

Basics of communication and dissemination

Communications is a strategic function directly supporting the RI activities and achieving its goals. RI leadership should understand its strategic nature and dedicate proper resources to support the function.

Communication is definitely a fundamental aspect in RI's activities. In general, communication activities of environmental RI aim at informing different target groups and/or getting them involved in the RI's activities (eg. using/providing data or participating in the events, gathering their feedback, etc.). There are several means to facilitate the internal and external communication of an environmental RI. Meetings and virtual communication tools, newsletters, websites, social media etc. are the common tools used for communication among RIs and projects supporting the RIs like COOP+. To guarantee good and long-term communication, RI needs to map out the resources it has (the number and competence of the available staff) and concentrate on those activities it has the resources. For example, it doesn't give a good impression of the RI if its monthly released newsletter suddenly start to be released not regularly, social media account stops being active, weekly news stop appearing to website.

***Difference between communication and dissemination.** Communication is always two (or multi-) way activity - i.e. there is feedback involved the process. Dissemination is instead meant as one-way activity, where the information consumer is considered passive for the process. Typically both are used, and communication tools are used also for feedback purposes in connection with dissemination.*

COOP+ communication: in the COOP+ project, at internal level, the RIs that are part of the consortium, as well as the project institutional partners, constitute one target audience, and communication activities involving them aimed at facilitating and promoting the feedback and cooperation among them. On the other hand, communication beyond project participants played a key role in the success of the project and that's why external RIs received special attention during the project. Moreover, the scientific community, SMEs as well as the general public have also been the target audience of external communication activities of the COOP+ project.

Regarding external communication, COOP+ website was the main digital platform, but Twitter social network was also used to inform about "just happening" activities. Finally, the scientific community was specially addressed by participating in several scientific fora and promoting the publication of project results in the form of scientific publications.

The amount and ways how RI disseminates/communicates needs to be in balance with the amount of available working hours and competence. It might not be vice idea to try to do everything and reach as many stakeholders as possible, as sometimes less is more. Both in methods and target audiences. Planning of the dissemination and exploitation of an RI might be a good start. It can include determining the RI's visual identity, mapping the stakeholders, and making/updating an outreach and dissemination/communication plan. As important as it is to map the stakeholders and make a dissemination/communication plan and strategy, it is to measure the efficiency and actively follow up the dissemination/communication activities.