□□ Partnerships, media and awards - visibility for your project (interview with macht.sprache.)

macht.sprache. is a project to foster politically sensitive translation between English and German. macht.sprache. offers a platform for crowdsourcing and discussing politically sensitive terms and their translations, and provides a tool to help translate with sensitivity. Anna von Rath and Lucy Gasser are co-founders of macht.sprache. and responsible for the concept and the curation of the project.

macht.sprache. cooperates with Goethe-Institut and was funded/awardes by Berliner Senat Digitale Entwicklung im Kulturbereich, Prototype Fund, Deep Tech Award, Wikimedia Deutschland (UNLOCK Accelerator), Kultur- und Kreativpilotinnen and Deutscher Übersetzerfonds. Here the team explains how they approached these cooperations and what they found is essential for your project's visibility.

When did you start thinking about further funding? How have you approached the issue of follow-on funding, are there resources (e.g. overviews of funding pots etc.) that you can share in this regard?

Essentially, we kept our eyes and ears open for calls that seemed like a good fit throughout the life of the project, sometimes looking more actively and sometimes being lucky. Often, the key is networks and it can become easier once you've built up a certain kind of momentum. Because you got one kind of grant and the attention that comes with it, your contacts are more likely to think of you when they see something else that might be a match for your project. Sometimes we would even receive emails inviting us to apply for things.

It can be helpful to follow relevant people in your sector on social media; they often post about further opportunities. Actively build your networks, attend events, use LinkedIn. The more people have your project on their radar, the better.

Here are a couple of helpful resources:

https://www.kreativkultur.berlin/de/forderfinder

https://www.foerderdatenbank.de/FDB/DE/Home/home.html

https://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/foerderung/

Articles about macht.sprache. have been published by the Goethe-Institut or on http://wissenschaftskommunikation.de – how did you initiate the media coverage?

Sometimes we actively pursued these possibilities, by reaching out to publications we thought would be interested in the work we were doing, or rather, publications likely to reach our target audience, and pitched an article. We also activated our personal networks. In the case of the Goethe-Institut, one team member had a personal contact which led to multiple further contacts in other Goethe-Instituts and various subsequent co-operations.

Winning awards (Deep Tech Award and Kultur- und Kreativpilot*innen) has helped as well. The organizers usually tried to create a little bit of a buzz with an award ceremony and supported us with our public relations.

What kind of partnership have you established with the Goethe-Institut?

The Goethe-Institut London supported our first funding application with a letter of recommendation because they were about to embark on a similar project and foresaw cooperation opportunities. So while the Goethe-Institut was running its Artificially Correct project, we actively co-operated in the organization of some events, and were invited to give a workshop when their branch in Finland gave a conference on Ethics and AI. More recently we joined the Resonance programme organized by the Goethe-Instituts in France. Resonance aims to promote the cultural and creative industries in Europe. Franco-German tandems work on a joint project for a year, i.e. one of our team members is now in close exchange with a French partner. The various Goethe-Instituts offer different programmes that one can apply for, their calls can be found on their websites or on social media.

What is the distribution of working time between technical work on the project, community management and communication/relationship management/fundraising?

This radically depends on the different stages the project is in. There was a time when the technical development of the app was moving along with quite some speed and regularity. Now our tech team-mates have more or less moved on to other projects. Community-building, communication and outreach continue to be very time-consuming - especially because for macht.sprache. the community is an integral part of what we do and try to offer. It is also our experience that these different types of work are very differently (financially) valued in different contexts.

Can you say what is most beneficial for getting the word out about the project (awards, promotion, coverage)?

It depends to some extent which section of your target audience you want to reach. We have accounts on Instagram, Twitter, FaceThema and LinkedIn and we regularly write newsletters. This is a lot of work, but the number of our followers and subscribers is slowly, but consistently growing.

Real-life workshops or webinars we held with translators were extremely successful in terms of community-building. They fostered active engagement and participation by a community that really cared about the type of work we do.

An award like the Kultur- and Kreativpilotinnen gave us significantly more visibility, particularly outside of the bubble that we had mostly been reaching so far. The award in turn led to an article in the Tagesspiegel, which was probably the most wide-reaching visibility we achieved.

But without financial grants like the Prototype Fund, none of it would have mattered, because we couldn’t have actually built macht.sprache., so financial grants like these are, finally, what have the most power to make or break a project.

Do you have any specific tips or advice for other projects that want to become better known?

Use social media and build a community that supports you. It’s easier if you are willing to show your faces (which we rarely do), because people love to feel that they can get to know you and not only what you do.

Identify your target audience, businesses, institutions and organizations that share your interests and network like crazy. You can find relevant events and go to talk to people in person or you can contact them on LinkedIn. Don’t be shy and don’t let rejection get you down.

Opportunities to talk about your project to people in real life are extremely valuable. We regularly host events, teach workshops or give inputs at universities, (literature) festivals or conferences. We organize some of the events and workshops ourselves, but often we receive invitations - in the coming months we will be speaking at the Bundespresseamt and the Conference of Translation Services of European States. Very often, one thing leads to the next.

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