

DIACOMET

„Fostering capacity building for civic resilience and participation: Dialogic communication ethics and accountability“

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Executive summary

This deliverable outlines the development and functionality testing of an online forum dedicated to ethical dialogue, aligned with the principles of dialogic communication. The platform is designed to support structured, respectful discussions of ethical dilemmas among non-governmental organisations (NGOs), educators, and civil society actors.

Functionality testing was conducted by project partners and focused on evaluating the platform's core features: user registration, posting, commenting, voting (like/dislike), and moderation tools. The test confirmed overall operational readiness and offered valuable feedback, which led to interface refinements.

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1. Introduction

The development of an online forum within the DIACOMET project responds to the growing need for structured, ethical, and inclusive dialogue in the digital sphere. As communication becomes increasingly polarized and fragmented across social platforms, this forum offers an alternative: a moderated, value-driven space guided by the principles of dialogic communication, where ethical dilemmas can be explored through respectful and responsible dialogue.

The forum provides a focused space for reflective dialogue on communication ethics, designed to facilitate responsible exchanges among NGOs, educators and civil society actors. It also serves as a complementary tool to existing NGO networks and educational initiatives. Beyond its role in fostering civic engagement, the forum is envisioned as an educational resource that can be integrated into university teaching and used to support the analysis of real-world ethical dilemmas in communication.

The conceptualisation of the forum design began in December 2023, during an initial meeting with the University of Tartu team, where the preliminary concept was discussed. From that point until May 2025, the forum's concept, design, and core functionalities were discussed through a number of meetings and via email with Vytautas Magnus University, other DIACOMET partners and NGOs. In May 2025, project partners actively participated in internal testing by engaging directly on the forum. They registered on the platform, posted ethical dilemmas, interacted with content, and explored the forum's key features. Their feedback was instrumental in assessing usability, identifying technical and interface issues, and informing final refinements prior to broader deployment.

This deliverable report presents the outcomes of the internal testing phase, assessing how effectively the platform functions as a dialogic environment for debating and negotiating ethical issues.

2. Forum design and functionality

The online forum was developed as a dedicated platform to foster ethical, inclusive, and structured dialogue around communication dilemmas. Designed specifically for the DIACOMET project, it prioritizes user accountability, multilingual access, and alignment with the project's core values. It allows full control over design and moderation, ensuring consistency with the project's ethical framework. The forum is publicly accessible at the project website (<https://diacomet.eu/forum/>) or directly (<https://forum.diacomet.eu/>).

Users may access the forum anonymously or as registered members. Anonymous users have full access to view discussion content but are permitted to comment on existing threads. However, users who wish to initiate new posts—by submitting their own communication ethics dilemmas—must register and log in. This requirement ensures traceability and responsibility for initiating discussions, while still allowing open participation in ongoing conversations.

A pop-up message is shown to first-time users, outlining the advantages of creating an account. While full content access and commenting are available without registration, posting new discussion topics and receiving notifications require user registration (See Figure 1).

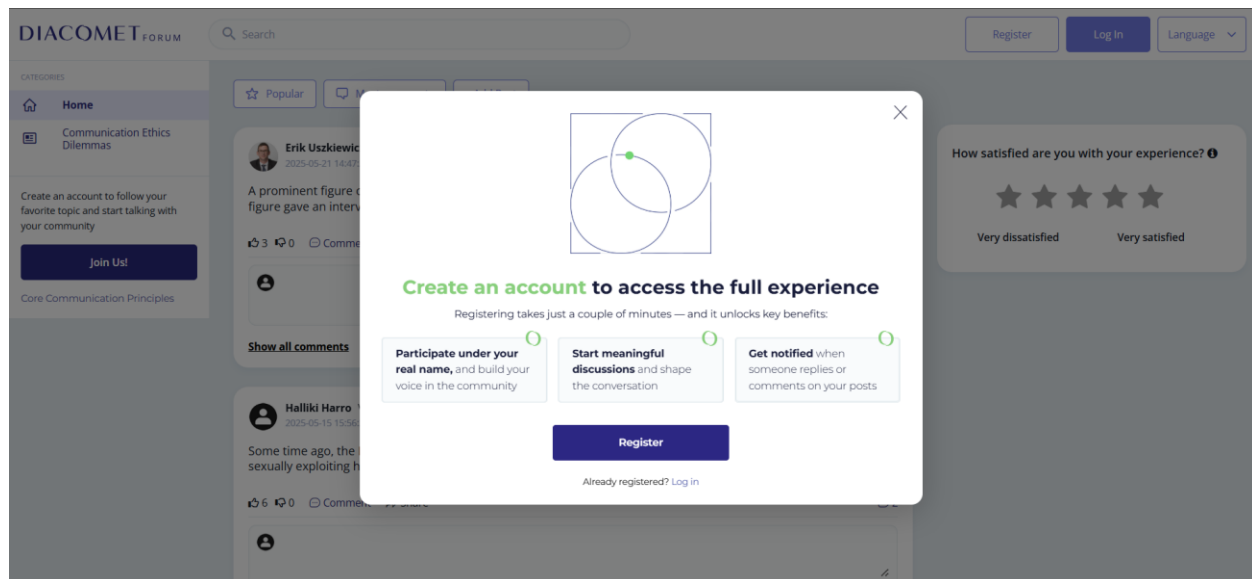


Figure 1: A pop-up message highlighting registered user benefits

The registration and login process are quick and user-friendly, offering multiple options including email, Google, or Facebook login for faster access (see Figure 2 and 3).

The registration interface features a sidebar with 'CATEGORIES' (Home, Communication Ethics Dilemmas), a 'Join Us!' button, and 'Core Communication Principles'. The main area is titled 'Registration' and includes social login options for Facebook and Google. Below these are input fields for First Name, Last Name, Email, and Password (with a minimum 8 characters requirement). There are two checkboxes for terms and conditions: 'I have read and agree to the Privacy Policy and Terms of Services' and 'I agree to receive news and special offers...'. A 'Register' button is at the bottom, with a link for 'Already registered? Login'.

Figure 2: User registration interface

The login interface is similar to the registration page, with a sidebar on the left. The main area is titled 'Login' and includes a disclaimer: 'By logging in, you confirm that you agree to our Terms of Services and Privacy Policy.' It features social login options for Facebook and Google, followed by input fields for Email and Password. There is a link for 'Forgot your password? Remind' and a 'Remember me' checkbox. A 'Login' button is at the bottom.

Figure 3: User login interface

The main feed is the central view where all published content is displayed. Each post appears as a standalone narrative, typically introducing an ethical dilemma followed by an open question that invites users to participate in the discussion (see Figure 4).

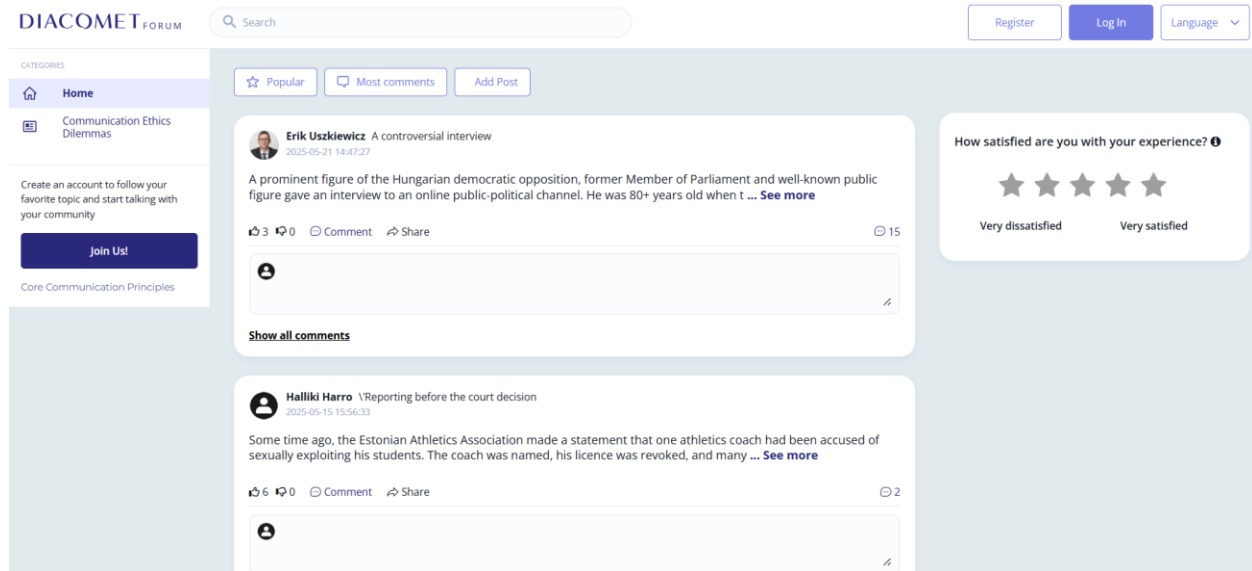


Figure 4: The main feed of the forum

Registered users can create new posts using a simple and intuitive interface. To begin, users can click “Add Post” on the main forum page or navigate to the “Posts” section within their personal dashboard and select “Add New” (see Figure 5 and 6).

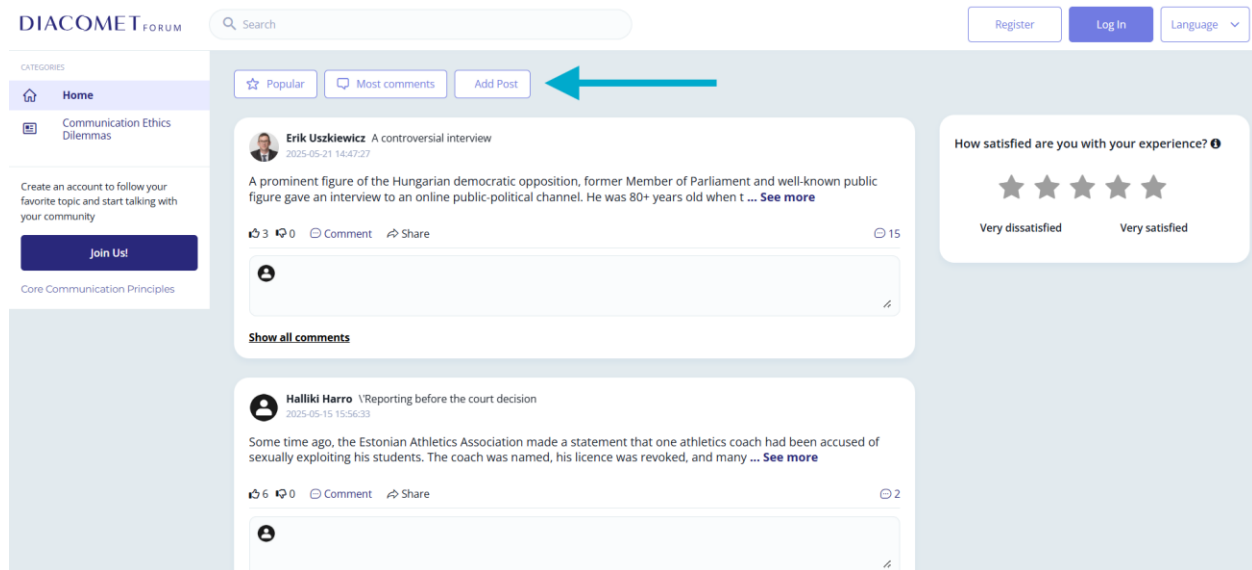


Figure 5: “Add Post” button on main forum page

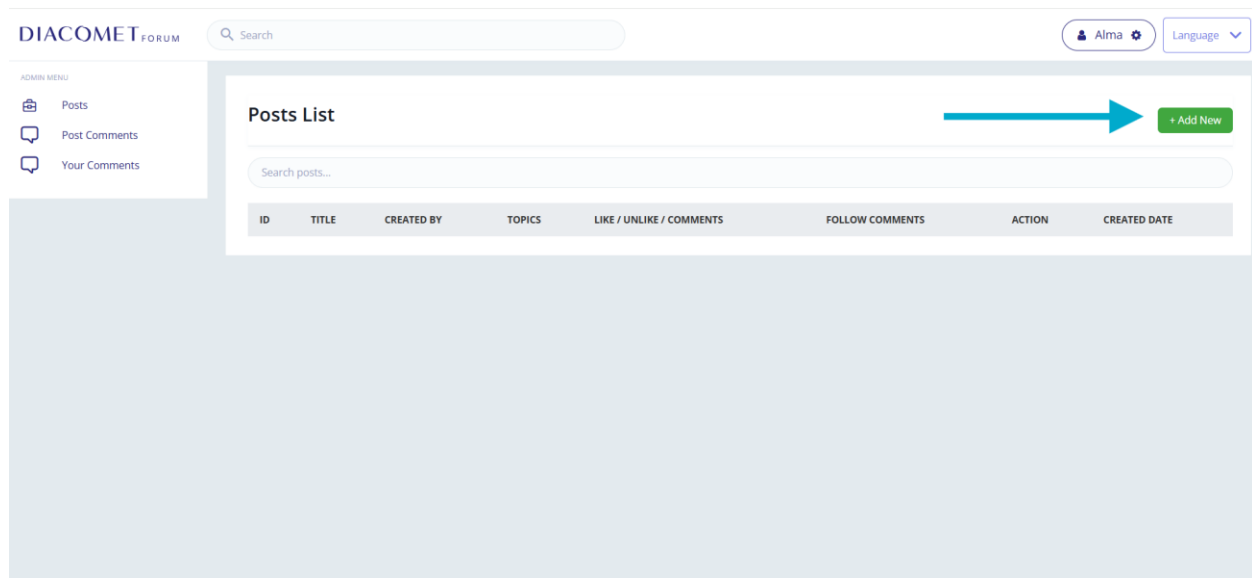


Figure 6: “Add New” option in the user dashboard

The post creation form includes fields for a title, topic, and a detailed description of the dilemma. At present, one default topic—Communication Ethics Dilemmas—is available, but as the platform expands and reaches a broader audience, additional thematic categories (e.g., Inclusion in Public Discourse, or Information Quality and Transparency) may be introduced. The post editor offers a range of rich formatting options to support clarity and user engagement. Users can format text using bold, italic, underlined, or strikethrough styles; apply text colors; align text (left, center, right); and structure content using bullet points or numbered lists. The editor also allows for embedding hyperlinks, uploading images or videos, inserting tables, and using a variety of symbols—enabling users to present complex, media-rich content effectively. To stay informed about activity on their posts, users may opt in to email notifications by ticking the box labelled “Follow the comments on this post”, which alerts them when others reply or comment (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: New post creation interface

Users can interact with posts in several ways: they can like or dislike the main post, add their own comments, and like, dislike, or reply to comments made by others (see Figure 8 and 9).

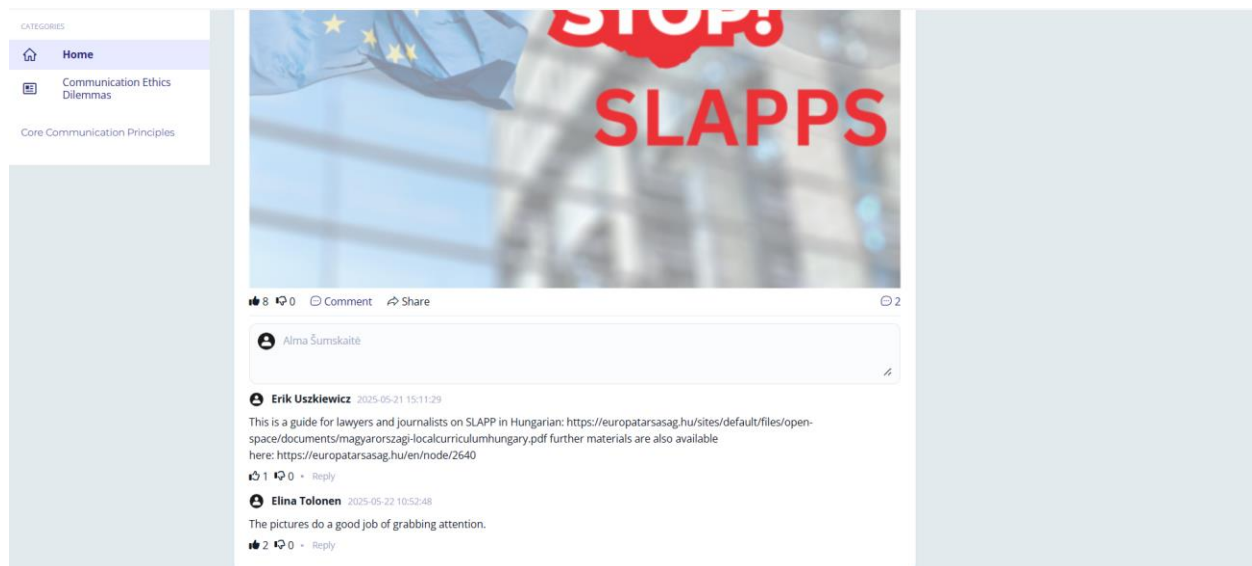


Figure 8: Post interaction options: like, dislike, and comment

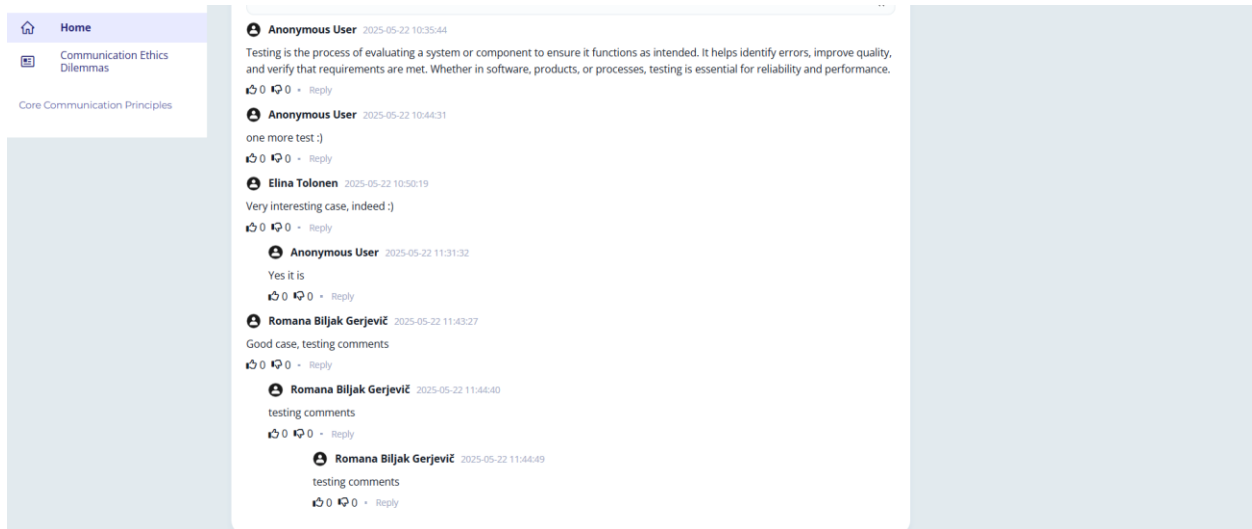


Figure 9: Comment interaction options: like, dislike, and reply

Posts can also be shared externally via integrated buttons for Facebook, X (Twitter), LinkedIn, or by copying the direct link to share manually (see Figure 10).

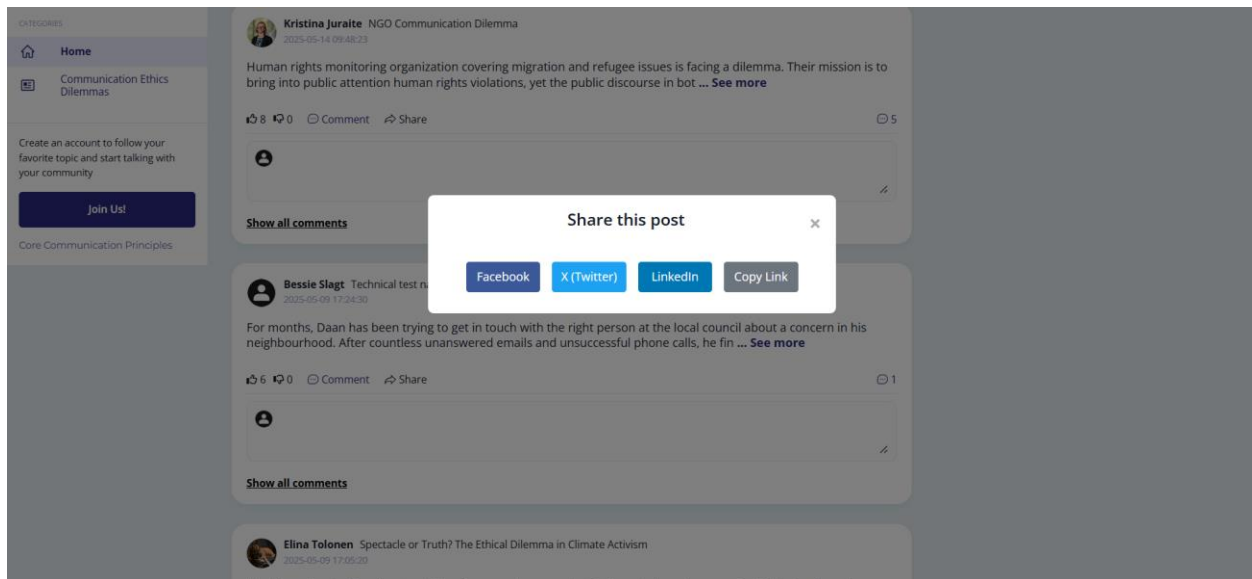


Figure 10: Post sharing feature

Users can sort all posts in the main feed by popularity or by the number of comments, making it easier to navigate discussions based on relevance or engagement. Clicking the DIACOMET logo in the upper left corner returns the user to the default view of the forum (see Figure 11).



Figure 11: Post sorting options

On the left-hand sidebar of the main interface, users can view the current topic category (Communication Ethics Dilemmas). Beneath this, the Core Communication Principles are visible to ensure that ethical standards remain an integral part of the user experience.

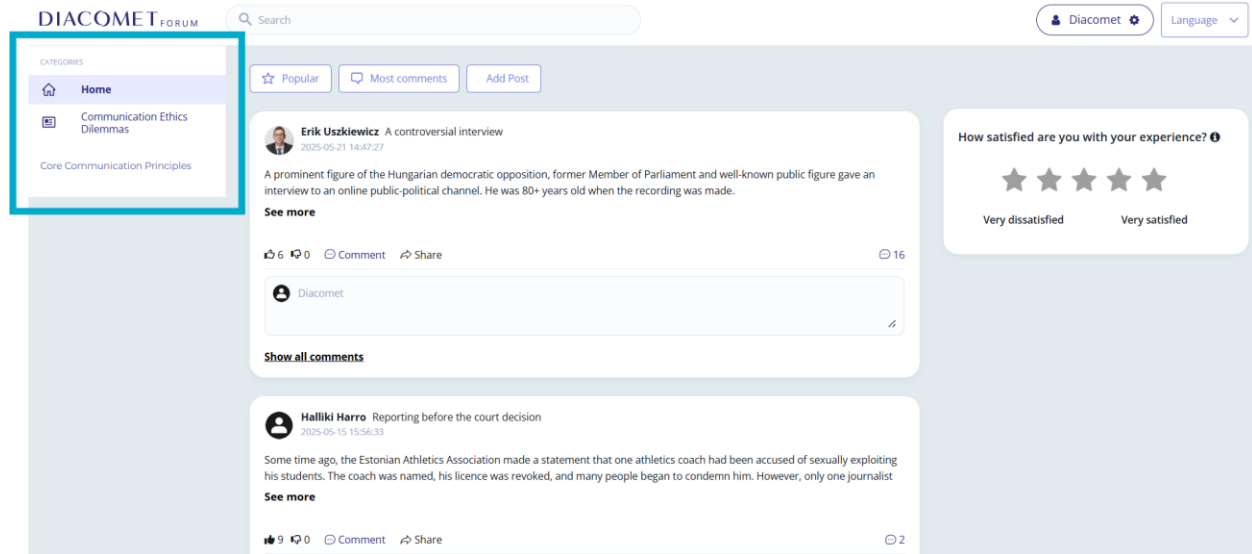


Figure 12: Sidebar with forum topics and core principles displayed

The forum includes an AI-powered machine translation feature, based on Google Translate, which enables users to access and contribute to discussions in multiple languages. As of now, the forum supports the following languages: English (EN), Lithuanian (LT), Estonian (ET), Finnish (FI), Slovenian (SL), Dutch (NL), Hungarian (HU), French (FR), Italian (IT), and German (DE). Users

can select their preferred language from a dropdown menu in the top navigation bar (see Figure 13).

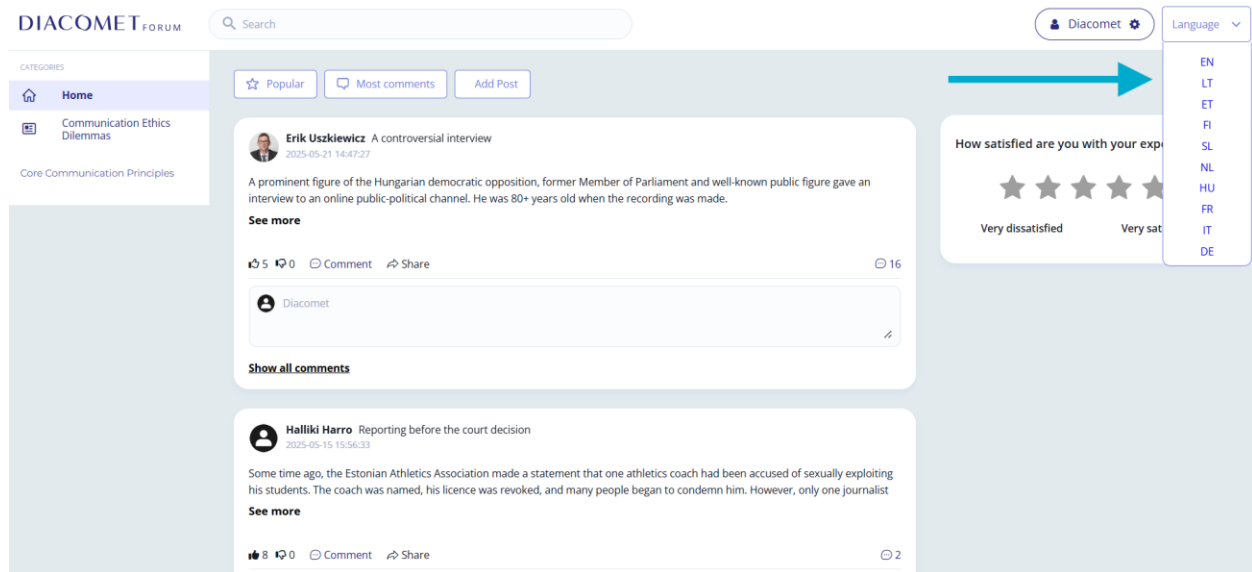


Figure 13: Language selection dropdown

Each registered user has access to a personal dashboard, which serves as a central hub for managing their activity on the platform. From the dashboard, users can view, edit, or delete the posts they have created. The “Posts List” view displays each submission along with key data, including the title, topic, number of likes, dislikes, and comments, whether they have chosen to follow the comment thread, and the creation date (see Figure 14).

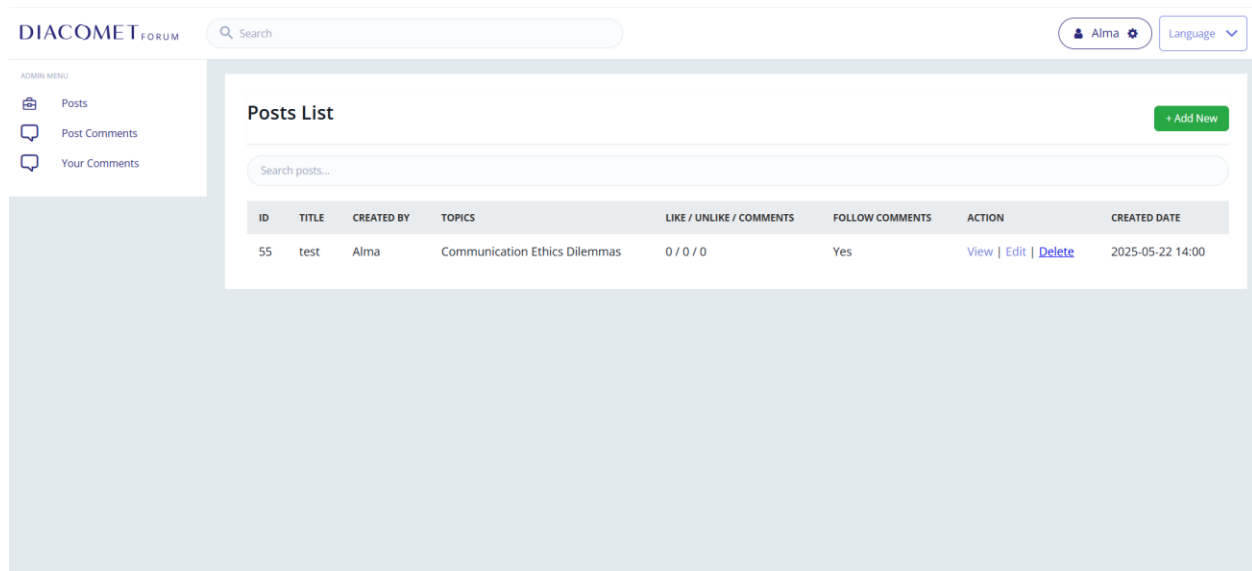


Figure 14: User dashboard – “Posts” section

The “Post Comments” section in the user dashboard provides an overview of all comments received on a user’s published posts. This feature allows post authors to monitor engagement, manage visibility, and moderate interaction directly from a central interface.

Each comment is listed with key data, including the comment ID, associated post title, comment text, author name, date, and status (visible or hidden). Users have access to quick moderation tools: they can edit, delete, or restore comments as needed. This functionality supports responsible management of discussions, enabling authors to maintain the quality and tone of interactions under their posts (see Figure 15).

ID	POST TITLE	COMMENT	BY	COMMENT DATE	STATUS	ACTIONS
141	test	another test	Alma Šumskaitė	2025-05-22 14:06	Visible	Edit Delete
140	test	test: hidden comment	Alma Šumskaitė	2025-05-22 14:05	Hidden	Restore Edit Delete
139	test	test	Alma Šumskaitė	2025-05-22 14:05	Visible	Edit Delete
133	x	x	Diacomet	2025-05-22 11:36	Visible	Edit Delete
132	x	x	Alma Šumskaitė	2025-05-22 11:35	Visible	Edit Delete

Figure 15: User dashboard – “Post Comments” section

The “Your Comments” section allows users to view and manage all comments they have posted across the forum. Each entry displays the post title to which the comment was made, the comment text, author name, date, status, and quick-access action buttons for editing or deleting the comment. This feature provides users with an organized overview of their participation across multiple discussions (see Figure 16).

ID	POST TITLE	COMMENT	BY	COMMENT DATE	STATUS	ACTIONS
141	test	another test	Alma Šumskaitė	2025-05-22 14:06	Visible	Edit Delete
139	test	test	Alma Šumskaitė	2025-05-22 14:05	Visible	Edit Delete
134	Crafting an Awareness Strategy on Climate Change	You can view hidden comments in your “Dashboard” under “Post Comments.” From there, you can restore the comments. They don’t disappear permanently.	Alma Šumskaitė	2025-05-22 11:38	Visible	Edit Delete
132	x	x	Alma Šumskaitė	2025-05-22 11:35	Visible	Edit Delete
129	Crafting an Awareness Strategy on Climate Change	Testing	Alma Šumskaitė	2025-05-22 11:26	Visible	Edit Delete

Figure 16: User dashboard – “Your Comments” section

To support continuous improvement of the platform, the main forum page includes a user satisfaction rating tool, allowing participants to quickly provide feedback on their experience. This feature is presented as a five-star scale ranging from “Very dissatisfied” to “Very satisfied,” with an optional comment field that enables users to rate the forum’s interface, usability, and overall engagement (see Figure 17).

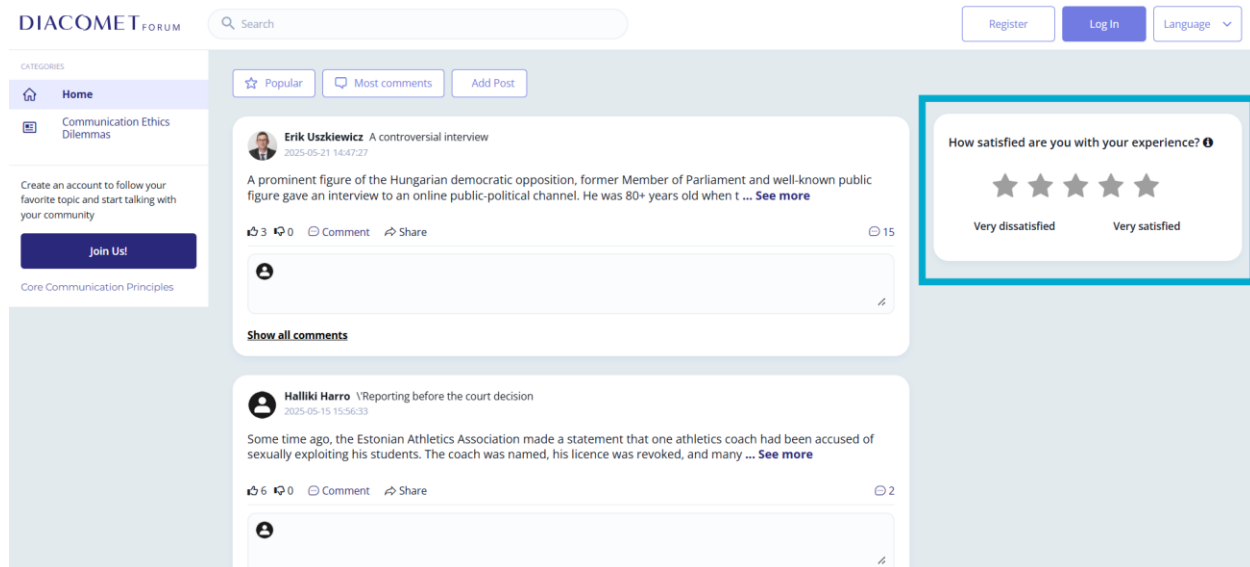


Figure 17: User experience feedback tool (five-star rating scale)

The platform applies a robust set of technical and ethical safeguards to protect both user data and the quality of discussion. Security begins with strict password requirements: all user passwords must be at least eight characters long and include a combination of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters. Additionally, users registering via email must confirm their address to complete the registration process ensuring that user accounts are secure and that participation in the forum is both authentic and accountable.

Passwords are securely hashed and never stored in plain text, ensuring that sensitive credentials remain protected. All sensitive communications—such as login credentials, account notifications, and password reset emails—are encrypted using Transport Layer Security (TLS) to maintain data confidentiality and integrity. Confidentiality ensures that any data transmitted between the user's device and the platform's servers is shielded from eavesdropping, interception, or unauthorized access. For example, when a user logs in or updates their profile, TLS encryption prevents attackers from reading this information in transit. Integrity ensures that the data cannot be altered or tampered with during transmission—any attempt to modify the data would be detected and blocked. This dual protection helps prevent man-in-the-middle attacks, data leaks, and message spoofing. In combination, these measures guarantee that

users' personal information remains both private and trustworthy throughout their interaction with the platform.

In parallel with these technical safeguards, the platform includes an AI-supported moderation system to maintain ethical discourse. Specifically, the OpenAI Moderation API is integrated to automatically scan all user-submitted comments for inappropriate or harmful content prior to publication. When a comment is submitted, it is analyzed in real time for indicators of hate speech, harassment, sexually explicit language, threats, or other violations of community standards. If the comment is deemed safe, it is published immediately. If the comment is flagged, it is saved but marked as “pending review” and withheld from public view until a moderator evaluates it.

This dual-layer system—combining automated AI filtering with human oversight—ensures that the forum remains a secure, respectful, and values-aligned space. It supports the DIACOMET project’s commitment to dialogic communication ethics.

4. Testing process

The internal testing phase of the forum was carried out with DIACOMET project partners, focusing on evaluating the core functionalities of the platform and collecting practical feedback for refinement. To introduce the forum and guide participation, an online tutorial session was conducted, during which all key functionalities—such as registration, posting, commenting, and moderation—were demonstrated. For those unable to attend, a short eight-minute video recording of the tutorial was made available, ensuring equal access to onboarding information (see Figure 18).

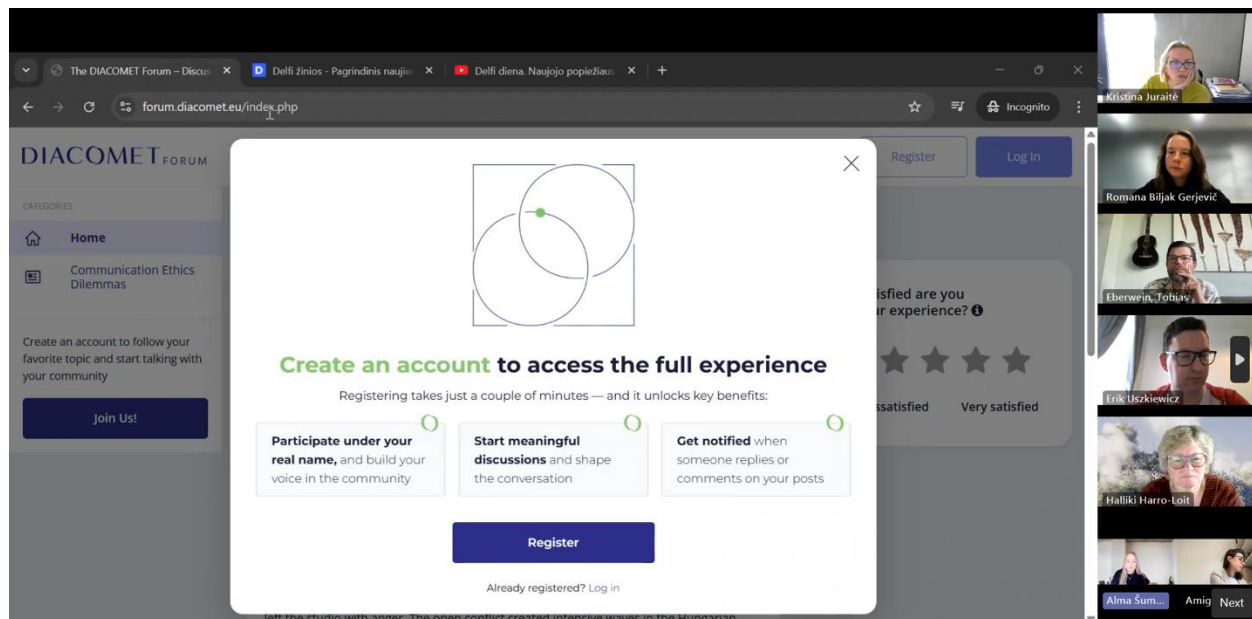


Figure 18: Online tutorial introducing the forum to DIACOMET partners

Following the tutorial, partners were asked to register on the platform and create a new discussion post using a narrative of their choice. The objective was to test how effectively users could engage with the system. To support this process, the University of Tartu team proposed three types of narratives that partners could use as examples for testing the forum's functionality:

- A narrative describing a controversial situation the author had experienced or witnessed
- A case that evokes strong moral judgment
- A perspective expressing a dissenting opinion

Each partner was free to select a scenario that they felt would be compelling or provoke meaningful interaction (see Figure 19, 20 and 21).



Figure 19: An example of a published ethical dilemma by Praxis

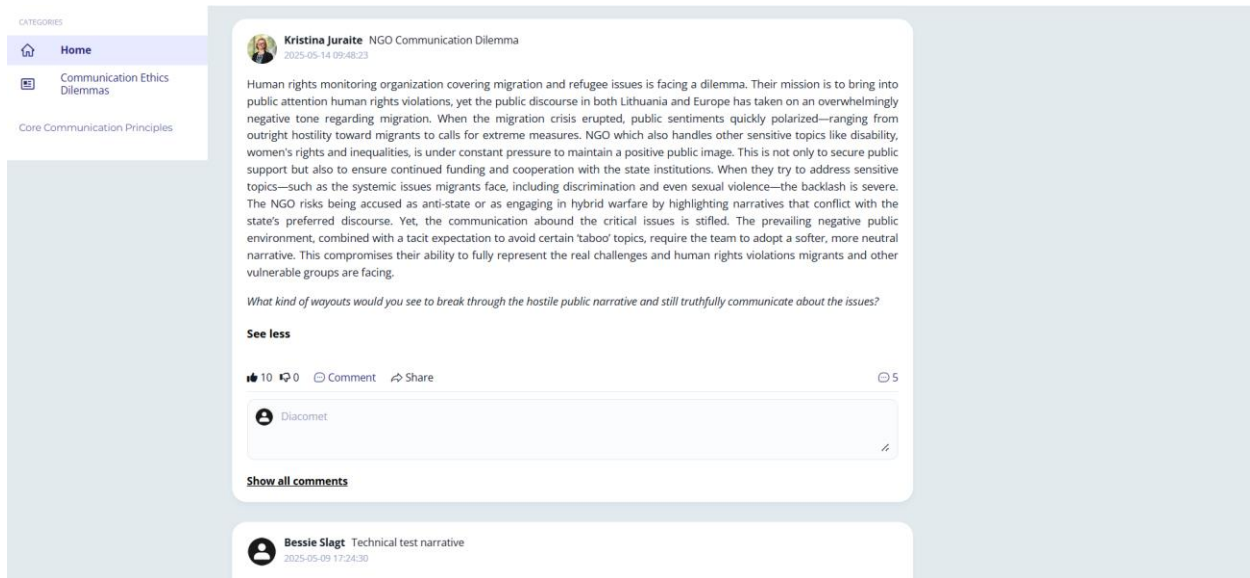


Figure 20: An example of a published ethical dilemma by Vytautas Magnus University

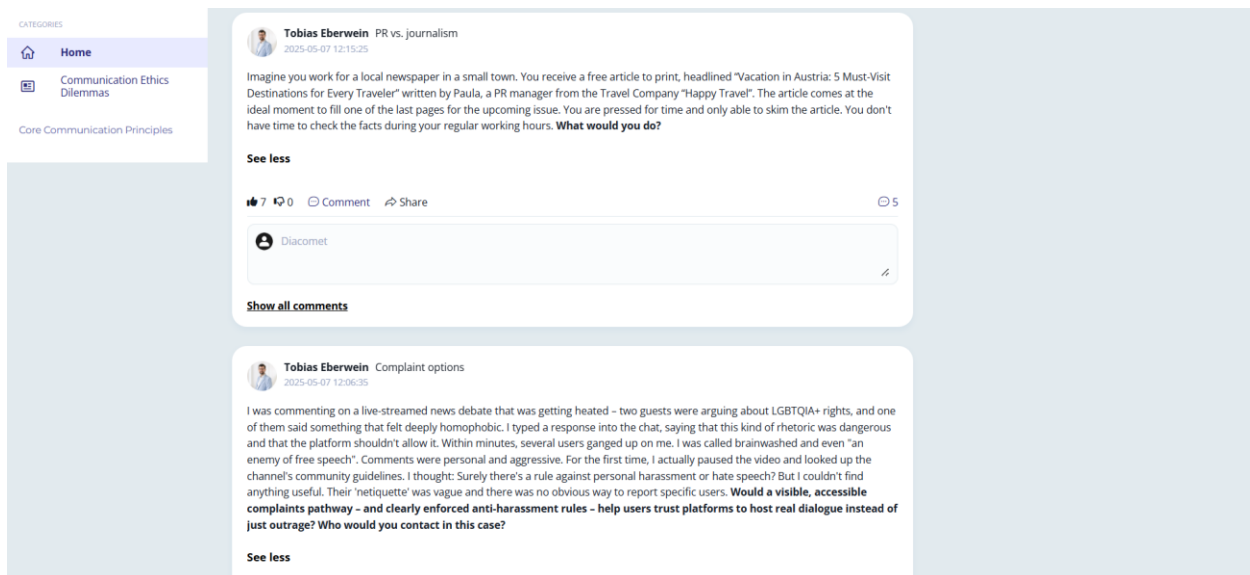


Figure 21: An example of a published ethical dilemma by Austrian Academy of Sciences

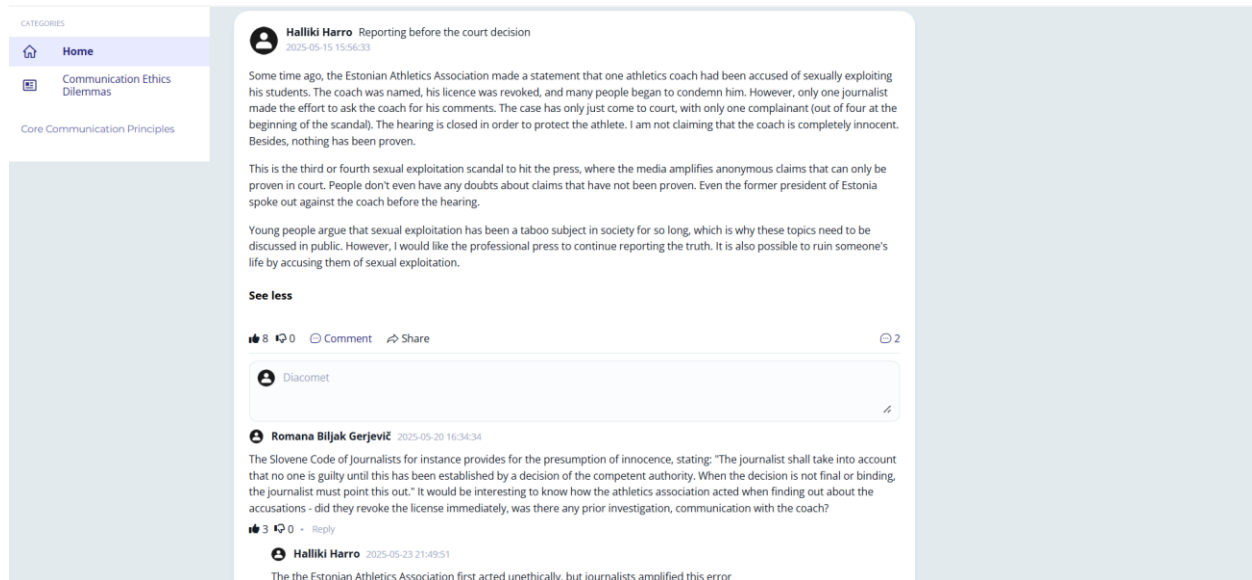


Figure 22: An example of a published ethical dilemma by University of Tartu

Once narratives were posted, participants were asked to explore the forum's features by engaging with other threads—commenting, replying, using the like/dislike function, and navigating between posts. This hands-on participation allowed for comprehensive testing of the platform's usability, from the registration and login process to post creation and content interaction (see Figure 23).

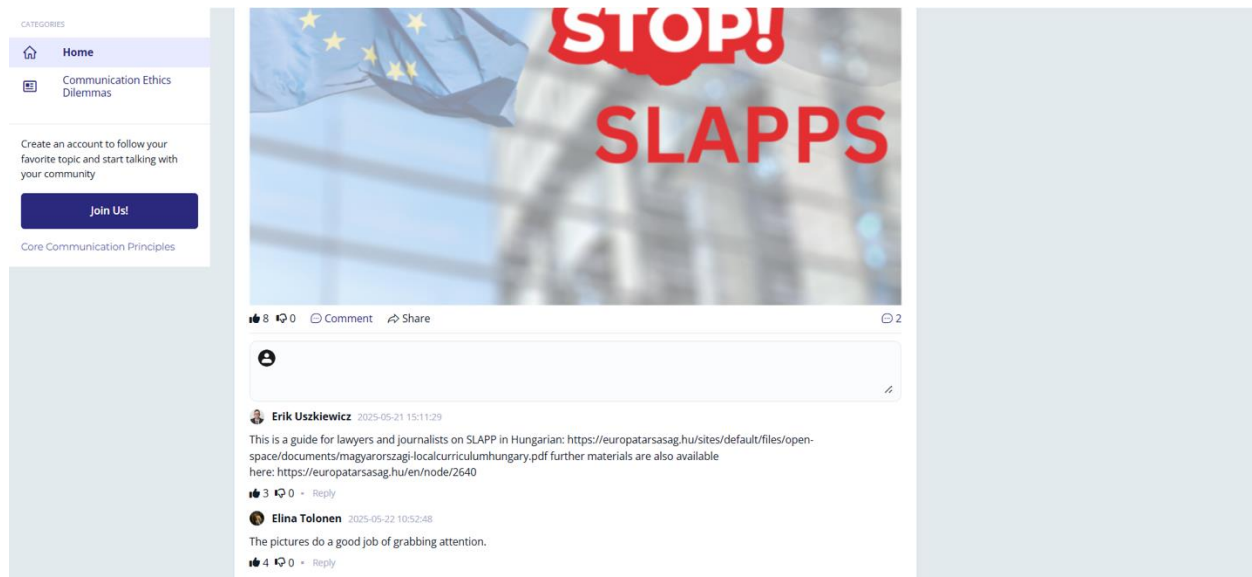


Figure 23: DIACOMET partners testing the forum's features

Feedback on the forum's performance was collected through several channels. Some partners used the built-in star-rating tool on the platform, which allowed them to rate their experience

and leave optional written comments (see Figure 24). Others shared their observations via email, offered reflections during consortium meetings, or posted directly in the forum's comment sections while testing. To ensure follow-up was possible, users were encouraged to provide feedback while logged into their accounts rather than anonymously.

ID	USER NAME	IP ADDRESS	RATING	COMMENT	SUBMITTED AT	ACTIONS
16	Elina Tolonen	185.185.171.27	4.0 (★★★★)	Testing: Are these reviewed to be public? Editing your own posts could be easier. Right now you have to figure out that you need to go to your dashboard—without any clear instructions—and edit the post there. Because most social media platforms put an "Edit" button right next to the post, this felt a bit hard, and I wouldn't have found it without the discussion below. Otherwise, great job!	2025-05-22 11:05	Delete
15	Anonymous User	212.95.8.144	5.0 (★★★★★)	TEST	2025-05-21 13:31	Delete
14	Bessie Slagt	145.89.23.247	5.0 (★★★★★)	I think the technical functionalities of the forum work really well. It is user-friendly and looks clean. I also tried the language function and the translations of the posts into Dutch are very good. One thing I'm wondering about is whether the search functionality also works in the different languages. I tried to look up some posts and used search terms in Dutch, but the posts didn't pop up. As this is one of the few ways to filter in the posts and look for something specific, this might be something to take a look at?	2025-05-21 11:24	Delete
13	Tobias Eberwein	80.80.253.78	5.0 (★★★★★)	Thanks a lot -- everything seems to work fine. No adjustments necessary, as far as I am concerned!	2025-05-20 23:27	Delete
12	Anonymous User	195.176.44.38	5.0 (★★★★★)	Hi again. Many thanks for all the work you've done! As I mentioned in our last meeting, I think it would be useful to include a feature that allows users to recover their password in case they forget it. It would also be great to add French and Italian translations, alongside German. I'd suggest using language codes (e.g., "DE", "FR", "IT") rather than country codes, so that users from German-speaking Switzerland can more easily identify the German option — currently it's listed under "AT" for Austria. Lastly, in the anonymous version, we can only comment the main post, and not the comments of others. I don't know whether this is something we would like to change. Many thanks! Laura, from Switzerland :-)	2025-05-20 16:27	Delete

Figure 24: DIACOMET partners providing feedback using the built-in five-star rating form

This phase emphasized practical, functional testing. Key focus areas included the ease of navigation, the intuitiveness of post and comment features, the clarity of the interface, and the visibility of moderation tools. The diverse and detailed feedback from partners provided a solid foundation for platform refinement and helped ensure that the forum was user-ready ahead of external testing and broader engagement.

5. Feedback and results

The internal testing phase provided valuable insights into the forum's technical performance, usability, and user expectations. Overall, partner feedback confirmed that the platform functioned well and offered a clean, user-friendly interface.

Partners described the forum as intuitive and easy to use, while also offering several constructive suggestions for improvement. These included making the like/dislike button change colour when pressed to indicate interaction, enlarging the input fields for comments, and adding an "Edit" button directly to posts in the main feed for easier access. Additional suggestions included enabling anonymous users to reply to comments (not just main posts), replacing country codes with clearer language codes (e.g., "DE," "FR") in the language selection

menu, and improving main feed navigation by shortening the display of narratives and comments, with expandable options such as “See more” and “Show all comments”. Minor bugs—such as incorrect profile image display, inconsistent language labels, and misdirected buttons—were also reported and addressed. Functional refinements, such as the addition of a password recovery feature and improved dashboard navigation for viewing posts and comments, were implemented promptly in response.

During testing, it was also decided to configure the forum as an open platform. This means that unregistered users can view all content and participate in discussions anonymously. However, only registered users—through a quick and simple registration process—can create new posts. This setup helps prevent inappropriate content while lowering the barrier to participation. Furthermore, post creators automatically assume the role of moderators for their discussions, supporting a decentralized moderation model. This approach encourages broader engagement, as users are more likely to participate in a platform they can explore before committing to registration.

During the testing phase, only one topic—Communication Ethics Dilemmas—was made available to focus on technical validation. As the platform evolves, further thematic categories may be added.

In summary, the internal testing process confirmed the forum’s foundational robustness and generated targeted, actionable feedback that led to meaningful improvements. The platform is now ready for broader deployment as a space for ethical dialogue, offering NGOs, educators, and civil society a dedicated environment to debate and negotiate communication dilemmas. Looking ahead, further testing will continue with external users, more particularly within NGO network starting in June 2025 and in educational institutions, while interface and design enhancements will remain a priority to further strengthen usability and accessibility.

6. Conclusions

The internal testing phase confirmed the platform’s foundational robustness and demonstrated that the DIACOMET forum offers a functional, user-friendly, and ethically grounded environment for dialogic engagement. Building on the technical and usability improvements outlined in Section 5—including enhanced user experience, interaction features, simplified moderation, and multilingual support—the platform has become significantly more accessible, inclusive, and user-friendly.

Looking ahead, further testing will continue with external users, particularly within NGO network and educational institutions. The forum is expected to be piloted with students at partner universities and reintroduced to the NGO network. It was initially presented during an NGO network and DIACOMET event on April 23rd, 2025, and will be followed by a more practical

tutorial on June 17th, 2025, to deepen engagement and demonstrate use cases. A key next step is to clearly define the forum's primary target audience and articulate the value it can offer across different contexts. To ensure meaningful adoption, a well-defined strategy is needed—outlining who the forum is for, why stakeholder groups would use it, and how it will be effectively promoted. Thus, while the consortium will make every effort to foster a vibrant and engaging platform, it recognises that certain challenges—such as sustaining user engagement and ensuring effective outreach—will need to be addressed.

The forum's development will remain guided by the Principles of Good Communication (PGC), supporting ethical, inclusive, and purposeful dialogue. With its core functionality now validated, the platform is ready for broader deployment as a dedicated space for NGOs, educators, and civil society to debate and negotiate communication dilemmas.