

Short Rotation Woody Crops (SRC) plantations for local supply chains and heat use

Project No: IEE/13/574



Report on media work and social networks

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SRCplus website: www.srcplus.eu

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1. Introduction

WP7 aimed to inform and involve different stakeholders and target groups in different project activities. In addition, the exchange of information was carried out in WP7 ensuring that communication and dissemination activities support all other work packages.

Likewise, the project visibility was needed during the lifetime of the project and now beyond.

The present report aims to provide a more detail insight on how the dissemination of the project activities happened, focused on media work and social networks.

At least the following EU associations have been involved in the dissemination activities of the project:

- European Farmers and Agri-Cooperatives Association (Copa Cogeca)
- European Landowners, Organisations (ELO)
- European Commission's European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)
- European Biomass Association (AEBIOM)
- European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
- European Forum for Renewable Energy Sources
- European Renewable Energy Council
- European Renewable Energy Federation

And the European Pallet Council and the European Industry of Pellets Suppliers were in particular involved in the dissemination activities.

1. Media Work

1.1 Project Website

The objective for the project website is to disseminate relevant information and outcomes of the SRCplus project. The website of the project can be found under the domain: www.srcplus.eu. The website was designed by a professional company and it is presented in English and 7 national languages. The website was launched in June 2014 and WIP has been updating the website ever since. It foreseen that WIP will continue with the maintenance of the website for the following two years.

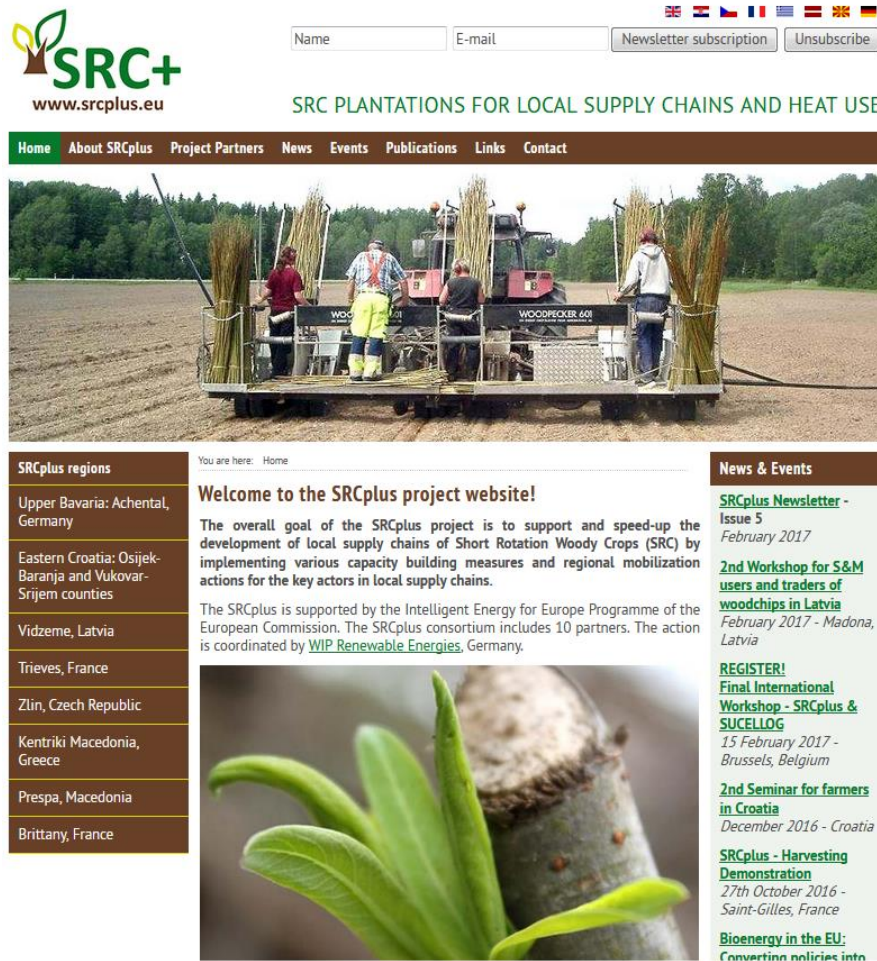


Figure 1 SRCplus homepage website

As presented in Figure 1, the homepage offers a brief overview about SRCplus, its regions, and its current activities. In its homepage, on the upper right side, a language menu takes the user to the desired homepage of the language selected. The homepages are designed to offer the most of information in one view. The bar menus presented at the top, left and right, have well-defined features spotting the necessary information in a glance. WIP as work package (WP) leader updated continuously the contents of the website by uploading publications, news, disseminating SRCplus events, results, activities, newsletters, among other relevant materials.

Next, some of the website trends and results will be presented. However, it is important to note that Google Analytics has been the tool used to obtain these results. In addition to the note, please consider that Google Analytics is a free online tool that cannot be considered as accurate as some other available tools where paying a fee is required, or the private policies

cannot be accepted. In this case, Google Analytics may not register the exact number of visitors or the exact number of click and downloads, though, it presents a more general idea - the one is binding for the WP leader assumptions and goes in line with the project objectives, and the consortium observations.

According to Google Analytics results, the SRCplus website received 7302 sessions from 4868 users around the world (Figure 2) with 55% of bounce rates and 66.65% new sessions. In addition, as indicated in

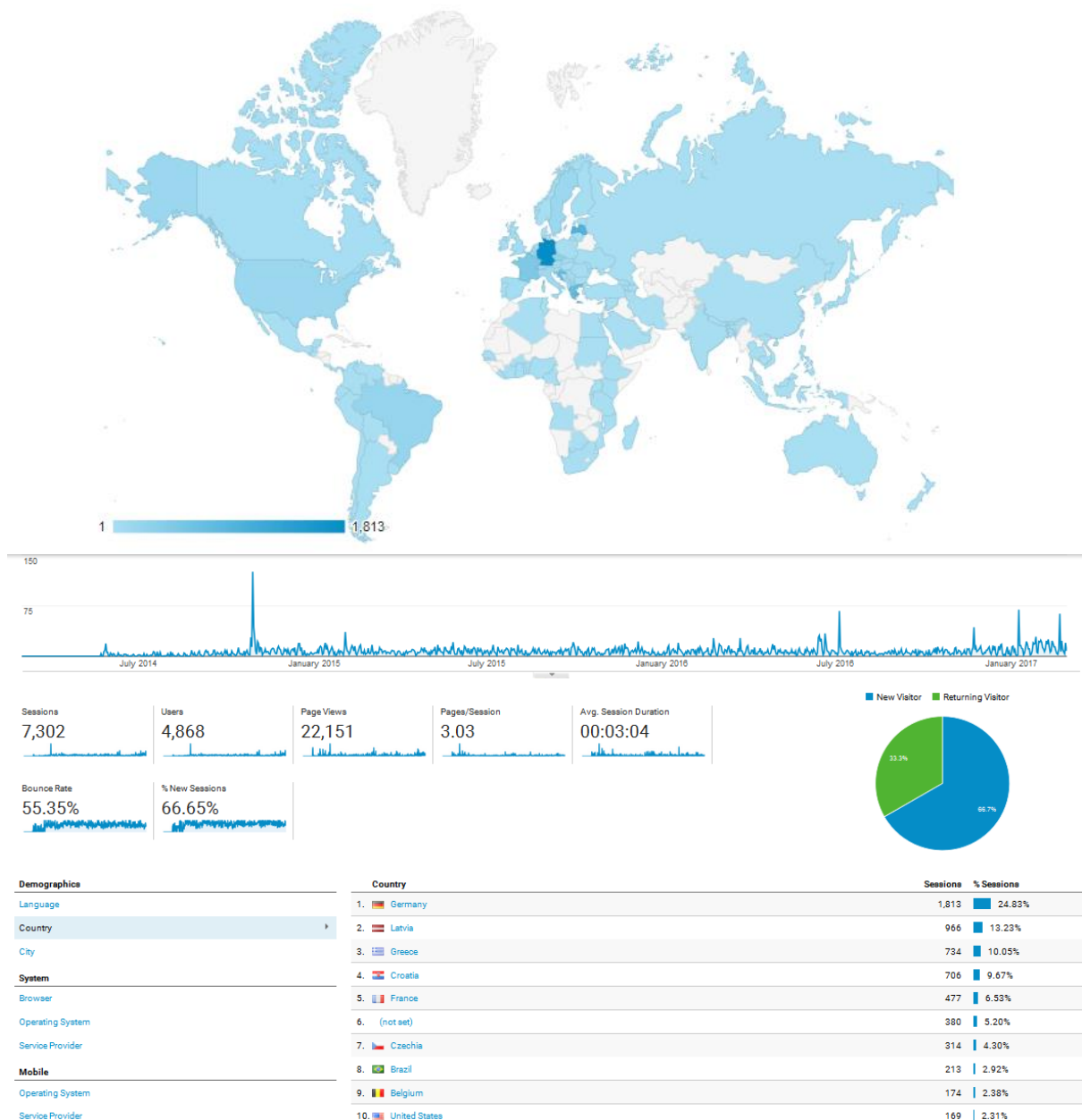


Figure 3, most of the visitors came from Germany with 1813 sessions, Latvia 966, Greece 734, Croatia 706, France 477, Czech Republic 314, Sweden on the 11th place with 157, and Macedonia on the 12th place with 151 sessions. These results do not show sessions coming from the same IP addresses; therefore we cannot take this data as accurate as wished.

Figure 2 SRCplus around the world

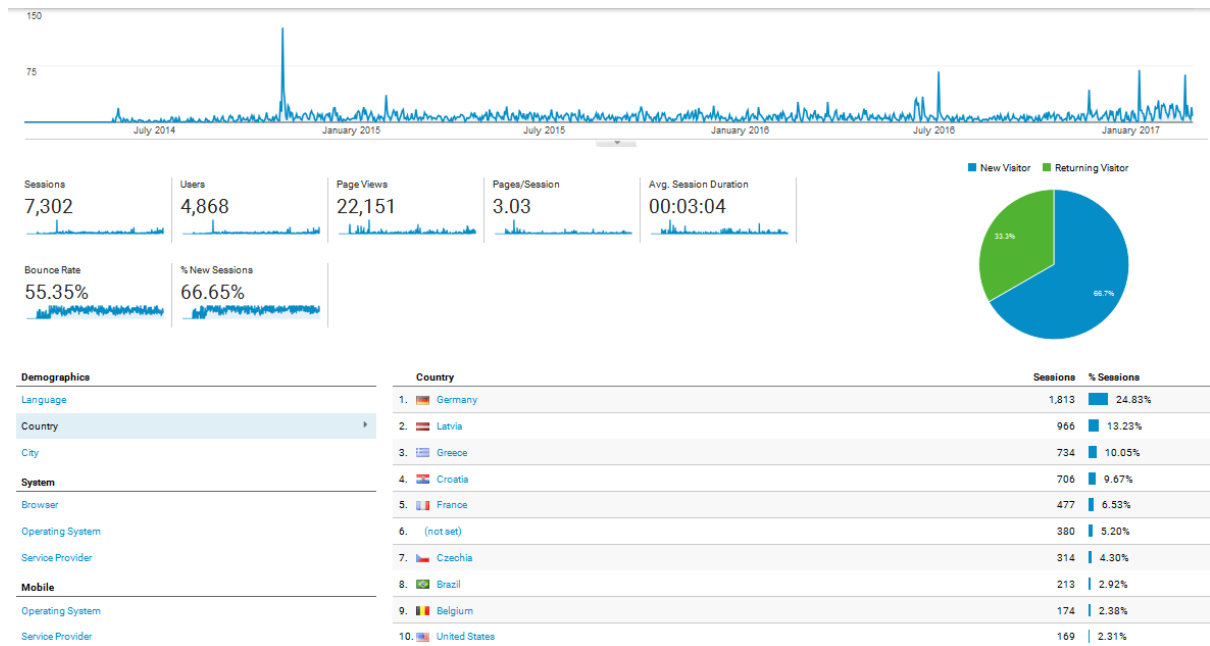


Figure 3 Overview of SRCplus website (Google Analytics, March 2017)

Subsequently, in order to understand the success or failure of the SRCplus website, it is appropriate to understand the behaviour that users followed along their visit sessions. Analysing the users flow diagram presented in

Figure 4, one can appreciate that the homepage in English was the starting point of ca. 3800 session coming from different countries, mainly from Germany, Latvia, Greece, Croatia, and France, with a drop-off rate of 50%. This drop-off is related with different external factors, such like, users performing organic searches where key words linked them to the SRCplus website, or users following the SRCplus link directly from promotional material, E-mails, social media, or other search tools, that in the end SRCplus did not match with the users' given key-word or searches criteria.

Following the users flow, the first interaction shows that ca. 3000 users were interested in the SRCplus publications, read more about the project, know more about the project partners, news, or visit the website in other languages. The second interaction starts with ca. 2000 users that kept surfing between news, project partners' information, publication, events among others. The third interaction displays ca. 1300 users left surfing the website within similar menus as in the second interaction.

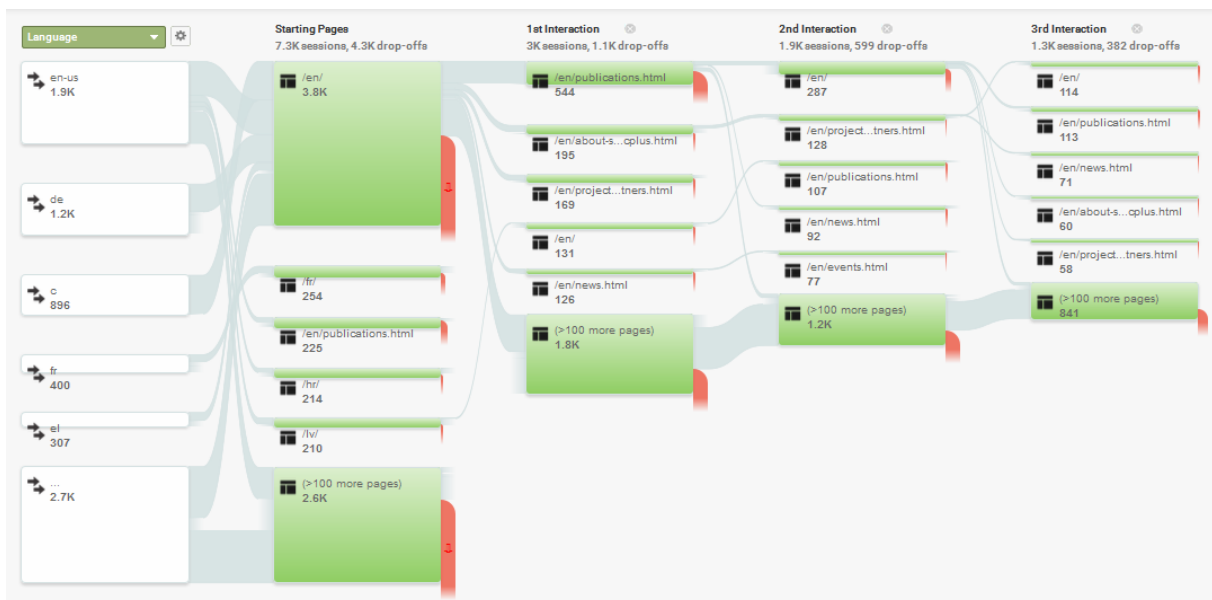


Figure 4 SRCplus users flow chart

The knowledge and the existence of these numbers must be properly interpreted, as it can lead to many misunderstandings. It is a fact that the website has been actively visited along the project's lifetime. However, the number of visitors and sessions could have been higher as Google Analytics presented. The WP leader believes that the thematic of the website is very technical, though in one hand, the number of visitors highlights that the dissemination of the website reached a diverse of communities worldwide, where perhaps SRC aroused interest. In the other hand, despite not reaching a higher number of visitors, the consortium is certain that the number of visitors reflects a success, due to SRCplus reached the attention of real users, in particular from the target regions, to be more interested in the development of short rotation coppice; creating a loyal community where the dissemination of the project was taken seriously and worthy.

1.2 Media and press work

The media and press work elaborated by all partners is has been presented along the reporting periods. For the Final Technical Report, WIP provided a compilation of the media and press work done by the project partners

After evaluating the media and press work done by all partners, the WP leader can conclude that the media and press work task was successful. The development and implementation of these activities demonstrated that the local communities and regions have been interested in knowing more about SRC in their regions. The media work has been supporting the implementation and dissemination of results, and has been leaving an important footprint within the target groups (farmers, stakeholders, private and public landowners, small and medium users of woodchips).

All partners did and extended work, more as it was expected. Considering the direct feedback provided by the project partners, WIP can note, that the publication of the media and press work helped to identify potential stakeholders, increased the local awareness, and impulse the dissemination of SRCplus within the regions and different working groups.

2. Social Networks

The dissemination of the SRCplus was supported with the promotion of the project actions via social networks; Annex I of the Grand Agreement states:

“Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn are currently used by many people, mainly of the younger to middle-aged public. Although the larger public is not the main target group of the SRCplus project, it is important to disseminate the project activities to the broader public. WIP will create project accounts in different social networks and the partners will provide contributions and promotes SRCplus project and the outcomes (especially good practice examples) among their own social networks.”

2.1 Facebook

WIP created a SRCplus group in Facebook since the beginning of the project. Since then, the group has been inviting members from different groups to join to the SRCplus network, while promoting activities, events and results from the project. By the end of the project, the group counted with 91 members, who had been witnessing the development and promotion of project.



Figure 5 SRCplus Facebook group

The strategy on dissemination in social media has been flexible enough to adapt to new trends and interest from different stakeholders. At the beginning of the project WIP posted mainly news and results about the project, however, as soon as the project matured, WIP asked the contribution of all project partners to post directly news, events, and results from their side. With this strategy WIP believed that more local stakeholders would be attracted to join the group and like and comment the posts. Despite that the consortium would have liked to have more members involved and active discussions. WIP believes that the topic was not really fitting in a network like Facebook. Firstly, many of the target groups of the project do not own a Facebook account; second, some of the participant institutions, stakeholders, partners, and target groups do not trust Facebook to be part of it.

Due to Facebook's distrust, the number of post and likes had a relative low impact during the first part of the project. Though, during the second half of the project, WIP decided to ask their project partners to be more active in social networks and post. Unfortunately, in order to join a Facebook group, the user needed to own an account in this platform, therefore WIP proposed to the consortium to open *SRCplus regional accounts* - in case that the project partner would not be convinced to open or use the institution's account. This proposal was accepted by a few partners like EIHP, who created a "*SRCplus Croatia*" profile to disseminate part of their results during various project activities and events. WIP believes that by posting pictures of the events and a providing links would help to promote results and get the attention of group members, and increase the number of possible stakeholders.

In the end, the strategy worked, but not as much as it was expected. WIP believes that Facebook is a platform more dedicated for informal events, news, etc., and it could have been more successful if the target groups would have count with Facebook accounts. In

addition, nowadays, private policy terms and security issues have become much more important than ever. Therefore the project intended to maintain certain flexibility within its dissemination, while considering the type of public and social media channels.

Twitter

The SRCplus Twitter account shares similar information as in Facebook. A similar strategy was implemented after the second half of the project, where WIP decided to use more images, tags and links to promote further the project. Along recent twits, WIP decided to tag project partners having a twitter account, stakeholders, nature conservation associations, general associations related to SRCplus within the EU and the world.

By the end of the project, the SRCplus twitter account shared 38 tweets, counting with 14 followers like:

AEBIOM	Résau EAU
AILE	WIP Renewables
Graceful Globe Ltd	Ekodoma
Rokwood	Confobioenergy
EurObserv_ER	

SRCplus can be found in twitter using @srcplus2014. Likewise, SRCplus interacted with the following tags: @WIPRenewables, @Ekodoma, @AILEAgence, @AEBIOM, @EU_EASME, @LocalCleanEnergy, @Energy4Europe, @Agrocoop, @H2020EE.

These tags helped in the further dissemination of the project, mainly during the second part of the project, where our tags would involve some of the related organisations, being able to follow SRCplus, like the twit, and share it within their networks.

In the end, twitter is a brilliant tool to promote much of the activities happening within the project. However, WIP believes that in order to have a greater success it is important to establish a network in order to have a larger impact within the platform.

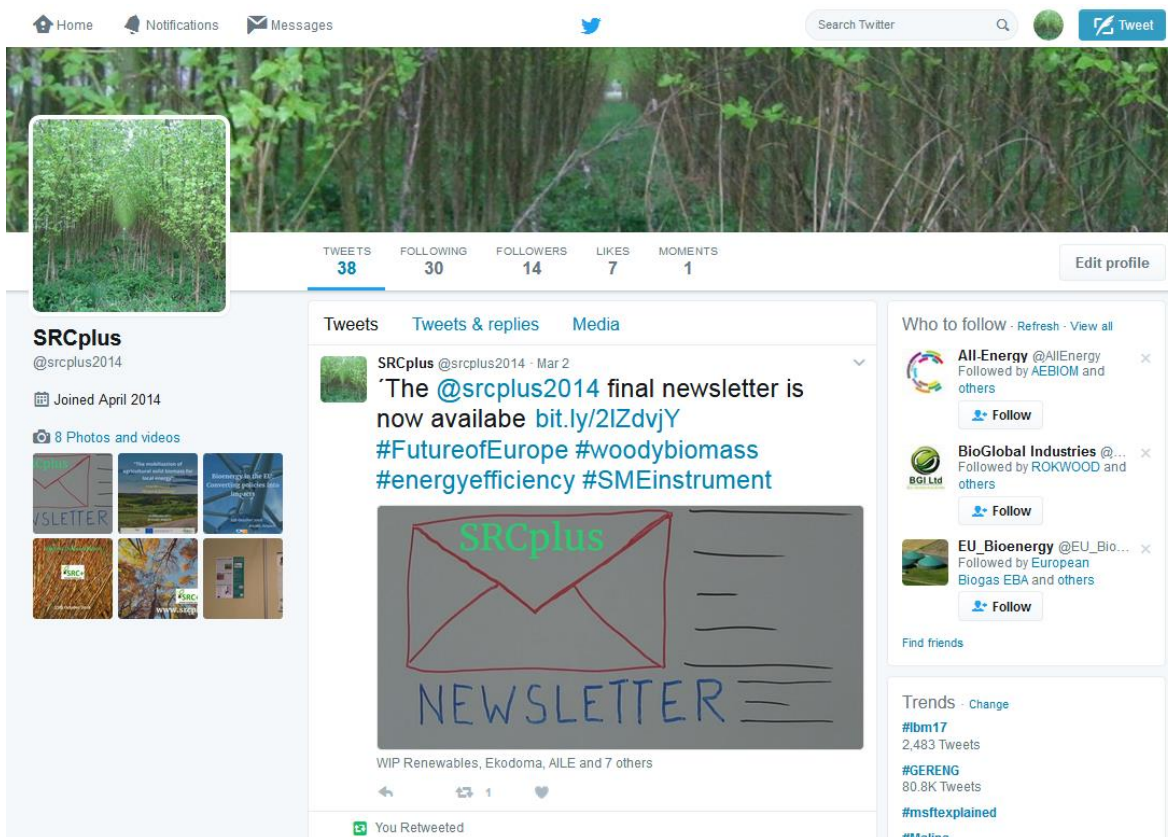


Figure 6 SRCplus Twitter account

3. Conclusions

The SRCplus developed a few dissemination strategies that proved to be successful at the end of the day. However, it is important that all project partners are deeply involved in the dissemination process, and together adapt to flexible implementations processes. Being part of international consortiums normally implies that each country and region uses a favourite social media tool; each tool may support the dissemination of activities, events and news of the region in more easy way, than others. In projects like SRCplus, where the target groups do not use much internet, or are active in social media channels, would be important to develop further communication strategies where they can get involved in all the dissemination process. Therefore the WP leader initially believed that by promoting the project over Facebook and Twitter would be attractive enough to reach larger communities and stakeholders. However, the traditional channels like, TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and E-mails showed to be the more preferable ways from our target groups to interact with SRCplus.

WIP and the consortium worked very hard and good in the dissemination of the project in social networks. The impact that SRCplus put into the community was always well-taken and was promoted as far as our networks reached. We learnt a lot in communication, being able to implement and used the current strategies to keep disseminating and promote SRCPLUS within the next two years. We believe that the community shall grow still, and SRC can be further promoted to inspire many other regions across the EU, and perhaps the world.