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Campaigning for Europe

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(23) Ideas Lab: Local heroes as EU ambassadors 9 November, Ledra Street

Lab leaders: Nils Bunjes, EDIC Stuttgart, Germany

Facilitators: Ian Andersen and Susanne Nebert, Art of Hosting Team, European Commission

“Everyone needs something local they can identify with”, said Nils Bunjes, as he opened the session with a summary of the ‘112’ campaign he created. The purpose of ‘112’ is to raise awareness of the EU’s impact at local level, using the local emergency services number, also valid EU-wide, as the hook. Most people in their own country know the number, but only about 35% know it is EU-wide, according to Mr Bunjes. He argued that showing the added value of the EU at local level can be a good way of **getting the local population interested and involved in EU initiatives**.

The ‘112’ campaign has been very successful. By using firefighters to promote the campaign, it was able to generate incredibly high media uptake. The campaign's ‘Notruf 112 Europaweit’ (112 EU-wide number?) logo, has been hung from the top of the TV tower in Stuttgart, and affixed to the vehicles of local mountain and air rescue teams. The campaign also gained formal recognition for ‘European 112 Day’, held last 11 February, to raise further awareness.

Mr Bunjes’ presentation ended with a picture of Edelgard – at 112 years of age, the face of the 112 campaign – alongside a screenshot of a tweet from MEP Guy Verhofstadt, commending the campaign with the hashtag ‘support112’.

At this point, participants formed smaller groups, and the ideas lab part of the session began, with participants introducing themselves and explaining what made them passionate about the EU. These groups then began to brainstorm ideas about potential local message carriers. Some of these ideas included harnessing **‘zero-wasters’** – local environmental, waste-reduction activists and professionals – to promote the EU’s waste reduction targets, especially concerning the use of plastics. **Local teachers, taxi drivers and tour guides**, due to the high number of people they come into contact with as part of their job, were also mentioned as possible local message carriers.

Groups were then tasked with coming up with next steps to get their local heroes to act. To do so, they had to think carefully about which EU project should get more local attention, and from this point of view identify a local hero and the ways in which they could promote the EU.



The first group decided to focus on **the EU's historical legacy** and its positive impact on local communities, culture, labour practices and so on. They identified **taxi drivers and city guides** as appropriate **message carriers**. With some training from the EU, they could help to point out to visitors the EU's presence in their town or city – buildings it has funded, cultural initiatives it has supported, and so on. **'EU in your city'** was suggested as a possible tagline for this campaign.

The second group identified a similar group of people – **bus drivers** – **to convey EU-related messages**, this time with a focus on **environmental issues**, such as carbon emissions and fuel-efficient driving. To mobilise bus drivers, this group suggested **creating an association of EU bus drivers**, through which members would receive a **monthly newsletter sharing stories of best practice**, as well as the chance to win the European bus driver of the **competition** – the prize for which would be a free weekend break and travel pass in a European city. The EU would also provide training. In return, drivers would be encouraged to drive in an environmentally friendly way and publicise EU environmental standards on their bus.

The final group identified **social workers** as an effective group to mobilise; due to the personal relationships, they are able to form as part of their job. For example, it was suggested that social workers would be able **to raise awareness** among the people in their care of **energy-saving methods** in the home, in support of EU environmental measures.

Alongside these kinds of day-to-day activities, social workers on the scheme would receive **training from the EU on social exclusion and social justice programmes**, with a view to their raising awareness of such programmes among their colleagues. The final group also came up with the idea of setting up **an EU-wide organisation for social workers**, to be coordinated by local universities, colleges and authorities, with an annual conference, for professionals to share best practice and discuss new ways of raising awareness of the EU.

Using local people to convey information about the EU, would help make the link in people's minds between what happens at the level of EU institutions and the relevance of those decisions at local level.

In summing up, participants were also encouraged by the session leaders to think of EU-wide hooks – like '112' – on which they could develop future initiatives, to be shared at www.localpower.eu.

Take away of the session: **Create your own local heroes at www.localpower.eu!**

