

EPR Communications Network meeting

Report

18th September 2025

10:00 – 12:00 CEST Brussels Time

Online

Participants: [Rosalie Vella Piscopo](#), Aġenzija Sapport; [Nerea Ruíz](#), AURA Foundation; [Eva Iglesias](#) and [Daniel Rojo](#), INTRAS Foundation; [Rebecca León](#), Rey Ardid Foundation; [Miguel Pradas](#) and [Susana Ortega Bataller](#), SASM Foundation, [Rhona McAuley](#) and [Ciara Allen](#), The Cedar Foundation; [Raia Mihaylova](#), EPR.

1. Welcome and introduction

After a welcoming and introduction of the participants representing six EPR members (Aġenzija Sapport, AURA Foundation, INTRAS Foundation, Rey Ardid Foundation, SASM Foundation, The Cedar Foundation) from three countries (Malta, Spain, Northern Ireland), Raia Mihaylova, EPR Communications and Events Officer, introduced the meeting agenda, including sharing of good practices, a successful communications campaign case study, and new AI trends and tools that strengthen overall messaging and efficiency. To kick-off the meeting, the group answered an Icebreaker question of: 'what communication challenge keeps you up at night?'. Responses included:

- Ensuring that we are getting the correct message across;
- How we use analytics to improve or change our work;
- How to reach all of our stakeholders and society in general with a clear and understandable message/s;
- The things I can't control like people/bots posting inappropriate content on our social pages (ex: posting links to a 'cure' for autism');
- Whether we will get back any response from the intended target audience.

2. EPR Members good practices: The Cedar Foundation and Aġenzija Sapport

The Cedar Foundation: creating an accessible podcast

Ciara Allen introduced a forward-thinking podcast initiative developed within The Cedar Foundation, a long-established service provider supporting people with disabilities, autism and brain injury since 1941. With a vision of building an inclusive society for all, the organisation delivers regional services to children and adults, guided by values of collaboration, equality, dignity, achievement and respect.

Why a Podcast?

The podcast emerged from a desire to modernise communication and deepen meaningful engagement. Recognising the growing popularity of digital audio, with podcast listening outpacing social media engagement and even local radio in Ireland, the organisation saw an opportunity to:

- Communicate services in a cost-effective and time-efficient way
- Reach new audiences through accessible, on-demand content
- Provide a platform where disabled people speak for themselves
- Capture authentic, conversational feedback that can influence organisational development

Importantly, the podcast is not a marketing broadcast. It is a tool for co-production and dialogue.

The podcast is co-hosted by a staff member with lived experience of brain injury and a volunteer who is an active member of the user forum, ensuring content is shaped collaboratively from the outset. Episodes

feature conversations with both service users and frontline staff, maintaining a natural, accessible, and conversational tone. Episodes are brief, recorded online or in person, and include captions, transcripts, and accessible social media promotion. The content is repurposed into short “evergreen” clips, allowing the organisation to extend reach and reinforce messaging across recruitment, awareness campaigns, and community events.

Ciara shared that early outcomes are highly positive. In the first quarter, episodes achieved over 1,500 content views with predominantly new audiences, particularly around autism services, children’s services, and user forum activities. Beyond audience metrics, the podcast strengthens internal learning by surfacing authentic feedback, enhances impact reporting and partnership presentations, and provides opportunities for service users to build digital production skills. By combining accessibility, authenticity, and strategic planning, the podcast functions as a co-production mechanism, a platform for lived experience, and a driver of inclusive organisational culture, demonstrating a future-focused approach to engagement and communication.

Aġenzija Sapport – running a successful campaign that leads to policy change

Next, Rosalie Vella Piscope presented Aġenzija Sapport’s campaign that focused on a long-term reform of Malta’s independent community living scheme, aligning it with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD). This reform represents a comprehensive shift, encompassing service redesign, cultural change, and legislative updates, with a campaign horizon extending to 2030. The process began with internal stakeholder engagement over 18 months and expanded to include national and international partners, including staff, service users, families, academics, policy makers, and advocacy groups.

The public phase of the initiative launched two years ago with a national consultation, designed not merely as a press announcement but as a multi-layered engagement campaign. Aġenzija Sapport produced accessible policy documents in Maltese, English, and easy-read formats, streamed a live panel event online, and coordinated intensive media outreach, combining conventional outlets with social media. A six-week consultation period allowed the public to review proposed policies and submit feedback, supported by trained helpline officers, social workers, and service staff who were prepared to address questions and guide participants through complex changes such as personal budgets, person-centered planning, and the shift away from institutional models.

Central to the campaign’s success is transparency, accessibility, and active engagement. Updates on progress and delays are communicated openly, workshops and conferences are held for service users, families, and professionals, and lived experiences are consistently highlighted through testimonials, videos, and social media content. This approach ensures both public understanding and professional alignment, supporting change management across all levels of service delivery. By combining strategic planning, continuous engagement, and narrative framing around real experiences, Aġenzija Sapport’s reform demonstrates how large-scale systemic change can be implemented inclusively, responsibly, and sustainably.

3. Case Study and Campaign Dissection Lab (group activity)

Raia Mihaylova, EPR, presented a case study and interactive activity focused on effective disability-inclusive communication, drawing on the global “#WithThe15” campaign linked to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. The campaign aimed to challenge stereotypes and shift public perceptions of people with disabilities, moving away from portrayals of individuals as “superheroes” or objects of pity and instead representing them as equal participants in everyday life.

Participants discussed how storytelling, humor, relatable scenarios, and strong visuals were used in the campaign to convey messages about inclusion and equality, highlighting the power of authentic, human-centered narratives.

Building on these insights, the session engaged participants in a practical activity: translating the principles of the campaign into a social media post focused on employment for people with disabilities. The discussion emphasised framing messages positively, showcasing real-life success stories, and highlighting independence, career progression, and the diverse contributions people with disabilities make in the workplace. Participants explored audience targeting, visual formats (video, graphics, or testimonials), and ethical considerations, including obtaining consent for sharing stories and footage.

A key takeaway was the importance of demonstrating what is possible rather than focusing on obstacles, using authentic, relatable content to reduce stigma and inspire change among employers, policymakers, and the broader community.

4. The Battle for Attention: What works well in communicating on disability

During this session, the group explored trends and tools for capturing audience attention in disability communications, with a focus on overcoming information overload, digital fatigue, and creating inclusive, empowering messaging. Participants discussed strategies for effective engagement, emphasising positive storytelling that centers lived experiences of people with disabilities, connects to universal human themes like work, love, and community, and anchors messages to high-profile events or awareness days. Key communication principles highlighted included avoiding stereotypes, using diverse and accurate imagery, and ensuring accessibility across platforms, with websites adhering to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and social media incorporating alternative text, high-contrast settings, screen reader compatibility, and captioning for live or recorded content. Tools to support accessibility were noted, including the AccessiPro plug-in, Inclusion Europe's Easy-to-Read guidelines, and video scene descriptions for enhanced comprehension.

The session also presented AI-driven tools to improve efficiency and creativity in communications, with participants sharing their experience and guidelines for:

- **ChatGPT**
 - Idea generation and drafting for text, social media posts, and presentations.
 - Can condense, rewrite for specific audiences, add emotional hooks, or create multi-part content series.
 - Most effective when prompted as an expert (e.g., "Act as a content editor").
 - Requires human editing to maintain authentic voice and avoid AI-generated style markers.
- **Syllabi.io**
 - AI video creation platform, producing professional, social-media-ready videos.
 - Supports avatars, automated or custom voiceovers, and script generation.
 - Suitable for educational content and storytelling when visual communication is needed.
- **ThreadMaster.ai**
 - Generates engaging social media content by analyzing trending threads.
 - Provides ready-to-post content and includes an extensive image library.
 - Helps integrate campaigns into existing viral discussions.
- **SlidesAI**
 - Converts scripts, notes, or documents into structured, visually appealing PowerPoint slides.
 - Allows control over the number of slides for time management.
 - Optimizes design and layout to save hours of manual formatting.
- **Gamma**

- Presentation creation tool that turns ideas or text into fully designed slide decks or infographics.
- Paid tool with an initial credit system for testing; saves significant time compared to manual design.
- **Canva Pro**
 - Graphic and design tool for creating infographics, social media visuals, and marketing materials.
 - Supports highly customizable and visually accessible content creation.
- **Microsoft Co-pilot**
 - AI assistant integrated with Microsoft Teams and other Microsoft apps.
 - Supports automation of document workflows, approvals, and data processing.
 - Functions similar to ChatGPT but optimized for internal and private organizational data.

Overall, the session reinforced that combining compelling storytelling, accessibility, and AI-assisted tools can make disability communications more engaging, inclusive, and efficient while maintaining human-centered authenticity.

5. Evaluation

The Communications Network meeting scored 4.8/5. The feedback was positive, with an expressed desire for the next meeting to continue covering new communication AI tools, as well as to focus more on communication around EU-funded projects.

