Communication Handbook for the EU Agencies¹

December 2013

¹ As per Commission Roadmap for Agencies, Nr 21. “Develop guidelines for agencies' communication strategies”
Introduction

The European Union agencies play a key role in implementing EU policies and contribute to the EU’s overall visibility and image. For many agencies, external communication is a core task. Only through communication activities can they relay information and research-based evidence on specific issues, trends and challenges which relate to EU policy and its implementation, to inform policy makers and the public. For several agencies, a clear mandate for communication is outlined in their founding regulations. For others, their external communication might be limited to providing organisational information, as all EU bodies are committed to do under the principle of transparency.

Internal communication in the EU agencies, like for any organisation, is a strategic management tool that ensures that staff is informed appropriately and timely, has a sense of belonging, and feels part of a common corporate endeavour. This enables the organisation to act efficiently and to live up to its values within the EU framework.

Given the diverse nature of the agencies and their different communication needs and approaches, this document aims to be a support tool for those working with communication in the EU agencies, by providing guidance and examples of good practices from the agencies. The document is also recommended reading for management and all other staff who want to get an overview of the range of purposes and areas communication can serve in the agencies. It covers the most critical areas of communication, what questions communicators need to ask themselves, gives ideas of actions to take and suggests ways of measuring impact. All agencies need not attempt to undertake all the activities or take a maximal approach to any particular activity outlined in this document. Communication strategies and plans of the agencies have to be in line with their communication mandate and represent a responsible use of available resources.

Failing to plan is planning to fail – this holds exceptionally true for communication in the EU’s complex environment. In this handbook, we will therefore start by looking at how decisions on communication are planned and taken, and how to make sure that the entire organisation stands behind you and your communication team. We will then move on to discuss the importance of branding and reputation and how they can be stirred. Finally, we will look at the main categories of audiences you might cater for, and what the main communication options and tools are at your disposal.

This document is the result of a collaborative effort of the decentralised agencies and DG Communication of the European Commission and forms part of the work undertaken under the Common Approach to EU agencies2.

Each chapter contains a section on what agencies should be considering, and several questions and issues present themselves across multiple areas. These are:

- What is the mandate of the agency in this area?
- What is the overarching objective of your communication activity?
- What are the budget and resource implications?
- Are the workflows and processes in place appropriate?
- Who are the other EU institutional actors that could be involved?
- How are lessons learnt gathered and utilised?
- Can impact be measured in terms of increased awareness and understanding of the messages?

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1. Communication governance

1.1. Why is it important?

The way in which external and internal communication actions are planned and resourced, will determine their effectiveness and hence impact. Too often communication is seen purely as a “support function” which is there to relay messages at the end of a process. However, successful communication can only happen if communication and stakeholder relations are factored in from the outset. This means first and foremost setting the right institutional culture, supported by the right structures and resources. Aligning communication objectives and priorities at EU level and fostering a culture of collaboration among EU institutions and bodies are crucial. Without prejudice to their statutory independence, communication priorities of EU agencies have to be in line with communication priorities of their partner DGs, the European Commission's corporate priorities and inter-institutional priorities of the EU. Communication departments should have a key role in assessing the policy and stakeholder relevance of a project and take the decision on key messages and target audiences as well as types of products and communication channels.

1.2. Questions to ask yourself

Mandate and resources
- What does the agency’s founding regulation say about communication? Have you looked at all communication functions (transparency, dissemination, awareness raising, behaviour shifting) and methods (passive public information, media outreach, campaigns, stakeholder relations etc.) and decided what works best for you?
- What is your agency’s role in communication vis-à-vis the European Commission, other EU institutions and bodies, and Member States?
- What does the agency’s founding regulation say about working with stakeholders? Are the stakeholders clearly defined? Are the structures and processes for working with stakeholders defined in the regulation – and how has the agency taken this on board?
- Are the human and financial resources appropriate for the tasks as defined in the regulation?
- What skills do you have in your team? What is missing? What are the training needs for your staff?

Governance structures
- Is everyone in the organisation on board with the stated objective of the agency's communication activity?
- How are communication priorities defined?
- Does communication sit appropriately in the organisational structure?
- Is the head of communications (or highest ranking communications officer) part of the agency’s management team?
- Is the decision making process clear and accepted by all? Does it allow for swift and coherent action when needed? (e.g. in crisis communication).
- Is communication involved in projects from the beginning?
- Is it clearly defined who can speak on behalf of the agency?

Communication strategy and implementation plans
- Are communication priorities in line with communication priorities of the relevant European Commission DGs, the corporate priorities of the European Commission and the inter-institutional priorities at EU level?
• Is there an overall communication strategy? Who is responsible for it? Is there a clear approval/validation/evaluation process for the communication strategy?
• Do you review your strategy when needed?
• Is the annual work programme or the annual implementation plan linked with the communication strategy, and vice versa? Is communication a well-integrated part of the business planning process?
• Is the communication strategy translated into an annual communication/implementation plan?
• Are the EU institutions, other agencies and other partners informed about the annual communication plan? Do they need to be? Or does it suffice to alert them of key events and activities?

Planning, workflows and evaluation
• When and how are priorities and budgets set?
• Are they decided well in advance to allow proper implementation (public procurement etc.)?
• What are the approval lines for content? How and when are communication actions planned? Is this consistent with the overall objective and does it allow for enough flexibility?
• Do you have all the necessary workflows in place?
• Do your procedures and workflows account for all your foreseen activities? Do your procedures and workflows account for unforeseen events?
• Are communication activities monitored and the results evaluated? Are lessons-learnt taken into account?
• What, if any, communication activities should be outsourced and what should be kept in-house?

1.3. How to go about it?

Governance structures
• There should be a process in place which ensures a shared understanding of the agency’s communication objectives and priorities.
• The head of communication should be ideally part of the agency’s senior management team.
• The experience, seniority and level of responsibility of communication staff should be acknowledged the same way as for other functions in the agency. Online communication (web and social media) require communication expertise and should therefore be within the communication department (rather than IT).
• Make sure the communication staff gets the necessary training – technical and other.
• Internal communication requires specific communication expertise and should therefore be linked with the communication department and work closely with human resources (see Chapter 11).
• Workflows and processes must be in place to ensure that communication is involved in projects from the outset, and not only at delivery stage.

Communication strategy and implementation plans
• There should be a clear validation process for the communication strategy to help ensure organisational buy-in.
• Keep the relevant EU partners (European Commission and relevant EU agencies) and other important stakeholders informed of the communication strategy. Organise joint media outreach activities, campaigns or other communication activities with them if useful/possible.
An example of where such cooperation occurs regularly is the joint EU Agencies – Eurofound, EU-OSHA, Cedefop and ETF collaboration with the European Parliament, which results in an annual seminar on a particular thematic area of shared relevance to all parties. See http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/events/2013/fouragencies/index.htm?utm_source=website_item2&utm_medium=website&utm_campaign=fouragencies20130925.

- Consider revisiting the communication strategy periodically. For example, when changes are made to the founding regulation or when multi-annual plans are developed.
- The communication strategy should be translated into annual communication/implementation plans and integrated into the annual management plans.
- The development of (annual) communication plans integrates all planned communication activities, defines themes, timing/scheduling and priorities. DG Communication’s basic principles on this can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/go_live/promotion/communication_plan/index_en.htm

Planning, workflows and evaluation

- Workflows should be in place regarding all core communication actions (editing and production, speechwriting, articles, web and social media content, publication launches, events, campaigns, crisis communication).
- Key performance indicators should be developed for communication – ideally within an agency-wide evaluation framework. These should not only be quantitative, but also qualitative. (For concrete indicators, see the relevant chapters.)
- In case of outsourcing of work to a contractor through a framework contract of the Commission, contact should be taken up well in time with the DG managing the contract to have all the preparatory legal and organisational steps done in time.

1.4. Ways of measuring what was done

Your assessment needs and methods will very likely vary considerably, depending on your objective, actions and resources. However, some principles hold true, and communication can be measured on three levels:

- Output: such as produced content, its quality, number of visits, shares etc. Indicators or metrics are straightforward to set and quite easy to track. Targets for achieving certain quantitative goals can be set on an annual basis and alert mechanisms can be put in place to indicate when these goals are not being reached. Keep it ambitious, yet realistic.
- Outcome: What is your mark on your audience - shifts in knowledge, opinions, attitudes and behaviour? Spontaneous reactions (e-mails from your target audience, journalist inquiries) are helpful, however also more structured feedback should be sought, for instance via (stakeholder) surveys, questionnaires and focus groups. For high budget, high impact communication campaigns, you can also explore the option of outsourcing evaluation to a specialised contractor.

EXAMPLE
Examples of more qualitative indicators of impact include a useful impact tracking approach from Eurofound, which highlights how it is possible to track the influence of Eurofound’s outputs on different policymakers via the various relevant EU policy documents on an ongoing basis. It is part of the Eurofound Performance Monitoring System (EPMS) as an indicator of ‘impact on the policy debate through the monitoring and analysis of the use of Eurofound’s material and expertise in policy and legislative documents’. A similar analysis of references to Eurofound outputs in relevant scientific journals is carried out on an ongoing basis and also feeds into the corporate performance monitoring system.
• Perception and reputation: Communication will ultimately influence how your agency is perceived by its key stakeholders as well as the public, and, in the wider context, how citizens view the European Union. Long term consistent media monitoring and opinion polls (such as the Eurobarometer) are best suited to paint the bigger picture.
2. Branding and reputation management

2.1. Why is it important?

Every agency has a reputation. A good reputation takes time to develop and creates trust and appreciation amongst your stakeholders. Positive public perception impacts the support to the agency’s activities as well as the acceptance of their services and advice. On the other hand, a bad reputation once gained is difficult to change, and restoring credibility takes time. Your brand defines how you want to be perceived by stakeholders, the media etc. but also impacts internally on the organisational culture.

As a family of EU institutions, our reputations are entwined, one with another. It is in all our interests that we each take our branding and reputation seriously. Although “branding” is a term broadly used in the private sector, it is equally applicable to public sector agencies. How ‘branding’ is referred to internally should be carefully considered.

2.2. Questions to ask yourself

The ideal time to consider the kind of reputation wanted for the agency is before it is created. That almost never happens. But it is never too late.

Some fundamental questions need to be answered.

- What is our reputation now? How do we see ourselves and how do our stakeholders and audiences see us?
- What reputation do we want to have? How do we want to see ourselves and be seen by others?
- What is the vision for the agency, building on the founding regulation? Where do we want to be in ten years’ time?
- In terms of an agency’s relationship with the EU institutions and the Member States, what are the parameters for that vision? Are there constraints that have to be managed?
- What are the organisational values? What are the overriding principles to work by?
- Once a brand identity has been created, how will it be managed and maintained?

2.3. How to go about it

The most crucial factor in a successful project to establish (or renew) a corporate or brand identity is the leadership of the senior management. They need to be involved and to drive the project at every stage and understand that this is not just about logos or the look and feel of the website.

Defining the agency’s identity

- Start by deciding what the fundamental components of your identity are. Keep it short and smart.
- Establishing the brand identity is not only about visuals, but aims first and foremost to influence the ways in which the agency works. It will take time. Plan on a minimum of two years from the start (research and benchmarking) to the finish (a fully accepted, understood and implemented corporate and visual identity).
Find out what your reputation is now and identify the reputation you would like (and need) to have. Ask your own staff as well as key stakeholders and peer organisations.

Identify gaps between your current and desired reputation. Work along the lines of the fundamental components of your identity you already established.

The basics of organisational identity: mission, vision, values

Senior management need to lead on/ agree to the mission, vision and values which will enable the development of a robust reputation. There also needs to be a commitment to consistently put this into action by the senior management.

Do extensive internal communication to explain the project and the new mission, vision and values to all staff. Engage your staff actively, via reflection days, online forums or any other means that suits you.

Consider how the day to day work and processes match up to the mission, vision and values. If there are things that need to change, include them in the annual work plan. The new identity needs to become business as usual.

The agency's logo and visual identity

The name of the agency should express its statute as an official body of the European Union. The Annex to the Joint Statement of the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Commission on decentralised agencies³ states: "To avoid confusion among citizens and stakeholders,

- a standard term shall be used for future agencies, "European Union Agency for...."
- aligning the names of existing agencies should be explored; however the costs this would entail and the already established image of the agency should be taken into account.

The logos of the agencies should convey their statute as an official body of the European Union. This can be best achieved if agencies’ logos become part of the EU institutional brand architecture, incorporating the reproduction of the EU emblem in their logos. This will facilitate easy identification of the agencies as EU bodies. Therefore, the EU emblem should be built into agencies' logos when they are next revised.

EXAMPLE
The current logo of CEDEFOP and EFSA serve as good examples of how to incorporate the EU emblem in the agencies' logos.

![CEDEFOP logo](image)

FRA is currently changing its logo to also include the EU emblem.

When you develop a new visual identity or update the current one, develop visual identity options (at least three) and consult your staff.

• Implement the new visual identity and have a “big bang” launch, internally and externally, to signal the change from the “old agency” to the new one. Try to generate some excitement! But also be prepared for any negative questions that might be posed, such as why the change was needed (including the money spent on it).

Managing identity and reputation

• Designate a “brand manager” within the agency to ensure adherence to the brand (not just to the visual brand!), monitor progress and evaluate the agency’s reputation. For example:
  1. Translate the mission, vision and values into simple messages that staff can link to their own work
  2. Adapt (or develop) your Staff Ethics and Conduct guide accordingly – to steer your staff, ensuring that this is not only a cosmetic exercise
  3. Create a corporate identity toolkit (a series of templates and items supporting the new visual identity, a graphical charter, a writing guide and style book including a reference vocabulary to be continuously used in the agency’s communication to promote the brand and the values that go with it, a database with updated information on the agency’s work that can be used to answer questions, prepare presentations, an image bank, etc.).
  4. Develop an organisational voice and persona.

• Produce a reputation management strategy. Consider how you are going to measure and manage your agency’s reputation on a regular basis. Try to assess how your reputation adds to how the EU is perceived.

• Consider the support of a specialist brand or reputation management consultant (external contractor).

Promoting EU programmes

• Agencies can also play a role in promoting EU programmes and funds. Specific guidance on how to use the EU emblem for the promotion of EU programmes (also by recipients of EU funding) is available at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/services/visual_identity/pdf/use-emblem_en.pdf

2.4. Ways of measuring what was done

Reputations do not stand still, they evolve continually and you need to keep a regular check on yours. There are a number of ways:

  1. Include a reputation check as part of any survey (internal and external) conducted
  2. Request feedback after events (internal and external)
  3. Qualitative media monitoring (including online blogs)
  4. Exit interviews with departing staff members

The feedback on your reputation needs to be given to your senior managers at least once a year so that they are in a position to reflect on any changes that they need to make. This should not exclude the possibility for risks of reputational damage being raised with senior management as and when they happen so they might be addressed.
3. Public Information, relations with citizens and transparency

3.1. Why is it important?

Public information means providing information for the ‘general public’, as opposed to your key stakeholders. They may be well-informed in the subject area, but they are not directly involved in it – as for example, a European policy-maker. The general public, as taxpayer, expects that it should be able to access information about public bodies and the work that they do on their behalf. This can be provided passively through websites for example, and actively in response to requests for information.

Public information has two elements:
- The presentation of agency outputs and information about the agency itself and its functioning.
- Information requests that might come to the agency.

An EU agency’s mandate will shape how and what public information is made available but, inevitably, a degree of public information will always need to be provided. EU agencies work in the public interest and as they are spread throughout the EU, they also facilitate outreach to the EU’s citizens.

3.2. Questions to ask yourself

- What is the agency’s mandate on providing information to the public?
- Is there a formal decision by the management team or the management board on public information? Is that decision periodically reviewed?
- What are your primary audiences, how can you segment them and what are the tools you can use to assess what information they need? (information requests, online metrics etc.).
- Which are the potentially interesting/relevant areas of work that you would like to promote?
- Do you ensure that all information/products/work programme and public administrative documents are accessible, ensuring transparency of the agency’s work?
- How is public information offered? What channels are employed?
- Is there clear ownership of who is responsible for handling public information requests, particularly in a day-to-day sense? Does there need to be?
- Are there clear guidelines, formal or informal, on how to handle public information requests? When potentially sensitive issues arise, how are these handled?
- Are there clear guidelines, formal or informal, on how to handle visits/speaking requests from the general public?
- How easy is it to access the agency with an information request (e.g. generic information email address, etc.)?
- Within the context of agencies’ obligations to provide information to the general public and fulfilling its primary mandate, what degree of resources would be appropriate to devote to public information?
3.3. How to go about it?

Minimum standard to be ensured by all agencies:
- Provide on your website information about mandate and governance structure of the agency. List all your publications, notably the annual report / annual activity report.
- Follow the European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour (ECGAB)\(^4\) – including:
  - Every person may write to the institutions of the Union in one of the languages of the Treaties and must have an answer in the same language.
  - Acknowledging letters or complaints within two weeks of receipt.
  - Make the ECGAB visible to citizens by providing a link to it on the website.
- Create a dedicated page identifying the rules applicable to request for access to documents (and responsible contact person in the agency).
- Make the website pages relating to information on the functioning of the agency and language policy available in all EU languages as well as being able to navigate directly to this from the homepage.

Identifying the need
- Agencies will already have an idea of the type and degree of public information requests they receive. This can range from contact to functional email addresses (such as info@...) to visitor groups. Viewing requests as a whole helps to understand the public’s expectations.
- Agencies should also look to differentiate what members of the general public want to know about and tailor the information to suit its various audiences. One way to do this would be to analyse website traffic although that may not dis-aggregate users; another would be to analyse all public information requests coming to the agency; and feedback requests and surveys can also provide useful insight.
- Always consider rationalising your web resources and constantly scour your online content for superfluous or outdated content and pages.

Engaging the public: social media
- Social media offers a dynamic way to engage people but it is not necessarily suitable for all agencies. It is important to consider that embarking on a social media strategy targeting the general public requires a commitment of resources and time to see the results of such engagement. (See Chapter 7)

Engaging the public: face time
- A further, although less common, way to engage with the public is face-to-face through events in the host country. Many agencies receive requests for visitor groups, often from stakeholders but visits requested by the general public could be prioritised – but only if human resources allow.
- The European Commission representation offices in the Member States organise public facing events on Europe Day, in particular. The agencies should participate as is appropriate and the representations should actively involve the agencies when possible.

Thinking of the public for all outputs
- Some agencies have scientific or technical remits, and consequently their outputs may not be easily understood by the general public. Agencies should consider tailoring an element of the output to a lay audience. Examples include news/web item about an event or executive summary of a report.

• Every agency should produce one short item (leaflet, booklet) about its mandate and work, available at a minimum in English, French, and the seat country language in printed version. Ideally it should also be accessible online in all EU languages.

Staff as ambassadors
• In many agencies, staff is directly involved in contacting stakeholders, and in disseminating knowledge and findings in the field via face-to-face communication, including at conferences, expert seminars and expert meetings – hence acting as “ambassadors”. An agency should develop a repository of tools (such as standard presentations etc.), communicate internally the agency’s (current) key messages very clearly, and offer periodic training in writing and presentation skills.

3.4. Ways of measuring what was done

The tools and technologies used to provide public information can also be used to measure usage. Some of this will be aggregated with the usage of specialist groups, such as policy makers or researchers, but it still can be used as a measurement guide. Website and social media metrics analysis is a rapidly evolving discipline, so agencies should look to learn from each other, and the Commission could offer its support to maximise understanding in this area. The Commission could also share its own experience on media monitoring services with the Agencies to increase efficiency and create a more comprehensive ‘impact’ profile in different areas of work.

Feedback collected face-to-face by participating in public events (like Europe Day) or following visits to the agency should also be collected and centralised in order to plan more efficiently the resources invested, but also in order to help identify the main topics of relevance to the general public.
4. Media relations

4.1. Why is it important?

The media is an important communication channel to decision-makers, stakeholders, and the public. Good media relations can be used to multiply the effect of agency key messages and increase the visibility of the agency as a key information provider, and as a voice in current affairs debates. It can also be used to support the messages of other EU and national authorities in a consistent manner. In a targeted media approach, an agency can select the media it wishes to work with, depending on the messages it wants to communicate and the target group(s) it aims to reach.

Media relations may be proactive – for example, regularly contacting a core group of journalists individually, inviting journalists to events or distributing press releases to many journalists at once. More reactive media relations include responding to enquiries and interview requests from journalists.

Proactive media relations can also be useful in the longer term, as established and trusted relationships can be utilised if and when there is a crisis situation.

4.2. Questions to ask yourself

- Do you have an overall media strategy in place?
- What are your key messages?
- Who do you want to reach?
- How do you want to reach them?
- Which media are read, listened to or watched by your target audiences?
- Which languages are needed for your media communication?
- Which are the most important communication multipliers, for example news agencies, influential publications, specialised media or commentators?
- How do you position yourself in the media landscape of the EU?
- How can your agency complement media communication by other EU bodies and institutions?
- Which hooks can be employed to help align the agencies’ outputs with the media cycle?
- Do you have any information which you can use for pitching local angles, for example data comparing country performance or regional peculiarities?
- Who would be potential partners for pushing common messages? (e.g. NGOs, other EU or national agencies). How can you work together with them?
- Are there budget implications to the plans?
- Are there any stakeholders (including the European Commission) that you should inform in advance/send embargoed information to?
- Who is allowed to speak to the media and in what context? Identify appropriate spokespeople with internal authorisation to speak to the media?
- How is media monitoring done and evaluated? Is it proportional and appropriate?
- Is there regular media training? What level of media training is required for staff?

4.3. How to go about it?

Working with journalists
• Develop and maintain a core network of journalists across Europe covering agency member countries and Brussels correspondents. Include also journalists working for key multipliers outside Europe, such as Associated Press and New York Times. Consider this group of journalists as your ‘key clients’. Aim at maintaining good working relations and support the journalists’ job by providing embargoed material or ad-hoc quotes when needed. Constantly update your databases and insert as much information as possible to profile your media, based on their origin, size, interests etc. Consider pooling information with other EU agencies whilst respecting data protection legislation.

• Develop guidelines with lines of responsibilities and clear deadlines for answering questions from journalists. A journalist usually needs a reply within a couple of hours.

• In case of interview requests, the press office should suggest an appropriate person. It should be clear to all staff who is entitled to speak with the media on the agency’s behalf without prior approval. This could be the agency’s Executive Director, a Head of Unit/Department, the spokesperson, or a staff member with expert knowledge on the topic. The press office should support preparation for the interview by requesting details on interview format and topics, and, when relevant, tentative questions. Brief the interviewee before an interview, either via a written briefing or face-to-face, including other relevant experts if need be.

Guidance and training to staff

• Set up clear guidelines to staff on relations with the media. All media enquiries should be channelled to the press office. If the journalist needs background information, facts or data, the press office should attempt to answer the enquiry with relevant expert input if needed. Try to build a relation based on trust, especially with your ‘primary suspects’. Get on a first-name basis with them.

• Consider setting up, especially for the higher profile outputs, a ‘launch team’, bringing together the main staff engaged in planning communication activities, the project staff and possibly staff from the executive director’s office.

• The communication department should offer media training and refresher courses to all relevant staff and, where applicable to external experts associated with the agency. Specific trainings can be offered ahead of major events. This can be supported by online tools/extranets presenting materials, tips, LTTs, etc.

Preparing the press material

• Develop guidelines and templates for writing press material (press releases and online announcements). These texts are written by the press office, based on the report and in collaboration with the relevant experts. Quotes are approved by the Executive Director, and/or whoever is quoted. To be able to get a document properly checked within the minimum amount of time, good planning and a clear workflow (sequence of checking and sign-off) is needed for these texts.

• Where relevant, the press release or web story may be translated into other languages. The time and resources required to do this need to be factored into the planning process.

• If the messages to be communicated are controversial, prepare an internal ‘defensive’ Q&A document to help the press office answer difficult questions, jointly produced by the press team and experts. This lines to take (LTT) is for internal use only, and can be used to brief the agency Executive Director (and other potential interviewees) before interviews. Where a subject is complex or technical, press officers may produce another kind of FAQ (or memo), which can be published on the website or shared with journalists alongside a press release.
• In some cases the press office prepares a full media package, including an audio or video news release or other multimedia products, quotes, photos, infographics, maps and a Q&A/presentation (memo) for journalists.

Media outreach

• When releasing a story, pitch it to relevant journalists drawn from the core network and send the release and report under embargo before publication (allowing enough time for journalists to develop an article), and offer advance interviews and other supporting materials. Respond to their enquiries or possible interview requests. When relevant, inform institutional partners such as the agency’s network(s) in countries and the spokesperson and communication unit of the relevant European Commission DG. Consider whether it would be relevant to team up with national institutions or Commission Representations in Member States, or other stakeholders.
• Publish the press release or web story on the agency’s website.
• Arrange press conferences for major reports when relevant. Arrange media briefings at agency premises or in Brussels whenever needed. Live streaming or online video conferencing (such as Skype or Google Hangouts) can be used to reach a wider audience.
• Keep your media informed without spamming them. When sending updates or press releases, try to target journalists that are most likely to be interested. Your media profiling tools will come in handy. In addition, press releases may be sent to the list of subscribers which receive email notifications about all agency products (which may also include some journalists). This email should include a link to the story on the website.
• Promote key messages via social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter which are also followed by journalists.
• Respond to media enquiries after the launch and monitor the media to evaluate the effect of the communication efforts. Compile and analyse press clippings; draw lessons learned.
• Consider developing guidelines for “inviting” (paying expenses for) journalists to attend key events.
• Consider organising joint media outreach activities together with other agencies and EU institutions.

4.4. Ways of measuring of what was done

Some free tools such as Google News can be used to get an impression of the online coverage of a report, but to get a more comprehensive picture, it is usually necessary to contract media monitoring tools and services.

A minimum would be an online tool monitoring online media mentions of the agency done by agency staff, external contractors or in collaboration with partners. Monitoring print and audio-visual media provides useful information, but this can be extremely expensive, and for broadcast media – difficult, so cost efficiency needs to be considered.

Agencies already benefit from the Europe Media Monitor service⁵, maintained by the Commission.

Key performance indicators may include the number of news items (articles and broadcasts), media outreach based on coverage in high impact media, and web traffic to the agency website following a media launch. If resources allow, media monitoring can be further elaborated to give insight into

coverage by country, topic and agency activity. Different audience measurements are linked to different types of media. For online and print articles, readership and web traffic information is important. For radio and TV broadcasts, listener and viewer statistics should also be considered - and possibility of shared services amongst Agencies or with the Commission, for this particular area could be considered.

For major agency outputs, it is useful to prepare a monitoring report which includes qualitative elements. Such a report should look at the messages picked up by the media in comparison with the intended message and tone, the effectiveness of the approach chosen by the press office, multipliers increasing web site traffic, social media outcomes and key journalists that could be included in core network(s) in the future. The report should sum up the lessons learned which may be useful for ongoing improvement of the communication efforts. Analysing also the media reporting breakdown by country and relating this information to national debates is also useful in terms of determining future investment in a topic or country.
5. Stakeholder relations

5.1. Why is it important?

The primary stakeholders for agencies can be defined as the EU institutions and the relevant national authorities (as well as their Governing Boards where relevant). Other organisations such as civil society, academia and private sector companies can be termed as secondary stakeholders.

Agencies can reach the right audiences through the effective management of relationships with its stakeholders. The aim of stakeholder relations management is to build a two-way relationship with the people and organisations that have a direct interest in the agency’s success. By working together, you can be informed about their attitudes, decisions, and actions for your mutual benefit. Two-way is important because stakeholders need to gain from the relationship or they will not be sufficiently motivated to cooperate with you. It is, however, not possible to have such two-way relationships with all secondary stakeholders.

The main benefits of managing stakeholder relations are:

- Understanding the views of those who: bring expert knowledge and analysis; are most affected by- or who are influential in the field of activity at an early stage. Not only does this make it more likely that decisions are well informed, but stakeholders are also much more likely to support you if their views have been listened to and taken into account.
- The stakeholders you engage with will become partners who can multiply the information you want to spread and, in return, feed information back.
- Building trust, especially with more critical stakeholders, may prove useful in difficult times. Ensuring understanding of the decisions your agency takes will minimise incorrect or unfounded criticism.
- You can anticipate the reactions and expectations of the key audiences and build that into the plans - either planning consultations or explanations of decisions for example.
- In good stakeholder relations you define common goals and achieve them together.

5.2. Questions to ask yourself

Who are your stakeholders?

- Who are the stakeholders as defined by your founding regulation?
- Who are the most affected by your activity? Who are the most influential in your area of activity? Who would be good allies to achieve impact with your activity?
- Who can help you spread your message?
- Who can inform your actions with experience “from the ground”?
- Who are the relevant critical stakeholders of your work? How do you deal with (open) criticism by stakeholders?

What do you want/need to achieve from working with your stakeholders?

- Where or on what do you need input from your stakeholders? Do you require scientific or technical expertise that can only come from those working within specific sectors or fields of activity?
- What do you need to inform your stakeholders about? What is the best way to inform them?
- How can you build up a functioning network with key partners that has an added value for both sides?
- How can your stakeholders help you disseminate your information?
- What’s in it for your stakeholders?
- How can you work with “critical” stakeholders?
- Are your stakeholders consulted on the Annual Work Programme? The Annual Report?
- Is feedback from consultations taken into account, and how?
- Are all your (key) stakeholders included in evaluations/stakeholder surveys?

How do you want to get in touch with your stakeholders?
- What is the best way to communicate with your stakeholders?
- Are your stakeholders already part of the agency’s structures? Do you need focal points in communicating with stakeholders? Do you need a central coordinator for stakeholder engagement?
- Would your agency benefit from establishing a stakeholder forum or network(s) with which it regularly engages?

What resources (time, money, staff) is your agency prepared to invest? Stakeholder relations are a continuous investment and require constant attention for the best results.

5.3. How to go about it?

European agencies have a purpose which impacts people and organisations across the EU (and in some cases beyond) and we need to consult, involve and engage with stakeholders at the European level. One of the main challenges faced by agencies is how to manage a potentially large number of stakeholders efficiently, often with very few resources at their disposal.

The first step in stakeholder relations management therefore is to identify and prioritise your stakeholders. The founding regulation of an agency may prescribe some selection and prioritisation of stakeholders and assign to them more specific procedural roles which have to be taken into account when planning your engagement activities.

- Define clear and balanced criteria for prioritising stakeholders based on your mandate, their interest and influence on your activity, or their potential usefulness for your work.
- Focus your engagement resources accordingly.
- Remember to adhere to transparency and equal treatment as this will allow you to maintain your neutrality and credibility when engaging with groups representing different interests.
- Ask relevant stakeholders to assist in the dissemination of the agency’s news, such as events or publications, through their networks, websites and newsletters. Organise events with civil society and other stakeholders to discuss key policy developments, and to get their input.
- You could consider involving stakeholders in the preparation of some of your communication actions and products (e.g. newsletters) in order to widen audience and reciprocity of coverage.
- All stakeholders should be informed regularly about the agency’s activities. Consider informing relevant stakeholders ahead of time.
- Consider involving the different stakeholder groups in the planning phase of projects, as well as in the preparation and agenda setting of events.
EXAMPLE

ECHA’s approach to stakeholders:

ECHA has a wide range of varied stakeholders – from companies who need to comply with the chemicals legislation, to NGOs and members of the public who are keen to see hazardous chemicals phased out. ECHA used the following simple grid to prioritise their stakeholders. For example, stakeholders who are very interested and influential for ECHA have become “partners”. ECHA has established a strategy for engagement with stakeholders representing their field of interest on an EU level and interested in closer co-operation with the agency. They can apply to become “accredited stakeholder organisations” on the basis of a transparent procedure announced on the agency’s website: http://echa.europa.eu/about-us/partners-and-networks/stakeholders

These Accredited Stakeholder Organisations contribute with their knowledge and help the agency in reaching out to wider audiences. They are involved in many activities, including public consultations and even in decision-making. More than 70 organisations, representing the EU-level interests of industry, workers, consumers, the civil society, as well as animal rights organisations have become ECHA’s accredited stakeholders. The process is open and the list is constantly growing.
In addition, identify:

- Who can help you in following up on your issue?
- Who can give you intelligent input/information?
- Whose ownership of your work would be useful to build?
- Who can help you spread your information?

**How to develop stakeholder relations**

- Formalise your engagement at an early stage by establishing a stakeholder relations strategy and communicating it both internally and externally. You will need the full commitment of your agency, especially your management – this is crucial when planning engagement activities – this is not simply a communication exercise.
- Assign staff responsible for stakeholder relations, and depending on human resources available, assign staff for different stakeholder groups.
- Do your best to inform and raise understanding of your agency’s mandate and working methods. Although your stakeholders are affected by your field of activity, they might not be aware of your agency’s mandate (and its limitations), working methods and how it wants to achieve its goals.
- Create ownership of your work and involve stakeholders in projects and ways forward from the outset.
- Depending on your mandate, your agency may want to serve as a platform for stakeholders to exchange their experiences, and possibly harvesting good practices for your field of activity.

**How to do effective stakeholder communication**

- Develop your information tools as relevant for your stakeholders (newsletters, including specific targeted newsletters if applicable, website, social media, etc.)
- Target your information on different stakeholders interest/needs.

**EXAMPLE**

FRA has started to prepare, host and harvest meetings increasingly together with its stakeholders, in order to create shared purpose and ownership from the outset, and ensure the meeting outcome will be useful for and owned by everyone. For example for its annual meeting with 100 representatives from National Human Rights Bodies, the meeting topics and agenda were developed jointly by FRA with representatives from key organisations. The meeting itself had room for interaction including several working group sessions. Special care is given to preparation, harvesting of meeting outcomes, and follow up of the meeting.

**5.4. Ways of measuring what was done**

Due to the constantly developing nature of stakeholder relations management, regular collection of feedback is important to ensure that you are meeting stakeholder expectations and achieving your own objectives through your engagement activities. Regular feedback surveys measuring the different projects and means of cooperation can be very helpful in collecting input and results for your performance indicators. Face-to-face interaction is often underestimated but it can in many cases give you a much more authentic and comprehensive feedback than, for example, web-questionnaires.
6. Information campaigns

6.1. Why is it important?

Campaigns bring together multiple activities to influence the knowledge, attitudes and/or behaviour of identified target audience(s). A campaign strategy is developed in order to plan and coordinate the steps involved in the development, implementation and evaluation phases of the campaign.

In the case of EU agencies, initiating an EU wide campaign which reaches large parts of the general population is often difficult due to limitations of budget and human resources. However, an EU agency may be able to provide a platform for, or support to, national or local campaigns by carrying out EU level awareness raising activities. These types of activities may be particularly relevant to EU agencies where there is a political commitment at European level for behaviour change in a certain area that is not being translated effectively at national level across the region, and a modest budget and resources are available. They might also contribute to campaigns initiated by other EU institutions or bodies.

As the products of EU public bodies, any agency campaigns should respect the following conventions:

• Relevant to agency mission and responsibilities;
• Objective and explanatory, not tendentious or polemical;
• Not political or liable to misrepresentation;
• Produced and distributed in a way that is economically, environmentally and socially responsible;
• Justifiable expenditure of public funds;
• Achieve measurable impact.

6.2. Questions to ask yourself

• Do you need a campaign? Would a campaign have any impact on the target audience?
• Is it timely? This is important for making a difference, especially if you are dealing with a date sensitive issue.
• Have there been similar campaigns in the past? How can you build on / learn from those campaigns?
• What do you want to achieve through the campaign? Build awareness? Enhance understanding? Expand your outreach? Further co-operation with other partners?
• Is your campaign realistically conceived to achieve its intended objective?
• Is your agency the best institution to run the campaign? Do you have sufficient credibility and resources for a sustained effort over months or years, possibly in 24 or more languages? Or is perhaps another institution already doing or planning a similar initiative? Do your research.
• Is there a more cost-effective alternative? For example, could you provide support and template materials to support national or local campaigns? Are some countries already running campaigns that could be encouraged to share their experiences and best practice?
• Do you have enough staff and expertise to create and run such a campaign? Would it be more effective to outsource to a contractor either by own tender or by using a Commission framework contract if possible?
6.3. How to go about it?

There are no one-size-fits-all solutions when it comes to campaigns. This chapter will explore some examples of how EU agencies have worked in the area of:

- Pan-European campaigns: communication campaigns that reach out directly to target groups and audiences.
- EU level awareness-raising: maintaining political attention and commitment to an issue at the EU political level in order to support national efforts.
- Support to national campaigns: working directly with partners who are running the national and local campaigns.

**Pan-European campaigns**

In defining the campaign strategy, ask yourself which of the three “A”s should be tackled by the campaign:

- Your target group(s)’ level of Awareness
  - what do they need to know?
- Your target group(s)’ Attitude
  - what do they need to appreciate?
- Your target group(s)’ level of Action
  - what do they need to do?

- Set a measurable objective: The only way to tell whether your campaign has been successful – and to learn from the experience – is to set yourself a measurable objective. Keep your goal fairly specific and realistic, taking into account the resources you have available.
- Identify your target audiences: Focus and segment your audiences as much as possible. If you try to appeal to too broad a cross-section of people, you will waste resources and dilute your message. Existing Eurobarometer data may provide key insights into target audiences. Secondary desk research of these data might be useful to identify target audience segments.
- Different target audiences demand different messages and different media. Ask yourself: Who are the people who can help me achieve my objective? Do you need to identify and work with intermediaries to reach the campaign’s intended beneficiaries? Who has a vested interest in the issue I want to promote and the power and determination to implement my recommendations? If your agency has a stakeholder engagement strategy, use it for the planning of the campaign.
- Formulate a clear/memorable title/motto and simple message(s): Make short, simple and credible message(s) of direct relevance to your audience. Think the way they do, empathize. Reflect on the objective (what?) this time with the question “why”?
- Identify the most suitable channel to reach your target audiences and interact with them: Should you use social media, advertisements, direct mail, posters, seminars, trainings, visits...? What about partnerships – with stakeholders, other agencies or the media?
- Agree a budget. Include a reserve amount for unexpected additional costs.
- Find a good launch date - avoid major holiday periods, and try to link your campaign to a topical event or season to give it greater resonance (International Day of the Environment, European Consumer Day, etc.).
- Inform relevant EU institutions and bodies and find ways of collaboration. Avoid overlaps with their communication activities.

EXAMPLE
ECHA has implemented joint campaigns with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the European Chemical Workers Federation (EMCEF), calling worker representatives to act as ambassadors for the benefits from new chemical laws and alert their employers on their duties to comply. This also proved to be an effective way for reaching out to small and medium sized companies, many of which have been unaware about the REACH regulation and the safety standards required by the new EU chemicals legislation.

The campaign used a simple leaflet explaining both the benefits for workers and the requirements for their employers. It was co-produced and co-branded with the European Trade Unions, translated by ECHA and customized by their national affiliates. This provided the opportunity to tailor the message and to motivate partner organisations for action at local level. The campaign was implemented in partnership with EU-OSHA.

Following the success of the first campaign for the REACH registration deadline in 2010, the trade unions approached ECHA and extended the action for the registration deadline of 2013.

Further details and examples of good practice can be found in EU-OSHA’s campaign toolkit at https://osha.europa.eu/en/campaign-toolkit/

EU level awareness raising campaigns

To achieve maximum value for money, make sure you rely on multipliers, map your stakeholders and engage your partners:

- A day or week can be selected at EU or European level, for example to encourage national campaign coordinators on a specific topic to plan events around a common timing on an annual basis.
- This can be supported by the agency through the planning of EU level promotional activities, such as media activities (press conference and media releases) and social media activities. Several agencies host EU events at the Brussels Press Centre, as this venue is flexible and open to the Brussels press corps and other EU level stakeholders.
- Advocate for your issue to be included on the agenda of the rotating EU Presidency in order to keep the EU level focussed on it. This may include working with the technical experts and ministry in the countries of the upcoming EU Presidencies, and including the issue on the agenda of the relevant council meetings of national ministers.
- Inform relevant EU level stakeholder groups about your plans and activities on a regular basis and ask them for their input. They will often have member associations in all EU Member States as well as a strong lobby at EU level, and therefore be able to help deliver national campaigns as well as awareness-raising at EU level.

EXAMPLE
Since 2008, ECDC has provided support to national and local initiatives promoting prudent use of antibiotics under the umbrella of the European Antibiotic Awareness Day initiative. The agency has a budget of around €150,000 each year in order to develop communications toolkits, including guidance, key messages and template materials, which can be adapted for use at national level. In addition, ECDC runs EU level awareness raising activities to promote the European Antibiotic Awareness Day during the week of 18 November each year. This activity follows an EU Council Recommendation on the prudent use of antimicrobial agents in human medicine in November 2001 which stated that EU Member States should inform the general public of the importance of prudent use of antimicrobial agents. For more information, visit: http://antibiotic.ecdc.europa.eu
Support to national campaigns

Your national campaigns can be stand-alone or act as a follow-up to your EU campaigns:

- Set up an advisory group including agency experts from communication and the technical side, as well as equivalent representatives from five or so countries that have good experience or an urgent need for action, and active professional groups or stakeholder organisations. This group should meet at least twice per year, either remotely or in person.

- Terms of reference for the advisory group are helpful and could include discussing in detail the themes for developing the toolkits. It could also review the guidance for the activity including objectives, target audience, key messages and evaluation methodology.

- Ensure close collaboration with contacts in all the participating countries, for example through presenting the topic and draft messages and materials as part of the agenda at regular network meetings or through a dedicated extranet, and asking for information exchange and feedback.

- Follow a strategic process for the development, delivery and evaluation of the key messages and template materials (see section on EU wide campaigns).

- Ensure that the toolkits are delivered to the participating countries in a timely way on a pre-announced date, so that budgets and resources can be secured for adaptation and roll out. Commit to delivery during a certain month each year on a longer term basis so that annual planning can be achieved. This can be difficult if your agency’s work programme is agreed annually, but may be possible for some priority projects.

- Consider translating some or all of the template messages and materials, as this may encourage uptake at national or local level, and ensure that all files are delivered in formats that are accessible even to the small and less well resourced settings.

- Make your toolkits available on a public website as well as an extranet, so that other interested groups are able to access and deploy them with the correct permissions. However, you may need to take a cautious approach to working with organisations with commercial objectives depending on the sector.

6.4. Ways of measuring what was done

- Monitor and evaluate your campaign at each stage of its implementation. Learn from your experience so you can revise the plan and/or have a greater impact next time round.

- Campaigns should be researched at the outset, and evaluated during and after completion. For example, a report can be prepared to assess the environment and provide insights to inform the choice of topic, as well as the message and materials development process.

- Evaluation may involve pre and post market research, follow-up research of a sample group or a simple count of the number of website visits, downloads or publications distributed.

- It is also important to measure the inputs and the outputs in terms of evaluating the cost-efficiency of the campaign.

- Evaluation of activities in support of national campaigns is more difficult at European level as national and local campaigns are implemented heterogeneously. However, the following approaches may be taken to provide some measure of success or failure feedback:
  - Evaluate the uptake and use of the messages and materials by sending around a survey to all participating Member States and partners;
  - Work with the Commission to include questions as an omnibus to a Eurobarometer which may be repeated every few years, in order to gauge public impact;
  - Plan a training course for national campaign coordinators to raise standards and streamline approaches;
  - Ultimately, develop EU level indicators to measure the impact in terms of knowledge, attitude and behaviour.
7. Online communication / web / social media

7.1. Why is it important?

The Internet and social media have enormous potential for EU agencies. Internet presence provides a cost-effective way to reach your audience, while social media provides a direct channel to engaging them, to collect information, to network or to start collaborative projects and crowdsourcing policy making.

7.2. Questions to ask yourself

Websites

Does the agency have an online communication and/or a social media strategy? Technology moves very fast – how often do you revise your strategy?

Agency’s website:

User-facing:
- What is your agency’s mandate in terms of web communication? Is it a priority? What would be the right profile for your website: corporate, service/product oriented and/or focused on content sharing? A combination of all or of some?
- Is your website content accurate and continuously updated?
- Is there a web strategy and how does it relate to the overall communication strategy? Does it identify goals and target audiences?
- As set out in the ECGAB, are your website pages relating to information on the functioning of the agency and language policy available in all EU languages?
- Have you identified the top (5) tasks your users expect to complete on your website (e.g.: 1. Understand if they qualify for funding. 2. Get updated statistics etc.)
- Have you identified the users of the website, as they may be different to key target audiences?
- Do you cater to the needs of your target audiences? Is your homepage delivering? Is vanity content kept to an acceptable minimum?
- Does your website comply with basic web usability standards? Can users find the information they search for in an intuitive way? Is it nimble enough to be share-friendly?
- Does your website comply with the main accessibility standards, including for persons with disabilities?
- How do you promote your website? What is the cooperation with your partners?
- Is there a version of your website for mobile devices? Do you need one?
- Do you have mechanisms in place where users can provide feedback, or ask questions?
- Do you ensure that your users are aware of their rights with regards to their personal data?
- Are your website contents compliant with intellectual property rights and copyright rules?
- Agencies’ websites should follow the Commission’s guidelines on privacy and data protection and reassure users that cookies are not used in an intrusive way.

Behind the scenes:
- Do you have a content strategy?
- Do you need to rationalise your presence on the web (web rationalisation)? Is your website cleaned-up, professional and achieving the best value for money?
- Do you have clear workflows in place for all website content?
- If you collect personal data from your users for any reason, is it secure?
• Do you collect metrics/web statistics? Do you analyse these and adjust content strategy accordingly?
• Is your idea of what is the most important/relevant content the same as what is visited most often?
• Does your website content management system allow you to make updates quickly and easily?
• What is the best option for developing and maintaining the website: in-house or outsourced, considering that the lifespan of a website is usually greater than 5 years (therefore more than the duration of a development contract) and that statistically the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) of a website is composed by around 20% development and 80% maintenance over this period of time? In case of outsourcing the website's content, have website repatriation risk and relative cost been considered?
• Do you have enough human resources for your online activities? What do you need to outsource?
• Do you know how your website performs in search engines; do you need to do Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) actions?
• Do you actively focus on incorporating keywords in your content? (Necessary for Search Engine Optimisation)
• Do you have in place relevant metadata for tagging web content, also aligned with the terminology of your organisation?
• Do you archive content? Is it easily accessible to users?
• Do you have style guidelines for producing/editing web content? These should be in line with the overall house style.

Creating/adapting content for online/mobile communication

Have you considered other ways of online communication that may be appropriate for some or all of your target audiences? These can include:

• Mobile devices: Apps for smartphones and/or tablets (However: if what an app does can be done in a website, do it in a website. It is cheaper and a lot more people will see the content).
• Interactive and embeddable content:
  o Data visualization
  o Infographics
  o Videos, images, etc.
• Subscription services:
  o Alerts, RSS
  o E-newsletters, etc.

A good example of data visualisation online is Eurofound’s survey mapping tool which provides an interactive and intuitive way of providing all information from the Agency’s three surveys, European Working Conditions Survey, European Quality of Life Survey and European Company Survey. It is available at [http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/smt/index.htm](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/smt/index.htm)

This approach to presenting complex comparative data in a way that allows the user extract and present what they require, has proved to be very popular with both users and researchers and is now being introduced by other Agencies such as FRA. [http://fra.europa.eu/DVS/DVT/lgbt.php](http://fra.europa.eu/DVS/DVT/lgbt.php)

For comprehensive guidance regarding web communication, please refer to the Information Providers Guide⁷ of the European Commission.

Social media

Your agency’s social media

- Is there a social media strategy with clear goals and objectives, and in line with other parts of the communication strategy?
- Is there a ‘minimal’ social media presence required of the agency?
- What social media channels are you using, and what channels are your target audiences using? Do the two match?
- Do you have enough knowledge of social media outlets to choose the ones that best suit your purpose?
- Have you considered other social media channels besides the big names such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn and YouTube?
- Have you considered a blog?
- Have you considered hosting a discussion forum?
- Do you have sufficient resources to properly manage your social media accounts?
- Are you repurposing web content, or are you also creating and/or sharing new content? Why are you posting what you are posting?
- Social media requires quicker responses than other media forms, do you have the relevant workflows to allow the services to be used effectively?
- Do you have processes in place to quickly and effectively respond to criticism on social media?
- Do you encourage users to share the content you post? Do you share other users’ content?
- Do you encourage agency staff to use social media for work purposes? How do you manage what they write?
- Do you encourage engagement and dialogue?
- Have you considered having several thematic or more specific accounts versus one corporate account?
- Keep in mind that social media websites and platforms are fast-changing also in terms of access. A free access website can become a paid service; some platforms can simply disappear and so does all content uploaded onto it.

7.3. How to go about it

Your website:

- A web and social media strategy should identify goals, target audiences, key performance indicators (KPIs), the main content, choice of the social media channels, etc. Involve relevant internal stakeholders (business owners), and possibly also key external stakeholders, in the process. This can be done in-house or outsourced, followed by ‘fine-tuning’.
- Ensure that content on your website has an owner who is responsible for its accuracy and keeping it up to date. Even static content should be checked and refreshed frequently.
- Consider conducting usability and accessibility studies to find out how your website measures against sector standards.
- Position yourself as a user when designing/creating your website – Are paths to content short, clear and easily understandable?
  - Is your website accessible to users with disabilities? Have it tested using screen readers, and by people with various types of disabilities (see http://www.w3.org/WAI/ and http://webaccessibilityguide.com/pwd_and_web.php)
  - Do you actively focus on incorporating keywords in your content? Research what search queries lead to your website.
• Identify which languages you should translate your content into – keep in mind that many internet browsers have automatic translation tools built in.
• Ensure that the website operates well on desktops and laptops, but also on online mobile devices. Similarly it should operate well on different browsers and operating systems.
• If a significant share of the users of your website are visiting it through mobile devices, consider not only the proper display, but also responsive design for your website.
• Properly analyse your website statistics – what trends can be identified year on year? What do they tell you about who the users are? Respond to this information to both meet users needs better but also to maximise the impact of activities.
• Do you have sufficient financial and human resources to implement major changes such as a website redesign or a new content management system? Encourage web partnerships, exchange of links and web information.
• Issue regular web and social media statistics reports and ad-hoc reports on the success of pushed out content and campaigns; as well as agency’s content linked to external events and ‘hot topics’.
• Consider adapting the agency’s content (typically a linear report or presentation) for presentation on web and mobile devices, e.g. breaking down reports, taking out interesting tables, graphs, creating infographics/data visualisation, etc.
• Plan your updates carefully. Conduct dry runs. For critical or large updates, make sure your quality checklists are flawless: retroplan your update times to account for incompressible technical times, make sure that all language versions are updated or link to the 'international version', double-check for dead links etc.

Your social media:
• Due to the wide variety of social media channels and tools, it is key to identify relevant, professional platforms. So far, the most popular social media platforms in the EU have been Twitter, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and blogs. There is no need to be on them all. It is better to be active on fewer channels than inactive on many.
• Don’t be afraid to ask questions of your audiences – social media is a fast, cheap and efficient way of gauging responses to ideas, hearing opinions and learning what your audience wants/expects from you. But be prepared for criticism and know how to respond positively.
  o Make clear to staff that when commenting using social media the distinction between a personal and a professional opinion as a representative of the agency is becoming increasingly blurred.
  o You need a crisis plan for social media – any criticism received on social media is very open/accessible to a large audience. You need to be able to respond quickly and effectively.

Keep a uniform message across all communications and platforms. Never let knowledge go to waste, gradually build your Do's and Don'ts database. Look for good practices (from other EU institutions, outside organisations or citizens) and apply those that suit your needs. Be on the constant lookout for multipliers and synergies. Who are the 'stellar' bloggers/twitter/FB users/etc. in your area of expertise? How can you reach them? What are the other relevant institutional resources and how can you access them?
7.4. Ways of measuring what was done

Because quantitative data is usually readily available for websites and social media, there is a tendency when measuring performance to focus on this. Such data often includes:

- "Traditional" website statistics (page views, visits, downloads, unique visitors)
- Bounce rates, time spent on site, repeat users statistics
- Number of fans/followers/likes on social media
- Number of social media interactions
- Location of audiences
- Comprehensive reports from specialised tools (e.g. Engagor)

However, it is equally important to examine the qualitative aspect of your online communications. This can include:

- Feedback (positive and negative) received on your website and social media. How did you respond to that feedback? Could you use it to improve your website and/or social media for everybody?
- Audience surveys
- Focus groups (online or face-to-face)
- Trends in statistics over time. Due to seasonal variations (e.g. many users being on vacation in the summer months), it is necessary to examine year on year statistics to establish clear trends.
- Quality of social media interactions (shares, retweets, conversations) – not just how many are sharing/retweeting your content, but also who is doing it.
8. Crisis communication

8.1. Why is it important?

Crisis communication is used to defend and protect an organisation’s image and reputation when criticised or challenged in the public eye. This is typically linked to an agency decision, which is proving to be controversial, or accusations of improper conduct by the agency or its staff. It can also apply to the mode of communications employed by an agency when there is an external event or ‘crisis’ which the agency should or is obliged to comment on, although it may be rapidly evolving with a large degree of uncertain facts.

Crisis communication is an element of crisis management and will have a bearing on an organisation’s reputation and operational performance. When done well, it enables the maintenance of or establishes confidence in the agency.

Crisis communication is also essential in order to address and mitigate risks such as arising from a public health threat. This could for instance concern a novel flu affecting human health or a food safety concern (e.g. E. coli O104:H4 outbreak, 2011)
In such instances, timely communication and co-ordinated with all relevant partners is needed to provide information required to protect public health. Close coordination with the Commission and its Spokespersons’ Service is crucial to present a unitary image.

Having a well-defined crisis communication policy is vital to ensure the optimal communication response and to support the agency’s overall goals and business continuity. Much of what is covered below can be applied to both types of crisis communication.

8.2. Questions to ask yourself

- Does the agency have the necessary understanding of crisis communication and its importance for the organisation’s core business?
- How are threats to the agency’s reputation being monitored and assessed? Are internal reviews carried out to identify potential reputational risks?
- Do you have a crisis management as well as a business continuity plan and manual indicating actions to be followed in times of crisis and/or requests for urgent advice from your agency (which require different/accelerated working procedures)?
- Have you defined the measures necessary to be taken in a crisis situation? Have you designated communication staff to join the crisis management team and those with crisis communication roles and responsibilities?
- Is it sustainable to continue day-to-day operations through a crisis?
- Have you defined the necessary target audiences, for particular messages (internal/external, EU actors, Member States, etc.) and the considerations when and how to communicate with them, given different objectives, as well as defined who should contact the different actors?
- Is the crisis communication aligned with other policies (media, social media)?
- Are there mechanisms in place to re-assign resources and staff to support crisis communication?
- Are there mechanisms in place to upgrade activities, e.g. 24/7 availability, depending on the magnitude of the crisis?
- Have plans been tested, e.g. via exercises which could be internal or also be done with European Commission, external stakeholders?
- Consider the internal communication needs during a crisis situation.
8.3. How to go about it?

Plan

- For every communication related strategy and plan (media relations, public information, social media etc.) include a crisis communication component. These components together can form the core of a crisis communication strategy.
- Keep it short and simple - the crisis communication policy/strategy should be a practical tool, which should work in a crisis. It should thus be clear and easy to understand for all.
- Define the hierarchical procedures for decision-making on crisis communication/public affairs in a crisis situation.
- Devise principle guidelines for effectively handling issues and crisis communication. These could include:
  a) defining clear roles and responsibilities for staff involved in crisis communication, including spokespersons, communication advice, media monitoring and analysis, and internal liaison;
  b) familiarising your organisation with the cyclical development of an issue; allocating appropriate resources for early identification and monitoring of information relevant to the emerging issue and organise the response;
  c) communicating in language that relates to and alleviates public anxiety; establishing and building trust about the commitment to control, reduce and contain the risk.

Prepare

- Establish an issues and crisis management process linked to business continuity, with clear responsibilities and timelines, as well as what type of messages you need to convey to staff and to your external audiences.
- Have the necessary tools ready in order to be able to respond quickly and efficiently when needed, such as distribution lists, media monitoring tools, templates.
- Coordinate with relevant European Commission services and, in particular, with the Spokespersons' Service and other EU institutions.
- Set up a procedure for 24/7 staffing, if needed, over time, securing backups to be able to sustain prolonged, intensive coverage. Consider involving Commission representations or European Parliament offices in Member States, and other EU agencies, through cooperation agreements.
- Test your crisis communication scenarios.

Execute

- Be consistent (always use the same message, adapt it to the medium) and 'ubiquitous' (deliver it prominently via all your established channels).
- Vigorously defend your agency when needed and accept responsibility when the situation imposes it.
- If appropriate, build trust-rebuilding mechanisms in your crisis communication: acknowledge the problem, display empathy, issue apologies.

8.4. Ways of measuring what was done

- Regularly assess the availability and readiness of crisis communication tools and templates.
- Response time to journalist, social media and other requests to the agency during a crisis.
• Confidence in the organisation in 3 months, 6 months, a year after the crisis among external stakeholders.
• The extent of continuing media reports or questions in the longer term.
9. Risk communication

9.1. Why is it important?

The goal of risk communication is to assist stakeholders, consumers and the general public in understanding the rationale behind a risk-based decision, so that they may arrive at a balanced judgement that reflects the factual evidence in relation to their own interests and values. As a result, EU risk managers have encouraged the EU agencies to embark upon risk communications – for some agencies this is even in their founding regulations.

Risk communication should not be seen as an attempt to convince or persuade people to share the judgement of the communicator about the level of risks considered acceptable. It is rather the application of communication and social science-based skills to help people make more informed judgments and decisions.

Through effective risk communication one can:
1. Ensure that risk managers are aware of the risk and can take action to mitigate against and/or remove the risk;
2. Ensure that target audiences (and as appropriate the public themselves) are aware of the risks associated with a product / substance / service / and thereby can take action either not to use it or to use/consume it safely;
3. Build public confidence in appropriate risk assessment and management decisions and the associated risk/benefit considerations;
4. Contribute to the public’s understanding of the nature of risk at stake; and
5. Provide fair, accurate, and appropriate information, so that consumers/stakeholders/the general public are able to choose among a variety of options that can meet their own “risk acceptance” criteria.

Risk communication must address the following:
- Provide information to the public on hazards and risks (emphasising the difference between hazards and risks);
- Provide information to the public about the process for performing risk assessments and making risk management decisions, including a description of the various actors and procedures involved in the two separate tasks;
- Organise effective two-way communication;
- Enhance trust and credibility of all actors in the risk assessment and management process;
- Involve stakeholders, including those working on risk communications at the national level, in the process with the aim of resolving diverging views of potential areas of conflict.

To implement this risk communications approach successfully, there are four general guidelines that apply to all risk areas:
- Start with a critical review of your own risk assessment and management performance;
- Design an integrative risk communication programme that ensures a continuous effort to communicate with the most important stakeholders;
- Tailor communication according to the needs of the target audience and not to the needs of the information source;
- Adjust and modify the communication programme in an organised effort to collect feedback and to sense changes in values and preferences;
- Be aware of the approaches to risk communication at international, national and local levels.
9.2. Questions to ask yourself

- What is the risk? Does your agency need to communicate about the risk?
- What are the alternatives to the hazard that is causing the risk?
- Is the risk specific to a point in time, over the longer-term or continuous?
- Who/what is affected?
- Is the impact of the risk high or low?
- What are the levels of consumer exposure to the hazard?
- Is exposure of a population to the risk voluntary or involuntary?
- Is there a history of similar events or legacies?
- What is the current political environment?
- What are the current information resources or campaigns being used?
- What is the current media environment?
- Is the risk highly stigmatised?
- Is there a risk of social amplification?
- How trusting is your intended audience?
- How responsive is your intended audience?
- Do the facts contest consensual science?

9.3. How to go about it

- Make sure you are the most appropriate actor to communicate on the risk.
- Choose your timing. Look at other events and assess possible developments.
- Define your audience and pick the right tools to reach it. Share risk-related information with other communicators who are also likely to be involved in the communication of the risk and coordinate your messages. Contradictory signals are disastrous for credibility.
- Take advantage of your position as experts in the field and add your scientific weight in communicating. Explain your priorities. It will increase your trustworthiness.

9.4. Ways of measuring what was done

- Depending on the objective of the communications, one would seek to assess: awareness and understanding of the messages in order to evaluate overall effectiveness.
- Media monitoring and analysis can be used to assess pick-up of key messages.
- Outreach can be assessed through media monitoring and online/social media statistics.
- Stakeholder feedback (either direct or through ongoing target audience research) is important to gauge overall effectiveness of communications.

EXAMPLE

GUIDELINES: When Food Is Cooking Up a Storm – Proven Recipes for Risk Communications

The objective of these guidelines - a joint initiative of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and national food safety organisations in Europe - is to provide a framework to assist decision-making about appropriate communication approaches in a wide variety of situations that can occur when assessing and communicating on risks related to food safety in Europe. The aim is to provide a common framework applicable for developing communication approaches on risk across public health authorities in different countries.

10. Translation practice / multilingualism

10.1. Why is it important?

An EU agency, working on behalf of the citizens of the EU, is part of a family which promotes multilingualism and cultural diversity. It is important as an agency to take a view on the need and desirability of providing information in different languages. Depending on your agency’s remit and available resources, reaching out to people in all or a selection of official EU languages may be essential for you to achieve your objectives. Good multilingual communication contributes to your image and reputation.

10.2. Questions to ask yourself

- What does the agency’s founding regulation say about multilingual communication/translation? Our sister agency, the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union (CdT), was set up precisely to offer translation and other language services to EU agencies (your founding regulation may foresee a mandatory clause to use its services). For effective cooperation and common understanding of mutual needs and expectations, it is important to build up and maintain a good working relationship with CdT.
- Has your agency’s governing/management board adopted a decision on the agency’s multilingual policy?
- Which are the working languages of your key target audiences (general public, companies, Member States, social partners, health professionals, etc.)?
- Would it be helpful to provide information in the official language(s) of your host nation?
- Do you have the financial / human resources for handling translations? Is the budget for translation proportionate with the rest of your communication activities or indeed the overall budget for the agency?
- What kind of multilingual material and in which format would be useful for your audiences (leaflets, web content, guidance, practical guides, manuals, reports, decisions, IT-tools)?
- Is the material you are producing stable or constantly changing? For example, it is most probably not worth translating material which gets quickly outdated (for instance, news or web content which is frequently updated).

You may choose to translate, for example, the following types of general material which could be of interest to wider audiences:
- leaflets
- strategic documents: activity reports/work programmes/executive summaries
- press releases
- general web content which is stable (for instance, stable for 6 months)
- practical guides/case studies
- documents relevant for small companies (SMEs)
- What are the risks to your reputation if you a) translate nothing; b) translate into a limited number of languages; c) the quality of translations is not assured?
- How important is the accuracy for you in the translated material? If it is a key factor, it could be worth thinking how to set up a quality control system (i.e. validating the accuracy of translations) involving the Member States or other stakeholders, internal staff etc.; however, human and financial resource considerations need to be kept in mind.
- Can you consider a demand driven approach to translation?
10.3. How to go about it

- Assess the feasibility/necessity of multilingual communication in the agency depending on the agencies remit, objectives and resources and establish minimum standards.
- Follow the ECGAB\(^8\) (Code of Good Administrative Behaviour)
  - Make the website pages relating to information on the functioning and language policy available in all EU languages.
  - Every person may write to the institutions of the Union in one of the languages of the Treaties and must have an answer in the same language.
- Prepare your translation strategy in line with your founding regulation, management/governing board decisions, and your overall communication strategy. Consider making it publicly available on your website. It is a good idea to be as clear as you can on the scope (and limitations) of translations, your translation priorities and the criteria you use to decide what to translate and what not. Be clear too on the languages you have chosen to translate into and why.
- The strategy needs to be implemented agency-wide. Ensure that in-house staff are aware of your translation strategy and what kind of material they should translate.
- Think quality:
  - Ensure that your materials are written simply and clearly – the more understandable the original text is, the better the translation will be. For advice, please refer to the Commission’s web page dedicated to “Translating EU texts made easier — links to resources”\(^9\) and to the Translation Centre’s brochure “Writing for translation”\(^10\).
  - Consider having your documents drafted by non-native speakers edited by native speakers before publication/translation.
  - Keep in mind that terminology is a key to translations – think about how to keep it consistent (develop glossaries, online terminology databases, use IATE\(^{11}\) etc.); cooperate with agencies/institutions sharing the same terminology and try to build common terminological resources to ensure consistency.
  - Provide relevant instructions and reference material with your translation requests in order to facilitate the translator’s work.
  - Make sure to factor in enough time for translation/revision to avoid hurried last-minute jobs, which are likely to impair quality. Keep in mind that the time lag is considerable when translating full reports into other languages.
  - Provide regular translation feedback. Consider the official translation feedback procedure established by CdT.
- Make sure that all translations (especially web sites and press material) appear simultaneously.

10.4. Ways of measuring what was done

The impact of your multilingual practice can be assessed in different ways, for instance:

- By carrying out user satisfaction surveys (web surveys, stakeholder surveys, surveys on publications etc.).
- By collecting statistics on the downloads of multilingual material.
- By collecting feedback from events, meetings, briefings etc. (for printed material, how many copies have been distributed).
- By monitoring how often the media in the various EU countries and abroad quote news and publications made available in their languages.

\(^11\) IATE – InterActive Terminology for Europe [www.iate.europa.eu](http://www.iate.europa.eu)
• Regarding translation quality, by analysing feedback received from staff/stakeholders/the general public with CdT.
11. Internal communication

11.1. Why is it important?

Internal communication is the sharing of information between members of the agency. It is considered a strategic management function that aims at improving efficiency, transparency and reputation, and can play an important role in staff motivation and engagement.

- **Efficiency**: staff can be more effective and efficient if they can easily find information that is relevant for the work, and if they share information to improve collaboration within the organisation.
- **Transparency** is the key to building trust by an open two-way communication, particularly important in times of change or crisis. Internal communication supports management in delivering timely, coherent and clear communication.
- **Reputation**: effective internal communication facilitates consistency in the organisation’s messages thus strengthening its reputation and supporting the development of the organisational culture.
- **Motivation and engagement** concerns the level of staff motivation, belonging and commitment. High levels of engagement lead to staff taking responsibility, delivering quality work and coming up with new solutions. Internal communication can help to empower staff and supports the development of the organisational culture.

Depending on the resources and structure of the agency, internal communication may be coordinated and facilitated by dedicated staff, or staff with other related but different responsibilities. Communication and human resources staff are best equipped for facilitating internal communication. But everyone in the agency is responsible for contributing to and for the success of internal communication.

11.2. Questions to ask yourself

Staff working on internal communication provide support throughout the institution and manage and develop corporate internal communication messages, tools and channels. They also facilitate a rich internal communication environment more generally. To do so, the internal communication staff need to be connected to the pulse of the organisation in order to gain support from internal key stakeholders. They should therefore ask themselves the following questions:

- What are the agency’s goals and values?
- What are the internal communication goals and values, and how do they support organisational goals and values?
- How far does the agency need to develop a dedicated internal communication function? (Internal communication is particularly important when the agency is large or when staff is situated in different locations, work from home or tend to work in silos.)
- Who is responsible for internal communication in the agency? Most commonly this is the communication department or the human resources department. Irrespective of its location, the internal communication staff must have clearly allocated and sufficient resources, and work closely with both departments. It is important that the internal communication task is done by staff with sufficient communication expertise.
- Which departments or teams are the key strategic partners? Does the internal communication staff have their support? How can that support be gained? This support is needed for a good internal communication function.
• Do the internal communication staff and internal key stakeholders have the same understanding of what internal communication is or should be? Where do the views intersect, where do they diverge and why does that happen?

• How will the internal communication staff and their internal stakeholders involve each other in communication and operational decisions respectively?

• What are tools and channels that are in place to achieve internal communication goals? What tools and channels can be added to the arsenal? It is best to make a communication matrix to distinguish all messages, channels and tools per target audience.

• Is the target audience a homogenous or heterogeneous internal audience? Do different internal audiences require dedicated messages, channels and tools? It is crucial to identify, per target group, these messages that would best achieve the goals set out. In addition, the activities and key messages of internal and external communication need to be aligned so as to produce coherent in-house and external speech.

• Who in the agency is managing the channels and tools used for the internal communication? Do the goals require any changes in that? It can be important to evaluate if it is for the internal communication staff to produce and manage all communication material, or to what extent it should support and advise operational departments, or middle or senior managers, to conduct their own internal communication?

11.3. How to go about it

• Prior to deciding on the goals, strategies and channels, existing internal communication must be evaluated. For instance, a SWOT (strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, threats) analysis can be used for this. Once there is a clear understanding of the current state, an internal communication strategy defining the aforementioned elements can be created and the respective policies can be derived from it.

• A good intermediate step before establishing the internal communication strategy is the creation of a communication matrix that lists, per target audience, all possible messages, channels, tools, timing, indicators and responsible actors (list can be shortened or extended). It gives a full overview of the ideal situation, but will be reduced in the strategy and the plans unless very important resources are dedicated to the internal communication function.

• Internal communication channels used for implementing the strategy should be chosen according to their intended purpose:
  - One-way communication channels support top-down communication and provide valuable information that can be referred to repeatedly, e.g. intranets (when used as a source of static information), video, bulletin boards, flyers, posters, (animated) TV screens, (electronic) newsletters, handbooks and guidelines.
  - Two-way communication channels are a space for top-down, bottom-up and side-by-side interaction, e.g. face-to-face communication, staff meetings, social events, intranets (when used as a web 2.0 tool), workshops, open doors, emails, blogs and social media.

• Internal communication should use a mix of the two types of channels. Larger amounts of information can be disseminated via one-way communication channels, but the provision of feedback mechanisms is important for management to gain valuable insights from its employees. Two-way communication channels are ideal to share and exchange information and to build on the transparency, the efficiency, the motivation and the agency’s culture. The role of managers as internal communication mediators and increased use of two-way communication channels can help in major organisational changes or crises.

• Collaborative platforms are important to help foster internal discussions on key topics of interest. Internal communication can play a key role in helping to organise discussions, ensuring that appropriate experts are involved.
• An invaluable tool for creating and exchanging best practices in internal communication is to have regular exchanges with peers from outside the organisation. Exchanges via the Internal Communication Network at the European Commission, and the Agencies’ network of contact points of internal communicators as well as Heads of Communication Network can be very useful.

• Building a similar, but internal, network of contact people from different units or departments will keep the internal communication staff updated on each respective department’s needs and expectations.

• It is crucial for the internal communication staff to have direct access to the executive management in order to create support for the internal communication actions.

• Finally, clear guidelines for employees and management describing how they can go about their daily internal communication related tasks are very useful. They should include, amongst others, information about when it is important to communicate, how to formulate audience-specific key messages, what channels to use, and how to facilitate feedback.

11.4. Ways of measuring what was done

Measuring the impact and success of internal communication is necessary in order to guide future strategies. Measurement features should be built into internal communication at the planning stage, and specific and measurable key dimensions defined. Outputs, out-takes and outcomes can be used to establish metrics (via indicators).

The core objectives and priority areas of internal communication in the organisation are the starting point of the evaluation (example core objectives: staff is well informed, has a sense of belonging and feels part of a common corporate endeavour [beware of putting all the responsibility for staff engagement on the IC function]). Specific objectives can also be formulated based on desired outcomes. (E.g. x% of staff should say they are well informed about a certain initiative as a result of an internal communication action.)

• Outputs: the physical/electronic products coming out of the internal communication staff offices. These can be monitored by resources used (financial, IT, HR), frequency of publishing, number of page views.

• Out-takes: what the agency’s internal audiences take from the internal communication messages they are exposed to, such as the messages they remember, a particular understanding of an issue, etc. The first step is the selection of the major issues that came up throughout the year. The second step is to choose the key messages that had to be transmitted, and the third step is to measure the particular way each issue was understood by the audience.

• Outcomes: the changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and habits as a result of internal communication outputs. They can be quantified so as to show the change or lack of change, e.g. total phone calls/emails about a training session should decrease by 50% after a news item on a specific subject is published.

More in-depth evaluations can provide complementary hard and soft measures and should employ a mix of instruments, e.g. surveys, interviews and focus groups. Annual evaluations can look both into the work of the internal communication staff (e.g. evaluation of tools and channels) and into internal communication as it is/was experienced in the agency (e.g. managers’ role and overall satisfaction).