



## Targeted Content for Neighbourhoods



### FROM TARGETED CONTENT STRATEGY TO SOCIAL INCLUSION

How do you inform citizens about the construction of a new motorway? How do you involve citizens when creating a new playground? How can local government provide citizens with the proper and necessary information without over-informing them? The Municipality of Groningen's Communication Department has come up with a good solution to such issues: as part of its neighbourhood-specific working method, it sends its subscribing citizens a weekly neighbourhood newsletter with need-to-know information at neighbourhood level for one of five neighbourhoods of choice. Informing citizens is not the only objective of the neighbourhood newsletter, however – offering targeted information about events that take place in citizens' immediate surroundings sparks local collaboration, leads to mutual inspiration and is key to citizen participation at neighbourhood level.

#### About LIKE!

Local governments, citizens, universities and SMEs have joined forces to co-create smarter, more efficient and more innovative services through 9 transnational pilot projects covering 3 themes:



#### Relations to Workpackages

This case study shows that delivering appropriate targeted content via simple digital channels can support service provision.

#### Local partners

Municipality of Groningen Communication Department  
Rolinda Ferwerda - communication advisor  
[gemeente.groningen.nl/nieuwsbrieven-en-social-media](https://gemeente.groningen.nl/nieuwsbrieven-en-social-media)

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In a city of over 200,000 inhabitants, it is a challenge to keep all citizens up to date on their immediate surroundings without over-informing them. Coordinating and communicating the various initiatives within neighbourhoods is therefore essential, but a complicated task. To raise awareness of local developments, get citizens involved and facilitate social cohesion in the neighbourhoods, the municipality of Groningen is sending targeted information through a digital neighbourhood newsletter

## Interdisciplinary search for neighbourhood-relevant content

Key to setting up this neighbourhood specific information, is the internal organization. This requires interdisciplinary working within and between various municipal departments from the perspective of the end users, i.e. neighbourhood residents.



## Neighbourhoods in the Netherlands

Dutch cities and villages are divided into neighbourhoods, and so is Groningen. A neighbourhood is comprised of several districts, with clean boundaries and often a shared character.

## Neighbourhood-specific working in the City of Groningen

The Municipality of Groningen has been using the neighbourhood-specific approach for several years in order to implement more specific policies and increasingly seek coordination with existing neighbourhood initiatives. To be able to work in a neighbourhood-specific way, Groningen knows five city neighbourhoods, each with an area team and an alderman responsible for the neighbourhood. This division allows for coordination at the right level with activities already in place thanks to local initiatives by, for instance, schools, sports clubs, social teams and entrepreneurs. This in turn leads to a more integrated way of working that puts the citizens first, and limits the Municipality's role to connecting and facilitating people and projects.

## **“Neighbourhood newsletter spreads like wildfire”**

*Rolinda Ferwerda, communication advisor at the Communication Department of the Municipality of Groningen*

### **Success Story**

Subscribing citizens of the Municipality of Groningen have been receiving neighbourhood newsletters since September 2017. The neighbourhood newsletter reached 8,000 subscribers in April 2018 in just a few months and welcomes 100 new subscribers every week; a real success story. Rolinda Ferwerda, communication advisor of the communication department at the municipality Groningen, believes that there are a number of contributing factors:

#### 1. Highly successful internal and external promotion

There was broad internal support for the neighbourhood newsletters, and all sorts of tools were used to promote them externally, including street billboards, free local papers, social media and flyers.

#### 2. Subscribers are only informed about need-to-know news, written with the information needs of citizens in mind.

They can always click through for more information about participation.

#### 3. ‘Neighbourhood newsletter spreads like wildfire’:

subscribing neighbourhoods get information about their neighbourhood and discuss it with other citizens, who then also subscribe to the newsletter. Subscribers often forward the newsletter to other stakeholders.

#### 4. The neighbourhood newsletter facilitates a first step in citizens’ participation which can lead to solidarity in the neighbourhoods, allowing the Municipality to follow up any new ideas.



### **Need-to-know content works!**

While the idea of a digital newsletter may not seem very revolutionary, it is very successful. It is exactly this interdisciplinary search for relevant content that creates a weekly neighbourhood newsletter with information that citizens need. The newsletter is sent from a reliable source, e. g. the municipality, written in accessible language, supported by images to get the information even better across. Citizens, by indicating their preferred neighbourhood, receive targeted, need-to-know content and possibilities to gain more information or join local projects.

## Facilitating social cohesion and area-specific working

Informing citizens is the essential first step in citizens participation. Subscribed citizens can be informed in a very targeted and effective way by looking for relevant need-to-know knowledge from a citizens perspective. This can even lead to having well-informed citizens who express their opinions on the information that they receive. This allows the Municipality to design better targeted policies for each neighbourhood and inform citizens about participation opportunities as well as the decision-making and implementation processes. It thus all starts with informing citizens.

## The Future; Digital Sharing?

New initiatives have already been proposed to expand the targeted content strategy of offering city neighbourhood newsletters, for example adding the option of digitally sharing individual items from the city neighbourhood newsletters, thus allowing subscribers to choose which news items to share with their networks. In addition, the technical possibilities of sharing messages via postcodes rather than the five city neighbourhoods are looked into. This would allow readers to subscribe with their postcodes and receive information that is even more targeted. Citizens should also be able to opt to receive thematic city information, for example about sports, sustainability, welfare, care, etc. By means of these adjustments, the objective is to reach 10,000 subscribers via an even better tailored newsletter.

