



Protect

The Right to International Protection

WP7 Policy briefing on how to
communicate about
international protection



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WP7 POLICY BRIEFING ON HOW TO COMMUNICATE ABOUT INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

for media actors—journalists, editors, media regulators, and social media users—regarding the establishment of an effective, legitimate, and resilient system of international protection for refugees:

- **The European institutions should seek to engage and communicate with civil society organizations** that support EU policies in their strategic communications to increase the reach of their message in online networks and discussion fora on this topic. Strategic communication at the EU level should also be aware that social media is not an effective medium to reach and engage with those holding views critical of the international regime for refugees and migrants.
- **The European institutions should be mindful** that many global inter-state organizations, global NGOs and global activist groups are outside of their reach on Twitter, which means not able to effectively reach many organizations interested in refugee protection issues and thus may not be able to influence the views of important players.
- **Focus on producing quality content** on social media that is shared among their peers and building relationships with ideologically diverse actors to increase their reach and influence.
- **Focus on conceptual issues and problem solving:** Journalistic coverage of migration often focuses primarily on visible events or "facts" and their actors that can be visualized. However, it is also important to cover conceptual issues and problem-solving strategies in relation to the protection of refugees.
- **Use precise language and avoid the use of "migrants" when referring to refugees:** The study found that the use of the term "migrant" in the media is associated with the policy objective of limiting refugee and asylum seeker inflows. Therefore, journalists and editors should use precise language and avoid the use of "migrants" when referring to refugees.
- **Highlight the legal status of refugees:** The study found that the designation of refugees as migrants was more frequent during the period of the European migrant and refugee crisis, indicating a relativization of their legal status and the presence of an anti-migration discourse. Therefore, it is important to highlight the legal status of refugees and avoid undermining their status.
- **Cover both traditional and social media:** The study found that traditional and social media retain their distinct characteristics in terms of scope and function when discussing migration. Particular attention should be paid to curating content in traditional and social media that can inform media organizations on how to provide a comprehensive understanding of public discourses on migration, ensure more balanced and accurate coverage of refugee issues and avoid contributing to polarization on the topic.
- **Communicate shared values and maintain ties to ideologically diverse actors:** To maximize the impact of their online communication efforts, political actors should communicate shared values similar to others in their political subsystem. In order to reach a wider audience, those active on social media must maintain ties with actors who are as ideologically diverse as possible. This can be achieved by communicating shared values in a similar way to other actors in their policy subsystem.

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