

# Tone of Voice for Bridge 47 Partnerships



**BRIDGE 47**

# About Bridge 47

Bridge 47 is a project co-created by 15 European and global organisations. We bring people determined to make target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality together in the Bridge 47 Network to work together and learn from each other.

We advocate for better policies that reflect the role of Global Citizenship Education in making sustainable development possible.

We explore new ways of working in partnership with organisations that have previously not engaged with Global Citizenship Education.

We explore new ways of doing Global Citizenship Education. We increase the capacity of European civil society to be innovative.

Bridge 47 is co-funded by the European Union. The project started in October 2017 and will continue until October 2020.

## Tone of Voice for Bridge 47 Partnerships

In 2018, Bridge 47 partnerships team worked with external expertise on our tone of voice in order to help us develop external partnerships. Our tone of voice work helped us develop strategies on how to use words to present our work and make it appealing for externals, especially those unfamiliar with Global Citizenship Education (GCE). This resource offers guidance on general tone of voice work for civil society groups interested in participating in a similar process.

# Tone of Voice

We need to find the right words to make the greatest impact. If we are to bring about change, we have to be more persuasive and effective with words.

It's not just what we say, it's how we say it. That's the meaning of *tone of voice*.

The principles should not seem unfamiliar. Many of them will have been suggested before as good communications practice.

But it's easy to forget. And it's easy to slip back into those formulaic ways of writing, filled with acronyms, jargon and obscure language. The aim of this guide is to encourage all readers and practitioners to bring GCE to wider audiences.

First, let's familiarise ourselves with the tone of voice framework:



At the centre of the framework is the short statement:

**Stories make connections.**

If we help people to understand better what we do and what we aim to do – by telling stories that describe it better than abstract language – we will connect more effectively with more people. And we will move them to action.

The stories should be real, not invented. Good storytelling needs authenticity. It is much better to show what Bridge 47 is about by telling a story that involves people – and that moves from a situation that needs to be tackled through to a resolution.

A simple storytelling structure might be used:

1. Doubt – a question that needs to be answered
2. Setting out the problem
3. Exploring and finding ways to deal with the situation
4. Action to resolve the problem

The narrative theme for Bridge 47 work is:

**Active citizens make a better world.**

Try to convey that message through the stories you tell in all your organisations.

**Example**

*In 2015 the member states of the United Nations discussed how to achieve its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and agreed that education was the key. These SDGs are about big issues facing the world including the environment and global warming, the diversity of people and cultures, economic inequalities, human rights and social justice. Big issues that need thought and action. Education – encouraging citizens to become more active participants in society from first years till last – is at the heart of the solution. Bridge 47 is based on the belief that active citizens make a better world.*

# The Tone of Voice Principles

If we go deeper into the three principles that form the outer circle of the framework, there are techniques you can use to support your writing. We have tried to keep to principles that can apply in any European language, not just English. The principles are for all communications with all audiences.

# 1

## Converse & question

This principle sets out our aim to be conversational, informal and always clear in our written language.

- Avoid excessive jargon
- Use acronyms only when they are understood by all your readers
- Steer away from bureaucratic formulas of language
- Show curiosity in your readers' response – ask questions
- Make your sentences varied – short and medium in length, with a rhythm
- Edit your words after the first draft (aim for one word less, not one word more)



## Example

*Bridge 47 is here to inspire people to do more for each other and the planet. We can learn to do things better, to live by values that make a difference.*

*We'll do this by bringing people together to share and learn from each other. To provide solutions instead of problems, to give support instead of criticism. We have a strong belief in the value of diverse views from people of all backgrounds and cultures.*

# 2

## Reflect & explore

This principle encourages us to be curious and thoughtful in our approach, and to reflect that in our words.

- Aim for clarity and simplicity in your words
- Be open to other arguments, not dogmatic
- Always think of your readers
- Replace abstract nouns with verbs wherever possible
- Use words to create pictures – through metaphors
- Use short connecting words to move the communication forward and keep your readers moving with you

## Example

### Instead of

*The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) is the national network for Development Education in Ireland representing over 70 members involved in the practice, promotion and advancement of Development Education. Bridge 47: Building Global Citizenship is an EU-funded project co-created and implemented by 15 European and global civil society organisations in order to promote to mobilise the civil society to effectively contribute to global justice and eradication of poverty through Global Citizenship Education. IDEA is a leading partner in this project with a particular focus on building partnerships between civil society organisations and new stakeholders who have not engaged with Global Citizenship Education previously (e.g. private sector, media, military/police).*

### Try this

*The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) is the national network to encourage more active citizenship in Ireland. Bridge 47 is an EU-funded project, with IDEA as a key partner alongside 15 other European civil society organisations. Our aim is, through formal and informal education, to create greater participation in discussing, reflecting and acting on vital issues that impact our society. These include sustainability, diversity and human rights. IDEA's role is to build partnerships – creating bridges between our network and stakeholders not previously reached, including private sector companies, media and more.*

# 3

## Move to action

We need emotion to tell stories, to win arguments, even if we need facts to back up those arguments.

- ‘Move’ contains the idea of emotion as well as motion – don’t be afraid to engage with your readers’ emotions through your own
- Favour personal pronouns such as ‘we’ and ‘you’ rather than hiding behind the third person ‘it’ to represent the organisation
- Use verbs, particularly verbs of action, as much as you can
- Aim for an arresting opening sentence – and a satisfying closing one
- You can be playful with language – through rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, used well
- Make sure your sentences and paragraphs are not too long and dense
- Use headings and sub-headings to guide your readers

## Example

*Building bridges, finding connections and bringing people together is what IDEA is for. We believe that all people should be able to participate in the decisions that affect them. And as we live in an interconnected world, those decisions can happen anywhere. We need to make connections. When people come together to explore Development Education, that connection creates a kind of magic.*

Above all, remember that communication is between human beings. You need your words to engage, one to one, with a human being who has feelings like yours. Make connections through stories that create shared feelings. Convey a strong sense of your purpose to make it easier for readers to understand and act on it.

**“No tears in the writer,  
no tears in the reader.”**

*– Robert Frost*

**For more information,  
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