



PROJECT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY - PLAN

LONG DISTANCE CROSS-BORDER HIKING TRAIL "THE FOREST TRAIL"

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1. Introduction

Aims of the project

The project's overall objective is to develop and promote a sustainable tourist attraction – the long distance cross-border Forest Trail.

The project's specific objectives are:

- To develop a sustainable, joint nature based tourism product with a high potential to increase the visitor numbers in the region;
- To market and promote the Forest Trail for achievement of increased visitor numbers in the area.

How will the communication work support the reaching of those goals

This communication strategy is aimed to reach and involve the target audience in the trail development process, and to promote the Forest Trail and hiking culture for general public. This communication strategy is developed according to the project Work Plan.

2. Communication objectives

It is defined in the project description that the objective of the communication activities is to raise awareness and influence attitudes of general public in favor of hiking and contribute to formation of active hikers' community in Latvia and Estonia. The society will adopt hiking as a healthy and entertaining way of holiday making, and will appreciate hiking trail facilities. This will contribute to the goals of increasing numbers of tourists in the area.

Communication activities are also aimed at local stakeholders – tourist service providers, local communities, local municipalities – with the goal to achieve understanding of benefits, acceptance, sense of ownership and active participation.

3. Target groups

Target group	What do they need to know?
local public authority	The Forest Trail route crosses territories of municipalities. Their representatives will be involved as stakeholders and invited to the planning and implementation events.
regional public authority	Regional public authorities will be informed about the project in their territories and invited to participate in project activities and events.
interest groups including NGOs	Relevant interest groups and NGOs active in the Forest Trail territory will be invited as stakeholders.
SME	Local service providers along the Forest Trail route will be directly involved in product development activities.
General public	General public will be addressed by marketing, promotion and communication activities.
other	Travel trade - tour operators, travel agents, tour guides specialized in nature tourism will be addressed by marketing, promotion and communication activities.

4. Strategy and measures to be taken

Every communication material produced for internal and external communication purposes will contain references to **Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020** and **European Regional Development Fund**. All materials will include the flag of European Union with texts “European Union” and “European Regional Development Fund” and the Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020 logo.

- The programme and EU logos in different languages can be downloaded here: <http://www.centralbaltic.eu/document-categories/logos>
- All the specific cases of references are covered in the Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020 Guide for project communication. The document is available here: <http://centralbaltic.eu/document-categories/project-documents>
- Written information will include the fact that the Project has received funding from the Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020.
- Communication materials will contain some project contact information, references to the Project’s Facebook page in Latvia/Estonia (*links*), Project’s website and/or to Forest Trail project sections in partners’ websites.

In FOREST TRAIL communication, partners will use a common visual identity (logo, name, etc.) according to the Forest Trail visual identity stylebook (logo, slogan, design of route marking and signposting). Available from the project web site <https://www.celotajs.lv/en/project/19> .

Target group	Message	Method
local public authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Forest Trail is a tourism product with a high potential to bring tourists/social and economic benefits to local communities. - The Forest Trail brings responsible tourists who respect local communities. - Hikers are a particular community with specific needs and interests. Involvement in project activities allows to understand the hiking tourist profile and create relevant services. - Sense of ownership – development and functioning of the Forest Trail parts and in local territories and success as a tourism product is very much up to local community. Local cooperation is the key. - The Forest Trail gives local communities an opportunity to become a part of a large scale tourism product with strong marketing support. - Each local territory is an important link within the whole chain of the Forest Trail route. 	Roundmail news, websites, social networks, project events.
SME	- All above	Roundmail news, websites, social networks, project events.
regional public authority	- All above in regional dimension.	Roundmail news, websites, social networks, project events.
interest groups	- Welcome to participate in the development of a new long distance European hiking product;	Roundmail news, websites, social networks, project

including NGOs	- Welcome to hike on the Forest Trail and share experiences (posts, blogs, etc.); - Welcome to share the Forest Trail information.	events.
General public	- What is the Forest Trail. - Forest Trail development process. - Launching the Forest Trail website. - Printed marketing publications. - Forest Trail implemented – full info for hikers.	Press releases (resulting in media coverage – printed and online media, TV/radio), social networks, websites (posts, banners, videos, Forest Trail full information incl. maps), travel fairs (project leaflet, printed marketing materials).
Other – travel trade	- Forest Trail – a new hiking tourism infrastructure, a basis for hiking tourism products. - Forest Trail information – online, printed publications available.	Roundmail news, websites, social networks, travel fairs.

5. Work plan

Communication work plan

Aims	Target Groups	Message	Tools /Evidence
04. – 09.2019 (1st reporting period). The project has started – raise awareness about the project, increase knowledge and engage target audience.	General public, local and regional municipalities, interest groups, SMEs, other.	The project has started. The aim of the project is to develop a long distance hiking trail – the Forest Trail. - What is the Forest Trail? - What is the Forest Trail route? - How and when the Forest Trail will be implemented. - How tourist service providers/local municipalities can become a part of the Forest Trail. - Marketing and promotion plans. - Who are project partners. - Invitation to join open hikes for Forest Trail route inspection. - further regular information sources: https://baltictrails.eu/forest/ https://www.facebook.com/meztaka https://www.facebook.com/metsamatkarada	Press releases, social networks, websites. N.B.! 1-2 press releases will be sent per reporting period. Several messages will be combined in one press release, especially in the 3rd reporting period.

<p>05.-09.2019. (1st reporting period). Forest trail route inspections – inform stakeholders and general public.</p>	<p>General public, local and regional municipalities, interest groups, SMEs, other.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forest Trail route inspection schedule, invitation to join; - Forest Trail route inspection experiences. 	<p>https://www.facebook.com/meztaka https://www.facebook.com/metsamatarada</p>
<p>10.2019 – 03.2020 (2nd reporting period) Forest Trail route inspections finished, Forest Trail visual identity designed – inform about project progress, maintain target audience interest and involvement.</p>	<p>General public, local and regional municipalities, interest groups, SMEs, other.</p>	<p>1) Forest Trail route inspections finished – results and conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - what can tourists experience on the Forest Trail (distances, terrain, nature values, etc.); - summary of external target audience involvement and interest (feedback on individuals and organisations participating in open inspections); - tourist services along the route (involvement of local SMEs). <p>2) Forest Trail visual identity designed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forest Trail logo and name for general public. - Forest Trail stylebook for trail marking and marketing. <p>3) Things to come/project work in progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - data processing for production of online and printed marketing publications; - preparations for the Forest Trail marking. 	<p>Press releases, social networks, websites.</p> <p>https://baltictrails.eu/forest/ https://www.facebook.com/meztaka https://www.facebook.com/metsamatarada</p>
<p>04. – 09.2020. (3rd reporting period) The Forest Trail image Brochure published – inform general public and stakeholders.</p>	<p>General public, local and regional municipalities, interest groups, SMEs, other.</p>	<p>The Forest Trail image Brochure published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - for whom - availability 	<p>Roundmail news, websites.</p> <p>https://baltictrails.eu/forest/ https://www.facebook.com/meztaka https://www.facebook.com/metsamatarada</p>

<p>03.2020 - 03.2021 (2nd – 4th reporting periods). Forest Trail service provider regional workshops/national events – inform service providers.</p>	<p>SMEs, local and regional municipalities.</p>	<p>Local stakeholders will be invited to the regional workshops/national events: - possibilities to participate in the Forest Trail product and marketing; - benefits from joining the Forest Trail product; - tourist service providers interested to attract and be prepared for hiking tourists can receive the Hikers' Friendly guidelines and label.</p>	<p>Roundmail news, websites – info for each event. https://baltictrails.eu/forest/</p>
<p>04.2020 - 09.2020 (3rd reporting period). Trail marking starts - inform about project progress, maintain target audience interest and involvement.</p>	<p>General public, local and regional municipalities, interest groups, SMEs, other.</p>	<p>- Trail marking is an open event, local stakeholders and general public invited to participate; - Trail marking event schedule published; - Posts from trail marking events in social networks.</p>	<p>Roundmail news, social networks, websites. https://baltictrails.eu/forest/ https://www.facebook.com/meztaka https://www.facebook.com/metsamatarada</p>
<p>By 30.09.2020 (3rd reporting period). Forest Trail web site launched – inform general public and stakeholders.</p>	<p>General public, local and regional municipalities, interest groups, SMEs, other.</p>	<p>- What is the Forest Trail; - why go hiking the Forest Trail; - What information is available from the web site; - Forest Trail visual identity and marking; - How to use the web site and plan a hiking trip.</p>	<p>Press release, social networks, websites. https://baltictrails.eu/forest/ https://www.facebook.com/meztaka https://www.facebook.com/metsamatarada</p>
<p>By 30.09.2020 (3rd reporting period). LV and EE national and regional media trips to present the Forest Trail - invite media to participate.</p>	<p>LV and EE national and regional media</p>	<p>- Media trip dates and programme; - Forest Trail general info (what it is, why come)</p>	<p>Roundmail news to media list.</p>
<p>By 30.09.2020 (3rd reporting</p>	<p>International</p>	<p>- Media trip dates and programme; - Forest Trail info – what it is, why</p>	<p>Roundmail news to media and tour operator list.</p>

<p>period). International media/Fam trips to present the Forest Trail – invite media to participate.</p>	<p>media/tour operators</p>	<p>come.</p>	
<p>12.2020 – 03.2021 (3rd reporting period). The Forest Trail tour Guidebook available – inform general public and stakeholders.</p>	<p>General public, local and regional municipalities, interest groups, SMEs, other.</p>	<p>- The Forest Trail Guidebook availability and contents; - Start planning your hiking trips!</p>	<p>Press release, social networks, websites. https://baltictrails.eu/forest/ https://www.facebook.com/meztaka https://www.facebook.com/metsamatarada</p>
<p>Beginning of 2020. and beginning of 01.2021. (2nd and 4th reporting periods). Calendar of events along The Forest Trail route – inform general public.</p>	<p>General public</p>	<p>Calendar of events along The Forest Trail route online – plan your hiking trips!</p>	<p>Social networks, websites. https://baltictrails.eu/forest/ https://www.facebook.com/meztaka https://www.facebook.com/metsamatarada</p>
<p>01.2020 – 03.2021 (2nd and 4th reporting periods). Participation in travel fairs – inform general public that Forest Trail information will be available, inform stakeholders about marketing activities,</p>	<p>General public, local and regional municipalities, interest groups, SMEs, other.</p>	<p>- participation in travel fairs.</p>	<p>Websites, social networks https://baltictrails.eu/forest/ https://www.facebook.com/meztaka https://www.facebook.com/metsamatarada</p>

inform tourism industry about the Forest Trail.			
By 03.2021 (4th reporting period). Project final event – invite participants	local and regional municipalities, interest groups, SMEs, other.	- Event promo information - programme, registration	Roundmail news, social networks, websites. https://baltictrails.eu/forest/ https://www.facebook.com/meztaka https://www.facebook.com/metsamatarada
By 03.2021 (4th reporting period). Project completed – inform general public and stakeholders about all results.	General public, local and regional municipalities, interest groups, SMEs, other.	- Forest Trail general info; - Forest Trail web site; - Forest Trail promo publications (image brochure, tour guidebook, hiking tour manual); - Forest Trail implementation story; - Forest Trail integrated in mobile app Nature Tourism; - Forest Trail integrated with the nature data management system "Ozols" for planners; nature conservationists. publicly accessible; - Forest Trail as part of European long distance paths; - Project final event.	Press release, social networks, websites. https://baltictrails.eu/forest/ https://www.facebook.com/meztaka https://www.facebook.com/metsamatarada

6. Responsibilities for implementation

The activities will be carried out by project staff and subcontracted marketing specialists. Partners will coordinate communication activities and will make detailed schedule in partner meetings. Communication plan will be revised and adapted to the project progress and results. The lead partner is responsible for overall Forest Trail marketing. Partners are responsible for their specific marketing activities according to their tasks in the project.

7. Evaluation

Effectiveness of communication measures will be measured by:

- number of attendants in project events (stakeholder events, media trips, final event),
- media coverage following press releases,
- web statistics (social networks, websites).

8. Budget

The project management will follow communication expenses to stay within the approved budget and ensure efficient communication throughout the project lifecycle as planned.