Using social media
A handbook for EU-funded projects

EU Neighbourhood Info Centre
An ENPI project

2014 edition

www.enpi-info.eu

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Introduction

This handbook has been prepared by the EU Neighbourhood Info Centre and builds upon elements covered at the workshop "Communicating an EU-funded project" held in Neighbourhood Partner Countries.

Its target audience is EU-funded projects and aims at providing them with a basic knowledge of what social media is, their differences and use. It includes tips and examples, most of which are based on the Info Centre's experiences.

One important factor anyone interested in social media should be aware of is that it evolves fast. Therefore you have to be on a constant look out for what is new!

Going social

Social networking and communities are fashionable "buzzwords", with everyone from NGOs, to multinationals and governments wanting to get on board to reach Internet audiences. But it is not only fashionable: it actually works.

So be prepared and be there!

social network thread web share internet forum post

Engage in social media to send your message to a wider audience, and to:

- reach new audiences who have less interest in conventional media channels;
- talk to people who consume information through multi-media.

Be where the **virtual conversation** is:

- social media is more personal and gives citizens a sense of ownership of projects and actions;
- online communication signals openness to engage actively in virtual debate.

Most social media platforms are free to use, though premium versions and the possibility to pay for the promotion of posts are becoming more and more popular. Having said this, it is still possible to generate significant traffic without having to pay.

Be aware: social media are not self-sustained. In order to take advantage of them, you need to dedicate some time every day. Therefore someone in your project needs to take on this role or you can have a social media expert part-time.

There are dozens of social media tools, but for the majority of projects for which this handbook is written the most popular are **Facebook** and **Twitter**. Through this handbook, we try to give you a better understanding of social media and how it is used, as well as valuable tips and examples.

Social Media: from monologue to dialogue

What is social media?

Regular media is a one-way street – you can read a newspaper or listen to a report on television, but have very limited opportunity to give your thoughts on the matter. **Social media**, on the other hand, is a web-based two-way street that gives you the opportunity to communicate and get into contact with people you know or who share some of your interests. Your **virtual community** is not only a place to find information, but also a place to organize events, express your opinions, share your photos, meet new people, promote your work, participate in campaigns and much more.

In order to understand the magnitude and effect of social media, below are some figures collected in January 2014. The speed with which social media facts and figures change (they will be completely outdated by the time you read these lines) is confirmation of how popular they are and how rapidly their popularity grows.

Facebook
1.3 billion users
680 million mobile users

YouTube
900 million visits every month
4.2 billion video views per day

Twitter
645 million users
145 million monthly active users

Linkedin
277 million users
2 new members per second

* Data source: Statistic Brain 2014

Social media
is the interaction among people in which they create, share, or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content.
Wikipedia

Getting started

There is nothing worse than starting to use social media and then not being able to keep it up, engage regularly with your followers or pass on interesting information. This would not help your communication effort and does not look professional.

Like in everything else you do, if you decide to use social media you need to do it in an organized and structured manner. Below we give you a diagramme of the steps you will need to take in order to engage in social media.

- Define goals
- Know your target audience
- Decide who manages
- Develop a strategy
- Choose tools
- Build and experiment for effect
- Soft launch
- Launch officially

The 4 Cs of social media

In writing, people take guidance from the 5 Ws that they need to answer in their intro paragraph – who, what, when, where, why (more in the Info Centre writing handbook).

Social media have their own simple guidelines, the 4 Cs.

1 Contribute – share content you produced that can be useful to others, use contributions from others;

2 Converse – listen and respond, have your say and contribute to a discussion; this expands your sphere of influence;

3 Connect – prioritise and come together with others, be they a group, organisation etc; target influencers who can spread your message;

4 Community – build online relations with people all over the world, you learn from them, they learn from you.

TIP *Try many things and learn from mistakes*

Which social media?

There are differences between each type of social media and they are used in different ways. So you should decide which to use based on your resources, your target audience, and what you want to achieve through social media.

Below we help you understand each social media tool and how it is used:

Facebook

A platform designed for people to share and communicate, so it is personal. Users register to use the site, they create a profile, add other users as friends, exchange messages and join groups or 'like' pages for which they have a special interest. Facebook is becoming more and more popular for EU-funded projects, instead of a website, as it is free to create and to update. But beware, you do need to spend time to update and engage!

The Info Centre has a Facebook Page, so join us there!

Facebook page or group?
This is a common question projects have, as it can be confusing.
Below we explain each.
Facebook Pages enable public figures, businesses, organizations and other entities to create an authentic and public presence on Facebook. Unlike your profile, Facebook Pages are visible to everyone on the Internet by default. You, and every person on Facebook, can connect with these Pages by becoming a fan and then receive their updates in your News Feed and interact with them.
Facebook Groups are for small group communication and for people to share their common interests. Groups allow people to come together around a common cause, issue or activity, to organize, express objectives, discuss issues, post photos and share related content. When you create a group, you can decide whether to make it publicly available to anyone, require administrator approval for members to join or keep it private and by invitation only. Like with Pages, new posts are included in News Feeds and members can interact and share.

Twitter

An online social networking and microblogging service that enables users to send and read "tweets", which are text messages limited to 140 characters. Registered users can read and post tweets, but unregistered users can only read them. Twitter, which is more immediate and needs to be constantly updated and engaging, is not as popular with projects. It is used by bigger EU-funded programmes like the Anna Lindh Foundation and the European Training Foundation.

Follow the Info Centre tweets!

In this example of an Info Centre tweet you see that there are 4 characters more, which means it had to be cut to be sent!

LinkedIn

This is a professional network, where you create a detailed profile of yourself and connect with people and groups that have similar interests. It is increasingly becoming a place for job seekers and those looking to hire people. If someone wants to know more about your professional path, they can visit your LinkedIn profile. On LinkedIn you can find many people, organisations and companies with some relation to the EU. There are also LinkedIn groups with special interests that you can join and follow.

The Info Centre is on LinkedIn, with a jobs and opportunities profile, and a sub-group on Communications.

Google+

Designed to be the social extension of Google, it has experienced a growth in its short life unknown to all other social networks. It competes with Facebook and has introduced two useful free services: Hangouts and Circles.

Hangout is a free video chat service that allows both one-on-one chats and group chats with up to 10 users at a time. In addition to video chatting, Google Hangouts users can share documents, scratchpads, images and videos with other users.

Circles are a way to group people together based around the relation you have with them. You may have circles for different members of your family, work colleagues, interest groups etc.

Google also manages a news portal aggregator called Google News.

The Info Centre has been approved as a contributor to Google News, which means that when searching on a specific topic on which we've sent out a news alert, it will show up, usually quite prominently.

Instagram

A fast and free way to share instances of your life through a photo or a video, which is becoming increasingly more popular with youth. You register with the app first, take a picture or a video, use filters to transform it and then post to Instagram and even share to Facebook, Twitter, etc. It also has a feature named Instagram Direct that allows users to send photos only to a specific user or group of users, rather than having it be viewable by all.

YouTube

A video-sharing website, owned by Google, on which users can upload, view and share videos. It uses Adobe flash video to display video content included clips, TV clips, music video, educational videos etc. It is used mainly by individuals but also companies and media corporations like the BBC. Unregistered users can watch videos, and registered users can upload an unlimited number of videos.

The Info Centre maintains an ENPI Tube on the Neighbourhood, with self-produced videos and others collected from official sources and projects!

TIP *Choose only the social media that meet your needs... they may be free but someone needs to work on them!*

SOCIAL MEDIA EXPLAINED (DONUT EDITION)

twitter « I'm eating a donut »

facebook « I like donuts »

foursquare « This is where I eat donuts »

You Tube « Here's a video of me eating a donut »

Instagram Fast beautiful photo sharing. « Here's a vintage photo of my donut »

Pinterest « Here's a pretty donut recipe »

imgur « Here's a viral picture of my donut »

Linked in « My skills include donut eating »

Spotify « Now listening to "Donuts" »
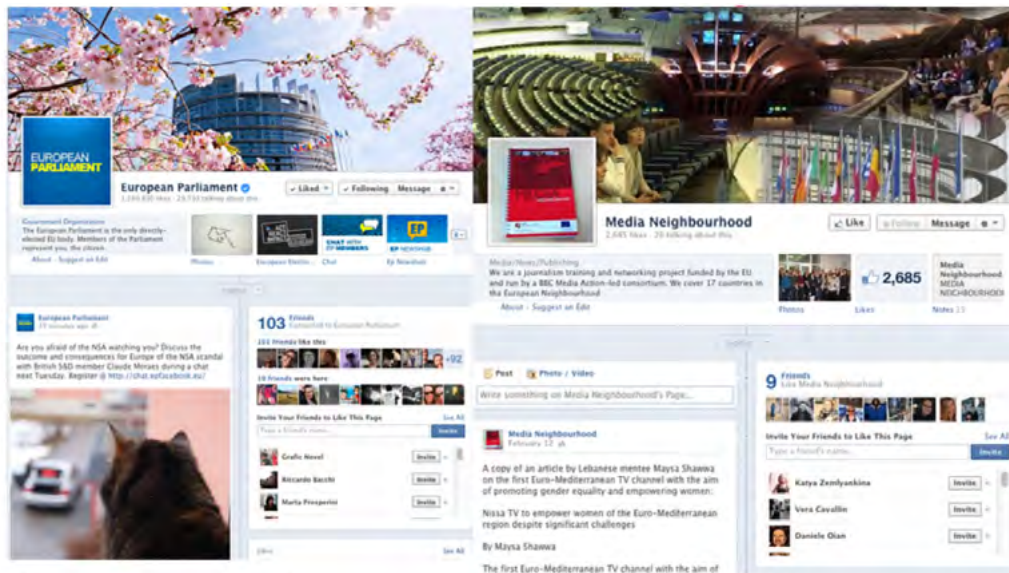
Google+ « I'm a Google employee who eats donuts »

"The donut edition" taken from Apartment 46 blog.

A new era of equalitarian platforms…

Social media like Facebook and Twitter offer the same opportunities to all users. From there on, it is how you make use of them that make a difference.

European Parliament vs regional project: On the left is the profile of the EP – on the right, the profile of Media Neighbourhood, an EU-funded project!

Writing for social media

An important rule for good communication is to write in a fast and engaging way so that your message comes across loud and clearly and reaches your audience immediately. This general rule is even more important when you are dealing with social media.

It is true that in social media you have friends and followers that have specific interests and desires. However, they still receive dozens of messages a day from different sources so your aim is to be able to interest them, engage them and interact with them. Therefore you should try to abide by the basic rule of making your messages relevant, useful, and interesting.

What you write for social media should…
- Be easy to understand and share;
- Include hyperlinks so people can find out more;
- Come across as friendly, conversational, and engaging;
- Prompt action, asking your audience to do or think of something;
- Come across as relevant so people think this matters to them;
- Be useful or interesting to your target audience.

How you write for social media…
- Relevant and intriguing information at the beginning of your post;
- Ask a question, that always works well;
- Keep messages short but relevant;
- For tweets you want shared make them less than the 140 characters so people don't have to cut when re-tweeting;
- Test your message to be sure your readers pick it up in less than a second;
- Provide enough context so your message can stand alone;
- Avoid acronyms that people may not know;
- Use simple words that people can easily recognise and understand;
- Write in first or second person (I, we, you);
- Tone should be natural and casual, but still professional;
- Use action verbs such as learn, watch, join.

And finally…
- Be aware of the importance of length: short, very short, too short…

TIP *Don't forget to tag, this is very important for both Twitter and Facebook*
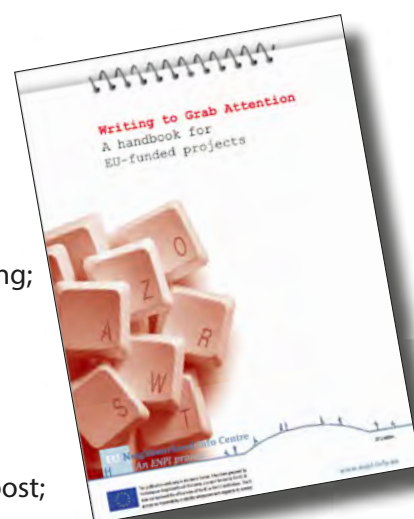
The EU Neighbourhood Info Centre has a handbook on writing, from which one can pick up more tips that would also be useful for social media writing: Writing to Grab Attention.

Producing content that works

Social media have their own way of expression and are particularly good for communicating certain issues and activities, but content cannot just be copied and pasted from a website. It needs to be adapted to better fit the communication framing you decide.

Here are some real examples
from the EU Neighbourhood Info Centre.

### How to take advantage of the high quality content available on the web from other sources

This article was taken from the Washington Post because besides having good content it included a great infographic that works well in social media.

A cover photo produced for planned weekly posts

The EU Neighbourhood Info Centre produces a weekly list with the latest funding opportunities for projects in the EU Neighbourhood. Instead of copying and pasting the news alert on Facebook as it is on the website, we create a cover photo to make the content more attractive on social media.

Reworking an Info Centre news alert for Facebook

For its Facebook page, the Info Centre doesn't simply pick up the intro to one of its news stories and use it as it is. The text is adapted to the medium (see more in Writing for Social Media section). Also, we use photos to attract our friends. What you should do with photos is upload the image first and then add the text with a shortened link.
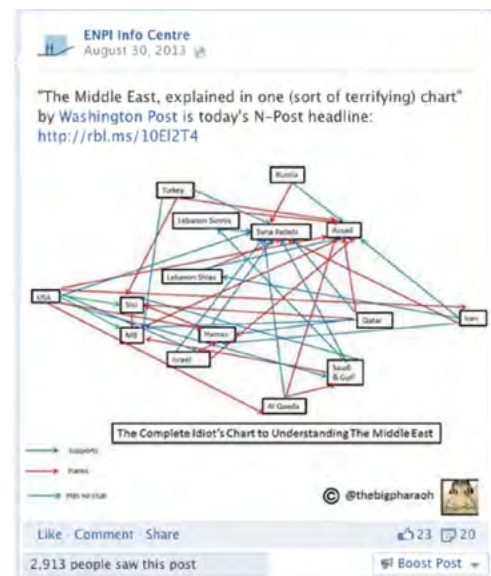
Social media key terms

The rapid evolution of social media has been accompanied by the development of a lexicon related to them! Below we give you explanation of some basic terms, in alphabetical order.

Abbreviations While tweeting you actually see how many characters are left so you have to keep cutting. Just as in text messaging, abbreviations are common.

Year	**>**	Yr
European Commission	**>**	EC
To be honest	**>**	TBH
In my opinion	**>**	IMO

Avatar Better one avatar for all. That is, if you are subscribed to multiple social platforms it is always better to subscribe with the same username so that people knowing you on Facebook will also easily find you on Twitter, for example, typing the same username in the search field.

DM or Direct Message This is how you refer to a private message you send or receive (providing both parties follow each other) on Twitter. It is usually used when you want to contact someone directly.

Favourite A button under each tweet through which you can show your appreciation for a tweet and to save it.

#ff 'Follow Friday' a hashtag used on Twitter on a Friday to highlight other Twitter followers you think are interesting. Also used to thank your followers who have helped out via Twitter during the previous week.

#

 # (Hashtag) is the symbol used in front of a key-word in a post, initially a practice created by users themselves out of their necessity to categorize content, but now also used outside twitter. It is used to search for what people are saying about something and is particularly important to organize a tweeting event, which is usually live and you want to follow it.

Influencers These are leading individuals who are very active on social media and have the ability to sway behaviours, thoughts, or actions of their community in the online sphere.

Link shortener Links are very useful for people wanting to find out more, but often URLs are very long. The good news is that there are free online tools to shorten your links. We recommend Bitly (there is also 'TinyURL') as it has good graphics, an automatic copy of the shortened link and a history of the shortened links. Short links are also becoming important for Facebook given the more frequent use of pictures. The automated picture generated by Facebook does not always look good. For this reason, it is good practice to post a picture first, then write the text and then add the link so it ends up looking like in the example. Always double check the link works before posting.

Photo As photos are very important, have a look at this infographic that gives you all the information about the different sizes photos one can use on a Facebook page.

Post The name for dissemination of original content into a network of users.

Profile Your social media profile is your image, how you appear in the public sphere. Having in mind the increased time spent on the Internet and the intensified interactions we experience on social media every day, social media profiles are becoming increasingly more important. Therefore:

- Respect formatting – for example: posting a picture that is too small would make the post look bad because on some supports (Ipad, desktop computers, etc.) the picture might appear with white stripes around;

- Use good quality pictures and high quality material;

- Pay attention to grammar;

- Provide concise, precise and hyperlinked information.

RT or Retweet The expression used when you reuse a tweet already sent out and the originator is acknowledged. That is you RT the actual tweet!

Share Used to describe sharing another person's post through the same network. Which means, for example, when you share the Facebook post of one of your friends.

Tag Tags are used to notify another user of something you have sent out on Twitter or shared on Facebook. Also they inform users of another user's existence or address a comment to a particular user. Before clicking 'post', always ask yourself: have I tagged everyone?

@

Facebook and Twitter also use the @ symbol to tag other users or pages.

Timeline Basically it's your profile. It's the collection of photos, stories and experiences that tell your story on Facebook and Twitter and shows your feed in a chronological order.

Thread A conversation flow, often used on an e-mail list or web forum by messages that have the same subject line.

8+1 social media FAQ

1   **Do social media really work?**
We are convinced as we have seen their effect in practice… traffic to the Info Centre website almost doubled within days of the project becoming active on social media. Social media is becoming increasingly important in communications, telling your story and promoting your work… and you cannot afford to be left behind!

2   **How will we decide whether or not we use social media?**
You will decide depending on the results you get. Our suggestion is to wait a little bit before saying "social media are not for me". It can take some time, but in the end you will find out how important is to engage on social media for your organisation.

3   **Will we need to employ someone to promote our project on social media?**
This is the ideal scenario, but of course not all projects can afford to have a full-time social media expert working for them. As with other communication activities, plan and put together a social media strategy, identify your needs and means. Also look into the option of having someone part-time, or even outsource your social media activity as today many people are working as consultants on social media.

4   **Is there social media etiquette?**
Exactly as in the real world, it's good to be honest and respectful of others. So act on social media in the same way as you would in your personal life. Online you can find an interesting discussion on the issue.

5   **Will I get nasty comments?**
Many people feel less constrained by social behaviour rules while on the Internet, due to the fact that there is no eye contact with the person they are interacting with. Depending on the issues you are working on, you will get more or less hard comments. That's the Internet! Don't get discouraged, they will be very few, if we are to judge from our experience.

6   **Should I reply to negative comments?**
Yes if they are negative comments, no if they contain abuse or threats. In this case, comments should be deleted and reported to the social media company.
There is usually a button on the side of the comment to do this.

7   **Can I delete a Facebook post or a Tweet once it's out?**
Yes, you can actually either delete or hide a Facebook post from your timeline. Have a look at how to do it on the relevant Facebook page. You can also delete your own tweet, but you cannot delete a tweet or a re-tweet from another user's timeline. Have a look at how to do it on the relevant Twitter page.

8   **Is it good practice to delete a post from Facebook and Twitter?**
No it doesn't look good on you, so think before you post. Also be aware that the more time goes by, the more chances that people saw your post, shared or re-tweeted it, or even kept a record of it (for example, a screenshot).

+1   **What is a live tweet?**
A live-tweet ("LT") is a way to start a conversation on Twitter and to comment on a live event, in real time. Live tweeting's main component is the hashtag (#) generally given by the event organizers or in some cases it can be defined by users. Speakers at an event or others interested in the subject are tagged and quoted. Through a search of the hashtag on Twitter one can find all relevant tweets and the people using it. When a hashtag goes viral, Twitter recommends it in "Trending Topic". The use of photos is a good idea too.

Promoting your Facebook page and building audience

Creating a Facebook page is a way to promote what you are doing. Therefore reaching out and constantly working towards building up your audience is important. Below some tips on what you could do to build a good audience at the launch of your page.

Through your page

- Invite e-mail contacts - there is an import function
- Invite your friends to like your page
- Ask your friends to invite their friends
- Share your page and find something new you've posted to share again
- Paid promotion: promoting your Page from the admin panel is a way to create ads that will show in News Feed and on the right side of Facebook. You can also create ads for your Page from the ads create tool.
  The amount you pay to promote your Page depends on how many people you want to reach.
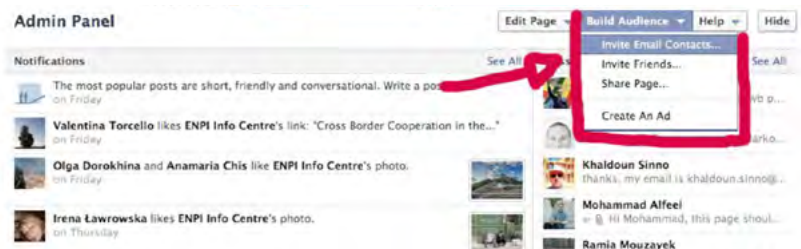
The admin panel on a Facebook page, showing you the buttons you use to promote your posts.

More tips

- Put your fan page url in your email
- Have your url on your business cards
- Put a link on your and your team's personal Facebook profile
- Include a tag in your YouTube videos
- Tag other well-trafficked fan pages in your update
- Use all your icons/links on all your social media
- Map allies – do a search to establish which of your partners are already on social media and see you hook up

Facebook has what it calls a Desktop Help www.facebook.com/help page from where you can definitely get many answers to questions, as well as ideas.

TIP *Don't over self-promote and concentrate on good posting.*

Promoting your Twitter account and building audience

Launching a Twitter account can be a good self-promotion activity. It is meant for people you want to communicate with, but there is not the mutual agreeing on friendship as in Facebook. You can follow as many strangers as you want. Anyone can follow you and you can follow anyone. Sometimes people decide to make their profile private, which means they approve before you can follow them, but this is very rare!

Twitter is increasingly being described as a personal news-wire. It makes you approachable and helps you to find new customers, and it reveals their tastes, expands your ranges, reveals your interests, it provides feedback and it lets you share.

Some tips

- Identify your #hashtags and use them, you will be connected to users with similar interests. Check www.hashtags.org
- If you want to be successful you should give an added value: tweet about what you really know and share your knowledge;
- Share useful and original links;
- Answer questions;
- Retweet others;
- Build your relationships.

If you start a tweet with the @ and twitter user name in front, e.g. @enpi_info, this means it will be visible only to enpi_info, you and anyone who happens to follow both of you. So if you want to reach a wider audience, avoid this common mistake, as your followers would never see that tweet appear in their feeds.

Twitter is a conversation, so join it…

- Start tweeting, following and tagging, this is the only way to get followers on Twitter
- Have in mind that the more you interact and share interesting content, the more followers you'll get

Twitter has a help centre that may be able to answer any questions.

Tips from social media gurus...

Tweet

Sean Gardner @2morrowknight
Social media is not just an activity; it is an investment of valuable time and resources. Surround yourself with people who not just support you and stay with you, but inform your thinking about ways to WOW your online presence.
624,000 followers on Twitter, Forbes number 1 social media power influencer in 2013).

Susan Cooper @buzzedition
Engage, Enlighten, Encourage and especially… just be yourself! Social media is a community effort, everyone is an asset.
69,000 followers, Forbes number 43 social media power influencer in 2013).

Christine Korda @christinekorda
This is a learning process and sometimes you have to fall in order to learn things.
88,600 followers on Twitter, Forbes number 44 social media power influencer in 2013).

Info Centre best practice

Promoting a photo competition

On the occasion of EU Cooperation Day (21 September 2013), the Info Centre, in cooperation with the INTERACT ENPI programme, used Facebook to invite all EU-funded projects implemented in the EU Neighbourhood to submit their best photo, describing how their project is making a difference. Emails to potential participants were sent out before the competition and expectations on the vote and the result announcement were gradually built up. Twitter was used to promote the event, as well as a news alert.

140 participants, 12,500 likes, and 200,000 visualisations

what made it work:

- Timing/ Partnership
- Audience building
- Networking
- Appealing prizes

- Simple rules
- Using "likes" as votes
- Special audience award
- Word of mouth

Lessons learnt

In general, visual content works better than text on social media. Moreover, this particular campaign encouraged people to interact by offering prizes to the winners and also encouraged projects to involve other people to vote for them. It was a triple win situation: the projects increased their visibility thanks to the pictures, users had fun voting and commenting, and the Info Centre generated traffic on its page.

The prizes were not something costly, but rather creative and hands on: the Info Centre offered winning projects the opportunity to have their story covered by a journalist, have photos taken by a professional photographer and the story placed in the local media!

Useful tools

Infographics: in the world of short, simple and animated, they are a great tool to show what you are doing in a very engaging way. Here are two tools that help you create Infographics: Easel.ly and Infogr.am

Huffington Post article entitled "14 Tools to Create Engaging Infographics and Images for Social Media Posts", which is worth looking at, as it is full of tips!

Pic-Monkey: a photo-editing tool with which you can quickly and easily edit a single image, create a collage or put together a design, e.g. for your Facebook cover image.

Social image resizer and Photovisi: photo related tools for resizing photos so they are fit for Facebook, Twitter and Google+, and to create a collage.

Storify: a tool used to tell stories by collecting updates from social networks, amplifying the voices that matter to create a new story format that is interactive, dynamic and social. Storytellers include journalists, bloggers, editors and people like you, too.

Rebel-mouse: a tool that aggregates posts from other sources into one. As it writes on its site, "RebelMouse is a revolutionary new way to reach, engage and grow your audience...

Timeline Slicer: is a tool for designing images for your Facebook Page or Profile. You can add images from your computer to a mock-Facebook Page or Profile, and then edit them to fit.

●
The Info Centre is using Infographics, posting them in news alerts, on our Facebook page, our Twitter feed and our LinkedIn. Here is an example.

●
" This tool is used by the Info Centre for its Neighbourhood Blog, collecting articles on the Neighbourhood.

EU Neighbourhood on Social Media

Info Centre

The Info Centre is active on social media and we engage with people interested in the Neighbourhood. Here is where you will find us:

Facebook
Twitter
LinkedIn
Flickr
YouTube
RebelMouse

Council

The EU Council is active on Facebook, with its own page, and also uses twitter to reach out to its followers. Both of these tools are mainly used to announce news and developments.

Info Centre Twitter list with EU delegations https://twitter.com/enpi_ info/eu-neighbourhood/ members

European External Action Service (EEAS)

The EEAS maintains a Facebook page from where you can mostly find news. It is equally as active on Twitter.
Reach the Delegations and others: The EEAS also has a page from which you can reach all social media – Facebook, Twitter, You Tube etc. – of both Headquarters and Delegations.

Info Centre liked pages https://www.facebook. com/browse/fanned_page s/?id=260980794911&sho wauxiliary=1

European Commission Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid

EuropeAid has a Facebook page from where you can get news and stories from the field. It also has a Twitter account.
You will also find Commissioners, the European Parliament, and plenty of other officials on social media.

European Parliament

The European Parliament is extremely active on both Facebook and Twitter, using these tools to engage with citizens in a more relaxed and informal manner and also to communicate information and news.

TIP *To find the various EU-funded projects on Facebook, visit the EU Neighbourhood Info Centre Facebook page and go through our likes and friends! Also go through our Twitter account for those active there. The same applies to the pages of others you are interested in – that's a way to build audience.*

How to stay updated

There is no way to always be updated, for the simple reason that the social media world is evolving very fast. Try not to miss the main changes and identify those people around you who could help you out.

The most popular information website on social media and new technologies is www.mashable.com, where you will also find a very good Facebook Guide and Twitter Guide.

Also have a look at:
Tech crunch http://techcrunch.com
Gizmodo http://gizmodo.com

Find out more…

EU Internet guidebook & writing for the web
http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/index_en.htm

Use of Social media in EU communication
http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/go_live/web2_0/index_en.htm

EC guidelines for staff on social media (PDF)
http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/docs/guidelines_social_media_en.pdf

The EEAS and social media - links
http://eeas.europa.eu/social_media/index_en.htm

Connect with the EU on Social Networks
http://europa.eu/contact/take-part/facebook/index_en.htm

Waltzing Matilda blog (European Commission webteam)
http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/waltzing_matilda/ and Twitter feed: @EC_MatildaBlog

Other Info Centre Handbooks for EU-funded projects are available online:

Writing to Grab Attention

A Journalists Handbook

A Photographers Handbook

EU Funding for the Neighbourhood and Russia

Neighbourhood Glossary South

Eastern Partnership and Russia Glossary

Visibility and Communications for EU-funded Projects

Stay connected

www.enpi-info.eu

A project implemented by
Action global communications

EU Neighbourhood Info Centre
An ENPI project