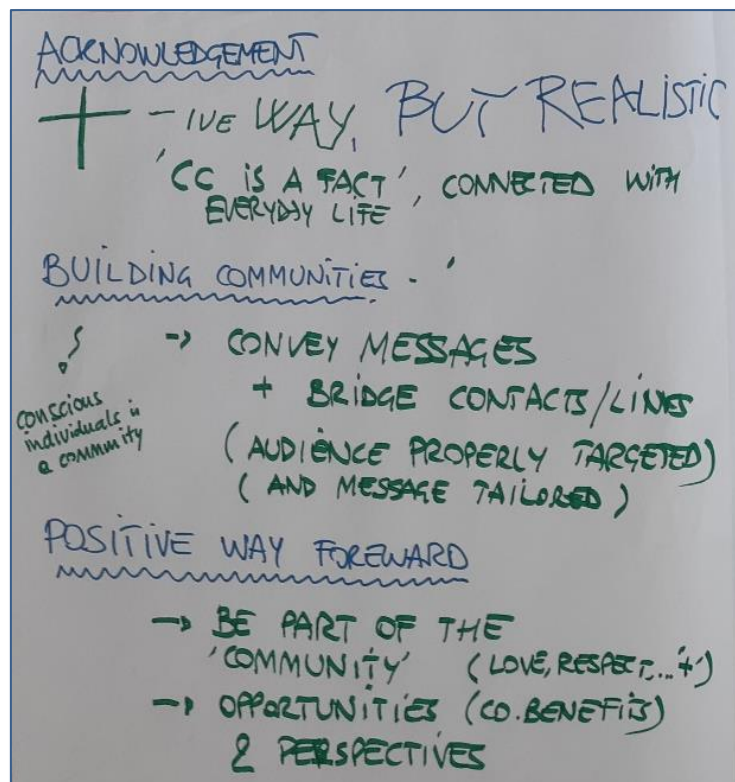


Communicating Climate Change and Global Development

DEAR Support Team,
June 2019



Hosted by [Climate Alliance](#), this workshop involved 20 representatives of four EC-DEAR projects over a period of two days. Participants represented eighteen different CSOs and local authorities based in ten EU Member States. The Hub enabled participants to learn, exchange and discuss **APPROACHES AND ACTIVITIES ON ISSUES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT**.

A practical and highly informative context for discussions was provided by Robin Webster of [Climate Outreach](#), an organisation that focuses on research to improve communications on climate change issues.

ALTHOUGH THE HUB FOCUSED ON CLIMATE CHANGE, MANY OF THE ISSUES AND IDEAS OF THE WORKSHOP ARE ALSO RELEVANT TO COMMUNICATIONS ON OTHER GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES.

The four EC-DEAR projects represented at the Hub were:

- [Change the Power – \(Em\)power to Change](#), a project managed by Climate Alliance (DE) working with local authorities and community initiatives in 11 EU Member States,
- [There isn't a Planet B](#), managed by Fondazione Punto Sud (IT) and involving work in 6 EU Member States,

- [Make ICT Fair](#), managed by Swedwatch (SE) with implementation in 10 EU Member States,
- [Trade Fair, Live Fair](#), organised by Fairtrade International (DE) and involving work in 11 EU Member States.

The Hub in half a page:

To communicate successfully with your chosen audience, you need to:

- understand your audience's values and sense of identity,
- tell a story that builds on/addresses those values and identity,
- use a communicator, trusted by the audience, to tell that story,
- provide examples of actions your audience can relate to and see as a practical steps forward in addressing the issue.

When using visuals to illustrate your communications consider these seven principles:



Source: <http://climatevisuals.org/>

1. Successful communications: considerations

Robin Webster's work – and that of her organisation, Climate Outreach – focusses on providing researched evidence of what works in communications on climate change. On the first day of the Hub, Robin presented key aspects of successful communications on climate change, giving participants various opportunities to reflect on such aspects and relate them to their own work. This and the next section aim to summarise the presentation and questions and issues that were raised by participants in response.¹

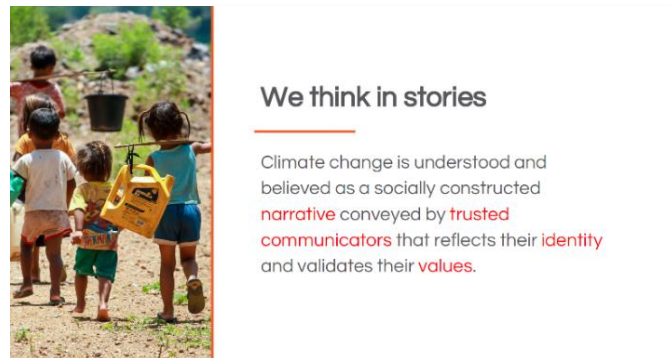
The content and the communicator

Evidence suggests that for communications to work – in raising awareness, developing understanding, in involving people in responding – stories that relate to an audience's values are particularly important. Principally those stories that exemplify (moral or ethical) ideals that the audience holds dear (such as

¹ Robin's presentation is available on-line at <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/dear/news/how-communicate-climate-action-more-effectively>

kindness, beauty, friendship), as opposed to stories that exemplify extrinsic values (such as monetary or other quantitative rewards).

In addition, what works in communications is if the communicator is trusted and reflects the identity and values of the audience.

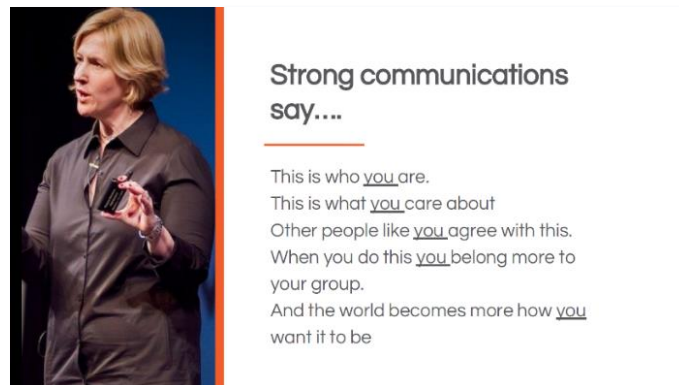


What doesn't work?

Although some people may be persuaded by facts, research suggests that for most people this does not work in developing their emotional let alone their active engagement with an issue. What tends not to work are, for example:

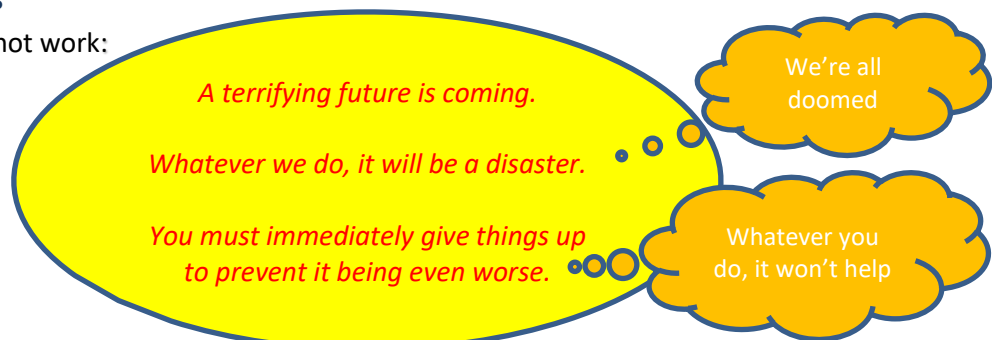
- Stories and messages that focus on the 'far away': "by 2050 this will happen ..." or "the Arctic's permafrost will disappear";
- Stories and messages that are technical, providing lots of facts and figures;
- Stories that blame the audience for what is happening;
- Stories that focus on the disastrous nature of what is happening without offering solutions;
- Stories that focus on financial incentives that respond to the issue.

What works better?



Opposing messages

Doom and gloom do not work:



² All images of power point slides shown in this report are © Robin Webster, Climate Outreach, 2019

A more constructive approach offers ...



The Communicator

Clever words and stories alone, however, are not enough:

- They need to be delivered by someone who is trusted
- and by someone who comes across as authentic.

(So, for instance, having a celebrity voicing the message may not be successful, unless s/he is known for her authentic interest in the issue, rather than as 'a hired voice over'.)

What makes communicators trustworthy for an audience is if they are:

- visible/known,
- similar to the audience (in their values and likes),
- concerned,
- knowledgeable,
- genuine/honest,
- accountable for what they are saying,
- without personal ego or interest,
- someone who might not be expected to be interested in the issue,
- offering a practical and positive response.

Responding to those who are not 'like us'

Positive communication which is effective in engaging audiences is based around shared values, shared identity and a sense of belonging. However, how do you respond to/deal with/address those whose values and sense of identity may not be the same as those of your project?

The greatest influence on attitudes to climate change is political worldview,³ and opinions about climate change appear to be particularly polarised according to a person's political perspective or allegiance.

To date, much of the climate change narrative has been developed by those who are seen and known to come from a liberal-progressive persuasion. The image created by climate change protesters is particularly off-putting for those whose political views are of a more conservative nature, added to which:

- The main climate change communicators, the language and narratives used by liberal-progressives are off-putting (an 'out-group' as far as those of a conservative persuasion are concerned);

³ Hornsey M. et al., 2016, *Meta-analyses of the Determinants and Outcomes of Belief in Climate Change*, 25 polls, 171 studies over 56 nations. Available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/nclimate2943>

- There is no compelling and distinct conservative narrative for accepting and acting on climate change - but there is one for rejecting it;
- Those conservatives who are concerned about climate change often suppress such concerns.

To address concerns and communicate across political boundaries, climate change communication should consider, build on and address the values of the conservative audience:



In responding to those values:

- Avoid 'big claims', instead use personal testimony, be honest & authentic,
- Avoiding waste, keeping things in balance, continuity with the past are all key points to focus on,
- Co-benefits of addressing climate change – health, well-being - are good 'ways in' (but don't call them that!)
- And: climate change doesn't need to be the lead topic: start with the issues that concern your audience (but don't lose the connection with climate change).

KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE,
UNDERSTANDING THEIR VALUES AND WHAT THEY IDENTIFY WITH,
ADDRESSING THOSE VALUES AND IDENTITIES,
PROVIDING POSITIVE STORIES THAT CHANGE IS POSSIBLE,
ARE KEY IN SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATIONS.⁴

2. Creating a response to climate change

Responses to climate change: what works?

Keeping changes in global climates to within Paris agreed boundaries (such as a 1.5°C increase in global temperatures) will necessitate major lifestyle changes and social-economic transformation – particularly in EU societies. This will require public and political willingness. How to achieve such behavioural and political change?

Relatively small and easy steps, such as more re-use and recycling in households, can be helpful and neighbour to neighbour influence in this respect can be effective. However, research suggests that 'behavioural spillover' of this (i.e. one person affecting the behaviour of others and thereby making an appreciable difference to the climate emergency) is limited. It appears to be more effective when bigger steps are taken – such as stopping flying, cutting out the consumption of meat, living car-free.

⁴ Other DEAR Hubs have also given attention to the importance of getting to know your audience and addressing their perspectives and concerns. See, for example, 'Planning and Implementing EU DEAR Projects', 2017, pp 8: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/dear/node/64775>

Such 'bigger' steps not only have more impact on climatic conditions, but also help in building a public belief that a difference can be made. Reportedly, for those who have taken such steps, it also leads to an increase in a sense of 'well-being'.

Governments tend not to run-ahead of public opinion. Therefore, significant policy changes are unlikely to happen until there's a public groundswell of opinion and behaviour in favour of transformation. Advocacy for policy change then needs to go hand-in-hand with efforts to create public behavioural change.

But, changing habitual behaviours/lifestyles and policies is difficult – as is communicating the need for such changes. No one action or approach offers **'THE'** solution. But seven principles seem to be underpinning successful communication, including * showing real people doing real stuff, * focussing on one person telling a story, * illustrating the local impact of changes in climatic conditions, * avoiding the use of protest imagery and instead focussing on consequences for real people (and what they are doing about it).

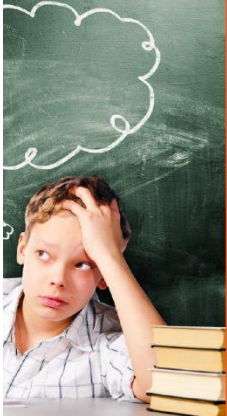


Source: <http://climatevisuals.org/>

Climate change activism: young people as standard bearers?

Evidence suggests that young people are no more standard bearers for climate change related behaviour or policy change than older age groups. Eurobarometer 2015 suggested that although European young people (18-25 year olds) see climate change as a serious problem (more so than older age groups), only 5% were involved in environmental NGOs. In other words, young people show a high level of awareness, but low levels of practical concern and engagement.

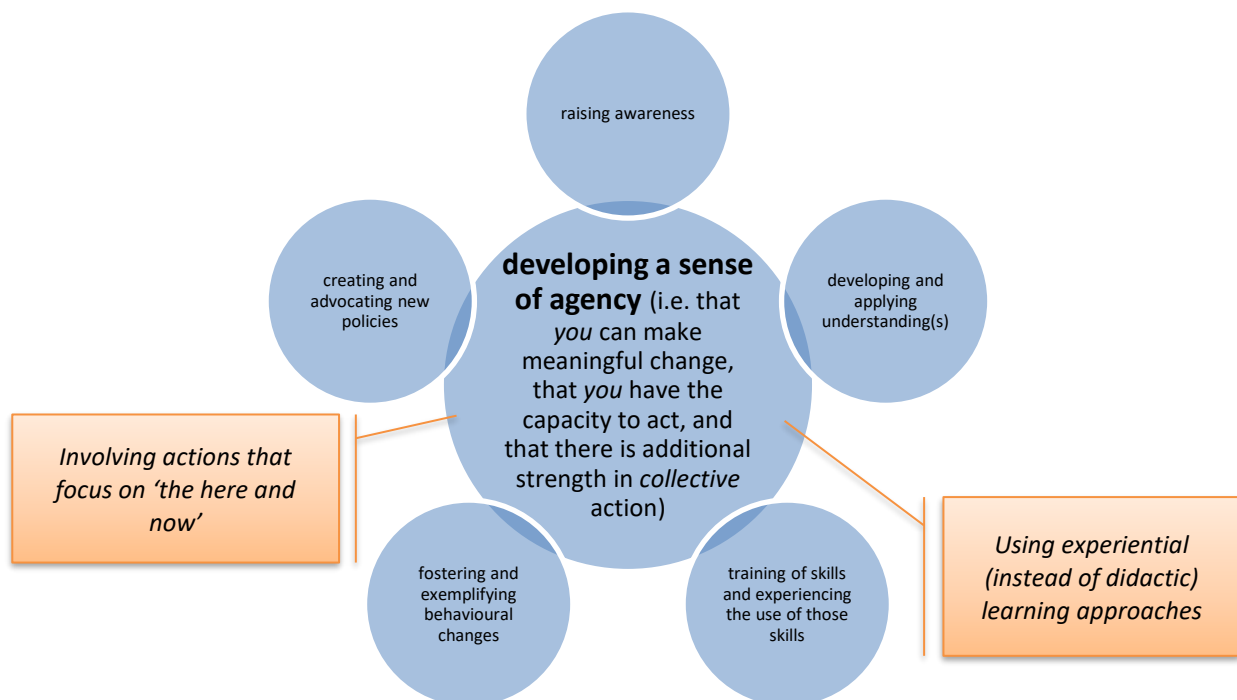
Recent high-profile activities such as 'climate strikes' by school pupils and students, and 'Extinction Rebellion' activities, may change findings, but research to date suggests that young people are not that different from other age groups - except in their level of awareness (albeit not necessarily in their level of understanding) and in their scepticism about mainstream politics.



Are young people's perceptions of climate change different?

- Concern – high, but rarely the 'top priority...
- Distance – happening 'now', but still 'not here' and probably 'not to them'
- Negative emotion/affect – but somewhat less fatalistic?
- Low levels of 'scepticism' – but not necessarily high levels of knowledge
- Government has primary responsibility for climate change

The challenge of engaging young people then may not be that different from the challenge of engaging any age group, i.e. how to engage your audience - through outreach, education, social activity, peer-to-peer contacts – so they can and do 'own' their actions. In engaging young people what gives particular opportunities however is that activism is generally seen as 'normal'.



'Choosing the moment' when different age-groups appear to be perceptible to engagement with the issues is:

- for older generations, for instance when they move into a new phase of life (moving to a new house, having a baby, acquiring a new job),
- for younger generations, e.g. when they leave school and move to university or a vocational college or when they move into the world of work,
- for all generations during a period of political, social or financial disruption.

3. Issues in climate change communications for DEAR projects

Following the presentation by Robin Webster and responses to it, participants discussed a range of other issues and exchanged information about how they addressed or might address those issues.

Localisation vs. 'Pan EU' messaging

What works in one context may not work in another. For example, visuals or activities that encourage people to use public transport instead of the car are unlikely to work and might even be counter-productive in countries or regions where public transport is not available, poorly organised or overcrowded.

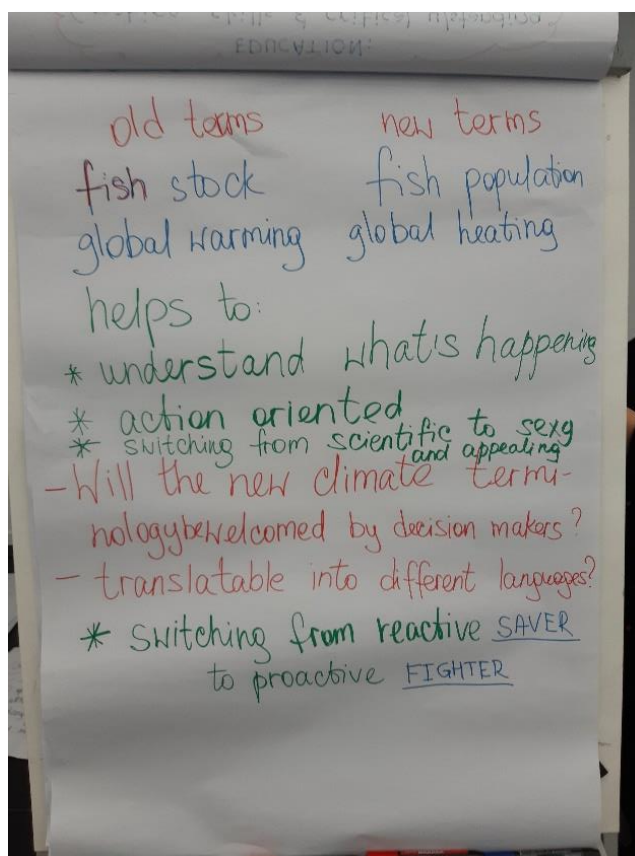
Discussions amongst participants suggested that where 'Pan EU' approaches and messages would work included:

- lobbying, advocacy, campaigning that focuses on 'top line' messages aimed at EU and Member State politicians. For example, to do with support for actions that implement the SDGs in EU and national policies;
- education activities on developing understanding of for instance the SDGs;
- strengthening the EU-wide legal bases for actions to address climate change.

In this context the point was made that SDGs are not a top political priority in the EU or its member states. A focus on e.g. trade relations of the EU and their impact on climate issues might prove to be a better way into highlighting the need to address (the consequences of) climate change.

The exact activities used in getting such messages across might, however, be different to take account of different political, economic, social, value contexts (such as those mentioned in previous sections). Using locally/nationally trusted people to communicate the message(s) would in many cases also be preferable and likely more effective than an internationally renowned person.

The language of 'climate change'



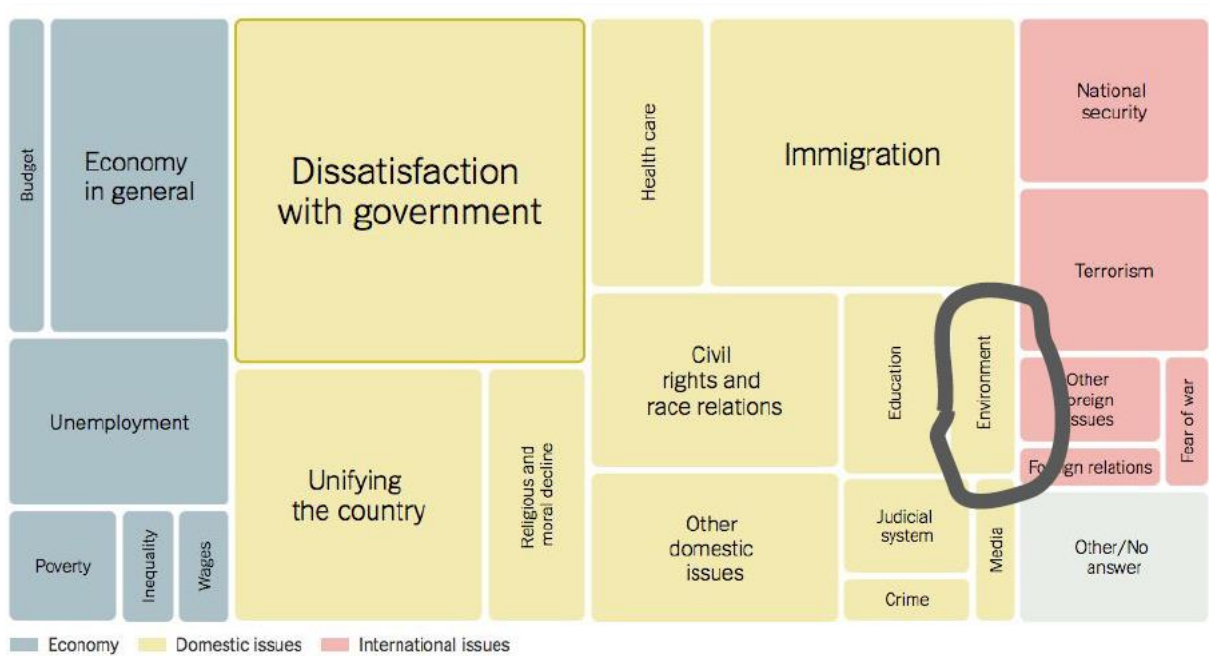
What language and words do we use when discussing ‘climate change’? Participants discussed how language can be ‘stirring things up’ (making the issue seem urgent) or ‘calming things down’.⁵ A term such as ‘climate change’, for instance, is rather passive and gentle while what scientists are describing is a crisis, since for humans and various other species there is an existential threat of the heating of the atmosphere. Some examples of where participants felt new terminologies might be appropriate included the following:

Climate Change (i.e. passive and gentle)	Climate Crisis, Climate Emergency (i.e. better related to scientific findings)
Fish Stock (e.g. as in “the stock of goods held in this warehouse”)	Fish Population (i.e. related to the number)
Global Warming (i.e. a relatively gentle increase in temperature)	Global Heating (i.e. which is what is happening)

Using the revised terminology helps to draw attention to the urgency of the issue. However, it will be different in different languages and will depend to some extent on the political or other audience: for instance, a change from using ‘saving (e.g. the environment)’ to ‘fighting or combating the climate crisis’ might be counterproductive.

From ‘awareness’ to ‘understanding’ and ‘action’

Public concern about issues relating to climate change almost dwarfs into insignificance when set next to other economic, social or political matters. As mentioned in section 2, awareness may be present but unprompted environmental issues feature low on public lists of priority issues, as one of the slides shown by Robin Webster illustrated (admittedly based on US responses, but Eurobarometers and other polls show similar responses from Europeans):



Hub participants discussed how to move on from general awareness of climate change to greater understanding and active engagement with the issues could be developed.

⁵ Also see, for example, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/17/why-the-guardian-is-changing-the-language-it-uses-about-the-environment>

The role of education and curriculum content was seen as particularly important in developing such understanding (and response) amongst young people. Campaigning and advocacy might provide publicly visible actions, but without education any successes are likely to be based on limited public understanding.

Evaluating the effects of projects

This was not discussed in detail at the Hub (but see ideas from previous DEAR Projects about this on C4D/dear⁶). The key suggestions made focussed on:

- the use of before and after polling (amongst the project's direct audience/participants),
- the use of (public and/or project participant) focus groups,
- analysis of changes in the type of public conversations and media coverage about the issue(s) raised by the project.

Using 'out of Europe' examples to engage Europeans

In response to a video about activism in Ecuador, concerning people's (successful) fight for their local environment threatened by mining activity participants mentioned that, from a DEAR perspective, it would be counter-productive to show such a video without giving explicit attention to amongst others:

- that this was a successful action – partly through local action and partly through international support for that action;
- that lessons from such local activism in Ecuador can be learned that are relevant too to e.g. mining or other forms of environmental and community destruction in the EU (deforestation and gold mining in Romania were mentioned in this context);
- developing an understanding of the relationship between human society and eco-systems (particularly but not only through formal education).

⁶ Previous Hubs involving EC DEAR projects that discussed this issue included:

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/dear-programme/documents/dear-programme-cluster-meetings-ec-grant-funded-dear-projects-brussels-18th-21st-april> ('Challenges and opportunities of creating lasting results through DEAR projects') and

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/dear-programme/event/dear-site-cluster-meetingreading-2015> ('Assessing the results of DEAR projects on project participants and audiences')

Appendix: Participant feedback on the Hub and suggestions for future DEAR Project Hubs

After the Hub participants were emailed an on-line survey to gather their opinions about the Hub. Relatively few responses were received, most likely due to problems with the survey site (EU Survey) that was used. In the end 11 responses (out of a possible 20) were received.

Average scores given to various aspects of the Hub were as follows (scores out of 10 maximum):

1. Extent to which participant expectations of the Hub were achieved	8.3
2. Extent to which Hub objectives were achieved	8.3
3. Relevance of the Hub programme to the work of participants	8.4
4. Appropriateness of the methodologies used during the Hub	8.2
5. Quality of input provided by the external expert	8.8
6. Quality of facilitation provided by the DEAR Support Team	9.2
7. Value of EC staff participation in the Hub	9.1
8. Quality of logistics support (travel, accommodation) provided by DST	9.3
9. Assessment of overall success of the Hub	8.7

The presentation by Robin Webster was highlighted as very useful to participants, particularly in respect of:

- development and use of evidence-based communication approaches and messages;
- the different perspectives and responses (of participants) to different examples of communications.

Suggestions and comments that respondents made in respect of open-ended questions included the following:

- Give more attention to project partner collaboration in design and implementation of joint communication efforts;
- “A clearer presentation of each project, what they do, and in particular what kind of support or partnerships or info, etc. they would be interested in. Perhaps kicking off with a formal - but brief - presentation by each project leader. Oh, and get a bell for announcing the end of tea/coffee breaks”;
- More time for knowledge sharing and discussion between participants about their projects and the issues they face;
- Participation by more, and not just one, EC staff members;
- Ensure that the ‘field-trip’ during the Hub relates closely to the main issue of the Hub.