Terms of Reference (ToR)
Communications Support for Strategic Engagement and Positioning – Forus

Forus, a global network of civil society organizations all around the globe, is reinforcing its position as a positive force and influential actor in civil society collaboration and support.

As we enter a new strategic cycle in 2026, we are focusing on strengthening the visibility, storytelling, and influence of our network — both to support our members and to amplify our collective voice in key global spaces.

As part of this process, **the Forus communications team is looking for an experienced communications professional for strategic engagement** to support the positioning and impact of our unique network!

Objectives of the Collaboration

The objectives of this assignment are several, and mainly involve supporting Forus communications team in implementing proactive and creative communications. *Member stories and communications assets will be developed with informed consent and attention to contextual risks, with publication agreed through Forus' review process.*

Forus Narrative, External Visibility, Reach and Brand Development

- Clarify and elevate the **"story of Forus"** in alignment with our mission and strategic direction for Forus members, prospective members, supporters (donors), and other civil society networks.
- Promote **positive, hope-based narratives about civil society** across Forus communication platforms.
- Support in creating **consistent and inspiring messaging** that showcases the diversity, expertise, and impact of Forus and its members.
- Strengthen **external visibility of the network** by communicating the value, role, and positioning of Forus within the global civil society ecosystem.
- Explore and develop **new approaches to the Forus brand**, ensuring it reflects our evolving role and resonates with key audiences.
- Ensure all communications efforts are **aligned with Forus' evolving strategic direction**.
- Provide pathways **to develop a communications approach that is practical, adaptable, and testable over time.**

- **Develop innovative tools** (such as reports, toolkits, microsites and more) to help members communicate about their engagement with Forus — and to help Forus communicate more effectively about its members.
- **Support the strategic mapping and development of Forus campaigns** by working with the Communications team and relevant advocacy/programme colleagues, develop and implement communications approaches for agreed Forus priorities and initiatives, building on existing advocacy objectives, member inputs and programme plans.
- **Design integrated storytelling and distribution journeys** that help transform individual products and initiatives into longer-term communication and engagement opportunities, building anticipation, sustaining interest, amplifying impact and extending the lifespan and reach of Forus' work.
- **Together with the Forus communications team and social media expert,** increase reach among strategic audiences, including advocacy targets and potential donors.

Scope of Work

The communications consultant/agency will work closely with the Forus Communications Team and relevant staff to deliver on the following:

a. External Visibility and Forus Brand Novelties

- Create and adapt messaging and brand positioning for various platforms (website, social media, newsletters) and visual assets using Canva and other softwares.
- Identify strategic contact lists and social media accounts to target with our communications based on our main advocacy priorities and fundraising priorities.
- Design creative strategies to expand our reach and deepen engagement across platforms.
- Help us increase recognition towards current and new potential donors

b. Forus Member Continous Engagement

- Develop at least 5 communication toolkits and templates to support member participation in Forus campaigns on advocacy priorities identified by the Forus secretariat.
- Define how Forus can better communicate about its members — in tone, purpose, and format — and vice versa by proposing a brand-use and narrative kit
- Support in understanding the type of digital advertisement we need for our content to reach new and strategic audiences by sharing a report on trends, risks and strategic directions.
- Help present and interpret communication metrics and engagement summaries for continuous learning with our data and monitoring tools.
- Document and share approaches and tools that can inspire other members across the network and that can be adapted to their national and local contexts with 3 short reports or kits on agreed thematics.

- Carry out 4 knowledge-sharing presentations (which will benefit from EN, FR, ES interpretation) on successful approaches to share knowledge withing the Forus Communications Working Group & Network.

c. Hope-based and positive narratives

- Support the Forus network in improving their editorial angle based on hope-based and positive communications to counter anti-NGO narratives with strategies and approaches documented in a report.
- Identify ways to spotlight solidarity, civic innovation, and civil society resilience with examples of campaigns from the network and innovation in the sector.

Deliverables

- **A consistent messaging framework and content plan** implemented across Forus communication platforms (website, social media, newsletters), showcasing the diversity, expertise, and impact of Forus and its members.
- **At least 3 new distribution strategies tested** to expand the reach of campaigns and key content (e.g., partnerships, targeted mailing lists, social media collaborations, cross-posting with member networks).
- **A set of at least 5 communication toolkits with templates** (e.g., social media posts, visuals, campaign messaging, guidance notes) to support members in participating in and amplifying Forus campaigns. Campaigns will be identified by the Forus advocacy and programmes team and shared with the consultant.
- **The development of 1 strategic contact lists and 1 social media mapping** identifying key accounts, networks, journalists, advocacy targets, amplifiers and potential donors to prioritise in communications and outreach that should be broken down in Global/Regional and National levels. The Forus advocacy and Programmes team will already provide a list of audiences and strategic contacts to guide the consultant.
- **A set of at least 5 visual and narrative assets or approaches** highlighting key themes and initiatives from the Forus network, including stories and examples from Forus members.
- **Regular monitoring and presentation of communication metrics**, including engagement summaries and insights to support continuous learning and improvement.
- **At least 5 concrete approaches identified** to highlight themes such as solidarity, civic innovation, and civil society resilience through international networks that can inform the Forus communications strategy and operational plan.
- **4 Forus knowledge-sharing presentations** (with EN, FR, ES interpretation) delivered to the Forus Communications Working Group, showcasing successful communications practices and lessons learned.
- **Active knowledge-sharing in 3 short reports or kits**, on innovative communications approaches and in communications and advocacy nexus (both within the network and in the sector), tactics to boost digital advertising, presence and risks (e.g.

misinformation etc.), boosting the visibility specifically of National Civil Society Platforms and Regional Coalitions including the documentation and sharing of communications tools, strategies, and lessons learned to strengthen collective capacity.

Duration and modalities

The consultancy/support role is expected to last for an initial period of **6 months**, with the possibility of extension (for another 6 months) based on performance and evolving needs. The estimated level of effort is **2.5 - 3 days a week** (to be discussed depending on availability).

Reporting Line

The communications support person/agency will report to the **Forus Communications Manager** and work collaboratively with **the Forus Communications Coordinator** and other team members, especially the advocacy and programmes teams.

Profile and Qualifications

- Proven experience in strategic digital communications planning, management and evaluation within an international, NGO, or network context.
- Skilled communicator with strong writing, editing, and digital content production skills.
- Familiarity with communication tools (Canva, Mailchimp, social media schedulers, etc.)
- Familiarity with AI-powered tools and emerging technologies for communications, including their potential to support content development, storytelling, research, audience engagement and digital communications strategies.
- Ability to critically assess and use AI tools responsibly, ensuring human oversight, accuracy, inclusivity and alignment with Forus values.
- Ability to work collaboratively, manage multiple deadlines, and adapt to strategic priorities. Excellent organisational skills.
- **Fluency in English required; proficiency in French and/or Spanish is a strong asset.**
- Experience working with civil society networks and/or leading or advancing communications and campaigns with diverse audiences is highly desirable.
- Demonstrated track record in enhancing digital engagement and interaction with the target audience.
- Experience in advising and designing high digital engagement communications strategies for international networks, alliances, consortiums, etc.
- Aligned with Forus values and mission embedding intersectionality in all communications ensuring inclusion, respect and representation of all voices.

Budget

Total budget for the assignment: **The maximum budget for this assignment is of 15.000 Eur VAT included.**

Translation, interpretation and paid advertising are covered separately from the consultancy fees.

Working with Forus

Working with Forus offers an opportunity to contribute to the communications and positioning of a unique, diverse, global civil society network at an important moment in its evolution.

Through this collaboration, you will:

- **Contribute to a global movement:** Work alongside a network connecting more than 24,000 civil society organisations across 124 countries, amplifying diverse voices, experiences and perspectives.
- **Shape a new strategic narrative:** Help bring Forus' 2026–2030 strategy to life through creative storytelling, fresh communications approaches and stronger external positioning.
- **Experiment and innovate:** Explore new formats, new technologies, tools and distribution strategies to make civil society stories more visible, accessible and impactful.
- **Work across diverse contexts:** Collaborate with colleagues, national platforms, regional coalitions and partners from different regions, learning from their experiences and expertise.

Application Process

Interested candidates are invited to submit the following documents (in English)

Technical proposal: Strategic communications approach

As part of your application, please submit a short technical proposal (maximum 3–4 pages) outlining how you would approach the development and implementation of this strategic communications initiative for Forus, including what you would tackle first, how you would develop the deliverables and what you would need to make this collaboration as fruitful as possible.

Your proposal should demonstrate your ability to:

- **Think strategically:** Identify the key communications challenges and opportunities, define clear objectives and explain how communications can contribute to Forus's broader organisational priorities and advocacy goals. Outline the main activities, channels, audiences and formats you would prioritise, explaining why.

- **Develop a creative approach:** Propose an original concept or overarching narrative that could help Forus communicate its work, strengthen its visibility and engage diverse audiences across its global network.
- **Work across a diverse network:** Consider how national platforms and regional coalitions could contribute to and benefit from the initiative, ensuring that communications are relevant to different contexts and audiences.
- **Measure impact:** Suggest how you would assess the effectiveness and longer-term impact of the proposed approach.

Please also send your:

- CV and Portfolio
- 2-3 samples of relevant work (e.g., campaign strategy, social media growth plans, or editorial content)
- A **detailed fixed-price financial proposal within the EUR 15,000 ceiling, including days, rates and applicable taxes;**
- Availability and proposed schedule.

Please note that we value personal and original responses. While AI tools may be used for assistance, we ask candidates not to rely on AI-generated answers. We are interested in understanding your own thinking, creativity and practical experience.

Eligibility / contracting restrictions: This consultancy will be contracted under EU funding eligibility rules. As a result, Forus can only contract consultants/legal entities established in an EU Member State or in an eligible ODA recipient country. This means that Forus cannot accept proposals from legal entities established in (non-exhaustive list): the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, or South Korea. Consortium applications are welcome, but the contracting entity must be eligible and able to invoice Forus.

Applications should be sent to Forus Communications Manager Bibbi Abruzzini at bibbi@forus-international.org by December 15. Should you have any questions, feel free to reach out!