



# CIVITAS social media best practices

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## About

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# 1 Executive Summary

This document provides some advice to CIVITAS projects and partners targeting stakeholders via social media – specifically Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Flickr – to maximise their impact.

The goal of effective social media use is not only to keep target groups informed, but also to generate consistent ‘buzz’ and accumulate a higher following.

The following pages will dig into the basics of communicating via each of these social media platforms, as well as provide a few valuable tips for creating effective and memorable posts.

## 1.1 Twitter

As the most popular of the platforms, it is particularly valuable to have an active presence on Twitter. It is a fast-moving platform, where post success is often dictated by concise, clear messages and engaging graphics.

Key to Twitter success:

- ✓ Language should be accessible and not too technical
- ✓ Popular (yet relevant!) hashtags should be identified and used
- ✓ Mention topic-appropriate accounts that are likely to retweet or share your post
- ✓ Remember to mention @CIVITAS\_EU so your post can be picked up by our channels!

### Types of posts

*In addition to a regular tweet, Twitter offers other options to connect with an audience, for example:*

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>Retweet</b>     | The quickest and easiest way to share great content from other accounts on to your account. Retweets should be balanced with your own original content.   |
| <b>Quote tweet</b> | Like a retweet, but taken a step further. By retweeting a relevant post and adding a couple of personalised lines, Twitter users are able to better understand how your account perceives or relates to key topics. |



**Image 1:** Quote tweet

**Tip!** Take a short sentence or fact from a tweet, shorten it so that it communicates the punchiest points and to then add some trending hashtags and emoticons.

### Thread

A great choice for if you have longer message to convey, or if you want to create a “series” of posts. Simply click on the speech bubble below your own tweet and you will create a thread.

**Tip!** If you have, for example, four tweets in your thread, the first and the fourth (most recent) will be visible together – it is therefore important to have a strong first tweet, because it will be viewed over and over.

### Poll

An easy option if you are looking to promote more interactive engagement with and among your followers. The question you poll users on can use the same writing style you usually tweet in or take on a playful approach. Polls are a fun and more personal alternative to standard posts.

### GIFS

Depending on your network, you may or may not see GIFS on your newsfeed. For professional accounts these are not commonly used, but if they capture a particularly relevant idea or issue to your account, then it could be an interesting or more light-hearted posting option.

## Twitter tips

- ✓ Professional networks are typically most active at the start of the business day, so this is a great time to post **(8:30-10:00)**. In the mid-afternoon, when some professionals hit the **15:00** wall and they need a mental break, this is also a good time to post. If you aim to reach a non-professional audience, then posting later in the day may prove to be more effective. This timing is generally the case for all social media platforms mentioned here.
- ✓ Friday is not the ideal day to make an important announcement nor launch an important publication. Friday posts are usually lighter; particularly those posted in the afternoon.
- ✓ If you plan on posting more than once a day, give your posts some room to “breathe”. Wait a few hours before launching your next post.

## Emoticons

- ✓ Emoticons are a great visual supplement to your posts, but should be used with purpose and not at random. Too many emoticons make the post too overwhelming to read and may not look professional. Emoticons can also be used to replace words. See below:



Image 2: Emoticon use

## Space saving

- ✓ If you are including a link in your post use [bitly](#) to shorten it. This is applicable for all social media platforms.

## Getting the word out

- ✓ To make more people aware of your content, mention other accounts in your post. They can either be written in to the content of the tweet itself, or tagged in your attached image. The latter is ideal, because it will not cut into your character count. Ten mentions are permitted on an image. Before mentioning anyone, particularly if it is an account you rarely mention, it is useful to check their page and make sure that they are still active. If they have not posted anything in a few months it is best to skip them and use the mention on an active account.

## Clever connecting

- ✓ If you are looking to grow your network, one strategy is to use the search bar. Type in a hashtag that you use often and filter results by clicking 'From anyone'. Alternatively, you could check the list of followers on your favourite accounts.

## Twitter Analytics

Twitter offers a basic analytics function free of charge to all users. Use it! Analytics are a valuable indicator of what posts are and are not successful. They give you a quick view of how many people are visiting your profile, mentioning you in posts, following you and more. See below:

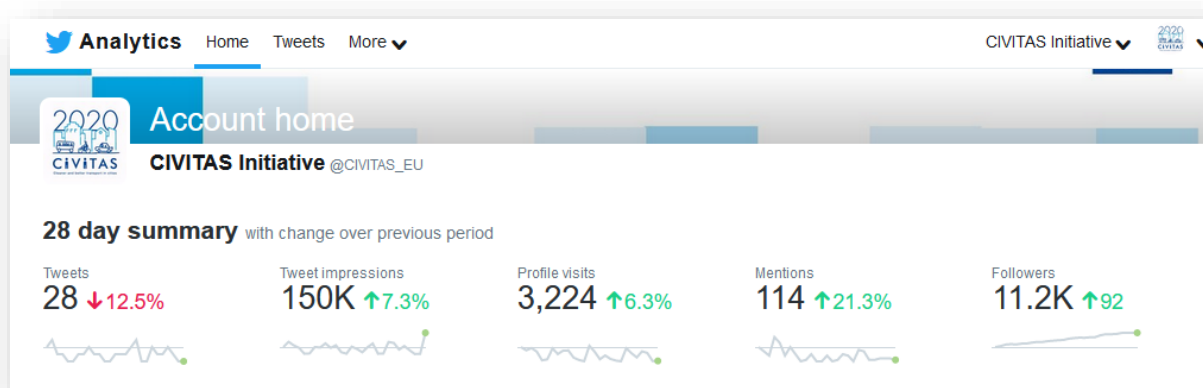


Image 3: Twitter Analytics 1

The second tab, 'Tweets', will give you a clear idea of how many people are engaging with each individual post.

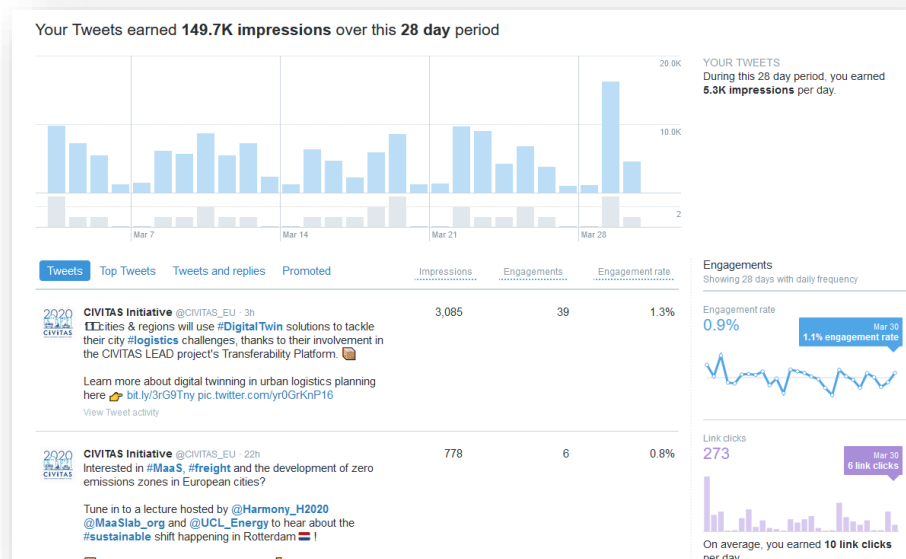


Image 4: Twitter Analytics 2

Twitter is the most dynamic, flexible and fun of all the platforms. If you are going to have only one social media platform, it may be your best choice since it is so widely popular.

## 1.2 Facebook

Facebook is an attractive option for the reason that it allows for longer posts and multiple pictures to be shared all at once. It also allows for the opportunity to create a group where likeminded posts can be shared, thereby creating a kind of thematic community.

It is a user-friendly platform and particularly popular among those with personal accounts. It is however, less popular than it used to be and many new projects choose to not even open an account.

The basics:

- ✓ Like the other platforms, Facebook uses hashtags
- ✓ Mentions, known more commonly on Facebook as Tags, can be made within the written content of the post, or as tags in a photograph
- ✓ Facebook offers an analytics tool called 'Insights', where you can monitor things like page views, page followers, post reach and post likes



- ✓ Remember to mention and follow **@Civitas Initiative** so your post can be picked up by our channels!

**Tip!** Although longer posts are possible with Facebook, shorter posts will generally perform better.

## 1.3 LinkedIn

With more of a business focus, LinkedIn is the ideal platform for connecting with professionals. Depending on your target audience, it will be the most or second-most valuable social media platform in your communications arsenal. The communicative tone is more serious here and the focus tends towards networking and knowledge-sharing rather than promotion.

The basics:

- ✓ There are two different types of posts on LinkedIn: first, a regular text post that is accompanied by either a photo or video, and second, a poll
- ✓ As on any platform, posts with some sort of visual element typically perform better
- ✓ LinkedIn uses hashtags
- ✓ Remember to mention and follow **@CIVITAS Initiative** so your post can be picked up by our channel!
- ✓ Project partners and those active in the sector are encouraged to sign up to the CIVITAS LinkedIn Urban Mobility Group:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4286016/profile>

### LinkedIn tips

#### Use of space

- ✓ Craft your post so that the most important message—and link, if you're using one—are visible in the first three lines before they are cut off by the 'see more'. When scrolling through the homepage few people actually click on 'see more', so put what needs to be communicated front and centre.

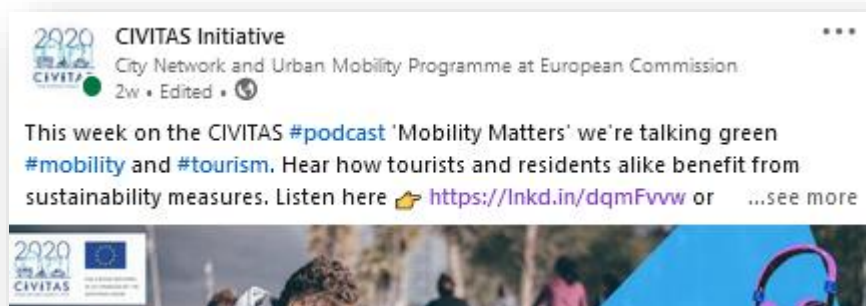


Image 5: Use of space on LinkedIn

## Mentions

- ✓ Mentions, also known as Tags, should be used strategically on LinkedIn since it is a professional network.
- ✓ Place mentions in either the back 'half' of the post (after the 'see more') or as tags in a photo
- ✓ Unlike on Twitter where mentions/tags are used more liberally to connect with others, for LinkedIn we recommend using tags only when the user is directly linked to what is being posted.

## Documents

- ✓ An excellent feature of LinkedIn is that it is possible to **upload documents** that can be viewed directly on LinkedIn without taking the user to another page. Attach a document by clicking on the attach a photo icon.

## LinkedIn Articles

- ✓ Using a simple, blog-style format, the LinkedIn Articles section allows users to share a longer text, where it is possible to include multiple photos
- ✓ Articles allow you to use familiar formatting techniques (different font sizes, bold text, bulleted lists, etc.)

## 1.4 Flickr

Flickr is the ideal photo sharing platform. The user-friendly design makes it easy to create and display multiple albums of photos. Such a platform is useful if your project/network/organisation hosts a number of events where photos are taken.

The basics:

- ✓ By creating a 'Group' multiple colleagues and partners can contribute photos
- ✓ Groups can be private or public
- ✓ Privacy settings are flexible on Flickr, so it is possible to decide who sees your photos
- ✓ When uploading images on Flickr, make sure to use the relevant copyright information, which generally includes the name of the photographer
- ✓ See the CIVITAS Flickr account here:  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/143590607@N08/albums>

## Flickr tips

### Management

- ✓ It is highly recommended to have one individual, like a Dissemination Manager, responsible for keeping the group and/or albums updated.
- ✓ Consider using different albums to separate logical clusters of photos (e.g. one album per event or workshop)

### Sharing is caring

- ✓ For those who do not have a Flickr account, it is possible to share a direct link to an album or specific photos by using the Guest Pass feature

### Consistency

- ✓ Maintaining a steady supply of photos throughout a project duration is particularly valuable – not only for reporting purposes, but also to show the progress of measures both before and after implementation

## 2 Post Inclusivity

Social media is a domain of communication that should be accessible and inclusive to all. Without tailoring your posts to all users, you may miss out on the opportunity to connect with your full potential audience.

[One billion](#) people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability. That includes difficulty seeing, hearing, speaking, organising thoughts, walking, or grasping with their hands. When social media content is non-inclusive it pushes this group of people away.

Additionally, not everyone speaks English (if this is the language you are posting in) at the same level. There are less than [400 million](#) native English speakers worldwide, and 1.5 billion who speak it as an additional language. The type of language you use should therefore be cognizant of that fact.

So, how do you make the content on your social media channels free from exclusion?

### Post Inclusivity tips

#### Text

- ✓ Write in plain language and avoid using jargon or slang
- ✓ Capitalise the first letter of each new word in a hashtag to ensure it is recognised by screen readers (i.e. #MobilityAsAService or #SustainableMobility)

#### Emojis

- ✓ Limit emoji use (emojis are read aloud by screen readers, which means that three cyclist emojis would be read aloud as "Woman Biking, Woman Biking, Woman Biking")
- ✓ When using people emojis, make an effort to alternate between genders and skin tones, as well as include those who are in wheelchairs or those using a white cane

#### Image captions

- ✓ Also known as 'alt text', descriptive captions on photos allow people to visualise images when they are unable to see them. For example, 'People standing in a busy tram'. As the [most problematic aspect of web accessibility](#), missing or ineffective alt text should always be included. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram all accommodate image captions

#### Video captions

- ✓ Closed captions on videos are necessary for viewers with hearing impairments, and valuable for those in sound-off environments and non-native speakers
- ✓ On several platforms it is possible to auto-generate captions

**Colour**

- ✓ Do not rely on colour to relay meaning, since colours are perceived differently depending on culture as well as by those with visual impairments, like colour-blindness (for example, add an underline to hyperlinks, which are otherwise just blue)

### 3 Post Organisation

Managing your social media posts can feel like a full time job – for some it is! To ensure that you are able to maximise your time while ensuring consistent and high-quality posts, it is highly recommended to create a social media calendar.

This can be created simply in Excel or Google Sheets, or in a social media management platform, like [Hootsuite](#) or [Buffer](#). There are plenty of platforms available and the list is constantly growing. Check to see which have a free option that allows for a certain number of posts per month.

For those who are not managing multiple social media channels full time, it is likely easiest to use Google Sheets. You can set up your calendar to include the date, body of the post, hashtag ideas, mentions to include and external links to add.

**Tip!** Include a column that adds up the number of characters in the body column, so that when the time comes to post you know exactly how long your posts are. Use the [LEN function](#) for this.

|   | A    | B     | C        | D  | E           | F  | G  | H   | I     |
|---|------|-------|----------|--|-------------|--|--|---|-------|
| 1 | Date |       | Platform |  |             | Additional information                       |  |   |       |
| 2 | Week | Date  |          | Full text  | Char. Count | Hashtag                                      | Related accounts   | Link  | Image |
| 6 |      | Jan 4 | All      | We're back! Happy 2021! * We're excited to see what this year has in store for #sustainable #transportation. Let's get to it **  | 128         | #sustainable<br>#transportation              |  |   |       |
| 7 |      | Jan 5 | All      | The '15-minute city': an urban planning model customized for the local future, where everything a resident needs can be reached with 15 minutes of walking or biking. The Parisian example: <a href="https://bbc.in/2MDCUkZ">https://bbc.in/2MDCUkZ</a> #community #neighbourhood #sustainable                 | 249         | #community<br>#neighbourhood<br>#sustainable |  |   |       |
| 8 |      | Jan 7 | Twitter  | The @MEISTER_H2020 project is bringing smart e-mobility to 3 residential pilot sites in Germany * with an e-car sharing service. Citizens can register, book and access the cars with an app. * Learn more about this game-changing project here > <a href="https://bit.ly/3nw4YUX">https://bit.ly/3nw4YUX</a> | 266         | #emobility<br>#EV                            | @MEISTER_H2020<br>@POLISnetwork<br>@EASE_ES<br>@Transport_EU<br>@gruposetra<br>@VIZ_Berlin<br>@KEM_Berlin<br>@CERThellas<br>@EON_SE_en | <a href="https://civitas.eu/news/meister-b">https://civitas.eu/news/meister-b</a> |       |

Image 6: Social Media Planning

## 4 Photo Dimensions and Character Counts

| Platform                   | Profile Image | Banner Image |
|----------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Twitter                    | 400x400       | 1500x500     |
| Facebook                   | 180x180       | 820x312      |
| LinkedIn ("personal")      | 300x300       | 1584x396     |
| LinkedIn ("business page") | 300x300       | 1128x191     |
| YouTube                    | 800x800       | 2048x1152    |

**Table 1:** Ideal Photo Dimensions (in pixels)

| Platform | # of possible characters | # of characters before cut-off ('...see more')   |
|----------|--------------------------|--|
| Twitter  | 280                      | n/a  |
| Facebook | 63,206                   | 140  |
| LinkedIn | 700                      | Cut once it reaches 3 lines (213-230 characters) |

**Table 2:** Character count limits

## 5 Linking with Relevant Channels

If you have not done so already, develop a detailed stakeholder list. You can start by doing a brainstorm of all the subgroups that can be identified from your original target audience list. This could include related associations, EU projects/initiatives, institutions, organisations, etc. Organise the identified stakeholders into one place, like an Excel sheet, and identify all the channels they can be reached at via social media.

|    | A               | B                          | C                | D                                | E                      | F                    | G                | H                |
|----|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1  |                 | Partners                   | Twitter          | LinkedIn                         | Facebook               | Cities               | Twitter          | Facebook         |
| 2  | CIVITAS SUMP-UP |                            |                  |                                  |                        |                      |                  |                  |
| 3  |                 | ICLEI Europe               | @ICLEI_Europe    | n/a                              | n/a                    | Birmingham, UK       | @BhamCityCouncil | @birminghamcity  |
| 4  |                 | POLIS                      | @POLISnetwork    | POLIS Network                    | polisnetwork           | Budapest, Hungary    | n/a              | @fovarosikorman  |
| 5  |                 | Union of the Baltic Cities | @UBC_BSR         | Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) | UnionoftheBalticCities | Malmö, Sweden        | @malmostad       | @malmostad       |
| 6  |                 | Eurocities                 | @eurocities      | Eurocities                       | EUROCITIES             | San Sebastian, Spain | @Ayto_SS         | @DonostiaSanS    |
| 7  |                 | Rupprecht Consult          | @Rupprecht_Tweet | Rupprecht Consult GmbH           | n/a                    | Sofia, Bulgaria      | @officialSofiaBG | @sofiamunicipali |
| 8  |                 | Trivector Traffic          | @TrivectorTraffi | trivectorab                      | trivectorab            | Thessaloniki, Greece |                  |                  |
| 9  |                 | Wuppertal Institute        | @wupperinst      | Wuppertal Institute              | n/a                    | Turin, Italy         |                  |                  |
| 10 |                 | Cerema                     | @ceremacom       | Cerema                           |                        |                      |                  |                  |

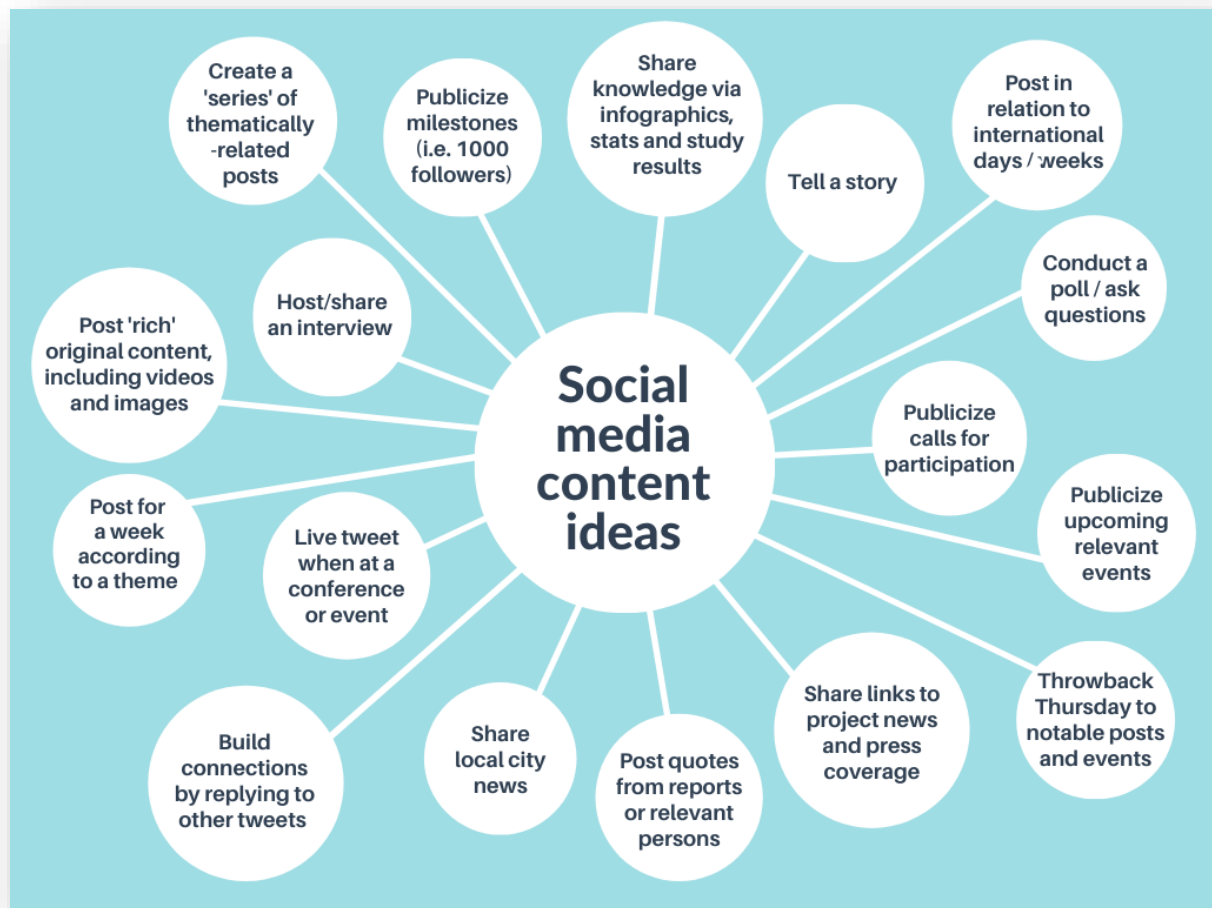
**Image 7:** Stakeholder mapping

**Tip!** Linking with established (and relevant) channels helps to improve Search Engine Optimisation.



## 6 Generating Post Ideas

Check out the word map below to find inspiration for your next post!



**Image 8:** Post inspiration word map