

Interact Academy, Interreg Slam 2024-2025

Storytelling: How to write your story

Nebojsa Nikolic/ Interact / 03.06.2024

Interact



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Interreg

Agenda/ topics

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course recap

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Steps in
refining

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Tips and
tools

04

Practical
demonstration

05

Next steps

Story so far



Without storytelling

Websites with 120 visits

Videos with 54 views

Brochures that go to trash

Posts with 2 likes

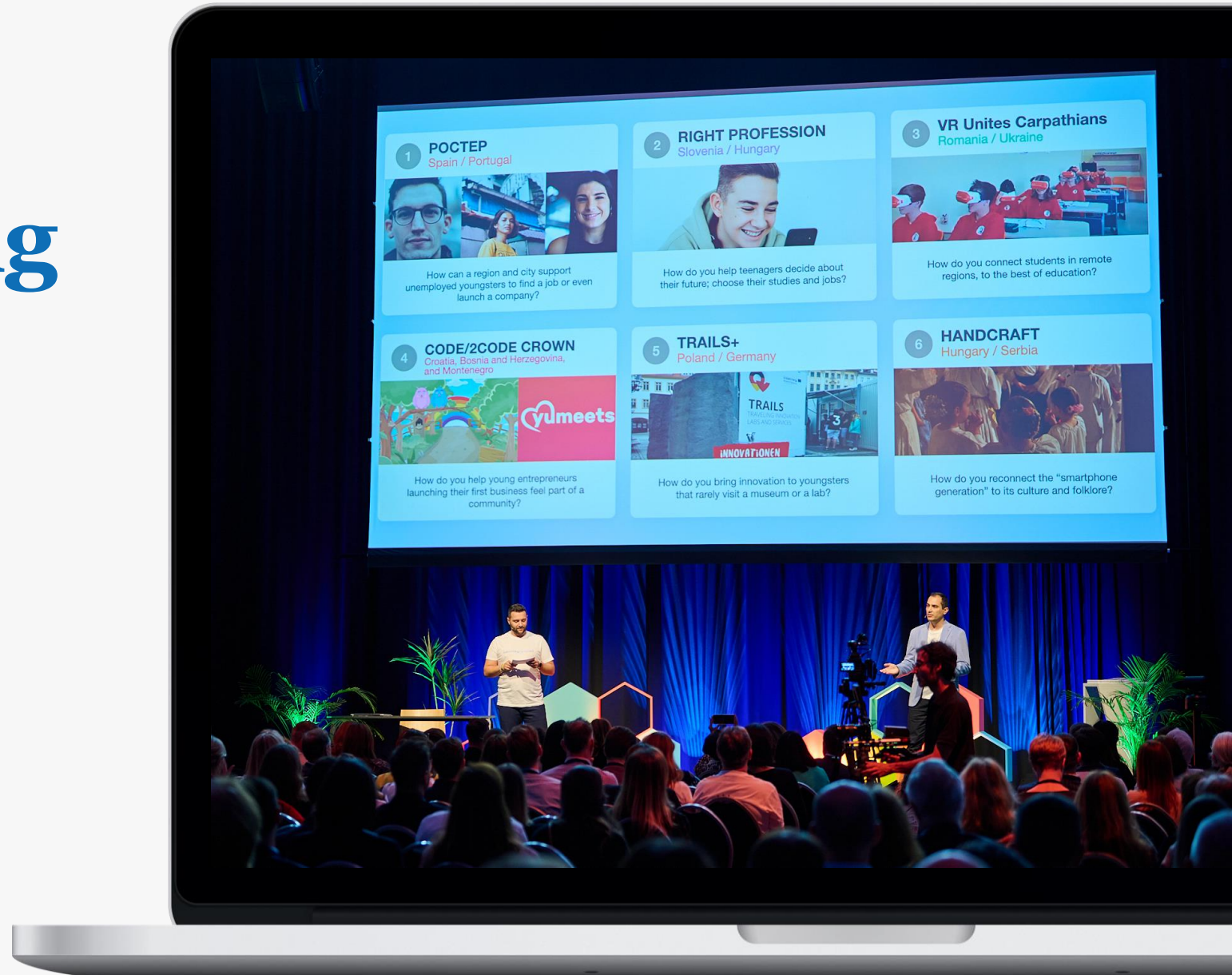


With storytelling

Interreg Slam reach

- 400.000 people in 2021
- 1.5 million people in 2022
- 3 million people in 2023

Video stories with thousands of organic views and hundreds of interactions.



The three kinds of stories

1. Fiction in movies, books and games

Dramatic triangle (Karpman theory):
villain, victim and hero

2. Brand association, advertisement

Psychological connection between an
emotion and a **brand**

3. Stories of knowledge

For **teaching** and **informing**



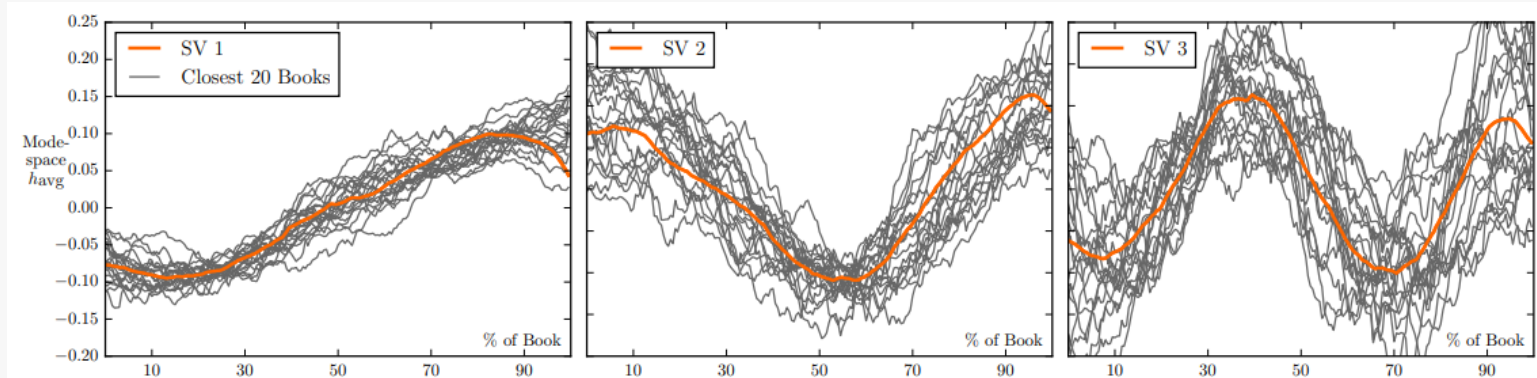
The patterns in stories of fiction

Research shows 6 general story arcs:

- “Rags to riches” (rise)
- “Riches to rags” or “Tragedy” (fall)
- “Man in a hole” (fall–rise)
- “Icarus” (rise–fall).
- “Cinderella” (rise–fall–rise)
- “Oedipus” (fall–rise–fall)



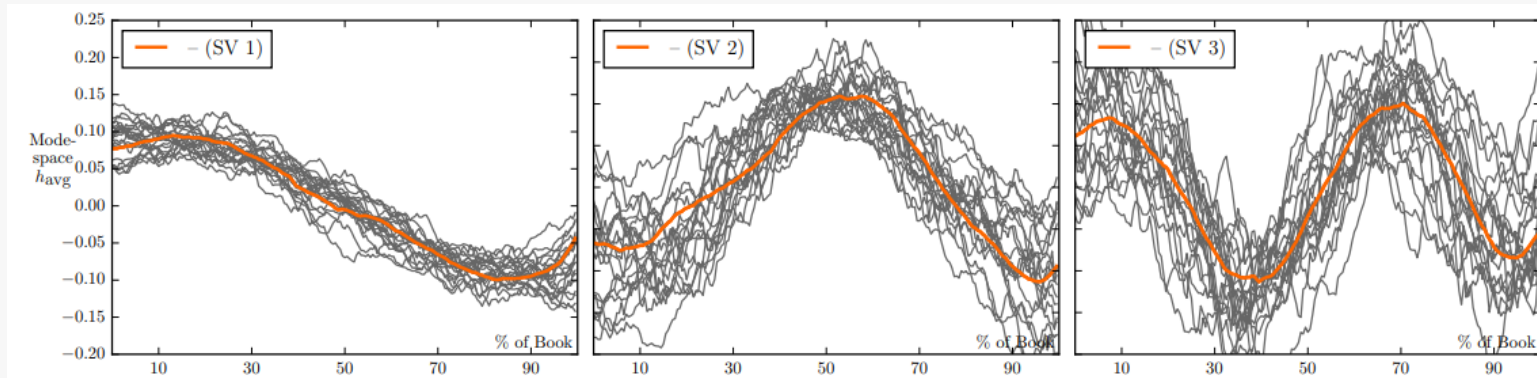
Examples



1. Rocky, Charlie & Chocolate Factory

3. The Martian, Shawshank Redemption

5. Cinderella, Count of Monte Cristo



2. Romeo and Juliet, King Lear, Citizen Kane

4. Macbeth, Great Gatsby

6. Hamlet, Gone Girl, Breaking Bad

The pattern in journalism

The inverted pyramid

1. The headline and the most important information
2. Important details
3. Other info



Our “rise” structure

- 1 CONTEXT
- 2 SPECIFIC PROBLEM
- 3 IDEA
- 4 SOLUTION
- 5 HOW IT WORKS - 1
- 6 HOW IT WORKS - 2
- 7 HOW IT WORKS - 3
- 8 PROOF OF SUCCESS
- 9 VISION
- 10 BRAND



Think about the audience

Making a “communication persona”

- A profile of a typical audience member, representing people who might care about your specific project - forget about Interreg for now
- This is known as “**audience profiling**” within a larger process of “**audience segmentation**”
- Think about age, gender, education, interests, hobbies, relationship status, income, commute to work, social media they use, etc.
- Write your story for THEM



Steps in refining



Revision Process

The paper basket is your best friend.

Step 1

Back to the
potential audience

Step 2

Check
problem/solution
relation, plain
language

Step 3

Play with AI and
other tools to help
with steps 1 and 2

Step 4

Test on a friend –
ask them to retell

Stories of knowledge potential audience



Where is the audience?

We need to consider where and how we are going to share our stories.

Facebook increased to almost 3 billion users (age shift)



LinkedIn on the rise, with over 900 million users in 2023.



Mobile dominates, especially for social media (78%)



Short video is the most engaging (2.5 times higher than long video)



Source: <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/social-media-statistics/>

Common mistakes in step 2: language and problem/solution

**Bureaucratic
language**



**Excessive
information**



**Solution oversell
or mismatch**



Bureaucratic language

- Programme
- Call for proposals
- Beneficiary
- Synergies
- Capitalisation
- Stakeholders
- Capacity-building
- Cohesion
- IPA, etc.



IPA is a type of beer

If you say you're working on an IPA project many people might think you're working for a beer company.



Excessive information

- Organised two in-person workshops
- Facilitated fourteen Zoom meetings
- Endured 8 project partner meetings
- Printed 10000 brochures
- Distributed 5000 pens
- And 300 8GB USBs
- Made synergies for capitalisation
- Bought one website (so popular)
- Organised 50 paid internships

Some numbers are more important than the others, and it's not always the highest one.



Photo by Wesley Tingey, Unsplash, CC

Overselling the solution

“With our two workshops, 14 Zoom meetings, pens, USBs, open days, cross-border synergies on capitalisation and cohesion, a high-level conference with policy makers on the future of post-27 thematic IPA-CBC networks, as well as the website, newsletters and the internships we have **significantly improved the challenging environment of complex systematic administrative congestions when applying for the initial career progression of young people and youths** in the cross-border region.”

#YouthForCooperation,
#AreYouStillReading, #WHY



Photo by Steve Buisinne, Pixabay, CC

Try instead

“We helped 50 young people get their first job.”



Oversell and mismatch

“We wrote a 100-page report that is going to fix climate change.”



Buzzwords and phrases we should avoid

“Cutting-edge”, to refer to a training, website, or an app the project developed. OpenAI Sora is a “cutting edge” tool – an overpaid WordPress website that nobody visits is NOT cutting edge.

“Innovative”, see above.

“Synergies”, like in “we created synergies to facilitate cooperation in the target area...”. Working in synergy is something we should be doing by default.

Buzzwords and phrases we should avoid

“**Tailor-made**” – This is a fancy replacement for “custom”. But what does it mean in practice? Can you explain and prove it in the story? Is something “custom-made” crucial for the project?

“**We capitalized on...**” – even programme experts often don’t really know what this is, so it is unlikely your reader knows either. Try “we saved money by using already available...”

“**Facilitated exchange**” – try “we brought together” or “organised a conference/job fair.”

Buzzwords and phrases we should avoid

“Tourist product” – as in “we created a tourist product. What does that mean? In practice, it usually means they made a brochure.

“Established a network” – What kind of network? Is it official and formal? How many members and who is in it? How does it work? What does it do?

“Mechanism/s” – as in “we made a mechanism for fostering collaboration and synergies in our tourist product network”. This is a very technical term that fits better in engineering manuals.

Technical phrases and plain language alternatives

“Utilized” – try “used”

“Facilitated” – try helped

“Improved competences” – try “trained”

“Improved knowledge levels” – try “taught” or “learned”

“Held public awareness campaign about the project by...” – try “we promoted the project by...”

“Fostered” – try “helped” or “supported”

“Procured” – try “bought”

“Target area” – just name the city/region

“Target audience” – people

The AI writing tools

[ChatGPT 3.5](#): Research, writing, drafting



[Microsoft Copilot](#): Chat GPT 4 + Dall-E 3 + Bing



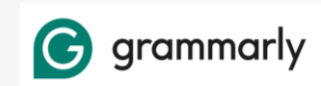
[Google Gemini 1.5](#): Multimodal (text, image, code, etc.)



[Resoomer](#): Summarize and analyze argumentative texts



[Grammarly](#): Check grammar, tone and generate text



[QuillBot](#): Paraphrase, grammar and improve English



[Hemingway editor](#): Improve readability, colour coded guide



Let's test the AI on an Interreg project

Project story: Forgetting no one, even if they forget us!

Author: Dani Bárdos, Interreg IPA CBC Romania - Serbia

Dementia is one of the most common mental illnesses which is not curable yet. Cities of Vrsac and Resita face the challenges of providing optimal quality of life to their ageing citizens, especially those with dementia. As a consequence of population ageing, prevalence and incidence projections indicate that the number of people with dementia will continue to grow.

What if we start to take the necessary steps for implementing preventive measures to slow down the incidence of dementia and to improve the quality of life of existing patients? Through infrastructural investments and training sessions for doctors and staff, we raised the quality of treatment for patients with Dementia. We raised awareness to reduce stigma and to promote action.

Firstly, we started building a dementia department in Vrsac and procuring the medical equipment in Resita while launching the awareness campaign about the prevention of dementia. Secondly, we organized events where doctors and other medical staff exchanged knowledge, know-how and good practices regarding preventing dementia beyond borders. Finally, we researched the risk factors for dementia in the region. The knowledge shared and the infrastructure provided allows medical experts to focus on vulnerable groups and improve the situation. In 24 months:

- 2 spaces in Vrsac and Resita were rehabilitated and equipped,
- 108 doctors and other experts attended various exchange events,
- 13.000 locals were involved in the project's activities,
- 600 disadvantaged persons either participated in activities or were part of a research study,
- 155.000 citizens from both regions learned more about preventing dementia from the awareness campaign.

Now, the community is aware of dementia prevention, and people have direct access to higher-quality medical care.

Analyse readability: Hemingway

Hemingway App makes your writing bold and clear.

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Write Edit

Readability 

Grade 12

OK. Aim for 9.

Words: 281

Show more stats ▾

2 adverbs, meeting the goal of 3 or fewer.

2 uses of passive voice, meeting the goal of 4 or fewer.

2 phrases have simpler alternatives.

3 of 18 sentences are hard to read.

7 of 18 sentences are very hard to read.

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Rewrite: example from Gemini 1.0

Prompt: “Help me rewrite this story, to make it shorter and relatable. It should read like a short inspirational article, and without bullet points:”

Imagine a community grappling with rising dementia rates, its citizens facing a future clouded by forgetfulness and isolation. This was the reality for Vrsac and Resita, two cities in Romania struggling to provide quality care for their aging population. But instead of succumbing to despair, they chose action.

Their 24-month journey began with a simple yet powerful idea: empower the community to fight back. First, they built and equipped dedicated dementia departments in each city, offering patients a haven of specialized care. But they didn't stop there. Recognizing the importance of prevention, they launched a knowledge exchange program, bringing doctors from across borders to share best practices and identify risk factors.

The ripples of change spread far and wide. An awareness campaign reached 155,000 citizens, dispelling myths and equipping them with tools for prevention. Vulnerable groups, often overlooked, received targeted support, ensuring no one was left behind.

Today, Vrsac and Resita stand as testaments to the power of community action. Residents have direct access to quality care, empowered with knowledge to protect themselves and their loved ones. This story isn't just about fighting dementia; it's about hope, collaboration, and the unwavering spirit of a community united against a seemingly insurmountable challenge.

If Vrsac and Resita can do it, so can others. Their story serves as a beacon, reminding us that even in the face of daunting challenges, collective action can pave the way for a brighter, healthier future.

Rewrite: example from Gemini 1.5

Prompt: “Help me rewrite this story, to make it shorter and relatable. It should read like a short inspirational article, and without bullet points:”

In Vrsac and Resita, where aging citizens face the growing shadow of dementia, we dared to dream of a brighter future. Instead of accepting this cruel illness, we took action. We built a specialized dementia department, trained medical professionals, and launched a city-wide awareness campaign.

Imagine: doctors sharing knowledge across borders, events bustling with engaged locals, and 600 vulnerable individuals receiving support. We weren't just building infrastructure; we were building hope.

In just 24 months, 155,000 citizens learned about prevention, 108 medical experts gained new skills, and 2 dedicated spaces were equipped to fight dementia. Now, families have access to better care, communities are empowered, and the future looks brighter for those we love.

This isn't just a story of Vrsac and Resita; it's a story of courage, collaboration, and the unwavering belief that even in the face of dementia, hope can prevail. And that's a story worth sharing, worth remembering, worth fighting for.

Social media: example from Copilot

Prompt: “Write three separate but engaging social media posts about this project:”

🌟 Post 1: “Empowering Our Community Against Dementia”

🗨️ Did you know that dementia affects millions worldwide? In Vrsac and Resita, we've taken bold steps to improve the lives of our aging citizens. Here's how:

- 🏠 **Upgraded Spaces:** We transformed two facilities, creating safe havens for dementia patients.
- 👤 **Expert Exchange:** 108 doctors and experts shared knowledge across borders.
- 🌱 **Prevention Awareness:** 155,000 citizens learned about dementia prevention through our campaign.

Join us in the fight against dementia! ❤️ #DementiaAwareness #CommunityImpact

🔍 Post 2: “Unlocking Hope: Dementia Prevention Insights”

🌐 As our population ages, dementia cases rise. But what if we could slow down its incidence? Here's how we're making a difference:

- 🚀 **Infrastructure Boost:** Our dementia department in Vrsac is now a beacon of care.
- 🤝 **Cross-Border Wisdom:** Doctors and staff exchanged best practices, bridging gaps.
- 📊 **Research Clues:** We dug deep into regional risk factors, empowering our experts.

Together, we're rewriting the dementia story! 🌟 #DementiaPrevention #KnowledgeIsPower

Social media: example from Copilot

Prompt: “Write three separate but engaging social media posts about this project:”

♥ Post 3: “From Awareness to Action: Dementia Matters”

🌱 Dementia isn't just a challenge—it's an opportunity for change. Look at our progress:

- 🌟 **Local Engagement:** 13,000 community members actively participated.
- 🌐 **Stigma Breakdown:** We're reducing misconceptions about dementia.
- 🌈 **Quality Care:** Direct access to better medical support is now a reality.

Join hands with us! Let's create a dementia-friendly world. 🤝 #DementiaCare #TogetherStrong

Video script: example from Copilot

Prompt: “Help me write a script for a short 2-minute promotional video about this project:”

[Opening Shot]

- [Visual: A serene view of Vrsac and Resita, transitioning to the faces of hopeful citizens.]

Narrator (Warm Voiceover): *“In the heart of Vrsac and Resita, where history meets hope, a silent battle unfolds. Dementia—a common yet incurable mental illness—touches lives, leaving families searching for answers.”*

[Cut to: Clips of elderly individuals looking out windows, families supporting them.]

Narrator: *“But what if hope wasn’t lost? What if together, we could improve the quality of life for our aging citizens?”*

[Transition to: The construction and rehabilitation of spaces in Vrsac and Resita.]

Narrator: *“Introducing our dementia prevention project—a beacon of care, a promise of resilience.”*

[Cut to: Doctors and experts exchanging knowledge at events.]

Narrator: *“108 doctors and experts united, sharing wisdom beyond borders. A symphony of collaboration, a chorus of compassion.”*

[Showcase: Locals participating in project activities.]

Narrator: *“13,000 community members engaged; every hand joined makes us stronger.”*

[Highlight: Disadvantaged persons receiving support.]

Narrator: *“600 souls touched directly; every life uplifted writes a story.”*

[Closing Scene: The community coming together; images from the awareness campaign reaching thousands.]

Narrator: *“And the numbers speak: 155,000 citizens enlightened on preventing dementia. Today, we stand aware and equipped—ready for tomorrow.”*

[Final Frame: A hopeful sunrise over Vrsac and Resita with text – “Together for a brighter tomorrow.”]

Narrator (Softly): *“Empowering minds, transforming lives. Join us.”*

Tips

- Always think of your audience
- Clear out all the bureaucratic phrases
- Double-check connection between the problem and solution
- Try using examples and testimonials
- Use AI tools to help you rewrite
- Think how your story could look like on social media or as a short video
- Practice



Photo by Andrea Piacquadio, Pexels, CC

Next steps

10 June

Final webinar

Refine your story,
storytelling exercises,
practical work

1 July

Slam final deadline

To apply for the Slam, you need
to send your story by email:

stoyan.kanatov@interact.eu

1 July

Academy deadline

On the Academy
platform and you will
receive the certificate.

Cooperation **works**

All materials will be available on:

Interact Academy