

# soil4life

What is essential is invisible to the eye

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#SOIL4LIFE

# COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT



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## Introduction

This toolkit is created to support the implementation of local projects focusing on soil management and conservation.

### More about the Soil4Life project:

Soil4Life is a European project that involves Italian, French and Croatian partners, which aims to promote sustainable use of the soil as a strategic, limited and non-renewable resource. A goal in line with the commitment signed by the European countries at the United Nations table, through adherence to the Sustainable Development Goals - SDG.

Co-financed by the European Commission through the Life programme, Soil4Life involves associations and research institutions convinced that the soil must be preserved with concrete actions and policies, supported by analyses and data that allow monitoring of the ecological status. Soil4Life pursues the application of the Voluntary Guidelines for sustainable soil management promoted by FAO, adapting them to national, regional and local contexts, and provides information and support to territorial planning involving the agricultural sector and sector professionals (agronomists, geologists, urban planners and designers). Soil4Life also aims to increase citizens' awareness of soil protection and to raise awareness among national and EU institutions of the need to adopt adequate regulations to stop soil consumption and prevent its degradation.

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Some of the specific project objectives include:

- Improving governance of land-use decision-making processes at national, regional and local level
- Providing decision makers and stakeholders with the information necessary for soil protection and planning support tools
- Increasing knowledge and awareness of farmers and the agricultural world on the role of agriculture in soil protection
- Increasing knowledge and awareness in the world of freelancers (agronomists, architects, geologists and surveyors) about the soil problem
- Achieving a higher level of citizen consent to policies in favour of soil protection
- Raising awareness among community institutions and other member states about the need to adopt adequate regulations to reduce land consumption and to promote sustainable use.
- Promoting the reduction of soil consumption in urban planning.
- Increasing awareness of farms and stakeholders (institutions, technicians, citizenship), with respect to ecosystem services generated by the adoption of appropriate practices to maintain or restore adequate organic carbon content in agricultural soils.

<http://soil4life.eu/en/gli-obiettivi/>

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## Photo Tips!

Pictures are very important for every communication campaign. They catch the eye, they create empathy between the public and your organisation, they manage spacing between texts and allow to illustrate any kind of speech. Remember the saying: 'an image is worth a thousand words!'

### GOOD PRACTICE:

- Try to use the best quality high definition photos you can. If your organization does not own a good camera, you can ask your volunteers if they possess one. Smartphones can also have a good camera resolution.
- Be sure your subject is in focus, well lighted, your photo nicely composed. A good photo is a more impactful photo.

### BAD PRACTICE:

- Be sure to have the image rights of the people you are taking the picture of! Always ask permission when preparing the workcamp. If they are minors, you will need the agreement of the minor and the parents!
- If the picture you want to use doesn't belong to your organization, ask for the permission if you are able to. You can also try to find pictures labeled for non-commercial reuse. Be sure to check the legal terms of your country before using any of those pictures!! When you use an external picture, always mention the author and give credits following the instructions related to the material (see Creative Commons Policy).
- Be careful while taking pictures of minors. Be aware that it is forbidden to take pictures of minors in swimsuits or without shirts. You might have legal issues if are not cautious.
- Always give your pictures background. Do not publish a photo without any text or comment describing it. Your picture must tell a story.

### ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER

Try to show diversity in your pictures. Like in videos, you should empower your target group, give the opportunity to your volunteers to take pictures, to share their story.

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DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA  
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DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE  
AND URBANSTUDIES

ROMA



Once you have a good photo, how can we make it more expressive and attractive to showcase our events?



**ACTIONS  
SPEAK  
LOUDER  
THAN A  
POSE**  
OR A TABLE OF  
FOOD



**TAKE A  
CREATIVE  
GROUP  
PICTURE**

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## Text Tips!

Texts are a traditional way to convey a message considering all the information that we want to send to our target, at the same time we need to take into consideration that these texts can become an issue. We can fit all the information we want in a text however we also need to be direct and simple to prevent our information to be misunderstood.

*"Excuse the long letter, but I didn't have time to write a shorter one"*

Rudyard Kipling

### GOOD PRACTICE:

- 5W: What? Where? When? Why? Who? If you want to be concise, direct and simple in your texts, answer to these five questions while writing. It's an easy way to avoid missing any needed information without deviating from your point.
- Be careful with long phrases and long paragraphs. Short sentences and paragraphs with no more than 5 phrases are way more convenient to read.

### BAD PRACTICE:

- Think about who are you talking to and what vocabulary you are using. Your target may or may not be familiar with the words you are using. Don't use the same words if you talk to young people or funders. Be sure to identify your target before writing.

### ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER:

If you are thinking about creating a blog or sharing testimonies, think about empowering your volunteers by giving them the opportunity of writing their own experiences. Have in mind to share the diversity of your group.

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Keep in mind, depending on your country, about the language you want to use. Do you want to target a specific group? Do you want to use a broader language like English, taking the risk to exclude some of your targets?

If you have the resources, consider hiring a translator. Ask around! Maybe some of your colleagues or former volunteers can help you reach more people by translating your text in as many different languages as they can.

Picture the communication of the action as a story that you want to tell, not a report. What do you want to highlight about the training? Something special happened? Did you go for a walk? Good weather? Bad weather? In the examples, linked before you can find some of these ways of explaining what you did during the day. We don't a two-pages story, with 5 lines maximum it will be okay. Remember to pick something "different" or "special" that happened and combine it with some information of what you learned/activities that you did.

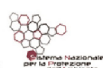
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## Video Tips!

Videos can be a great tool to promote all kind of content. They usually meet a big audience on Social Media if done correctly. Some may think that making video requires a lot of content and skills, but we will try to give you some tips to produce impactful video for all kind of purpose.

### GOOD PRACTICE:

- When realizing a promotion video, keep in mind that the length should fit the medium used and the focusing capacity of audiences. Most of the time, your videos shouldn't last more than 5 minutes. If your video features more than one testimony, think about splitting your "long" video into shorter ones that will be easier to share. If needed you can keep a long version for live events.
- Try to be dynamic! Use a fast montage of quick shots to emphasize the energy of what you are promoting.
- Be careful with the music you use. You can find free-to-use music on Youtube Audio Library (<https://www.youtube.com/audiolibrary/music>). If your organization has the possibility to spend some money on Video Creation, don't hesitate to purchase music tracks! We will never be insisting enough on the importance of music in a video. You can find some resources on website like epidemic sounds (13€/month)
- Use your funders and partner's logos at the end or beginning of your video. It gives more credibility to your action and acknowledge their action. This may also be a requirement by the funder.
- Try to talk with your volunteers! Maybe some of them have skills related to video editing or film direction!

### BAD PRACTICE:

- When editing a video, please be careful with your music volume. Think about lowering it when you want your protagonists to be heard.
- Try to avoid filming or editing long texts into your videos. It can be exhausting for your public to be forced to focus on a text for too long.
- Think outside of the box. Use different format like "Draw my life" or "Stop-motion animation"

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## Social Media

Think of Social Media as a dense network of individuals and institutions that you can contact directly or indirectly. Sharing a message on Social Media allows you to reach all the contacts on your network. If these contacts find your content compelling, they might share it in return, allowing you to reach a new network of individuals, those of this contact.

This way of working makes Social Media great tools to reach out to huge amount of people. Another specificity of Social Media is the public they attract. You will more commonly find youth and youth actors on Social Media rather than on traditional ones. Be careful about the fact that your target has to be on Social Media to be able to reach them! This type of Media requires indeed a computer (or a phone), an internet connection and the ability to use both.

Another issue is the fact that information and messages on Social Media are susceptible to trends. What is one day well-shared and visible might become has-been and forgotten. Being on social media means that you are susceptible to judgment. There are no filters when it comes to criticism or opinions.

There are two things that you shouldn't forget about when you are posting on social media: tagging and hashtags. These allow you to make links between your posts and the global network of Social Media publications. It also allows the users to find your content more easily.

The OK hand emoji has been officially recognised as a hate symbol by the Anti-Defamation League. It is necessary to understand what is being said and, for that, we should know the meanings of symbols used in social media. You can read this article by The Guardian to learn more.



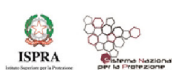
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## Facebook

### GOOD PRACTICE:

- Short messages are more likely to be seen and shared on Facebook. Think about limiting your text to a maximum of 20-25 words. The shorter the better!
- Use images and videos on your posts. Posts with images and videos are more likely to be seen.
- Use relevant hashtags. Check the background and the rating of the hashtag you want to use. Think about inventing your own hashtag if you want to create a feed on a particular event or subject.
- In Facebook, you have the option to “boost” your posts to allow the post to reach a specific target. When boosting your post, you will have the option to choose the audience you want to reach. Think about your audience, your message, and whom you want to communicate with.

### BAD PRACTICE:

- Be careful with image rights on Facebook.
- On Facebook, every picture and video posted becomes the property of Facebook. The Social Media will be able to use your content for other purposes than the ones you had in mind.
- Be careful when sharing news that you find on Facebook. Check the sources and the author of the information. Can you trust them? Why are they posting this content? Are they official? These questions must be answered before sharing anything.
- Be sure that the information you are sharing is in line with your organisations values and that the content is not sensitive. If you are in doubt check with a person who can advise you.
- Be sure to tag other institutions, individuals and sources to give more credibility to what you are posting and sharing. Beware of fake news!

Using hashtags is always an option. It will permit you to reunite all the posts in one same hashtag, like an album. Make it simple and ensure that everyone know about it.

Tag networks and organizations that are included in your post to strengthen the network and to ensure that they share it. Your post will arrive to more people.

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## Twitter

### GOOD PRACTICE:

- Use hashtags and tags to reach more people. Don't forget to tag every relevant Twitter user that might appear in your posts. Think about Twitter as a network so if you tag people and they retweet your posts, you can spread your post and reach an audience that wasn't following you.
- Use concise and simple language. Be inclusive! Act as if your followers don't know anything about you.
- Use simple phrases.
- Use Twitter to link all the contents you publish on the internet.
- Pin the relevant tweets at the top of your profile page. The first thing your audience will see is the tweet that you pinned

### BAD PRACTICE:

- Don't post pictures of long texts
- Be careful with humor, sarcasm and irony. Because Twitter has a character limitation you might not have the space to convey correctly your message. Humor can be a great way to reach your audience and to let your organization be known, IF you know how to use it correctly.

### ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER:

As with the other Social Media, Twitter has its own translating tool. Be careful still with auto-translation.

Twitter as a platform has his limitations: you cannot empower your actors and showing diversity might be a challenge because of the character limitation.

Be also aware that Twitter is not available in the following countries: North Korea, China, Iran and Turkmenistan.



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## Instagram

Instagram is a platform that highlights videos and pictures rather than text. You can post two types of content: stories and posts. Stories are a type of content that only last 24 hours on your profile. They can be text, infographics, pictures, videos. Posts can be pictures and videos that last less than 60" and can be shared with text. In your Instagram profile you can link your other social media's profiles and your webpage.

One element that you need to think about Instagram is that people can reach your profile randomly because you may have interests in common. Because of that, some users can visit your profile but they won't decide to follow you or not because of your content but because of the appearance of your profile. On Instagram your content's rights will be split between you and the platform, 50% will belong to Instagram and 50% to you.

### GOOD PRACTICE:

- Use hashtags and tags to reach more people. When someone uses this channel, they have the option to follow hashtags and keep themselves updated of the different topics that can be interested in.
- Use stories to share content but also to relate your content to the different channels that your organization has active. Don't see Instagram as one channel, but a way to promote contents that you published on other platforms.
- Don't limit yourself publishing photos and videos. This social media can also be useful to promote posters, flyers and infographics. Take advantage of it! If Instagram gives you lemons... you know.

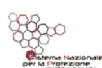
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## BAD PRACTICE:

- If your idea is to publish videos that are longer than 60", that's not your platform. Think about using Facebook or YouTube. Instagram can be useful to promote this video but not to watch it!
- On Instagram, you can only post a maximum of 30 hashtags per post. Be careful that these are related to your topic. Do a small research about the hashtags that you are going to use before using them!
- Instagram doesn't like text! Users won't take their time to read what you write below your picture. Try to use pictures, videos and infographics as storytellers.

## ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER:

Empower, empower, empower! Instagram is a good platform to empower your volunteers and make them the creators and editors of their own stories and experiences. Want an example? See what The Guardian did in their Instagram profile during the Climate March:

<https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/18020322652089218/>

While you empower your participants, show their diversity. Let them be creative and show their own cultures, let them create the content and become actors in your Social Media strategy.



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