Result Information

Deliverable Title: INNOCAMP.PL pilot report
Work Package: WP 4
Type of Result: report
Level: International
Target Groups: HE teachers, students, media professionals, SMEs, policy makers

Description

The INNOCAMP.PL Pilot Report was developed within WP4 of the SUMED project and documents the implementation of a pilot focused on sustainability in journalism and public communication. The report presents findings from focus group interviews conducted with media professionals, journalists, and PR specialists, addressing social sustainability, work-related well-being, and the impact of changing media formats.

The result provides practical recommendations for adapting journalism curricula to the goals of Agenda 2030, including sustainability, ethical journalism, and solutions-oriented reporting. The quality and relevance of the pilot outcomes were confirmed through external evaluation, highlighting their strong potential for wider use in higher education and professional media training, as well as their contribution to subsequent activities in WP5.

INNOCAMP.PL pilot recommendation report

Working Group 4 of the SUMED project

Executive Summary:

The report, titled **"INNOCAMP.PL Pilot Recommendation Report"**, is a result of the SUMED (Sustainable Media) project led by INNOCAMP.PL. Its aim is to align journalism studies with the goals of Agenda 2030, focusing on sustainability, climate change, inclusion, and well-being.

The project seeks to integrate sustainability principles into journalism training, enabling graduates to adapt to societal and professional changes aligned with Agenda 2030 goals.

Methodology:

- The study utilized Focus Group Interviews (FGI) to gather opinions from participants, including journalists, PR specialists, and press officers.
- The focus was on three topics:
    o Media's impact on social sustainability.
    o Work-related well-being.
    o Relationship between changing media formats and sustainability.
- The discussions were guided by experts and analyzed to develop recommendations.

Key Recommendations:

1. **Knowledge of Sustainability:**
    o Introducing classes on sustainability, climate data communication, and green journalism.
    o Emphasizing journalism's role in promoting positive social and environmental narratives.
2. **Professional Skills Development:**
    o Incorporating critical thinking, fact-checking, and research into curricula to combat disinformation and greenwashing.

  o Emphasizing "solutions journalism" to highlight actionable and data-driven solutions.

3. **Workplace Well-Being:**
  o Promoting work-life balance through stress management, psychological support, and improved organizational culture.

4. **Practical Collaboration:**
  o Encouraging fieldwork, internships, and projects with NGOs, local media, and other stakeholders to develop practical skills and build community trust.

5. **Ethical Journalism:**
  o Strengthening media ethics and teaching students the principles of integrity, honesty, and social responsibility.

6. **Adapting to Media Evolution:**
  o Training students in creating diverse content formats like podcasts and short videos while maintaining journalistic integrity.

Key Outcomes:

- Participants emphasized the need for journalism to inspire action through empowering stories and practical solutions.
- Recommendations aim to reform journalism studies, creating professionals equipped to address global challenges

The report provides a roadmap to transform journalism education into a sustainability-focused discipline, enhancing its relevance and impact in achieving Agenda 2030 goals. It highlights the importance of interdisciplinary approaches, ethical practices, and collaboration with communities.

The detailed report

This report is the result of the work of the SUMED (Sustainable Media) project leader, INNOCAMP.PL, based in Gdynia. SUMED is a project led by INNOCAMP.PL in cooperation with four partners: the University of Gdansk, the University of Malta, Turku University of

Technology (TUAS), and the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV). The goal of the project is to modify studies in journalism in line with the goals of Agenda 2030 in relation to climate change, building well-being, expanding inclusion, and other values of sustainability. The report was created as a result of the work of Working Group 4 (WP4), responsible for organized pilots aimed at collecting opinions and knowledge about the experiences of various groups. INNOCAMP.PL implemented its pilot in the journalism and PR community.

Source of the topics

The work of the other working groups of the SUMED project resulted in a list of topics to be used in pilots organized by the project partners in WP4:

- How does the media, PR department, and press office work affect social sustainability?
- How can we influence our work-related well-being?
- What is responsible production and consumption?
- What is the relationship between changing media formats and sustainability?
- What does carbon footprint awareness mean in the media, PR department, and press office?

These topics were the starting point for developing, together with the participants, recommendations for changes in the curriculum and operation of journalism studies in a way that will transform journalism studies into a more sustainable one, and enable its graduates to better function in social and professional environments in accordance with the goals of Agenda 2030.

Method

The study used the Focus Group Interview (FGI) method. This is a qualitative research technique for gathering the opinions of a group of people about a product, event, or idea. Participants had the opportunity to freely share their experiences and perspectives related to the integration of sustainability principles into the training of journalists and the professional work of graduates in this field. They discussed the topic during remote meetings in focus groups.

Due to the varying levels of knowledge about Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, each discussion was preceded by a brief introduction by an expert on the topic. By observing dynamic interactions in the group, we identified key factors influencing journalism students' education and professional work. The results allowed us to establish a list of recommendations, that can be used in the modification of study programs by project partners.

Selection of participants

The participants were selected according to the description of the project's purpose in the project proposal: the organization of a pilot - a place to exchange experiences and opinions of communication professionals: journalists, press officers, and PR specialists.

The invited group included dozens of people working in national and trade media (digital, TV, radio, and newspapers), press offices, and communication cells of institutions and companies (universities, RES energy sector, sports PR). Eventually, ten people took part in the meetings.

The group was composed in such a way as to include people with different experiences, most of them in the course of their careers seamlessly transitioning between journalism and PR. The discussion meetings were attended by ten people who shared their knowledge, and experience and referred to the threads discussed by the experts.

Selection of the topics

- Potential meeting participants had previously declared via an online survey which of the five topics developed by the SUMED project's substantive groups they were most interested in. The results of the survey prompted the organization of two meetings on three topics:
- How does the media, PR department, and press office work affect social sustainability? (1st meeting),
- How can we influence our work-related well-being? (1st meeting),
- What is the relationship between changing media formats and sustainability? (2nd meeting).

Meetings

The meetings were conducted in the form of remote discussions on the Zoom platform on September 27 and October 25, 2024. Each of the meetings was led by a moderator. The topics were discussed by experts associated with the Ashoka organization, which brings together the world's leading social entrepreneur-innovators. The first meeting was conducted in Polish, and the second in English.

On September 27, the meeting was attended by six people, and on October 25 by four people working in the media and PR industry.

The experts:

- Dr. Adam Jagiełło-Rusiłowski - entrepreneur and social innovator, trainer of innovation, applied creativity, improvisational drama, and leadership in services, leader of the SUMED project, for the topic of work-related well-being

(September 27, also participated in the October 25 meeting),

- Jacek Bożek - environmental activist, co-founder of campaigns protecting Polish rivers, planting trees, and effective advocate of banning the cruel treatment of animals, leader of the Gaia club, for the topic of the impact of the media, PR department, and press office on social sustainability (September 27),

- Jeremy Druker - executive director of Transitions and editor-in-chief of Transitions magazine, which has made solutions journalism a central part of its editorial strategy, member of the supervisory board of the Czech Journalism Awards, for the topic of the relationship between changing media formats and sustainable development (October 25).

The moderator for both meetings was Alexander Anikowski.

Recommendations for changes in the organization of journalism studies

The entire discussion during both meetings was recorded and subjected to detailed analysis[1], which resulted in preliminary recommendations, sent to those who participated in both meetings for final correction, completion, and verification.

Participants who wished to comment confirmed the consistency of the recommendations with their expectations and the course of the discussion.

For ease of reading, all the collected material has been divided into several thematic sections. Each is accompanied by quotes from female and male participants in the discussion relating to suggestions for change.

The recommendations relate to the study program itself, the support necessary for future journalists, and cooperation with the social and professional environment of the university.

Knowledge of sustainability

- Understanding sustainability: An introduction to the concept of sustainability and its importance in journalism and communications
- Communicating climate change: Introducing classes on communicating sustainability and analyzing climate data in a media context

"Ecology is more about politics already, so also teach these young people that these are informed political choices and so on," he said.

"We're also looking at sustainability in the same vein as we're specifically looking for ways to meet the needs of young people, for example, in the context of climate change."

"Don't teach about the watchdog principle, but that journalism and journalists should function as a kind of guide dog, also pointing in the direction of what is going well in the world. What are the positive examples, whether it's government programs, NGO activities, or civic activities that are actually making a difference in the world, and then writing about them in depth."

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[1] The analysis was based on a transcription made at Riverside.FM. Machine translation of the meeting transcript in English was done using DeepL. Models were used to verify the effects of the analysis: Copilot, ChatGPT, Google Gemini.

"It's a good idea to prepare future journalists not only to write, but also to get involved and be involved, and to do the right research and find people to help develop their ideas to make a difference."

● Environmental awareness: creating materials on the impact of human activities on the environment and reporting on environmental solutions

"Talking about climate change. In different contexts, because it's very complicated. In different political contexts, animal rights, human rights, women's rights. It's... River rights, it's very, very complicated. Talking about climate change It's talking about communicating with death and passing."

"Moving stories leave audiences inspired rather than depressed. The picture of the world in the media. More and more stories about what works in the world. It's just a more truthful way. And then the citizens, the people who read these stories, tend to feel more empowered, especially on this issue, that they can make a difference themselves."

● Environmental awareness: training in green journalism and promoting sustainable practices in content creation

"It's not about intentions. It's not about some great program that might work. These are programs that are already working and have evidence of impact. So we are looking at their effectiveness. They may be at an early stage, but there are already some results. Journalists who work with data are particularly good at solutions journalism because it is data-driven. We don't just create a nice story, because we hope that if it can work in ten years, it's already working, and there is data to back it up, both quantitative and qualitative."

● The role of the media in shaping social attitudes: Introducing student projects focusing on the positive impact of the media on sustainability.

"We can encourage this at universities and develop the involvement of students as journalists so they can build relationships with NGOs, they can experience situations that are influential."

● Collaboration with experts: Organizing workshops with experts in various fields related to sustainable development

● Promoting interdisciplinarity: introducing classes that will combine journalism with other fields, such as social sciences, economics, or environmental science.

"There are places where these dams need to be built. And there are which ones, and there are places where these dams cannot be built under any circumstances. Which politician will say that? Which politician will tell people to move further away from the riverbank?"

"When it comes to certain environmental trends, we go a bit sheepishly, and we perceive a zero-one situation. This applies, for example, to electric cars, which in Polish conditions are at the same time composed of impure coal. There is the issue of production, rare earth metals, their availability on the market, how they are extracted in what used to be called Third World countries."

Substantive competencies and values

- Critical thinking and information analysis: Courses on identifying disinformation and greenwashing

"Greenwashing, that is, forcing journalists, including precisely spokespersons, people in charge of public communications, to portray their institution in such a way that just, well, as we say, whitewashes it, that's where the whitewashing comes in, and not always following the truth and reality."

- Critical thinking and information analysis: Tools and techniques for fact-checking in the context of environmental and sustainability information.

"Journalists very often simply copy political statements without a word of commentary, and this is a very big problem here."

- Building analytical and research skills: Emphasize analytical, research, and critical thinking skills in curricula so that graduates can not only report but also verify data and avoid greenwashing

"Journalists who work with data are particularly good at solutions journalism because it is data-driven," he said.

"If journalists are forced to write ten articles a day, it will be difficult to find time for more solutions-oriented reporting, because it requires homework."

Solution journalism

Solution Journalism is an approach to news reporting that focuses on solutions to problems, rather than just the problems themselves. This form of journalism seeks to provide insight into how various challenges are being tackled, often with the aim of inspiring action or replicating successful strategies. It emphasizes rigorous, evidence-based reporting to highlight responses that have the potential to create positive change.

Key Characteristics of Solution Journalism:

1. **Focus on Solutions**: While traditional journalism often emphasizes problems, solution journalism examines what is being done to address those problems and how effective those efforts are.

2. **Evidence-Based**: It relies on data and verifiable outcomes to assess the effectiveness of the solutions being presented.
3. **Insight-Oriented**: The goal is to uncover insights that can inform and inspire others facing similar challenges.
4. **Acknowledges Limitations**: Solution journalism does not sugarcoat issues or imply that a solution is perfect; it critically evaluates both the strengths and limitations of the response.
5. **Actionable Information**: The reporting aims to provide practical knowledge that can be applied in other contexts or communities.

Why Solution Journalism Matters:

- **Inspires Change**: By showcasing what works, it motivates individuals, organizations, and policymakers to implement proven strategies.
- **Reduces Cynicism**: Constantly focusing on negative news can lead to apathy. Solution journalism provides a more balanced perspective, showing that progress is possible.
- **Increases Engagement**: Stories about solutions tend to resonate with audiences, as they are uplifting and empowering.
- **Holds Power to Account**: By highlighting solutions, it can also expose where institutions fail to adopt effective measures.

Examples of Solution Journalism:

1. **Environmental Reporting**: Articles detailing how cities are reducing carbon emissions through innovative technologies.
2. **Social Justice**: Coverage of programs that have successfully reduced recidivism rates in prisons.
3. **Education**: Stories about schools that have dramatically improved literacy rates using new teaching methods.
4. **Healthcare**: Reports on interventions that have significantly reduced maternal mortality in under-resourced areas.

How to Implement Solution Journalism:

1. **Identify the Problem**: Begin with a clear understanding of the issue.
2. **Research Responses**: Look for programs, initiatives, or approaches that are addressing the issue.

3. **Analyze Impact**: Use data, case studies, and expert opinions to evaluate the effectiveness of the solutions.
4. **Engage Stakeholders**: Speak to those implementing the solution, as well as those it impacts, to provide a full picture.
5. **Present Limitations**: Discuss any barriers or challenges that the solution faces to provide a balanced view.

Solution journalism shifts the narrative from "what's wrong" to "what's working," making it a vital tool for fostering a more informed and optimistic society.

- Include solution journalism in the curriculum: Introduce compulsory or optional classes on the topic, including both theory and practical exercises:
  o Introduction to the concept of solutions journalism and its importance in the context of sustainable development
  o Case studies of solutions journalism from different countries and cultures.

"Why the news industry still has this approach, even though journalists and others know this, of course, the phenomenon of news fatigue and aversion to news is such that many journalists still have this approach. And this is what they are traditionally taught in journalism schools, that if you investigate crime, corruption, and things like that, you are doing your job as a guardian of democracy."

"It's a good idea to prepare future journalists not just to write, but to get involved, and be involved, do the right research and find people to help develop their ideas to make a difference."

- Adapting to changing media formats: Teaching students to create content in a variety of formats - from short videos (3-5 minutes) to podcasts - in a manner consistent with solutions journalism.

"I've seen videos that are, I would say, three or five minutes long. So it's possible to create such stories. I don't know if you'll be able to do them properly in 30 seconds on TikTok or whatever. So yeah, I think it's going to be a challenge, and it might end up being too similar to these kinds of hero stories, because we're trying to explain how the reaction works, and it's going to be difficult to do that in this kind of format. I think it can be done in short films and I've seen that."

- The role of the media in promoting positive action:

o   Training on how the media can communicate solutions and positive actions to the public

o   Creating materials on initiatives that bring positive change

"People have such a misguided vision of how the world is. We get the impression that people feel depressed, they feel powerless, they feel that the influx of news is overwhelming. It makes them feel as if they can't contribute to the world or affect change in any way. It leaves them in a situation where they feel it would be better to turn off the news or selectively avoid it."

"What are the positive examples, whether they are government programs, NGO activities, or civic activities that are actually making a difference in the world, and then writing about them in depth."

Professional ethics

● Training in professional ethics: Increasing emphasis on media ethics, including avoiding misinformation and promoting social responsibility.

o   Journalism ethics courses with an emphasis on responsibility for content and its impact on society

o   Discussions on ethical dilemmas in the work of journalists and PR professionals.

o   Forming in students an awareness of the social responsibility of journalists, the principles of integrity and honesty in reporting information, and the ability to recognize and avoid manipulation

"Journalists with me no longer talk about bad things. They already know it. Those who talk to me already know it. So they talk about how you can do some simple good things. But they can't be, and this is very important, greenwashing. Well, they can't be. They have to be quite specific things."

"The public will take it badly, or there's a mistake there [...] So there's still this crisis of confidence in all of this".

"Why people still turn to the media for information and not directly to companies is because they just don't trust big companies. The media still advocates for many, many things."

Wellbeing

● Work-life balance: Promoting workplace policies and practices that support a healthy balance

"I have a lot of freedom to choose topics, and there's no pressure for it to be some news that will sell well I choose topics that interest me, so all of this makes me like my job AND work well."

"The local press, if it had more time, could better support local communities on issues that matter. Then journalists could focus on relevant topics and have a greater impact on the community."

Skills and support

● Stress management: Training in occupational stress management, including relaxation and meditation techniques

  o Time management and prioritization workshops to minimize time pressures

  o Psychological support: Introduction of psychological support programs, access to therapists and psychologists, training in emotion management

  o Psychological support: Organizing support and mentoring groups for journalists to share their experiences and cope with professional challenges

"What we are seeing now is that journalists are turning into media workers in Poland, that they don't have much time and have to present several stories a day, several short stories," he said.

"This is a gigantic pressure on journalists and those already with more seniority and those just starting."

Organizational culture and workflow

● Organizational culture: Promote among students the principles of building a friendly organizational culture based on cooperation and respect

  o Building a sense of belonging and community in journalistic teams,

  o Shaping skills in communication, teamwork, and conflict management.

  o Preparing to work in a dynamic media environment: Developing skills to adapt to change and manage information.

"A big figure is also the team of people you work with. So that it's not like there's a rivalry between. Maybe some people like rivalries, but I happen to be one of those things that rivalries would only stir up and add stress to me."

"In my opinion, journalism students have a much bigger platform for communication, so they can reach out more widely," he said.

"Let's act together. Let's work together. Let's create something together. And especially when it comes to journalistic cooperation, it should be like this. Let's learn how to do that. Let's be open."

Cooperation with the community

- Practical fieldwork: Field trips and research projects related to environmental protection and sustainable development
  - Professional internships in environmental organizations and corporate communications departments,
  - Organization internships and projects that will put students in direct contact with organizations working to solve social problems,
  - Implementation of communication projects in local media, most credible to the community and focused on the practical, local dimension of change,
  - Learning to connect with different audiences,
  - Developing apprenticeship programs to build relationships in the future work environment,
  - Introducing internship programs or project classes that last longer than one semester, allowing students to build trust in communities and work on deeper stories.

"There is the issue of dialogue between institutions. We teach cooperation between different institutions. Here is the university, the NGO, the local government, and we have a common goal. Our common mission, our common tasks."

"How can we encourage this at universities and develop the involvement of students as journalists, so they can build relationships with NGOs, they can experience situations that are influential"

"By suggesting how journalists could promote solutions and promote more positive actions to empower young people."

"You know, it's about neighborhoods, it's about solving specific problems at the local level, and it's all built on trust and strong collaboration with many stakeholders because universities have problems with these kinds of partnerships."

Quality Assurance and Evaluation

This result was developed and validated within the SUMED project and **evaluated by an external evaluator**. The external evaluation confirmed: high quality and relevance of the result, alignment with project objectives, strong potential for sustainability and wider use.

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