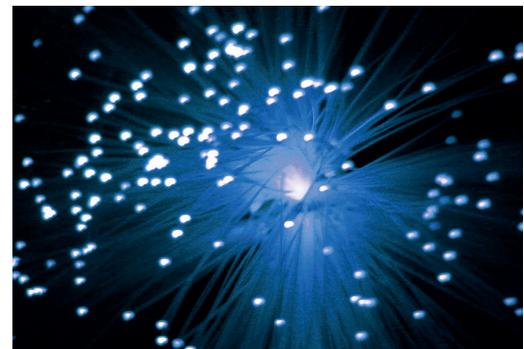


Communication Framework 2014–2020



Introduction

This Communication Framework supports the implementation of the Agency's Multiannual Work Programme 2014–2020 (MAWP) (EEA, 2014a). As resources are currently constrained, it is more important than ever to prioritise communication activities. The MAWP is the EEA's response to the priorities set out in the European Union's (EU) 7th Environment Action Plan (EAP), which has the long-term vision for Europeans to 'live well, within the limits of the planet'.

In line with the MAWP and contributing to its implementation, the communication framework aims to refine the content and improve the accessibility, availability and use of environmental information provided by the EEA. This, in turn, will improve the knowledge and evidence base for EU environmental policy, and help to promote transitions to a sustainable European society.

Furthermore, the implementation of this framework is an important contribution to achieving the key goals of the MAWP, positioning the Agency as:

- the prime source of knowledge at European level informing the implementation of European and national environment and climate policies;
- a leading knowledge centre supporting long-term transition challenges and objectives;
- the lead organisation at European level facilitating knowledge-sharing and capacity building in the field of environment and climate change.

A solid base to build on: The EEA has a unique role as an independent actor, linking policy and science, the EU and the Member States. According to the latest external evaluation, our stakeholders consider the Agency as 'the most effective and efficient solution to providing credible information on the state of the European environment'.

Source: COWI, 2013.

Communication objectives

The Agency is committed to inform and engage in dialogue with users of EEA outputs. The MAWP outlines key objectives of EEA communication:

- to ensure that EEA messages are heard and understood by target audience groups;
- to help inform environment and climate policies and broader discussions on transitions to the long-term vision for 2050 as laid down in the 7th EAP and other policy frameworks;
- to be a proactive, principal source of reliable and timely information on environment and climate change in

Europe, contributing to attitudinal and behavioural change;

- to ensure stronger engagement, continuous dialogue, and effective interaction with audiences in order to achieve adequate responses to societal changes;
- to identify and exploit synergies with the communication activities of the European Union institutions and EEA member countries; and
- to monitor the effectiveness of EEA communication and other outreach activities.

Key narratives

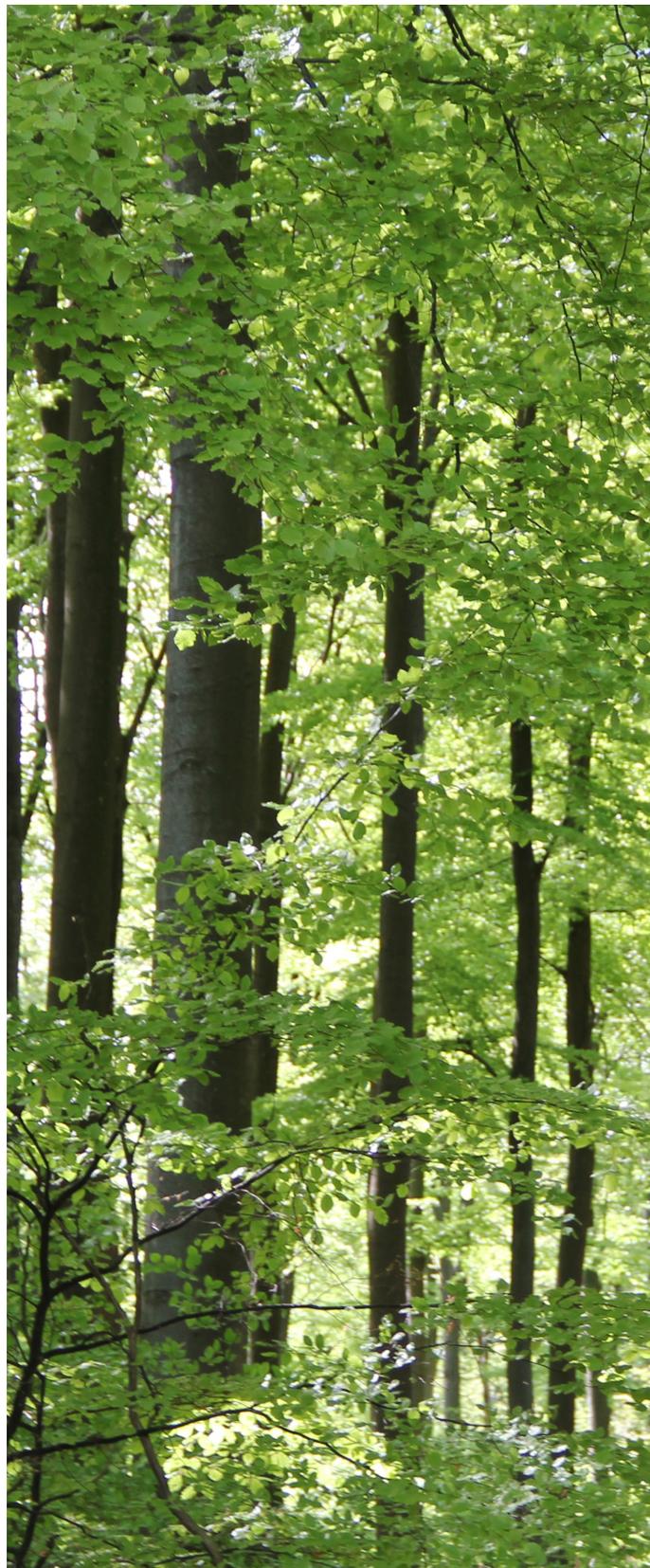
The Agency's communication is based on quality-assured and quality-controlled environmental data and information. The challenge of communicating often complex and inter-linked environmental issues can be tackled by framing information within the context of overarching key narratives:

- **The environment and climate are at the core of all societal and economic issues.** We all rely on resources or services provided by the natural world. By integrating environmental and climate concerns into a wider range of areas of policy, it is possible to find solutions that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.
- **There is an urgent need to improve ecological resilience.** Many aspects of the natural world are now changing at a faster rate than modern society has ever experienced. We must ensure that our actions avoid lock-in into unsustainable systems of consumption and production and instead open pathways to the sustainable use of resources and ecosystem services.
- **Improving the state of the environment requires better implementation of policies.** To meet this goal, we need even better knowledge on the state of the environment, measures taken and the expected effects of policies. The EEA is well-placed to provide this information.
- **To resolve environmental problems, we need a society-wide transition.** As described in the 7th EAP, we need to shift to a lifestyle that respects the limits of our planet. In Europe, this means a systemic shift involving all economic sectors.
- **Solutions are achieved at local, regional and global levels.** Through creativity, networking and action, local and regional frontrunners can improve quality of life and help address many environmental challenges. At the same time, governments and the international community need to step up their commitment and efforts in combatting climate change and other global issues.

We will specify these broad narratives at the level of individual environmental themes and outputs.

Our mission: 'The EEA aims to support sustainable development and to help achieve significant and measurable improvement in Europe's environment through the provision of timely, targeted, relevant and reliable information to policymaking agents and the public'.

Source: EEA mission statement.



Institutional stakeholders and key audiences

The MAWP commits the EEA to provide information and support to the EU policy agenda. For this objective to be realised, it is essential that we target our communication effectively, and that we involve our stakeholders to both create and share the knowledge needed for better policy implementation and a transition to long-term sustainability. The Eionet network is of central importance to the work of the EEA and an integral partner in communicating within the member countries.

- **Policymakers at European and national levels are our principal stakeholders.** We will prioritise policy-relevant communication with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the revolving European Union Presidencies and relevant policy makers in member countries' ministries and parliaments.
- **Key audiences can endorse, add value to, and disseminate the EEA message.** We will look at engaging broader interest groups within the policy sphere, such as NGOs, scientific and academic communities, business organisations, consultancies and think tanks.

Extensive media coverage in a country can raise the importance of an environmental problem and support NGOs and civil society in pushing for action. This happened in several countries in 2013, the Year of Air, due to the coverage of the EEA air quality report (EEA, 2013).

Source: EEA, 2014b.

- **More efforts are needed to engage policymakers and interest groups who are not engaged with environmental issues.** Broadening the range of our audiences to those outside the traditional environmental arena will allow us to engage with different sectors and to widen the range and depth of our messaging.
- **The public is an important audience for the EEA.** This is in line with efforts to support policy implementation and achieving a broader understanding of environmental and climate change issues. Policy is responsive to wider societal debate, and acceptance of environmental policies rests on broad societal consent. In addition to public communications via the channels outlined below, we will collaborate with the EU and the EEA member countries and wider actors to develop tools and networks to enable them to inform the public about the state of the environment.

These are general audiences for EEA communication. At the level of individual environmental themes and projects, we will define and prioritise audiences more specifically.

As part of the common approach to EU agencies' process, guidelines for agencies' communication are in place, which stipulate stronger alignment with other EU institutions. Communication is recognised as a strategic function which, to be successful, should be factored in from the outset of each project.



Priority work areas

The way society consumes and creates information is rapidly changing and the EEA has to adapt to these developments. We will therefore innovate to achieve more impact in communications using resources efficiently. This will help us to provide access to our knowledge and deliver our messages to target audiences at the right time.

Gatekeepers to information are changing. When looking for news online, the majority still look to familiar brands in some countries. But in most European countries surveyed, the most common way of accessing online news is via search engines. Social media is the most important source of news stories for under-35s, and is also popular with other age groups.

Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report, 2013.

Over the coming years, we are committed to the following priority areas of work:

1 Prioritising digital products and going mobile

We will improve the user experience and accessibility on the EEA website, focusing on its content, structure and design. These efforts are necessary as the website is the main platform for communicating EEA knowledge. We also need to optimise our website and other products for communication which is increasingly done through mobile devices. Throughout this work we will strive towards making EEA information available in multiple languages.

2 Understanding audience needs

We will build an increasingly nuanced understanding of who our stakeholders are, their working processes, information needs and concerns. This work will include using tailor-made dissemination services, information, and debate monitoring to ensure that EEA knowledge consistently reaches policymakers at the right time and best contributes to topical debates.

More than 50 % of EEA web traffic is generated via search engines such as Google. Moving information from PDFs to web products will increase the accessibility of EEA messages. The EEA website received almost 10 000 visits per day in 2013; web-based data services are intensively used.

Source: Google Analytics.

3 Creating outputs that match audience needs

We will produce new communication products that are appropriate to the way our audience digests information, including shorter publications, digital and audio-visual products. This will help facilitate greater accessibility and engagement with EEA information. We will also enhance the impact and visual appeal of our products through better design, data visualisations and infographics. This will include creating a clearer definition and identity of EEA types of outputs, so as to differentiate the look and feel of different product types.

4 Using modern communication channels

We will continuously use, adapt and improve modern communication channels to reach our audiences. By developing coherent sets of messages and deploying them in appropriate forms throughout different channels, we will ensure consistency and efficiency in our communication.

Information is consumed more and more in digital format and through mobile devices. Internet use is widespread. According to a recent survey, 70 % of Europeans use the internet once a week, 30 % use social networks every day, and 44 % use them once a week.

Source: Eurobarometer, 2014.

We will engage and participate in direct interactions, face-to-face meetings, conferences, workshops and dialogue activities. These are all crucial ways to reach key audiences and stakeholders. This will involve supporting stakeholders' capacities to work with the EEA through shared events, data and information, and methodologies.

As of early 2014, the EEA has more than 20 000 Twitter followers, including politicians, environmental scientists, academics, NGO staff and those working in European institutions.

We will continue focusing on the media and social media in communicating EEA messages. This engagement increases the visibility of the Agency as a key provider of environmental information and analysis. These efforts are increasingly reaching our core audiences as well as other influential social groups and key opinion channels.



Measuring performance

We will keep this framework under review. We will regularly assess the impacts of our work and continuously refine our communication approaches by learning and adapting. Before the end of 2020, we will evaluate its implementation as part of the regular EEA evaluation. We will measure our impact according to the performance indicators laid down in the MAWP:

- the EEA's findings are communicated regularly and objectively, providing full and easy access to information, respecting the EEA's corporate identity and corporate design, using relevant channels and appropriate frequency;

- input to EU and national environment agendas is provided, key stakeholders are engaged with the EEA in dialogue and networking; activities are aligned to priorities of the EU and EEA member countries;
- specific target audiences are known and addressed as directly as possible with appropriate measures; new audiences and tools are identified in response to societal changes.

This framework will inspire and guide our communication activities until 2020 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

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