating in communities? Correct any misinformation affecting the community by providing verified information. Organise media literacy training and workshops. You can use media literacy cards in these events

(see <https://www.redcross.fi/multilingual-coronavirus-communications/>).

### Build trust.

Trust is a result of long-term commitment. Trust in different communities varies widely, depending on factors such as previous experiences, social inclusion and the culture of the country of origin. Trust can be built by repeating the messages and explaining the information, for example.

### Communicate in an understandable way.

Use easy language or as clear language as possible. Do not assume that everyone understands difficult words. Consider whether there are any cultural references or metaphors in the source text that would benefit from further elaboration.

### Time your messages right.

Publish information when it is needed. In different communities, the same topics can be relevant at completely different times. If the content of the message is of a rapidly changing nature, make sure to mention this and add the date to the material, if possible.

### Make the goal of the message clear.

Think about what you want to achieve with your message. Is the message simply conveying information, or is it trying to spark a debate or direct people to act? If the aim of the message is to change people's behaviour, consider whether people are motivated enough to act in the desired way based on their values.

### Identify the target audience of your message.

Think about who you are addressing your message to. Narrow down the target group by language or age, for example, and identify what kind of information is needed in this specific group. What are the community's perceptions on the subject and is there room for discussion?

### Find the right channels.

Map out which communication channels are used by your target group. Does a certain social media channel or messaging app work, or would printed material be most effective? In what form is information best absorbed? In general, previously established channels quickly attract audiences in the event of disruptions and emergencies as well.

### Customise and adjust your messages.

Customise your messages according to the target audience. Simply translating official messages is usually not enough, as the message must be meaningful to bring about the desired change in behaviour. You can get valuable insights from the key people in your target audience on what types of messages work best.

**□ Narrow down your message and make it concise.**

Keep your message short and to the point, but include all the essential information. If possible, narrow down the content of your message to a single topic.

**□ Avoid stigmatising people.**

Avoid stigmatising certain groups and communities in your messages. Stigmatisation is damaging and can interfere with the crisis response by creating mistrust, for example.

**□ Also consider the images.**

Clear images support the message and make it easier to understand. The images must be unambiguous. Written text can reduce the potential ambiguity of an image, but it will not be useful for illiterate people. Can the target audience identify with the people in the images?

**□ Repeat your message.**

In the event of disruptions and emergencies, it is essential to repeat and update key messages, such as operational instructions. The format of the updates should be similar so that the messages can be easily linked to each other.

**□ Compile an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions).**

Create an easy-to-find information section with answers to frequently asked questions. Be sure to update it as well.

**□ Give it time.**

People and communities often need time to adjust to a new situation. You can assess whether there is room for new discussions in the communities. Could your organisation arrange a discussion forum with trusted experts from the community and interpreters present, if needed? The needs and questions of target groups can be surprising, so it is important to understand the cultural context.

**□ Be creative.**

If no message seems to reach and engage the audience, think of new ways to approach the topic. Could it be a poetry video created with the community, a drawing competition for children, a day camp for young people or a resource workshop for the elderly?

## COOPERATION

### **Make new contacts.**

Are there other organisations and actors in your area whose clients you would like to reach? Visit them to present your activities and invite them to visit you. Could we also cooperate with other actors to create materials or organise events? Does your organisation need to reach all the target groups by itself or could another organisation act as an intermediary? Also establish connections with authorities, cities, municipalities, wellbeing services counties, media and experts.

### **Cooperate.**

Through cooperation, you can avoid unnecessary overlapping work, promote the flow of information and know what kind of communications other actors are producing. Coordination is vital, especially in times of disruption and emergencies. Organisations can also work together to carry out things like fact-checking.

### **Identify the key people in the communities.**

Identify the key people and influencers in your target communities and make connections with them. You can also organise training on communications and on how to respond to disruptions.

### **Visit the communities.**

Arrange visits to community events and gatherings with the key people in the communities. These are good opportunities to share information about the organisation and its activities.

### **Ensure the continuity of your networks.**

Participate in networks and maintain them. Existing networks and partnerships facilitate communications in exceptional situations. When a crisis occurs, you can contact the actors you already know, instead of having to start building trust from scratch. Familiarise your new employees with the networks as well.

### **Share the material with other actors.**

The finished material should also be shared with other actors. One common platform to which material can be shared is the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's Partnership Platform.

### **Ensure the preparedness of your networks.**

Consider how the network is prepared to deal with disruptions and emergencies. Are the people in the network ready to help? Could you create a network of translators and proofreaders? The situation should be assessed well in advance, as information on how to act in disruptions and emergencies should be available before such a situation occurs.