COLLABORATIVE GUIDE:

Exploring Reputation and Communication Strategies of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

[1] The project name was determined before Türkiye adopted its new official name and therefore could not be changed retrospectively.

Third Sector Foundation of Türkiye (TÜSEV)

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About the Guide

This collaborative guide is the outcome of the Regional Hope-Based Communications Bootcamp, held on May 20–22, 2025, in Istanbul, a space where civil society professionals from the Western Balkans and Türkiye came together to reimagine how civil society organisations (CSOs) shape public perception and communicate with purpose and hope. The bootcamp was organised by Third Sector Foundation of Türkiye (TÜSEV) with the support of European Union Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations in the Western Balkans and Turkey (EU TACSO 3) under its component the People-to-People (P2P) Programme. This EU TACSO 3 component serves as a platform for fostering dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding among CSOs and other stakeholders across the Western Balkans and Türkiye. By facilitating thematic events, workshops, and study visits, the programme supports capacity building, regional networking, and the exchange of good practices. It contributes to strengthening participatory democracy and advancing the role of CSOs in policy dialogue, social development, and EU integration processes. Through P2P, EU TACSO 3 promotes inclusive engagement and the visibility of civil society as a key factor in democratic governance.

TÜSEV is dedicated to fostering a stronger, participatory, and reputable civil society in Türkiye. The bootcamp was developed in response to TÜSEV's ongoing research and insight findings, which highlight the persistent challenges civil society faces in building a strong public reputation.[2] In Türkiye and the wider region, CSOs continue to struggle with limited public understanding of their roles, low levels of trust by public, and communication practices that often fail to capture the positive social change they help create. Against this backdrop, TÜSEV convened this participatory, three-day learning and co-creation event to explore how hope-based communication strategies can reframe civil society narratives. The bootcamp aimed to strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of civil society by fostering more hopeful, creative, and inclusive communication approaches.

The hope-based communications approach was introduced by the facilitators, Thomas Coombes (Founder, Hope-based Comms), while creative methods and visual storytelling were explored with Yana Buhrer Tavanier (Co-founder, Fine Acts), setting the tone for the bootcamp. Derya Tombuloğlu (Founder, Heart Mind Design) also facilitated a dedicated session on "Rethinking Reputation vs. Perception", presenting key insights from TÜSEV's research on civil society's public image in Türkiye. In the final workshop, "Collaborative Handbook: Designing a Roadmap for Reputation Management and Communication Strategies", Fulden Ergen (Communications Consultant) and the TÜSEV team co-led a participatory session. Guided by the principles of hope-based communication, participants worked together to co-create a strategic roadmap and practical guide for CSOs seeking to strengthen their reputation, legitimacy, and communication strategies.

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[2] For further details, please see TÜSEV's Individual Giving and Philanthropy in Turkey research, an ongoing study conducted since 2005: Individual Giving and Philanthropy in Turkey 2021 Report

The workshop methodology combined group brainstorming with the use of semi-structured worksheets, organised across four working groups; each focused on a specific section of this guide: Reputation Management, Communication Strategies, Communication Tools, and the Impact of Visibility. Each group was also tasked with creating a visual representation of their ideas, either manually or using AI tools. The workshop concluded with a gallery walk, during which initial ideas and visuals were shared and refined through collective feedback and discussion. This participatory and inclusive process ensured that the guide reflects diverse perspectives and practical insights. Finally, the TÜSEV team synthesized the outputs into a collaborative resource, capturing key learnings and actionable recommendations for CSOs.

This resource is more than a structured guide; it is the result of a collaborative and experimental workshop aimed at shifting perspectives and empowering CSOs to strengthen their communication strategies and reputation. Rooted in trust, values, and collaboration, this resource brings together practical tips, metaphors, and strategies that reflect the spirit of the bootcamp and the collective wisdom of its participants.

We hope this guide serves as both inspiration and a practical tool as you grow your organisation's public presence with clarity, consistency, and hope.

💡 **Tip – Follow the Tips to Apply Hope-Based Communication:**

Throughout the guide, this resource will offer practical tips, examples and exercises to adapt to your organisation's needs. Use them to shape compelling campaigns, reframe your messaging, strengthen connections with your audience, and contribute to a more inclusive and inspiring public narrative.

Reputation Management

Introduction

This section offers both a conceptual and practical guide to reputation management for CSOs. It invites you to reframe how your organisation is seen; not just by focusing on issues, but by consistently showing what is possible, and what you stand for. The stronger the alignment between your values, voice, and actions, the more resilient and impactful your reputation becomes. To bring this idea to life, the group used the metaphor of a growing flower. Like a flower, reputation grows from strong roots, brand, visibility, and distinctiveness of your organisation. It is nourished by organizational core values, enriched by stakeholder feedback, and thrives in the light of trust, which radiates through key principles like transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness.

Defining The Reputation

The group **co-created a shared definition** of civil society reputation by focusing on how it relates to communication, trust, visibility, and credibility in the public eye:

A shared common definition for civil society reputation:

The reputation of CSOs is based on common values, built through trust and sustained by consistency.

Visualizing Reputation of Civil Society: A Visual Metaphor

To understand how civil society's reputation is built and sustained, imagine it as a growing flower *(See. Figure 1)*. This visual metaphor captures the essential elements that nourish and support a strong public image. Reputation takes root in a solid foundation of brand, visibility, and distinctiveness. These elements anchor the organisation and give it stability. A watering can labeled values pours essential nourishment into the roots, symbolizing how deeply held values fuel growth. A rain cloud provides additional sustenance in the form of *feedback from stakeholders*, refers that listening and responding to public is crucial for flourishing. Overhead, the sun shines with *TRUST;* its rays through hope-based communication, transparency, accountability, responsibility, inclusiveness, ethics, flexibility, availability, accessibility, and consistency represent key organizational principles which deliver the energy needed to sustain public trust. The stem, strong and upright, represents *reputation,* supporting the flower. The flower symbolizes the visible, positive outcome of good reputation. Together, these components help civil society organisations grow a visible, credible, and resilient reputation.
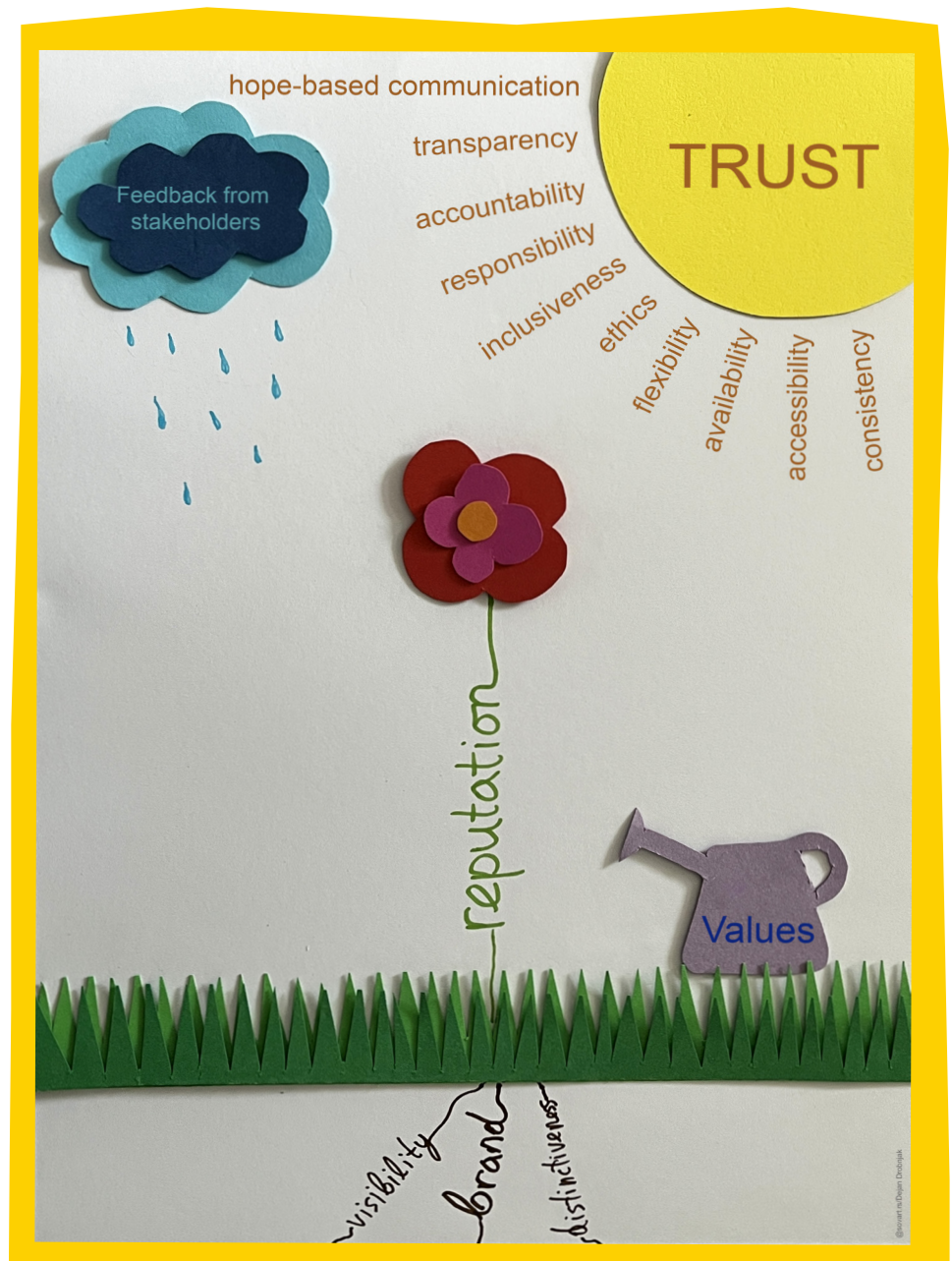

Figure 1. Reputation illustration (Credit: Dejan Drobnjak)

This flourishing ecosystem of flowers symbolizes the cultivation of a strong and positive reputation for civil society. A well-tended reputation is not just a reflection of how civil society is seen; it's a testament to **how it shows up, engages, and remains accountable.** By aligning actions with values and staying attuned to public perception, organisations can ensure their reputation continues to grow with integrity and purpose.

> 💡 **Tip — Building a strong civil society reputation through hope-based communication[3]**
>
> Hope-based communication offers a powerful narrative approach to building trust and advancing social change. By drawing on insights from neuroscience, psychology, and marketing it helps civil society organisations move beyond fear-based messaging. Instead, it encourages stories that emphasize shared values, agency, and positive visions for the future, leading to lasting shifts in public attitudes and greater impact in advocacy efforts.
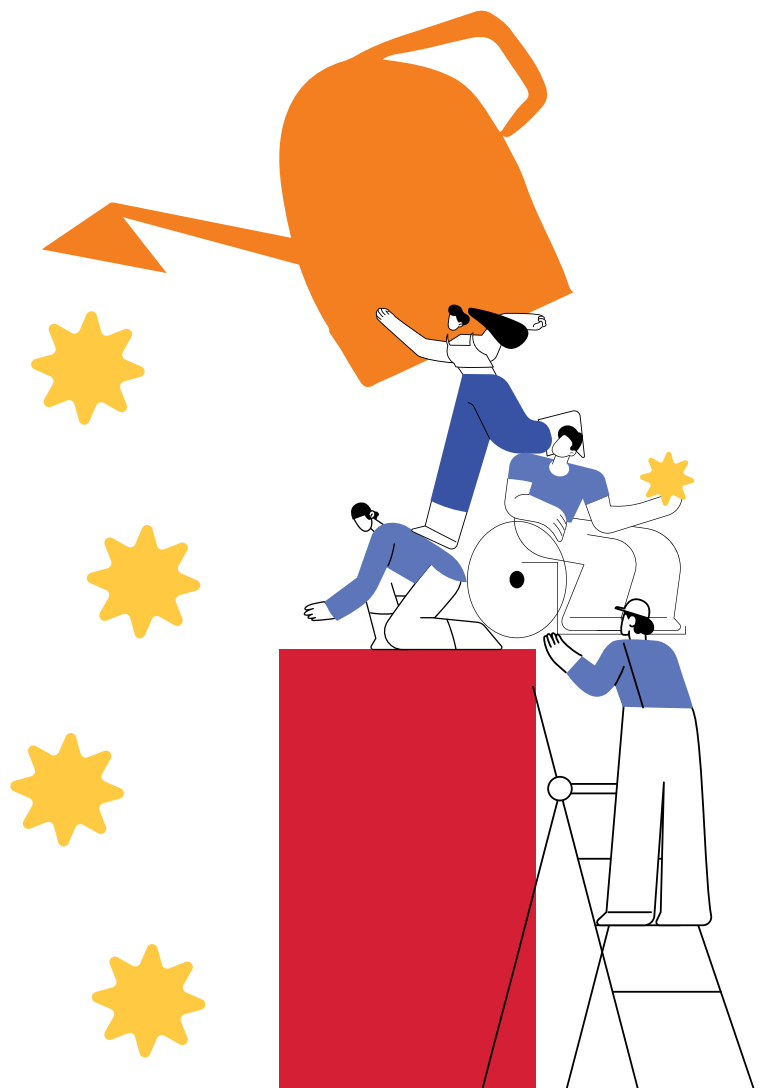
[3] Hope-based communication is an approach developed by Thomas Coombes, aiming to shift narratives from fear and crisis to those centered on hope, agency, and positive change. The references and materials throughout this guide reflect the principles of his approach. For more details on hope-based communication, see: https://hope-based.com.

Shifting Perspectives:
Building a Strong Civil Society Reputation

Reputation is built through consistent, transparent, and strategic communication. At the heart of reputation lies the ability to build trust and credibility. This means creating accessible communication, integrating civil society narratives into everyday life, and establishing open channels for dialogue. When civil society is seen as relatable, responsive, and reliable, it becomes easier for people to understand its value, trust, and support its work.

To shape a positive and trustworthy public image, civil society organisations must actively shape the narrative, showing not just what is wrong, **but what is possible.** In this sense, the hope-based communication approach provides strategic direction for civil society organisations to build a credible and future-oriented reputation. Using hope-based communications to build a reputation means:

- Sharing positive stories and uplifting images that **reflect the future we want to build**

- Connecting emotionally, **responding to people's hopes, concerns, and lived experiences and inviting them to act** and become part of the cause

- Visualizing impact in **clear, creative, compelling ways to make achievements visible and tangible**
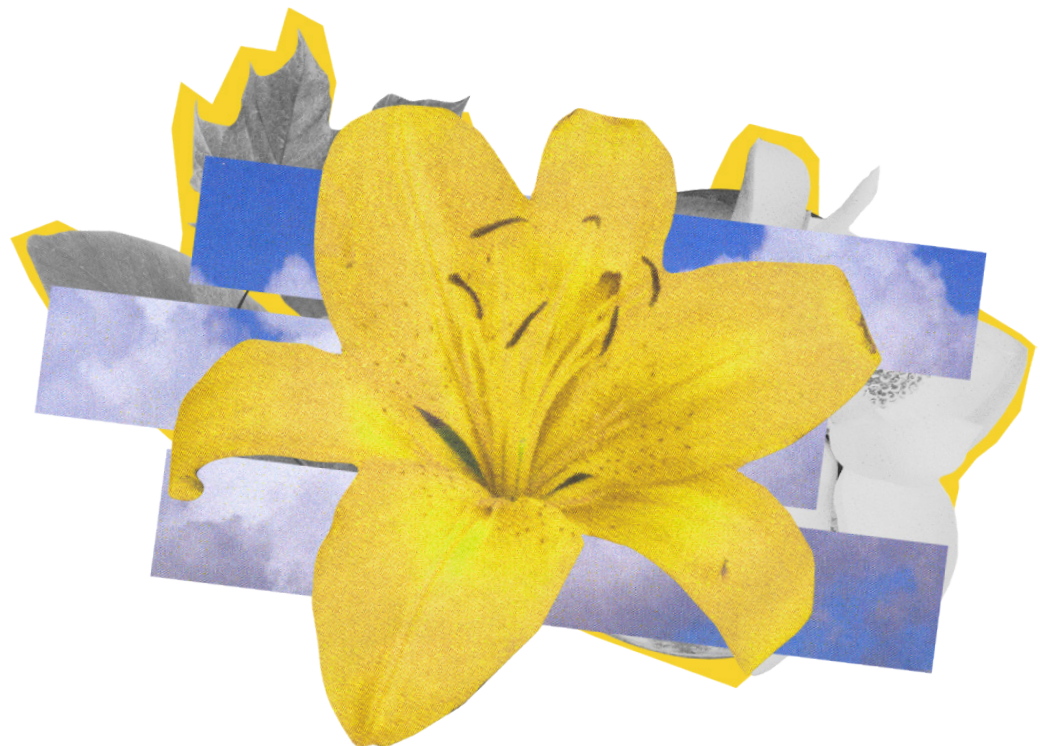
Reputation is not established instantly; rather, it develops gradually through consistent effort and strategic communication. Like the growth of a flower, a strong reputation requires deep roots, grounded in credibility, values, and trust. The deeper the roots, the more resilient civil society's reputation becomes.

💡 **Tip — Shifting the narrative with hope-based communication:**

➔ Strengthen your organisation's reputation by embracing hope-based communications five-shift approach[4]. This approach encourages you to shift:

● From Fear to Hope
Shift from crisis and fear-driven messaging to stories that inspire hope, empathy, and collective action by highlighting resilience, solutions, and possibilities.

● From Problem to Solution
Go beyond highlighting issues; present your vision and solutions using vivid language and storytelling.

● From Against to For
Frame messages around what you stand for —shared values like fairness and dignity—rather than what you oppose.

● From Threat to Opportunity
Emphasize the opportunity for change and progress instead of the risk of decline—show why now is the moment to act.

● From Victim to Hero
Portray people as agents of change, not passive victims—center stories on dignity, courage, and shared humanity.

➔ Apply **five-shift approach** worksheet to effectively guide your messaging and public perception of your CSO.

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[4] The Five-Shift approach was developed by Hope-Based Comms and the worksheet is designed to help apply this approach. For more details, please refer to Hope-Based Comms.

Tips | Practical Advice

DO:

- Make your values visible: let people know what you stand for ✓

- Define and consistently repeat your key messages and values ✓

- Ensure your messages are inclusive and representative ✓

- Communicate in a clear, simple, and accessible way ✓

- Tailor your communication to reach diverse audiences effectively ✓

- Listen actively to the public and respond with empathy and relevance ✓

- Remember: your organisation is not the center, always consider the broader context ✓

DON'T:

- Put too much emphasis on problems, instead highlight solutions and envision a better future ✗

- Try achieving everything, but prioritize and stay focused on what matters most for your organisation ✗

- Associate your cause with negativity, rather communicate with hope, dignity, and respect ✗

Conclusion

Reputation is not a fixed asset, it's a reflection of how civil society consistently aligns its actions with its values, engages with its community, and builds trust over time. When organisations remain responsive, transparent, and grounded in their mission, they don't just maintain public trust; they strengthen it. By using a hope–based communications approach and its tools, organisations shape not only how they are perceived, but also the future they contribute to building.

Behind the Work |
Reputation Management – Group 1

Visual — first sketch:
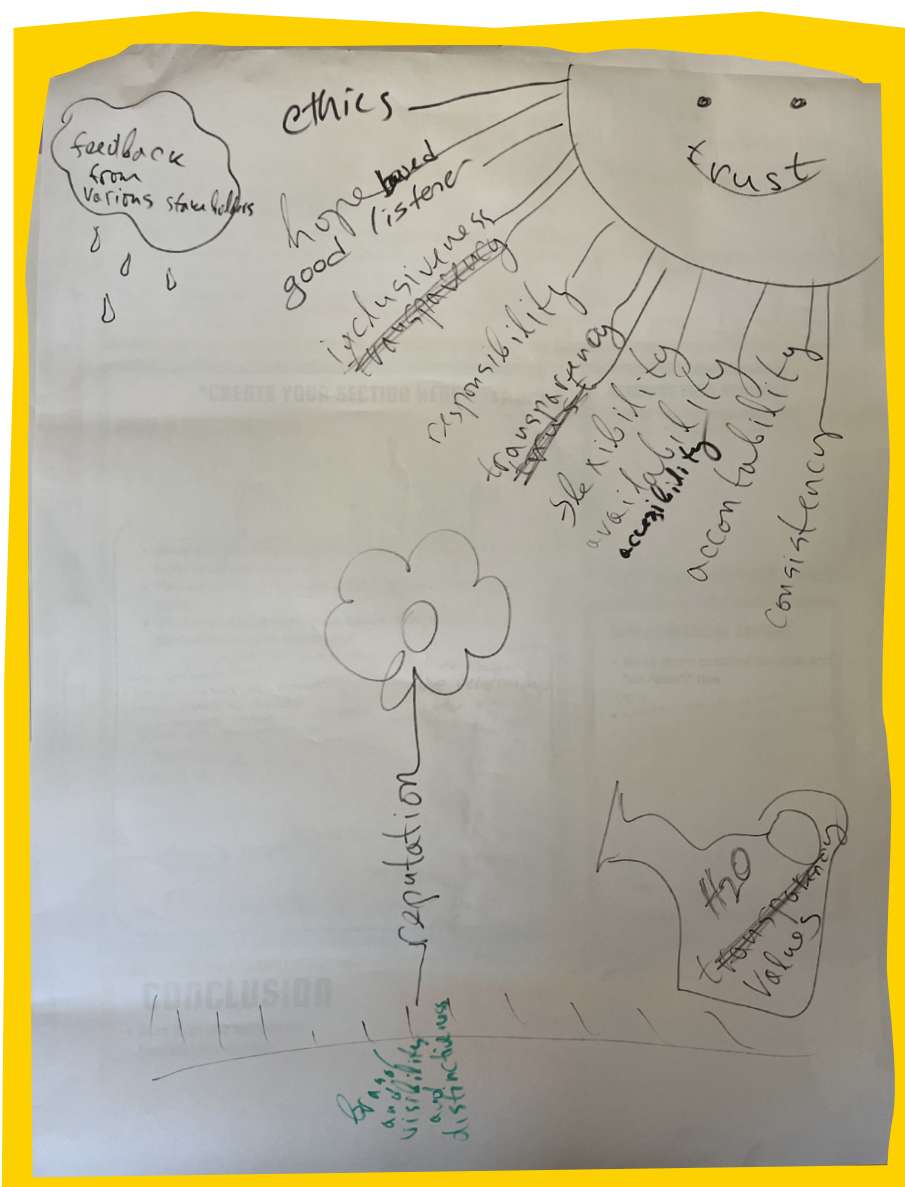
Work–in– progress: **Group discussions**

CREATE YOUR SECTION HERE

FIND A SUBHEADING

[..]

REFLECT ON AT LEAST TWO QUESTIONS

Some guiding questions:
- How can civil society organizations **build and maintain trust through hope-based communication?**
- What **tools and narratives** can help us shift to hope-based public perceptions?
- What is the **civil society's promise for the public?**

the deeper the roots, the more resilient our reputation

Work–in– progress: **Group discussions**

I. REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Some keywords: Trust, legitimacy, transparency, accountability, public perception, community engagement etc.

INTRODUCTION

- Create your **own shared definition** for **civil society reputation.** Think about how it connects to communication, trust, visibility, and credibility in the public eye.
- and **create an image**, draw or generate with AI in relation with your definition. Share your image at tutengul@tusev.org.tr — COMMON PERCEPTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY.

— REPUTATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IS BASED ON 8 COMMON VALUES, BUILD BY TRUST AND SUSTAINED BY CONSISTENCY.

CREATE YOUR SECTION HERE

FIND A SUBHEADING

[HOW TO CHANGE PERSPECTIVE ·······················]

REFLECT ON AT LEAST TWO QUESTIONS

Some guiding questions:
- How can civil society organizations **build and maintain trust through hope-based communication?**
- What **tools and narratives** can help us shift to hope-based public perceptions?
- What is the **civil society's promise for the public**?

SHOWING THE WORLD WE WANT TO SEE
— POSITIVE STORIES, POSITIVES IMIGES

— PRESENTING THE IMPACT TROUGH VISUALISATION

— RESPONDING TO EMOTIONS

—

TIPS | PRACTICAL ADVICES

Write down practical advices,
"do/don't" tips
DO
- FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS
- RESPOND TO EVERYONE
- BE CLEAR AND SIMPLE
- BE INCLUSIVE
- LISTEN
- YOU ARE NOT THE CENTER
- PREPARE KEY WORDS WHEN COMMUNICATING
- ANNOUNCE YOUR VALUES
-
-

DON'T
      PUT MUCH
- EMPHASIZE PROBLEMS

- DON'T TRY TO DO EVERYTHING

- DON'T PUT NEGATIVE IMPRESSIONS
  NEAR YOUR COUSE

CONCLUSION

- Sum it up (1-2 sentences)
- Restate your opinion

Communication Strategy

Introduction

In this section, we explore how CSOs can craft communication strategies that are not only effective but also inspiring, inclusive, and rooted in hope. We begin by establishing a shared definition of effective communication strategy, one that moves beyond visibility and messaging to center relations, values, and impact. The guidance that follows offers practical tools and strategies to help CSOs reframe narratives, connect emotionally with audiences, and communicate with clarity and purpose. Whether you're just beginning to rethink your messaging or looking to strengthen your approach, this section provides a roadmap to help civil society be seen not just as a responder to crisis, but as a builder of hope and lasting change.

Framing The Future: Toward Inspiring, Inclusive, and Impactful Communication

The group co-created a shared definition of civil society reputation by focusing on how it relates to communication, trust, visibility, and credibility in the public eye:

A shared common definition for civil society's communication strategy:

An effective communication strategy for CSOs is an integrated, creative and inclusive approach that establishes strong connections with diverse stakeholders & targeted audiences through clear objectives and a focused target. It aims to amplify community voices, lived experiences and is strengthened by ongoing learning to ensure relevance and impact.

From Crisis to Connection: Strategic Messaging for CSOs

To truly engage in public, build trust, and inspire action, CSOs must shift toward narratives that connect emotionally, emphasize solutions, and foster a sense of shared purpose. To move beyond fear, guilt, or crisis-driven narratives, and instead inspire connection and action, consider these co-created guiding principles:

→ **Shift the narrative: Propose hope, drive change**

- Be inspiring, empowering, and **forward-looking**
- Move from **problems to solutions**
- Highlight your **values** instead of threats
- Focus on **empowerment**, not victimization
- Replace fear and urgency with **vision** and **possibility**
- Center **human stories** over abstract data

→ **Connect emotionally:**

- Speak to the **heart,** not just the head
- Use **empathy** and storytelling to create meaningful resonance
- Show how the issue impacts real people, and **what change can look like**

→ **Be strategic yet consistent:**

- Differentiate between **short-term messaging** (mobilization, engagement) and **long-term strategy** (building trust and legitimacy)
- Align communication across **channels, people, and messages**
- Keep messages **contextualized** and relevant to your audience's environment and concerns
- Communicating as part of a **relationship,** not a broadcast

→ **Inspire collective action**

- Clearly **propose solutions** and show how they lead to the desired outcome
- Invite people to **act,** not just feel informed
- Use messaging to **motivate and mobilize** collective efforts
- Make your communication evidence-based, **connecting facts to hope**

→ **Sustain trust and wellbeing**

- Nurture **inner hope** within your organisation because outer messaging begins inside
- Support the **well-being** of your team and community through how you communicate
- Invest in **training, storytelling, and empathy-building** practices
- Continuously **monitor your impact** and adapt your approach
- Prioritize **public trust** as a long-term asset

💡 **Tip — Applying Hope-Based Communication:**

→ Use the Hope-Based Communication <u>Checklist</u> and explore additional resources to get inspired and to refine and adapt your narrative.

→ As you develop your communication strategies, you can apply <u>the five-shift approach</u> of the hope-based communication to guide your messaging.

Know Your Audience

Who are we speaking to, and what inspires them to act? Identifying your key audiences is essential for building meaningful, trust-based communication. Each group engages differently, is motivated by different values, and requires tailored messages to truly connect. Your audience may include:

- The **communities** you serve and the **volunteers** who support your mission
- The **general public,** whose perception helps shape your reputation
- **National and local government** officials, whose decisions impact your work
- **Policymakers,** who can drive structural change
- **The media,** which amplify your message
- **Influencers,** who can help expand your reach and credibility
- Fellow **local CSOs,** as allies and collaborators
- **Donors and supporters,** who seek transparency and impact
- **International agencies** and networks that influence funding and visibility

To reach and move these audiences, combine emotional resonance with credible evidence:

- Evoke empathy by highlighting real stories and lived experiences
- Present facts that demonstrate your impact and reveal existing injustices
- Show how your work gives back and contributes to a better, fairer community and world

By meeting each audience where they are, both emotionally and intellectually, you increase the chances of turning understanding into support, and support into action.

Tips | Practical Advice

DO:

- Show what's possible and highlight achievable change and hopeful outcomes ✓

- Use personal experiences to build emotional connection and relatability ✓

- Center people and values, not just issues or statistics ✓

- Combine evidence with a clear call to action which shows both the 'why' and the 'how' ✓

- Speak your audience's language: listen, understand, reflect their values and elevate their voices ✓

- Adapt your message to be context-aware and culturally relevant ✓

- Ensure message consistency across different platforms and formats ✓

DON'T:

- Speak about communities without involving them ✗

- Assume all audiences are the same; avoid one-size-fits-all messaging ✗

- Overwhelm with jargon or overly complex language ✗

- Ignore feedback, rather always listen and adapt ✗

- Copy and paste content that isn't relevant or authentic to your context ✗

Conclusion

An effective communication strategy for CSOs should focus on solutions, values and community voices. CSOs can build trust, mobilize change and motivate the audience for change. Communication is not just about visibility; it's about building meaningful relationships that sustain legitimacy, drive impact, and reflect the world we want to create.

Behind the Work |
Communication Strategies – Group 2

AI-generated visual by the group:

Work–in– progress: **Group discussions**

II. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Some keywords: Narrative building, messaging, audience segmentation, hope-based communication, strategic communication etc.

INTRODUCTION

- Create your own shared definition for **the best communication strategies** for CSOs.
- and create an image, draw or generate with AI reflects your definition. Share your image at tutengul@tusev.org.tr

An effective communication strategy for CSOs is an integrated, creative and inclusive approach that establishes strong connections with diverse stakeholders & targeted audiences through clear objectives and a focused target. It aims to amplify community voices and is strengthened by ongoing M&E to ensure relevance & impact.

CREATE YOUR SECTION HERE

FIND A SUBHEADING

[*Propose hope, drive change* ... *From Crisis to Connection: Strategic messaging for CSOs* ... *Framing the future: inspiring, inclusive and impactful Communication*]

short vs. long term messages

Some guiding questions:
- **What kind of communication strategies** do we need to embed hope-based approaches?
- How do we frame our **messages** to take action rather than alarm?
- What does **a long-term hope-based strategy** look like in contrast to reactive messaging?

shift
- *from fear, guilt or crisis driven to inspiring, empowering and forward looking*
- *solutions instead of problems*
- *values instead of threats*
- *empowerment instead of victimization*
- *resonate with your emotions, heart*
- *Evidence-based, showing facts and then propose the solution. to reach the desirable result*
- *storytelling*
- *Motivating a collective action*

regulating the relationship btw anger — hope — inner 'hope' trainings — asking to take action

well-being — contextual periodical — monitor impact — sustain the impact

communication

integration of channels. Both peer support

DESCRIBE YOUR AUDIENCE

- Who are our **key audiences** & what moves them toward action

- *community you work with & volunteers*
- *public audience*
- *national & local government stakeholders*
- *international agencies*
- *media*
- *influencers*
- *local CSOs*
- *donors*

fes emotions & facts, inequality, giving back to community

looks generic — it should be narrowed down

TIPS | PRACTICAL ADVICES

- Write down practical advices, and **"do/don't" tips**

Do's
- *showcase what can be done*
- *personal experiences to create emotional connection*
- *speak their language, reflect their values and focus what matters for them*
- *combine evidence with clear calls to action*

Don't speak
- *tackle them about comm. without including them*
- *Don't overload messages with complex jargon or complexity*
- *Don't assume all audiences are the same*
- *Don't ignore feedback or audience response*
- *peer support*

context changes msgs — titles, regions

CONCLUSION

- Sum it up (1-2 sentences)
- Restate your opinion

be adaptive — comms strategy is a living doc!

Comms strategy and tools are interrelated.

An effective communication strategy for CSOs should be focusing on solutions, values, and community voices. CSOs can build trust, mobilize change and motivate audience for change
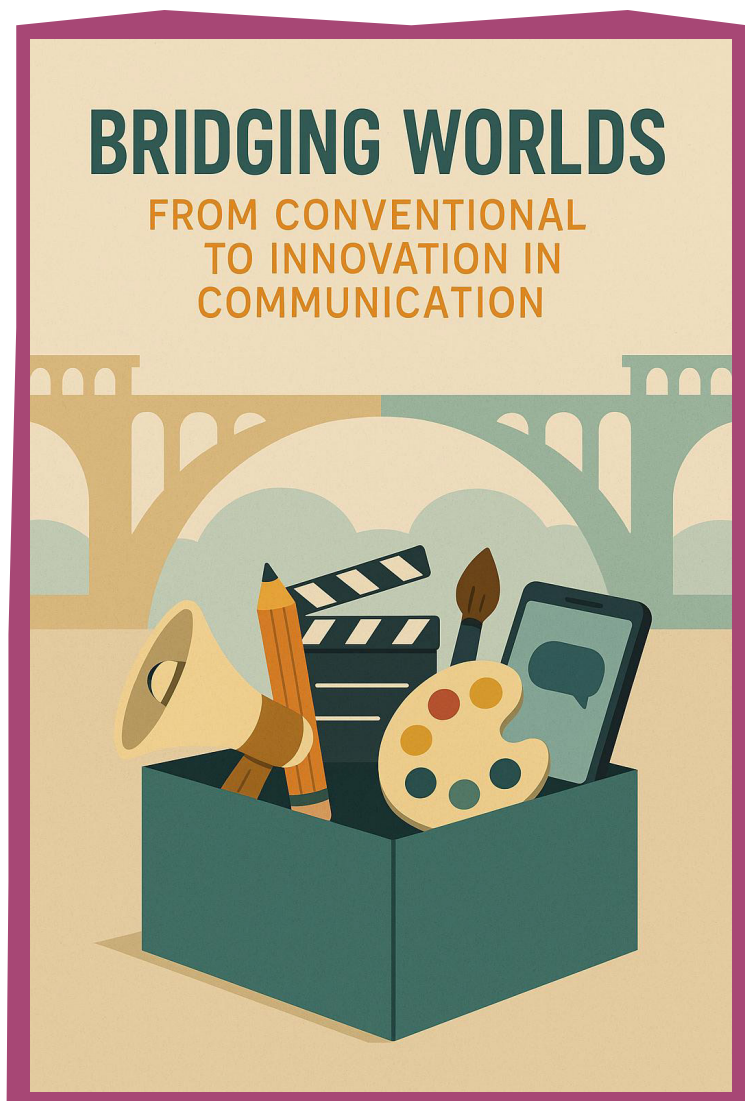
Communication Tools

Introduction

This section offers a shared framework to help CSOs select the most effective tools for their unique context while delivering their strategic messaging including hope-based messaging. From traditional media to digital platforms and contemporary artistic expressions, the right mix depends on your audience, message, and purpose. This section is your curated toolbox: a space to explore, combine, and adapt tools that bridge the familiar and the innovative. Whether you're printing a poster or launching a podcast, the key is to curate, collaborate, and create your own narrative.

Defining the Shared Framework of Communication Tools for CSOs

In this section, rather than developing a shared framework or definition for communication tools, the group expressed their understanding through creative AI work. An AI-generated visual created during the group work captures and reflects this framework:

Bridging Worlds from Conventional to Innovation in Communication

You can combine conventional methods like printed materials with digital tools like podcasts, interactive stories, or social media campaigns, choosing the right mix to reach people where they are and how they prefer to engage.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to communication tools, especially when the goal is to inspire hope and build meaningful connections. Building your own narratives requires a diverse set of tools including some that may seem beyond the reach of civil society. The choice of tools should be guided not only by creativity but also by a deep understanding of your audience.

Platforms like social media can be powerful when used intentionally to foster engagement and a sense of community, rather than simply boosting visibility. Consider which visual, audio, or interactive elements will best resonate with your specific audience and support narratives that connect and motivate.

The main tip is:

→ **curate**   → **collaborate**   → **to create your own narrative**

📦 Your Toolbox: Curate here

TRADITIONAL	DIGITAL	CONTEMPORARY
Printed Materials:	**Tools/ Strategies:**	**Formats/ Mediums:**
• Fliers	• Social media	• Performances
• Brochures	• Digital products	• Murals
• Letters	• AI tools/ algorithms	• Graffiti
• Posters	• Influencer collaborations	• Contemporary art installations
• Newspapers		
• Roll-up banners	**Platforms/ Channels:**	**Spaces/ Events:**
• Stickers	• Instagram	• Open mic events
• Pins	• Facebook	• Live shows
	• TikTok	
Broadcast Media:	• WhatsApp	**Collaborations/ Approaches:**
• TV ads	• YouTube	• Artist collaborations
• TV shows	• Websites	• Storytelling through art
• Radio	• Digital apps	
Direct Engagement:	**Formats/ Products:**	
• Events	• Videos	
• Face-to-face communication	• Podcasts/ Sounds	
	• Digital newsletters	
Press/ Publicity:	• Posters (digital)	
• Press releases	• Storytelling	
	• Reels	
	• TikTok	
	• Stories	
	• Single photo posts	
	• Carousels	

While these tools are grouped into categories, many of them are interconnected and can complement one another. Importantly, each tool can be applied through a hope-based communication approach. In particular, the hope-based framework is especially effective with contemporary tools, which include creative and often digital formats. This approach not only enabled the creation of powerful, engaging narratives but also inspired the exploration of new platforms and unconventional forms of expression. It encouraged experimentation and innovation in spaces not traditionally linked to civil society messaging, expanding the boundaries of how and where impactful communication can happen.

💡 **Tip – Applying Hope-Based Communication:**

You can use these **practical tools** rooted in a hope-based communication approach:

→ Access free artworks for use in social media posts, websites, campaigns, reports, and posters. Learn more here: <u>The Greats</u>

→ Get inspired by the Visual Guide for Communications: <u>#Seeing Hope</u>

→ Explore <u>hope-based videos</u> for further inspiration.

💡 **Tip:**

Always start by understanding your audience. Then, tailor your approach by thoughtfully curating, collaborating, and combining the right communication tools to effectively reach and engage them.

Keep in mind the hope-based communication tactic: center your messaging on what you stand for, not just what you stand against.

Tips | Practical Advice

DO:

- Research to understand the context, and your organisation's position ✓

- Clearly define your audience and know who you are speaking to and how ✓

- Choose the right platforms and tools and match your message with the most effective channels ✓

- Use the right words and prioritize clarity, empathy, and inclusiveness, and hope–based approach ✓

- Timing matters, time your communication well ✓

- Stay current and follow trends without compromising your core values ✓

- Apply design principles to ensure your content is visually coherent, accessible, and branded ✓

- Communicate inclusively through language, visuals, and tone that reflect diversity and equity ✓

- Write with intent and use copywriting techniques for clarity and engagement ✓

- Be authentic and build trust through honesty and transparency ✓

- Maintain quality by prioritizing accuracy, consistency, and professionalism ✓

DON'T:

- Use discriminatory or aggressive language that may cause harm to your reputation ✗

- Overload your audience with long texts on social media or soft communication channels ✗

- Use unprofessional visuals that weaken the credibility of your message ✗

- Exploit creative work and always credit artists and respect copyright ✗

- Share unverified and fake information that could damage your organisation's reputation ✗

Conclusion

Research thoroughly, analyze your audience, define clear targets, and let creativity lead the way. Most importantly, center your message on what you stand for, not just what you stand against. By focusing on what you believe in and curating a thoughtful mix of traditional, digital, and contemporary tools, you can craft narratives that resonate, inspire, and connect.

Behind the Work | Communication Tools – Group 3

Work– in– progress: **Group discussions**

Visibility of Impact

Introduction

This final section explores how CSOs can effectively demonstrate and communicate the social value they bring, not only by showcasing what they do, but by helping people understand why it matters. From raising awareness that the civil society sector exists to highlighting the unique roles CSOs play in advancing social change, communicating the impact is a powerful tool for deepening public trust, engagement, and support. It's about more than reporting activities or annual reports; it's about telling compelling stories of transformation, persistence, and hope. Whether through strategic communication, data-driven narratives, or emotionally resonant storytelling, CSOs have the opportunity to show the lasting change their work enables.

This section emphasizes how the impact of visibility can help people care, connect, and commit with the cause of CSOs. It also reflects on the importance of framing impact in ways that strengthen both the immediate and long-term reputation of CSOs by demonstrating their relevance, contribution, and value to society.

Our shared framework for the visibility of the impact of CSOs:

Visibility of impact makes the value and contributions of civil society seen and understood by showcasing its roles, achievements, and the meaningful change it creates over time. By communicating impact through storytelling and other creative mediums, it inspires people to care, engage, and act.
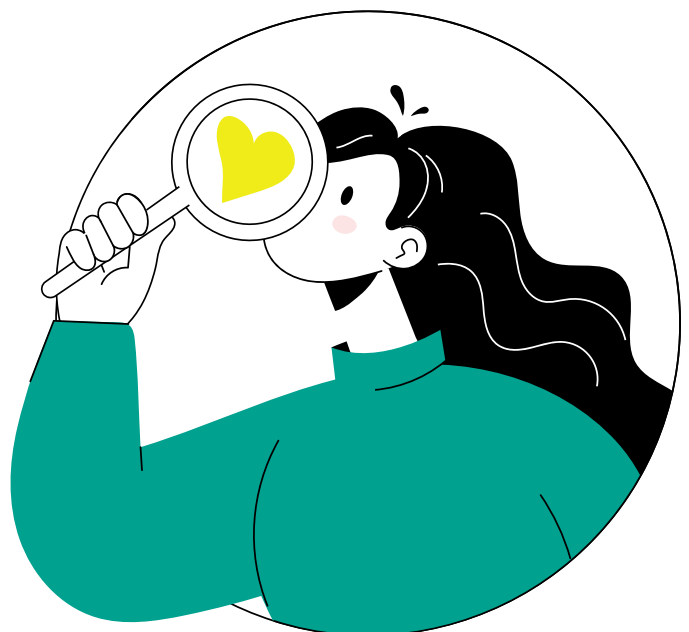
How to Make Our Impact Visible: Communicating the Impact

For CSOs, making impact visible is not only about evidence-based data or metrics, it's about telling the story of change in a way that inspires hope, invites participation, and builds trust. Here are some guiding principles that we discovered during the discussion:

→ Use hope-based communication to highlight change

Instead of focusing solely on problems, center your narrative around the solutions you're working toward and the change you've helped create. Let your story reflect progress, resilience, and the possibility of a better future.

→ Co-create stories with communities

Engage people as partners in storytelling. The most powerful impact stories come from those who have experienced change. Invite individuals and communities affected by your work to share their perspectives, in their own words, showing how civil society made a difference in their lives. Give space for their voices, listen actively, and allow communities to shape how their stories are told. This builds authenticity and strengthens relationships with the public.

→ Use creative tools to present change and impact

Digital platforms, visual storytelling, exhibitions, interactive maps, and story-driven campaigns are powerful ways to show both the scale and depth of your impact. Highlight not just the numbers, but also the volume and diversity of voices.

→ Celebrate your small wins, and communicate them honestly

Communicating impact doesn't mean overstating it. Be transparent about ongoing challenges while celebrating the steps forward. Use messages like #OurEffortContinues to show that progress is happening, even if slowly, and that your commitment remains strong.

→ Acknowledge complexity, stay hopeful

Recognize that social change is rarely linear. It's okay to say: "We still face challenges, but we're better than before." This honesty helps build credibility and keeps your audience engaged for the long haul.

Tips | Practical Advice

DO:

- Center real stories and real people to create authentic connection ✓

- Communicate with transparency to build trust and credibility ✓

- Include emotional elements that help people relate and engage ✓

- Use local languages to increase accessibility and resonance ✓

- Add subtitles to ensure your content is inclusive and widely understood ✓

- Use strong, relevant visuals to support and enhance your message ✓

DON'T:

- Dismiss criticism; engage with it constructively and openly ✗

- Overuse jargon that can exclude or confuse your audience ✗

Conclusion

Clear, honest, and hope-based communication is essential for strengthening credibility, mobilizing support, and fostering genuine public care for civil society's work. By acknowledging both achievements and ongoing challenges, CSOs can build trust and demonstrate their meaningful contributions to social change. Making impact visible is not just about sharing results; it is also about inspiring continued engagement and commitment to collective progress.

Behind the Work |
Visibility of Impact – Group 4

Work- in- progress: **Group discussions**

Final
Words

Final Words

This guide is both a product and a reflection of collective wisdom, shared purpose, and a renewed commitment to hope-based communication in civil society. From nurturing reputation like a growing flower, to crafting strategies that center empathy and impact, to curating the right mix of tools and telling stories that make change visible; each section offers both a guide and an invitation.

At its heart, this guide reminds us that communication is not a one-time campaign or a fixed formula; it is an evolving, intentional practice grounded in values, shaped by community, and driven by trust. It requires us to listen deeply, speak authentically, and act with clarity.

As you carry this guide into your daily work, we hope it serves as a source of inspiration and a practical resource. We hope it will guide you in building connections with the public, shifting narratives, and showing up with integrity and imagination. And most importantly, we hope it will remind you that civil society's voice is strongest when rooted in collaboration, courage, and the unwavering belief that a better future is always possible. Let's keep communicating with hope.