

OPEN LAB NETWORK

OpenLab Communication Guidelines

Version 01

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SKILLS FOR LIFE

OpenLab Network

www.openlabnet.eu

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Welcome to the world of modern educational laboratories brought to you by the **OpenLab Network**.

The OpenLab Network provides novel, high-quality, hands-on learning in life sciences, related technologies and other practical skills. Through practical experience, OpenLabs empower young people to develop the knowledge, skills, self-confidence, creativity, and critical thinking needed for their future studies and careers.

The OpenLab Network supports the growth of open-minded learners, innovators, researchers, and responsible citizens. Our shared ambition is to make science accessible, engaging, and relevant for schools, individuals, and society as a whole.

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1. GOALS FOR 2026–2027

The OpenLab Network (**OLN**) is a newly established European educational infrastructure connecting OpenLabs in Brno, České Budějovice, Linz, and Vienna. It builds on the long-term experience of Vienna Open Lab, JKU Open Lab, and Bioskop Brno and aims to strengthen modern, hands-on education in life sciences and related fields.

For the period **2026–2027**, the OLN defines the following strategic goals:

1) Strong and recognisable OpenLab brand

The OLN aims to be **internationally visible, recognisable, and attractive**. The Network promotes its shared vision, values, methodology, courses, and success stories under a unified visual identity.

The website www.openlabnet.eu serves as the main communication hub, providing:

- core information about the OLN,
- links to individual OpenLabs,
- visibility of joint activities and achievements.

2) Professional lecturers and motivated tutors

High-quality education is built on people. The OLN supports the **systematic training and professional development** of lecturers and tutors.

Key actions include:

- internal training and workshops,
- participation in conferences and professional events,
- support for professional certification where relevant.

All lecturers and tutors are expected to follow the approved OpenLab methodology and guidelines.

3) Growing network of experts

The OLN actively builds a **network of external experts** from research, innovation, industry, and education.

These experts:

- contribute to the development of new courses,
- support quality assurance,
- connect OpenLab activities with real-world practice.

A shared expert database will be developed and maintained at the network level.

4) Full use of OpenLab capacity by schools

OLN members aim to become a **natural partner for regional schools**.

Goals include:

- repeated visits of primary and secondary school classes,
- courses regularly booked in advance,
- the creation of a database of cooperating teachers,
- a systematic range of courses for teachers.



The long-term ambition is that **most pupils and students in the region visit an OpenLab at least once during their school education.**

5) Advanced programmes for motivated individuals

Beyond regular school courses, OLN members offers **advanced programmnes** for motivated pupils and students (typically aged 12–19), such as:

- afternoon or weekend courses,
- workshops,
- summer schools and camps.

The OLN actively identifies talented individuals and connect them with professionals and further learning opportunities.

6) Long-term public and private support

The OLN works towards **stable and diversified funding.**

This includes:

- long-term cooperation with public authorities,
- partnerships with private companies and donors,
- the development of a community of supporters (“OpenLab Friends”).

7) Strengthening international cooperation

The OLN strengthens **cross-border cooperation in education** by:

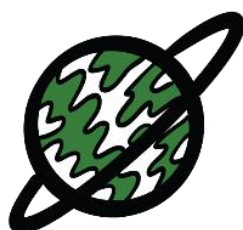
- organising international meetings and conferences,
- supporting staff exchanges,
- sharing know-how and best practices among members.

8) Expansion of the OpenLab concept

The OLN actively promotes the OpenLab concept beyond the current members.

Key steps include:

- the development of a start-up package for new OpenLabs,
- the licensing of the OpenLab concept,
- cooperation with institutions interested in hosting an OpenLab.



2. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

2.1. PURPOSE

External communication of the OpenLab Network aims to **clearly and consistently communicate the value of OpenLab activities** to schools, individuals, partners, and the wider public.

Its purpose is to:

- present OpenLab as a **trusted and accessible space for hands-on learning**,
- support engagement with schools, teachers, and learners of all ages,
- strengthen cooperation with scientific, educational, and societal partners,
- build public trust in science, critical thinking, and evidence-based reasoning.

At the network level, external communication supports and amplifies the activities of individual OpenLabs while respecting their regional focus and autonomy.

2.2. OBJECTIVES

External communication of the OpenLab Network pursues the following objectives:

- **Promote the OpenLab mission and values:**
Communicate the shared vision, methodology, and educational role of OpenLab.
- **Build credibility and trust:**
Position OpenLab as a reliable partner for schools, educators, institutions, and the public.
- **Strengthen relationships with key target groups:**
Especially schools, teachers, pupils and students, parents, partners, and decision-makers.
- **Motivate participation and talent development:**
Encourage motivated individuals to join advanced courses and long-term OpenLab activities.
- **Ensure consistent OpenLab branding:**
Maintain a unified visual identity, tone of voice, and key messages across the network.

*Descriptions of OpenLab courses, workshops, summer schools, and camps (including duration, structure, and staffing) are provided in the **OpenLab Methodology Guidelines (Chapter 3)**. This chapter focuses exclusively on **communication goals and principles**, not on operational details.*



2.3. TARGET GROUPS

OpenLab Network communicates with several distinct target groups. Communication is always **purpose-driven** and adapted to the needs, motivations, and roles of each group. While the OpenLab Network defines shared principles and messages, **individual OpenLabs focus primarily on their regional audiences.**

*Detailed communication channels and frequencies are summarised in the **External Communication Matrix** (see Chapter 2.5).*

PUPILS AND STUDENTS (PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION)

Pupils and students attending primary and secondary schools who participate in OpenLab courses, either with their class or individually.

We communicate with them:

- to create a positive first experience with science,
- to support curiosity, exploration, and confidence,
- to motivate talented and enthusiastic individuals to engage in advanced OpenLab programmes.

Communication focus:

Communication towards pupils and students is primarily **indirect**, mediated through teachers, schools, and leisure-time organisations. OpenLab content should be understandable, motivating, and experience-oriented.

TEACHERS

Teachers at primary and secondary schools, as well as educators involved in teacher training.

We communicate with them:

- to integrate OpenLab courses and materials into school education,
- to build long-term cooperation with schools,
- to support teachers' professional development and reduce preparation workload.

Communication focus:

Teachers are a **key strategic group**. Communication emphasises reliability, educational value, alignment with curricula, and practical benefits. Engaged teachers provide feedback and often act as ambassadors for OpenLab within their schools.

PARENTS

Parents and legal guardians of pupils and students.

We communicate with them:

- parents act as decision-makers and gatekeepers,
- they influence participation in extracurricular activities,
- positive parental experience strengthens long-term support for OpenLab.

Communication focus:

Communication highlights safety, educational value, accessibility, and positive learning experiences. Parents often encounter OpenLab through public events, media, or school-related activities.



HOST INSTITUTIONS

Universities, research institutions, NGOs, or other organisations hosting an OpenLab under a cooperation agreement.

We communicate with them:

- to ensure alignment with OpenLab values, methodology, and guidelines,
- to demonstrate institutional benefits such as visibility and outreach impact,
- to support the long-term sustainability of OpenLab operations.

Communication focus:

Communication is **structured and regular**, combining formal reporting with personal interaction. The relationship between a host institution and its OpenLab is always **adapted to local conditions**.

GOVERNMENTS AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Local, regional, national, and European public authorities responsible for education, innovation, and public funding.

We communicate with them:

- to advocate for investment in high-quality science education,
- to build recognition of OpenLab as a system-relevant educational tool,
- to demonstrate public value and societal impact.

Communication focus:

Communication is evidence-based and impact-oriented, using reports, summaries, and invitations to key events.

POTENTIAL TUTORS

University students and young professionals involved in delivering OpenLab courses, usually on a part-time basis.

We communicate with them:

- to recruit motivated and competent tutors,
- to ensure alignment with OpenLab values and standards,
- to support continuous professional development.

Communication focus:

Communication highlights learning opportunities, skills development, certification, and participation in an international educational network.

RESEARCHERS AND EXPERTS

External experts from academia, research organisations, industry, and professional practice.

We communicate with them:

- to ensure the scientific quality and relevance of OpenLab programmes,
- to involve experts in course development and mentoring,
- to connect education with current research and practice.

Communication focus:

Communication emphasises professional credibility, outreach impact, and opportunities for collaboration and visibility.



FRIENDS, PARENTS, AND SUPPORTERS

Individuals and organisations with a positive relationship to OpenLab who support its mission financially, materially, or through advocacy.

We communicate with them:

- to build a community around OpenLab,
- to strengthen long-term support and loyalty,
- to recognise and value their contribution.

Communication focus:

Communication is relationship-oriented and often informal, supported by newsletters, events, and personal contact.

THE MEDIA

Local, regional, and national media outlets.

We communicate with them:

- to inform the public about significant OpenLab activities and milestones,
- to increase visibility and public trust,
- to support transparent and responsible science communication.

Communication focus:

The media communication is selective and event-based, often coordinated with host institutions.

POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS (LIFE SCIENCES AND STEM)

Public and private employers in research, healthcare, education, technology, and innovation.

We communicate with them:

- to connect education with labour market needs,
- to obtain feedback on skills and programme relevance,
- to build partnerships and support talent development.

Communication focus:

Communication highlights OpenLab's role in skills development, practical experience, and future workforce preparation.



2.4. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The OpenLab Network uses a combination of **shared network-level communication channels**, **local channels managed by individual OpenLabs**, and **standardised content formats**. Together, they ensure consistent messaging, visibility, documentation, and effective knowledge sharing across the network.

*A detailed overview of channels, target groups, and communication frequency is provided in the **External Communication Matrix** (see Chapter 2.5.).*

NETWORK-LEVEL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Network-level channels are coordinated by the **OpenLab Network** and are used for communication relevant to all members of the network.

Key network-level channels include:

- **OpenLab Network website (www.openlabnet.eu)**
The central source of information about the OpenLab Network, its mission, values, member OpenLabs, joint projects, international activities, and publicly available documents (guidelines, manuals, worksheets, reports).
- **Network email communication**
The primary formal channel for:
 - communication between OLN bodies and member OpenLabs,
 - sharing strategic information, guidelines, and official announcements,
 - coordination of international activities, meetings, and reporting.

Network email addresses are managed by authorised persons and serve as stable contact points for the OpenLab Network.

- **Shared visual identity and branding tools**
Logos, templates, graphic standards, and visual elements defined in the OpenLab Visual Identity Guidelines. This also includes **site-specific visual elements** (e.g. murals or large-format illustrations) that express the OpenLab identity in a local and recognisable way while remaining aligned with the overall brand.
- **Network-level newsletters and announcements**
Used to communicate milestones, calls, success stories, and international events to external audiences.
- **International meetings and conferences**
Annual conferences and working meetings serving both communication and coordination purposes within the network.



LOCAL OPENLAB COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Each OpenLab is responsible for communication within its **regional context**, in line with OpenLab Network values, methodology, and visual identity.

Typical local channels include:

- **Local OpenLab website**
The primary information and booking platform for schools, participants, partners, and the public in the region. Websites are typically maintained in the national language and English.
- **Local email communication**
A key operational channel for:
 - communication with schools and teachers (bookings, confirmations, follow-up, feedback),
 - communication with participants and parents,
 - communication with local partners and supporters,
 - internal coordination within the local OpenLab team.
- **Social media channels**
Used strategically for promotion, visibility, and engagement with local target groups. Content may include posts, stories, short videos, and reels, adapted to the platform and audience.
- **Newsletters and mailing lists**
Especially relevant for teachers, partners, supporters, and repeat visitors.
- **Direct and personal communication**
Phone calls, meetings, and on-site communication, particularly for partnerships, institutional cooperation, and relationship building.
- **Public events and outreach activities**
Science festivals, fairs, open days, workshops, and other public-facing events organised locally or in cooperation with host institutions.



CONTENT FORMATS AND COMMUNICATION MATERIALS

OpenLab Network communication relies on **standardised, reusable content formats** that support visibility, documentation, quality assurance, and reporting.

These include in particular:

- **Photographs**
Used for promotion, documentation, reporting, and archiving OpenLab activities. Where appropriate, photos may be shared via open platforms or repositories in compliance with GDPR and licensing rules.
- **Videos and short-form content**
Including short videos, reels, and stories used on websites and social media to present OpenLab activities in an engaging and accessible way.
- **OLN documents and written materials**, such as:
 - guidelines and manuals,
 - worksheets and student materials,
 - annual reports, summaries, and internal documentation.
- **OLN presentation and event materials**
Slides, posters, leaflets, roll-ups, and other visual materials used for courses, events, meetings, and outreach activities.
- **Open platforms and repositories**
Where appropriate, selected content (e.g. photos, videos, educational visuals) may be shared on open platforms to increase visibility and reuse, provided licensing and attribution rules are respected.

All content formats should:

- follow the **OpenLab Network Visual Identity Guidelines**,
- respect data protection and consent requirements,
- be suitable for reuse at both local and network level.

*Detailed rules for content creation, licensing, storage, and reuse are described in the **OpenLab Methodology Guidelines**, Chapter 8: Evaluation and Quality Management, and in the Appendices.*

ROLE OF HOST INSTITUTIONS IN COMMUNICATION

Host institutions may provide **additional communication infrastructure**, such as:

- institutional websites and newsletters,
- press offices and media contacts,
- internal communication channels.

OpenLabs are encouraged to cooperate closely with host institutions, especially for communication related to major events, strategic announcements, or public visibility.



2.5. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION MATRIX

The External Communication Matrix is a practical tool that supports **planned, consistent, and efficient communication** across the OpenLab Network.

How to use the External Communication Matrix:

- The matrix offers **recommended examples**, not mandatory instructions. Each OpenLab adapts the suggested messages, channels, and frequencies to its local context.
- Communication frequency is **indicative** and may change over time depending on:
 - team capacity,
 - regional demand,
 - the maturity of the local OpenLab,
 - the strategic priorities of the OpenLab Network.
- Not all channels or content types need to be used by every OpenLab. OpenLabs are encouraged to focus on **quality and relevance rather than quantity**.

Target Group	Key Messages / Calls to Action	Channels	Frequency
Everyone (general public)	Discover OpenLab: vision, values, goals, methodology, courses, activities, news	Network & local websites	Ongoing
	Follow OpenLab activities and success stories	Website, photo / video reports	Ongoing
	Experience OpenLab events	Video	Occasionally
Pupils & Students	Join OpenLab events and courses	Website, leaflets, social media	Ongoing
	Discover science and innovations	Worksheets, news / blog, web	Ongoing
	Find hobbies, experience new technologies	Video, social media	Occasionally
	Participate in competitions, camps, internships	Video, leaflets	Irregular
Teachers	Plan and book OpenLab courses	Website, email	Ongoing
	Enrich teaching, become an OpenLab ambassador	Video, posters, leaflets	Irregular
	Stay informed and connected	Newsletter	1x per year
	Professional growth and trends in education	Workshops, worksheets, materials	1x per year



Parents & Public	Plan visits and register children	Website	Ongoing
	Discover science and innovation opportunities	Worksheets, news, blog, web	Ongoing
	Join events and community activities	Web, leaflets	Ongoing
	Stay informed and support OpenLab	Newsletter, web	1x per year
Researchers & Experts	Become an expert advisor, share knowledge	Website, email, personal contact	Irregular
	Support talent development	Courses, personal contact, email	Irregular
Host Institutions	Host or support OpenLab	Website, guidelines, video	Ongoing
	Visibility and outreach impact	Website, LinkedIn	Ongoing
	Reporting and strategic alignment	Annual reports, meetings	1x per year
Established Partners (private sector)	Experience OpenLab, organise joint events	Targeted emails	1x per year
	Stay informed, support OpenLab	Newsletter	1x per year
	Visibility through partnership	Web, partner networks	Ongoing
Potential Partners (private sector)	Become a partner, support regional development	Video, media, social networks	Occasionally
Governments & Public Administration	Demonstrate impact and public value	Annual reports, newsletter	1x per year
	Strengthen long-term cooperation	Personal meetings, reports	Regular / as needed
Friends & Supporters	Support OpenLab, become an ambassador	Website, newsletter	Ongoing
	Experience OpenLab community	Annual events	1x per year
Media	Inform about key OpenLab milestones, events, openings, anniversaries, and achievements	Press releases, press conferences, invitations to events, PR via host institutions	Irregular / event-based



2.6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation in the OpenLab Network are continuous, practice-based processes **supporting quality development, strategic decision-making, and long-term sustainability**. Data and feedback are collected at both individual OpenLab and network levels.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION AT THE LEVEL OF INDIVIDUAL OPENLAB

At the level of individual OpenLab, monitoring focuses on the **continuous collection of key operational, educational, and communication-related data**, complemented by qualitative feedback. These data provide a structured overview of OpenLab activities and support informed local decision-making.

Individual OpenLab regularly monitors in particular:

- the number of delivered courses and newly developed courses,
- the number and type of group and individual courses (e.g. afternoon clubs),
- the total duration of courses and programmes,
- the number of tutors and their total working hours,
- the number of visitors and participants,
- the number of visiting schools,
- the number of organised events,
- the number of media outputs and visibility,
- the number of published news items on local OpenLab websites,
- website traffic and basic online reach,
- the total operating budget and its structure,
- the value of gifts, donations, and in-kind support.



In addition to quantitative indicators, individual OpenLab collects **qualitative feedback**, incl.:

- feedback from participants (pupils, students, teachers, public),
- reflections from lecturers and tutors,
- feedback from cooperating schools, partners, and host institutions.

Together, these data support **quality improvement, planning, reporting, and evidence-based negotiations** on institutional and financial support at the local level.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION AT THE LEVEL OF THE OPENLAB NETWORK

At the OpenLab Network level, monitoring focuses on the **aggregation and analysis of selected data from individual OpenLab** in order to understand the development and impact of the network as a whole.

The OpenLab Network regularly monitors in particular:

- the number of OpenLabs within the network and changes over time,
- the number of newly established OpenLabs,
- the total number of courses delivered across the network,
- the total number of newly developed courses,
- the total number of tutors involved,
- the total number of visitors and participants,
- the number of jointly organised events,
- network-level media visibility (e.g. TV, newspapers, radio),
- the number of news items published on the OpenLab Network website,
- website traffic and overall online reach of the network.



Optional and future monitoring

In addition to core indicators, the OpenLab Network may introduce **additional monitoring indicators** in response to emerging needs and strategic priorities, such as communication outputs, online engagement, or audience development. These indicators are **optional and flexible** and may be adjusted over time without changing the core monitoring framework.

*Detailed methodological principles of evaluation and feedback collection are described in the **OpenLab Methodology Guidelines**, specifically in Chapter 8: Evaluation and Quality.*



3. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

3.1. PURPOSE

Internal communication in the OpenLab Network ensures that all team members understand the **goals, values, and priorities** of both their local OpenLab and the OpenLab Network as a whole. It supports smooth collaboration within teams and across the network, strengthens trust despite physical distance, and helps maintain a shared vision and organisational culture.

3.2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of internal communication are to:

- ensure timely and clear **sharing of key decisions**, changes, and priorities at both local and network levels,
- enable **two-way communication** and feedback within individual OpenLabs and across the network,
- **support cooperation** and knowledge sharing between teams in different OpenLabs,
- **strengthen connection**, trust, and transparency within the OpenLab Network,
- create space for exchange of experience, best practices, and know-how.



3.3. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Internal communication in the OpenLab Network is based on a combination of **shared network-level tools** and **local communication practices** within individual OpenLab. The aim is to ensure clarity, accessibility of information, and effective collaboration, while allowing flexibility according to local conditions.

NETWORK-LEVEL INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The following channels support coordination and information sharing across the OpenLab Network:

- **Email communication**
The primary formal channel for sharing key information, decisions, and coordination between OpenLab Network bodies and individual OpenLabs.
- **Shared document platform (e.g. SharePoint)**
A common space for storing, sharing, and updating documents, guidelines, templates, and working materials. All relevant OpenLab staff have access according to their roles.
- **Network meetings**
Regular online meetings of OpenLab heads and selected representatives, used to discuss strategic topics, coordination of activities, funding opportunities, and network development. Written minutes are shared with OpenLabs without delay.
- **Annual conferences and network events**
In-person meetings of OpenLab lecturers (and, where possible, tutors), focused on knowledge sharing, professional development, and strengthening the OpenLab Network community.

LOCAL INTERNAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN OPENLABS

Each OpenLab organises its internal communication according to its size and structure, using tools appropriate to its team and institutional context.

Typical local channels include:

- **Local email communication**
Used for daily coordination, operational matters, and internal information sharing within the OpenLab team.
- **Team meetings**
Regular meetings of the local OpenLab team, chaired by the OpenLab head, where courses, events, operational issues, and development topics are discussed. Key outcomes are documented and shared internally.
- **Instant messaging and collaboration tools**
Tools such as messaging apps or collaboration platforms may be used for fast, informal communication, coordination, and sharing of information within teams.
- **Online meetings**
Video conferencing tools are used when in-person meetings are not possible or practical.



PRINCIPLES OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Regardless of the tools used, internal communication within the OpenLab Network follows these shared principles:

- clarity and timeliness of information,
- transparency of decisions and processes,
- support for two-way communication and feedback,
- respect for different local working cultures and capacities.

3.4. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND CERTIFICATION

Professional growth of lecturers and tutors is a **core component of quality and credibility** within the OpenLab Network. Continuous development of teaching, communication, and mentoring skills supports high educational standards and a shared professional culture across OpenLabs.

The OpenLab Network is currently **developing a structured framework** for the professional growth and certification of lecturers and tutors.

*The detailed structure, criteria, and processes related to professional growth and certification will be **described in a future version of the OpenLab Methodology Guidelines.***

Professional development activities are also reflected in the monitoring and evaluation indicators described in Chapter 6.

3.5. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION MATRIX

The Internal Communication Matrix is a practical tool that supports **clear, timely, and effective communication within individual OpenLabs and across the OpenLab Network**. It ensures that information flows smoothly **inside local OpenLab teams** as well as **between OpenLabs and network-level bodies**, supporting coordination, shared understanding, and collaboration across the entire network.

How to use the Internal Communication Matrix:

- The matrix offers **recommended examples**, not mandatory instructions. Each OpenLab adapts the suggested messages, channels, and frequencies to its local context and organisational structure.
- Communication frequency is **indicative** and may change over time depending on:
 - team capacity,
 - size and structure of the local OpenLab,
 - current activities and priorities,
 - network-level coordination needs.
- Not all channels need to be used continuously. OpenLabs are encouraged to focus on **clarity, relevance, and mutual understanding** rather than volume of communication.



Internal Target Group	Key Messages / Purpose	Channels	Frequency
OpenLab Lecturers & Tutors (OL)	Use approved methodology, guidelines, and internal instructions	Initial training, guidelines, shared document platform	When needed / ongoing
	Share operational updates and daily information	Local email communication, instant messaging tools	Working days
	Keep track of ongoing courses and events	Service schedules, shared calendars	Ongoing
	Share know-how, experience, and good practice	Team meetings, peer exchange	Regular
	Support professional growth and skills development	Workshops, conferences	Several times per year
OpenLab Lecturers & Tutors (OLN)	Share network-level updates, decisions, and priorities	Network email communication, network meetings	When needed
	Strengthen professional community across the network	Annual conferences, network events	Once per year
	Enable knowledge transfer between OpenLabs	Workshops, peer exchange formats	Several times per year
OpenLab Heads / Coordinators (OL)	Coordinate local operations and planning	Local meetings, local email communication	Regular
	Address classroom issues, risk management, and student well-being	Team meetings, urgent meetings	When needed
OpenLab Heads / Coordinators (OLN)	Share strategic decisions and development priorities	Network meetings, network email communication	When needed
	Coordinate joint activities and funding opportunities	Network meetings, shared documents	Regular
Researchers & Experts (engaged internally)	Collaborate on course development	Email communication, personal meetings	When needed
	Support talent development and mentoring	Courses, personal contact	When needed

