



FONDAZIONI IN RETE
PER LA RICERCA
AGROALIMENTARE

Ager Project

Guidelines for communication and
dissemination of results

Why These Guidelines?

Scientific research projects create value and have a strong impact on the economy, but they often run into difficulty in terms of being understood and accepted by the stakeholders, making technological transfer and hence the practical application of the results achieved difficult. Moreover, research projects have a strong impact on civil society, since they tackle topics with strong economic and social implications that are therefore of general interest. For these reasons, the research conducted as part of Ager projects, and the results obtained, must be made widely known.

Strategically planned communication promotes dissemination of the research results, informs people how these results can be applied by companies and the consequent economic and social impact they will have. The research topics funded by Ager are well suited to these goals: for example, how to protect food quality and safety, or the discovery and perfection of sustainable production techniques.

Getting citizens to understand what a project is studying and what results are achieved means making them understand its value. This creates a process of sharing and establishes a virtuous circle in which civil society becomes the bearer of a positive message within the various "social networks". This is the same level of idea- and opinion-sharing that is today reached through the social media.

Good communication regarding the study's goals and objectives and good dissemination of the results considerably increase the likelihood of the project's success. Hence the study needs to plan for dissemination of the results as an integral part of the project itself right from the start; it will call for the immediate involvement of all stakeholders, thereby increasing the impact of the work done.

These guidelines take inspiration from the "Communicating EU research and innovation guidance for project participants" (Horizon 2020).

1 - INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION

1.1 - COMMUNICATION and DISSEMINATION OF THE RESULTS of AGER Projects

COMMUNICATION

To achieve effective results, a series of informational, awareness-raising and promotional activities needs to be planned so that the project can be described comprehensively: who is funding it, who is doing it, the goals, the results expected and achieved, and the eventual impact. The communication will be aimed at the general public and must follow specific steps that will begin with the project's approval and will continue throughout its term.

DISSEMINATION OF THE RESULTS

Communication activities capable of increasing the visibility of the results obtained with projects outside the circle of partners that produced them. The objective is to promote technological transfer and hence application of the results by the stakeholders, thereby making the most of the funding made available by the Ager Project.

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT AND ITS RESULTS: TO WHOM AND WHY

The project and its results are to be disclosed to the scientific community, stakeholders, and civil society. The purpose of the communication is to:

- Inform and create a bond with the stakeholders right from the start of the project, by gearing this report to the marketability of the results.
- Reduce the gap between the world of research and the public at large, spotlighting the work of the researchers and the institutions involved.
- Make public and private institutions and entities aware that they can be additional sources of funding, in order to expand or follow up on the study.
- Arouse the interest of potential partners for the project and/or for future projects.
- Create an appeal to the team of students and/or researchers regarding the entities and institutions involved in the project.
- Promote contact with potential funders interested in investing in the results obtained.
- Stimulate the creation of a market for the products and/or services obtained, depending on the study.

In regard to the funding institutions, good communication makes it possible to:

- Demonstrate the social and economic impact the study has generated.
- Enhance the image and role of the funding institution through its impact on the public in terms of interest, visibility and social utility of the study: the funding becomes a “social budget”.
- Provide information and assessment criteria for allocating any additional funding.

2 - THE COMMUNICATION PLAN

The beneficiaries of Ager funding must promote and make known the project and its goals and results, both expected and achieved. This will require a targeted, effective communication strategy, defined and contained in the **Communication Plan**, which must also include how the results are to be disseminated.

The Plan must meet the following requirements:

- **start with approval of the project and continue for its full term**, on an ongoing and scheduled basis, so as not to interrupt the flow of information;
- provide for internal and external **communication efforts**. Internal communication generates an information flow capable of **explaining and sharing the project’s deployment to the partners and the funding entity**. External communication takes into account the **segmentation of the reference audience into three targets**: scientific community, stakeholders, civil society;
- indicate **the communication media considered most appropriate** for reaching the various target audiences, to achieve the maximum result; for publications, favour open-access or repository with free access and, hence, in general, the means that will give the greatest visibility to the study’s results;
- contain **a specific implementation timeframe** for each communication activity (press conferences, brochures, press releases, science café, ...);
- indicate **the most effective content strategy according to the chosen media**;
- contain **a succinct communication strategy for the social media (Social Media Strategy)** that will indicate which social media it is intended to use, what targets will be reached and through what content (P.O.S.T. Analysis, cross-referencing targets, objectives, strategy and tools);
- in the event of paid advertising space in the various media, a media plan must be attached indicating how the media budget is broken down;
- provide the **budget** needed to carry out the Plan.

2.1 - Communication responsible person

The project must have one or more communication responsible persons who are researchers or other professionals, in either case with documented experience and skills in communication and dissemination of results in relation to research projects. The mission will be to manage the Communication Plan. The contact may be allowed to further hone the skills he already has by participating in a Master's degree programme or specific, certified training in scientific communication and dissemination.

Once the project is approved, a series of meetings will be held involving all communication contacts and Ager's representatives (project manager and/or communication responsible person). The objective will be to promote proper application of the Communication Plan for individual projects, creating the maximum synergy and integration.

2.2 - The Web site

Given the Web's huge strategic importance in communication, Ager will make a structure available to the winning projects for each of the four sectors covered by the call for proposals (Aquaculture, Olives Tree and Oil, Dairy Products, Mountain Agriculture). The sector site is therefore closely interfaced with the Ager Web site and will contain all projects funded for that sector. Its structure makes it possible to achieve the utmost efficiency in managing the content: hence it will be modular and expandable according to the needs of the individual projects and the specific strategic communication choices. Therefore we ask that the Communication Plan indicate the Web content strategy (e.g., menu items, etc.) in order to make the necessary changes to the pre-established structure. The strategy must be aimed at the three different targets indicated above: scientific community, civil society, and stakeholders.

As part of this communication, it will be very important to have ongoing periodic updates to the site, which, like management of the social media FB, Twitter, YouTube and any others deemed of interest, will be charged to the individual projects. A short training session will be provided if necessary on using the Web platform. The foregoing in no way precludes the possibility of using existing portals - such as those of the partners, for example - to convey the information. Hence the creation of networks is possible and requested.

Given the forms of Web communication chosen by Ager, the creation of new sites will not be fundable.

2.3 - Monitoring

During all communication activities, the Plan must provide for monitoring in order to evaluate the communication's results and efficiency with its reference targets. The monitoring shall be conducted for each medium utilised: for example, in the case of the Web, with the special tools available (Google Analytics, Insight, etc.), and in traditional channels using monitoring sources (Audipress, Radio Monitor, Auditel, etc.).

3 - BUILDING THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: a *checklist*

As the project is being drafted, a checklist may be useful for calibrating and optimising the communication and results-dissemination activities.

3.1 – For Good Organisation

- ✓ Does the project include a WP on communication with a defined budget?
- ✓ Was the communication strategy planned according to a timeline?
- ✓ Does it provide for internal and external communication?
- ✓ Does the communication begin upon approval of the project and continue for its full term?

3.2 – Clear, Monitored Objectives

- ✓ Was the communication plan prepared with clear, specified, initial, intermediate and final communication objectives for the project? What impact is expected from it and what change is envisioned by the reference target?
- ✓ Have deadlines been set for reaching the communication objectives, taking into account the various phases of the study and any possible interim results?
- ✓ Does the project call for measuring the communication activities and monitoring them to verify their impact? For example: number of articles in the press, number of people having requested information, participants in events organised by the project, targeted surveys, etc.

3.3 – Target Choice and Segmentation

- ✓ Has the public been “segmented” into relatively homogeneous groups of people (the targets) by interests, motivation and expectations regarding the research topics?
- ✓ Were all the targets involved who might be interested in learning about the project and its results?
- ✓ Was it considered that the type of message, communication medium and language needs to be adapted for each target?
- ✓ Were policy makers involved?

4.4 – Choosing the Right Communication Medium

- ✓ Was the right communication medium chosen according to target and type of message? (E.g., is the press or television better? Launch of an agency or an event? A guided tour of the research centres or a YouTube clip? Specialised press or general press?)
- ✓ Were the communication medium (e.g., which newspapers, which TV broadcast, which Web sites) and the motivations behind the choice sufficiently detailed?
- ✓ Were the various ways of communication and their advantages and disadvantages taken into consideration? The following is an incomplete list of forms of communication, for reference:

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| - Face-to-face encounters | - Sector and general newspapers and magazines |
| - Discussion groups | - Press releases |
| - Lectures, seminars, conventions | - Newsletters |
| - School visits | - Manuals |
| - Roundtables | - Brochures, booklets, flyers |
| - Informative tours | - Targeted letters |
| - Illustrations of prototypes | - Radio |
| - Exhibitions and trade shows | - Television |
| - Meetings | - Video |
| - Workshops | - Documentaries |
| - Open days | - Posters and photo exhibitions |
| - Demonstrations in the field | - Stickers |
| - Telephone calls | - Advertising and promotional banners |
| - Online information service with Q&A | - Billboards |
| - Online discussion groups | - Social (Fb, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) |
| | - Science cafés |