

External Communication as a Pillar of Horizon Europe Project Excellence

Why It Matters – and How to Get It Right

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 *Masterclass „The relevance and essence Communication“*

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»» Presentation Overview

- »» Why External Communication Matters
- »» Communication > Dissemination > Exploitation
- »» Visibility of EU funding – your obligations
- »» What CDE Excellence Looks Like
- »» Know Your Audience / Stakeholders
- »» The Right Message, The Right Medium
- »» What Often Goes Wrong?
- »» Science Communication ≠ Simplification
- »» Operating COMDISS during project implementation
- »» EC reporting of COM / DISS activities in SyGMA
- »» What Does the EC Expect?
- »» Final Thoughts – Make it Matter
- »» Resources & Support

»» Why External Communication Matters?

External Communication = Strategic (Policy) Impact



Builds visibility & trust

Creates credibility with stakeholders and the public



Facilitates science-policy translation

Bridges the gap between research findings and practical applications



Enables stakeholder engagement

Creates opportunities for collaboration and feedback



Boosts uptake of results

Increases likelihood of implementation and impact

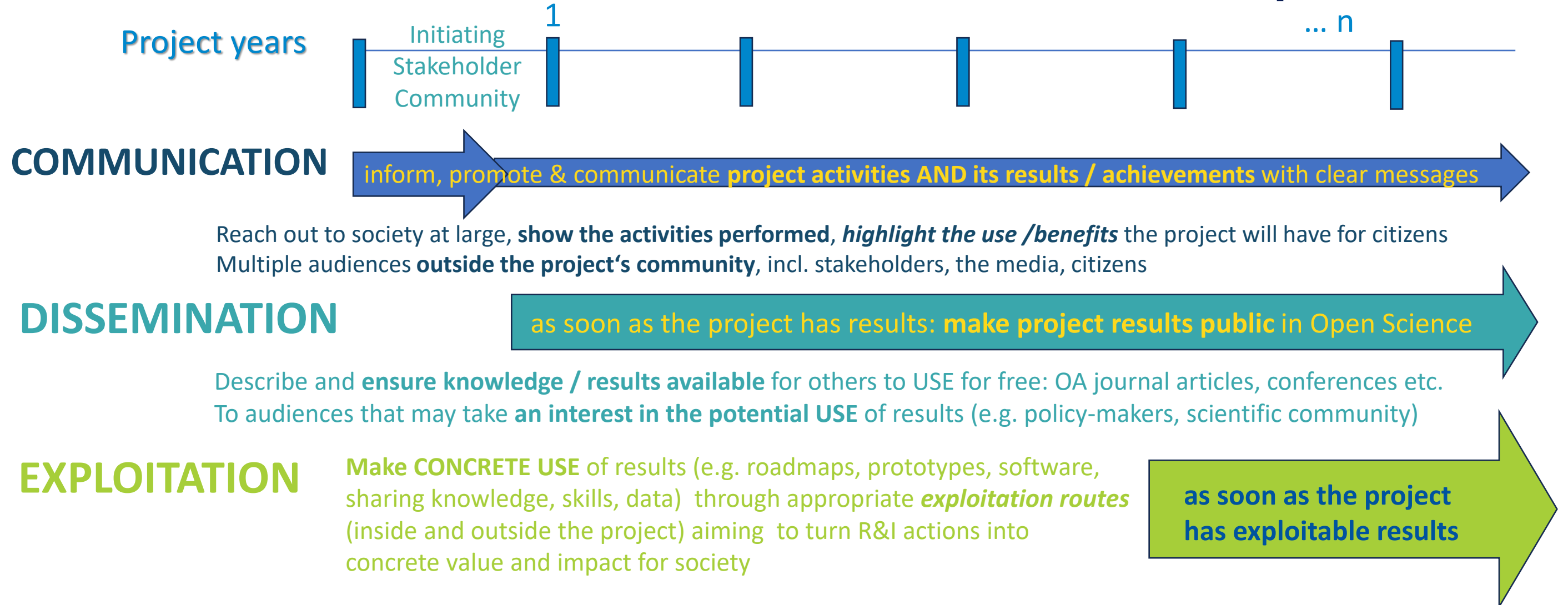
Also see:

[!\[\]\(b64b40baaee5acddc1eab8538ba84754_img.jpg\) The European Commission's priorities 2024-2029](#)

[!\[\]\(84f47badaad7772cd95667a7c387a639_img.jpg\) Horizon Europe strategic Plan 2025-2027](#)

[!\[\]\(28f72b996fc97883dfd9d4e8b1b16b4e_img.jpg\) Annex I Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025 1. General Introduction \(pdf\)](#)

»» Communication »» Dissemination »» Exploitation



All 3 activities are legal obligations in the Horizon Europe Grant Agreement

Also see:

 [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/695: Rules for participation in Horizon Europe § Articles 39-41](#)

 Project's Horizon Europe Grant Agreement § Articles 16-17

»» Visibility of EU funding – Your obligations

»» General obligation:

All recipients of Horizon Europe funding must acknowledge the EU as the funding source (Art. 17.2 GA).

»» What You Must Do:

Display the EU Flag (emblem) + Include the statement:



**Funded by
the European Union**

»» Applies to:

- Communication & dissemination activities
- Websites, social media, printed & digital materials
- Infrastructure, equipment, vehicles, major results
- Public outputs (e.g. patents, media, standardization)

»» Visibility Rules:

- Place EU emblem + funding statement together
- Must be easily visible & prominently displayed
- Can be translated into local languages (use up to 2 for bilingual regions)

»» IMPORTANT!

- Do NOT use the European Commission's logo for funding acknowledgement

Also see:

[!\[\]\(41aea2746216b27a6939d696d8e035da_img.jpg\) Download centre for EU emblem and the funding statement](#)

[!\[\]\(7bc43b319a082987e20f7bf78f4bab80_img.jpg\) Use of the EU emblem in the context of EU programmes 2021-2027](#)

From Science to Society

»» What CDE Excellence Looks Like

»» Translating complex findings into accessible narratives

👤 *Tip:* Use powerful visualizations.

»» Integrated across WPs

»» Clear messaging strategy:

- Tailoring messages for different audiences

»» Targeted stakeholder engagement

👤 *Tip:* Use science communication toolkits & findings of EU projects. E.g.:

🔗 [CORDIS Results Pack on science communication \(2024\) Empowering citizens in the public discussion of science. A thematic collection of innovative EU-funded research results \(pdf\)](#)

»» Consistent branding across all project materials

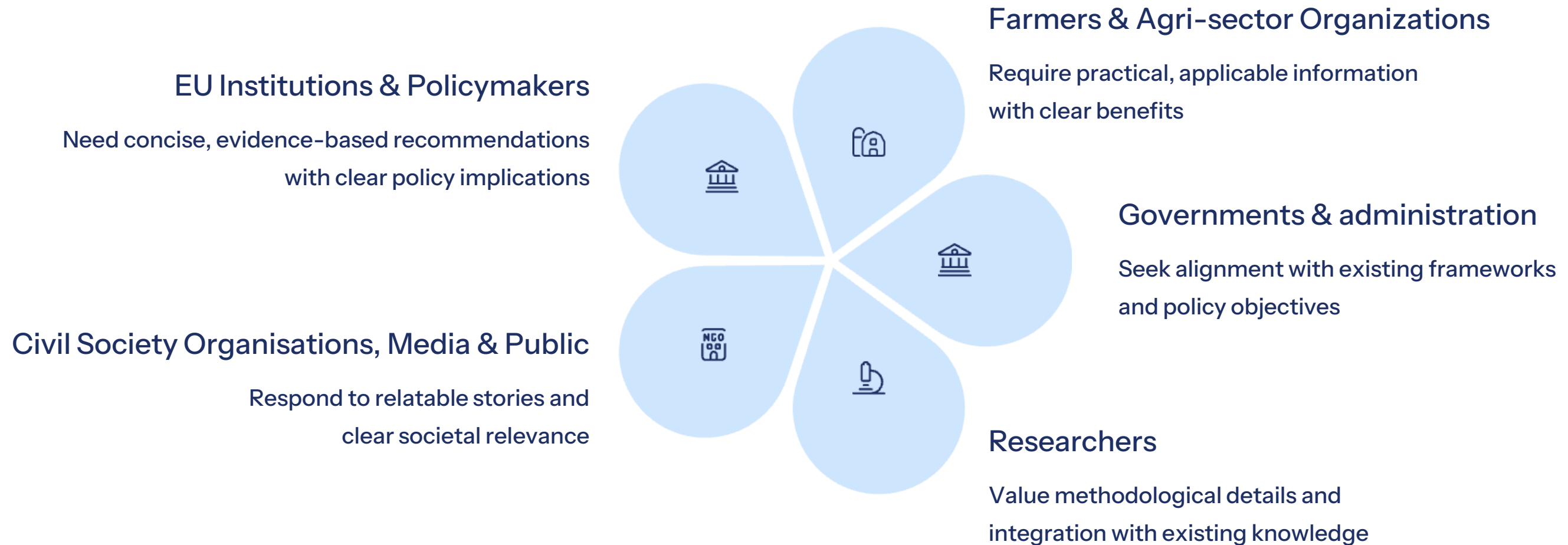
Want to write well your COM-DISS Plan?

👤 *Tip:* Learn how CDE are evaluated in HE proposals

🔗 How to evaluate Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication in HE proposals 🎥 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tFiOCiVZJg>

🔗 How to evaluate Open Science in Horizon Europe proposals 🎥 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiJ8RaD3WBw>

»» Know Your Audience / Stakeholders



»» The Right Message, The Right Medium

Policy Briefs

Concise documents (2-4 pages) translate research findings into actionable policy recommendations, ideal for government officials and decision-makers.

Media Engagement

Press releases, interviews, and media partnerships that amplify research findings to broader audiences and increase public awareness of agricultural issues.

Digital Content

Webinars, podcasts, and videos that explain complex concepts in accessible formats, reaching audiences who prefer audio-visual learning.

Visual Tools

Infographics and data visualizations that transform complex data into intuitive visual stories, making statistics and findings more accessible.

»» What Often Goes Wrong?



Too much jargon

Overuse of technical terminology creates barriers to understanding



Lack of strategy

Ad-hoc communication without clear objectives or planning



Communication left until the end

Treating outreach as an afterthought rather than an ongoing process



No feedback loops

Failing to collect and incorporate audience responses



Unclear responsibilities

Confusion about who manages different communication tasks

»» Science Communication ≠ Simplification

Use Metaphors & Storytelling

Frame research findings as narratives that connect to familiar concepts and experiences.

Stories create emotional connections that help audiences retain information and understand its relevance.

Show Real-World Implications

Demonstrate how research findings affect people's lives, communities, and environments.

Concrete examples help audiences understand abstract concepts and see the value of research.

Focus on Benefits, Not Just Data

Highlight how findings can improve agricultural practices, policy decisions, or environmental outcomes.

Benefits-focused communication answers the crucial "so what?" question for audiences.

Use Plain Language

Replace technical jargon with accessible terminology without losing accuracy.

Clear language ensures your message reaches beyond academic circles to influence practice and policy.

»» Operating COMDISS during project implementation

At proposal stage (Ref. HE Proposal Template – Part B, Section 2.2)

- WP level communication tasks
- KPIs (e.g. 10 stakeholder events, 5 policy briefs, 20k website visits)
- Dedicated budget (min 5%)

Deliverable on Communication, Dissemination (COMDISS) & Impact Strategy and Plan (latest by month 6)

- WHY? Purpose, aims & objectives, COMDISS principles & obligations
- WHO? Internal arrangements
- WHAT? Overall strategy for COMDISS
- TO WHOM? Audiences, target groups & key messages
- HOW? COMDISS modes / channels
- WHEN? Implementation plan
- Documenting, monitoring, evaluation & reporting of COMDISS activities

Central communication channels:

- Project website (D, m6), social media accounts,
- Newsletter, project flyer, policy briefs (D)
- Zenodo community

Sources of info for COMDISS:

- Grant Agreement
- **WP COMDISS Officers** – project implementation
- **partner COMDISS Officers** - news, events
- liaising with fellow projects' COMDISS leaders

Partners communicate about the project & results through their own COM channels & networks AND keep records of their COMDISS actions for EC reporting



CHECK:

- Project partner COMDISS reports (e.g. every project quarter)
- Performance assessment of central COMDISS channels

ADJUST: Regular meetings for COMDISS Officers (e.g. in every 6 months)

REPORT: annual internal reports + EC reporting periods

»» EC reporting of COM activities in SyGMA

»» Align your record keeping of COM activities to EC reporting requirements

SyGMA - System for Grant Management

Grant Management Project Continuous Report HOW TO

Communications Activities

Add Communication Activity

Communication Activity Name* {record ID in your COM activities database}

Description* {max. 200 characters}

Who? Target audience* {only 1 choice}

How? Communication channel* {only 1 choice}

Outcome* {related / contributes to which project COM KPI}

Status* {cancelled / delivered / ongoing / postponed}

* mandatory fields

Ok Cancel

Pre-set target audience categories (only 1 choice)

- Industry, business partners
- Innovators
- Investors
- EU institutions
- National authorities
- Regional authorities
- Local authorities
- Civil society
- Citizens
- Research communities
- Specific user communities (if applicable)
- International organisation (UN body, OECD, etc.)

Pre-set communication channel categories (only 1 choice)

- Event (conference, meeting, workshop, etc.)
- Exhibition
- Interview
- Media article
- Newsletter
- Other
- Press release
- Print materials (brochure, leaflet, poster, stickers, banners, etc.)
- Social media
- TV / Radio campaign
- Video
- Website

»» EC reporting of DISS activities in SyGMA

»» Align your record keeping of DISS activities to EC reporting requirements

SyGMA - System for Grant Management

ec.europa.eu/research/participants/grants-app/reporting/

Grant Management Project Continuous Report

Critical Risks Publications Results Dissemination activities

Dissemination Activities

List the dissemination activities carried out in the context of the project.
Include dissemination activities mentioned in the proposal and new ones.

+ Add Dissemination Activity

Dissemination Activity Name	What? Type of dissemination activity	Who? Target audience Reached	Why? Description of the objective(s) with reference to a specific project output (max 200 characters)	Status of the dissemination activity	Actor
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Pre-set types of DISS activity (only 1 choice)

- Conferences
- Education and training events
- Meetings
- Clustering activities
- Collaboration with EU-funded projects
- Other scientific collaboration
- Other scientific cooperation
- Other

Add dissemination activity

Dissemination activity name * {free text: record ID in your DISS activities database}

What? Type of dissemination activity * {drop-down box with pre-set types of DISS activity}

Who? Target audience Reached * {multiple choice is possible}

Why? Description of the objective(s) with reference to a specific project output (max 200 characters) *

Status of the dissemination activity *

* mandatory fields

Research communities
Industry, business partners
Innovators
Investors
International organisation (UN body, OECD, etc.)
EU Institutions
National authorities
Regional authorities
Local authorities
Civil society
Citizens
Specific end user communities
Other

Cancelled
Delivered
Ongoing
Postponed

Add Cancel

»» What Does the EC Expect?



»» Final Thoughts – Make it Matter

- »» External communication is a project pillar, not an accessory
- »» Start early, plan strategically, measure results

Start with the 'why'

Communicate purpose and significance
before details

Reuse content across formats

Maximize impact by repurposing for different channels



Multimedia content drives traffic



Tailor for the audience

Adapt content, format, and channels to specific stakeholders

Link audience & stakeholder mapping

Stakeholder co-design improves legitimacy

Strategic partnerships extend reach

Plan across the lifecycle

Integrate communication from project inception to conclusion

Test & adapt

Gather feedback and refine approaches accordingly

»» Resources & Support

- [!\[\]\(95b42f0077faf7439a26242a54e021ec_img.jpg\) EU F&T Portal: Horizon Europe Reference Documents](#)
- [!\[\]\(e097ab4c08b8186dd0908330bbc2dc28_img.jpg\) Horizon Europe NCP Portal: Horizon Europe Glossary \(pdf\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(1e9d865c5de095f8e3304757c49e79d7_img.jpg\) EC REA page: Communicating about your EU-funded project](#)
- [!\[\]\(735b10d724a5f0ec5005c4eb3eb9c9d1_img.jpg\) EC REA: Are you communicating your Horizon Europe project?, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022](#)
- [!\[\]\(e6250f05bc27fa93236b816562b699f9_img.jpg\) EC F&T page: 10 ways for recipients of EU funding to communicate and ensure EU visibility](#)
- [!\[\]\(d190cc638f389909d4b049d6c19e4cb2_img.jpg\) EC: The use of the EU emblem in the context of EU programmes 2021-2027, March 2021](#)
- [!\[\]\(4d34001966c7597a8c3e4293694bde37_img.jpg\) EC HE Social Media Guide, v 1.0 01 October 2023 \(pdf\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(70b9adae95aa76ce55f26a9fb944efce_img.jpg\) EC REA: Communicating about your research project using social media, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023](#)
- [!\[\]\(7b780ea9fe954e20f3a1890df3f944e2_img.jpg\) OpenAIRE page: Horizon Europe Open Science requirements in practice](#)
- [!\[\]\(6ed942f5426e79452fae08b09c55d70a_img.jpg\) Alea López de San Román \(2021\). Open Science in Horizon Europe. Zenodo.](#)

»» Thank You!

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