

SMILE INCUBATOR

NEWSLETTER



Dear SMILE community,

I am delighted to welcome you to the very first edition of the SMILE Incubator newsletter! With each issue, we will share key achievements, current highlights, and a glimpse of what lies ahead on our shared journey.

At its core, SMILE Incubator is about empowering young people to become confident, creative, and responsible voices on social media. Throughout the project, our entire consortium will work hand in hand to support them in this process – helping them explore ideas, gain skills, and grow into the digital leaders of tomorrow.

Thank you for following our work and for supporting the creation of a stronger, more connected, and responsible digital community. We are excited to have you with us on this journey.

SMILE goes on ... smile with us.

prof. dr. Simona Kukovič
Project Manager

Meet the team

Meet the talented team behind it all! SMILE Incubator is a major initiative, bringing together a **lead partner**, **15 project partners** and **4 associated strategic partners** from across the greater Danubian region of Central and South-Eastern Europe.



Making sure everything stays on track, SMILE consortium members are dedicated to managing daily tasks and ensuring that long-term goals are met and the project's aims achieved.

Each partner brings a **distinct area of expertise** to tackle the **ever-growing problem** of brain drain in rural areas. By joining forces, the team will address local challenges while also broadening the project's reach in those regions.

Read more on our official [Interreg website](#).

What it's all about?

SMILE as an Interreg project

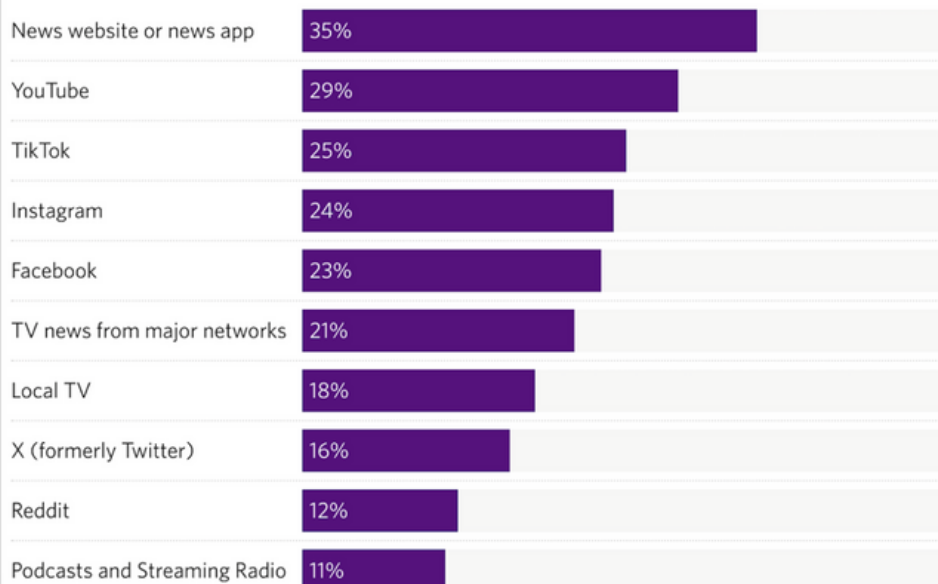
The Danube Region's (DR) remote rural communities are facing significant challenges due to emigration rates, brain drain, an ageing population, and the increasing importance of digitization.

The SMILE Incubator project aims to empower youth living in rural areas by providing them with essential skills, competences, and tools.



News Websites and Digital Platforms Are Young People's Top Sources of Political Information

The percentage of young people (ages 18-34) who selected each source or platform as one of the top three places where they saw or heard political information in 2024.



Source: <https://www.news-medical.net/news/20231004/Is-social-media-derailing-our-teens-Study-unveils-the-balancing-act-for-adolescent-wellbeing.aspx>

The project aims to reverse current trends by **equipping young people with the necessary resources to succeed in their rural environment, promoting sustainable development and resilience in these communities.**

The main objective of the project is to **develop a transnational Social Media Leadership Incubator** for rural youth, which will serve as a mechanism to strengthen leadership skills and empowerment, contributing to the development of **sustainable democracies in the DR.**

The main target group is youth from underdeveloped rural communities, but activities will also **aim at academics, SMEs, NGOs, and media outlets.** Building leadership capacity and social media skills will encourage youth participation in **active citizenship.**

Read more about the project on our official [Interreg website](#).

This project is supported by the Interreg Danube Region Programme co-funded by the European Union.

Echoes of the last months...

SMILE represented in South Korea!

- **SMILE Incubator Goes Global: SMILE Team Attends IPSA World Congress in Seoul!**

A part of the SMILE Incubator project team took part in the 28th [IPSA World Congress](#), held in Seoul, South Korea, from 12–16 July 2025. The delegation included SMILE Incubator Project Manager Prof. Dr. Simona Kukovič and Assist. Tine Šteger (both from SASS), Assoc. Prof. Dr. Peter Csanyi (Project Manager at EUBA), and Assist. Prof. Dr. Petr Just (Project Manager at MUP).

During the congress, team members actively engaged in discussions about the project's implementation and promoted [SMILE Incubator within the academic community](#). The event provided an excellent platform for international networking and raising awareness about the project's goals and impact. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).



SMILE in Seoul..



Keeping up with: SMILE meetings

Want to know what is happening first hand or meet the team? Keep up and check out SMILE Incubator's latest meetings and see where the project is headed and what has been done so far.

See the potentials and perhaps there is a chance for you to also help make a positive change.

Read [here](#), [here](#) and also [here](#)



.. and Bucharest

- **SMILE Incubator represented at Synergy Building and Capitalization Workshop in Bucharest**

SMILE Incubator, alongside with its project partner from RIT Croatia, was proudly represented and showcased in a capitalization event, held in Bucharest, Romania. The event encompassed many other projects within the **Interreg Danube Region** program.

The shared experience connected project leaders to many new cooperation opportunities with other peers and colleagues, with high hopes of enriching the already existing programs.

Read more [here](#).

SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2025

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SMILE reminder corner: don't miss out on...



The Slovenian Social Science Conference is a conference with international participation, organized by SASS since 2009. Every year the event attracts distinguished international and many young researchers.

• 18th Slovenian Social Science Conference — Call for Papers

Interested in active participation? Lead partner of the SMILE Incubator, School of Advanced Social Studies, welcomes you to attend The Slovenian Social Science Conference.

An international event, organized since 2009. The event attracts many domestic and foreign academics, as well as student researchers who also wish to publish/present their papers.

The submission box is open. More information found [here](#).

• 12th Danube Participation Day!

Save the Date and join us for the 12th Danube Participation Day in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina on Tuesday, 4 November 2025.

The topic to be discussed is related to [local communities and their empowerment](#), with the official title: Local Voices, European Future – The Crucial Role of Communities in Shaping EU Policy and Driving Enlargement.

For more details on the event click [here](#) or visit our [official site](#) for more information.



Wish to be the first to know what's new? Subscribe to our social media channels or follow us on our official website!

Read more about the project on our official [Interreg website](#).

Official Page: <https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/smile-incubator>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61575110481138>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/smile_incubator/

TikTok: https://www.tiktok.com/@smile_incubator

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/smile-incubator-a3709335b/>

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Reading with SMILE: contributions by our partners



- **The three pillars of SMILE Incubator.** How will the SMILE Incubator project make a difference for rural youth across the Danube Region? It is a very good question – answered in three simple paragraphs, which explain in detail the specific tasks that SMILE Incubator wishes to achieve in the greater Danube region, especially concerning rural youth being given a strong voice.

Attention is also given to specific parameters, such as: what is to be done, who is directly involved and how will the process unfold. Read more [here](#).

By our partner, FOSTER EUROPE

- **SMILE and technology.** Meet more of our project partners and see why we do what we do by reading some short engaging texts about our goals and ambitions, written by our very own project partners – each with their own series of expertise in their respective fields, which give SMILE its diversity.

In this edition - special focus is given to technologies that shape regions and communities and how SMILE will engage with them to benefit the rural youth.

The collection is available [here](#), [here](#) and also [here](#) (more on our official site).

*By our partners, FOSTER EUROPE and
RUDOLFOVO*



Read more about the project on our official Interreg [website](#).

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