ECHA Communications Strategy 2019-2023
Introduction

ECHA’s mission is to work for the safe use of chemicals. Communications plays a vital part in supporting this regulatory work in ensuring that companies comply with EU law.

The EU’s policies on circular economy and the sustainability goals help set the Agency’s work more firmly in a larger political context. At the same time, there is growing public interest in chemicals. The overall communications landscape is also changing: the role of public authorities is strongly questioned and challenged, and at a time of ‘fake news,’ there is also an increasing distrust in science. This brings new challenges to communication on scientific and regulatory matters.

To be able to respond to these challenges, ECHA’s communications need to be tailored to the needs of the Agency’s target audiences, use language which is relevant and easy to understand, and use the right channels and networks.

ECHA has an integrated approach to communications that fully aligns external and internal communications and builds corporate reputation from the inside. Internal communications has a role in increasing our staff’s understanding of ECHA’s strategic goals and in facilitating change and promoting new ways of working.

The Communications Unit ensures the coherent and balanced implementation of external and internal communications. It also contributes to the reputation of the Agency by sharing good communications practice and demonstrating independence and transparency. The Communications Unit adds value to the Agency’s activities by developing strategic plans for communications, identifying issues with potential reputational impact, and providing advice on matters related to communications.

We want ECHA to be:

- Interesting
- Proactive
- Close to the citizen
- Understandable
- Trustworthy
ECHA’s organisational and communications priorities

This communications strategy supports ECHA’s mission and vision and the Agency’s strategic priorities for 2019-2023.

ECHA’s strategic priorities:
1. Identification and risk management of substances of concern.
2. Safe and sustainable use of chemicals by industry.
3. Sustainable management of chemicals through the implementation of EU legislation.

To help ECHA achieve its overall strategic goals, increase the impact of its work and adapt to change, the communications strategy aims to:

- Increase ECHA’s visibility as a centre of knowledge on chemicals safety and relevant EU legislation.
- Strive for a more approachable tone of voice in all communications to make our messages more understandable and attractive to the targeted audiences.
- Increase our engagement with mainstream media and key stakeholders.
- Contribute to gaining the most out of ECHA’s data and competences by increasing their visibility and usage.
- Encourage employee advocacy and involvement.

The priority areas for action are presented below.

**Manage the increasingly complex stakeholder landscape by adopting new means of communication.**

- Identify the areas of interest of different stakeholders, and understand the stakeholders’ needs, perceptions and expectations.
- Streamline the management of all stakeholder activities, which involve policy makers, authorities, academia, third parties, international actors and accredited stakeholders.
- Establish a network for collaboration with Member State authorities to align communication messages and to carry out joint campaigns in the EU/EEA.

**Increase ECHA’s visibility and consolidate its reputation.**

- Improve the process within ECHA for identifying potential future hot topics and emerging issues at an early phase.
- Review ECHA’s crisis communication plan to shift the focus from crisis response to crisis avoidance.
- Revisit ECHA’s corporate identity by analysing how internal and external stakeholders perceive the Agency.

**Increase awareness about the impact of ECHA’s work.**

- Promote the big picture of the EU working for safer chemicals by increasing the visibility of our knowledge, data and scientific opinion-making together with the relevant partners.
- Promote the use of chemicals data together with other EU Agencies (EFSA, EMA, EEA, EU-OSHA.).
Establish relations with influencers and investigate methods to benefit from dialogue with EU citizens.

- Proactively reach mainstream media journalists and other influencers.
- Encourage staff to actively participate in the discussions on social media alongside ECHA’s institutional voice.

Strive for more approachability in all communications

- Establish an editorial policy covering all communications products.
- Make our messages relevant, understandable and attractive to the target audiences.

Key audiences

Targeting the right audiences is essential for successful communications. ECHA works with heterogeneous audiences across Europe and beyond, which poses challenges for general communication activities.

The main target audiences are:

- **Companies**
  e.g. manufacturers, importers, downstream users, suppliers, retailers, exporters, third country companies, waste operators, recyclers, consultants, occupational health and safety experts.

- **Authorities and policy makers**
  e.g. EU institutions, national authorities, international organisations, third country authorities.

- **Knowledgeable audiences**
  e.g. associations, trade unions, NGOs, academia.

- **General audiences**
  e.g. EU citizens, consumers.

- **ECHA’s staff and community**
  e.g. staff members, managers, members of ECHA bodies.

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1 Including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
The communications goal can be to involve, cooperate, consult or inform the target audience. The choice of a communications activity should take into consideration the communications goal and the target audience.

- **Involving** an audience, we want to raise interest and achieve a change in their behaviour. Involvement would typically be the goal if the audience has a high impact but a low level of awareness – such audiences may include members of the European Parliament or other politicians. The work requires proactive and often resource-intensive activities, for example, face-to-face meetings and targeted materials.

- **Consultation** aims at receiving feedback from the target audience – for example, to invite input to our public consultations or feedback on our activities. The consulted audiences have a high level of awareness but the level of impact on our work varies depending on the type of consultation activity, and include, for example, companies, research institutions and academia.

- **Informing** is about spreading information about the chemicals legislation, ECHA and its work to wide and varied audiences through, for example, websites, newsletters and social media.

- **Cooperation** means working together with the target audience towards common objectives and mutual benefits. It is also driven by the interest of target audiences that have a high level of interest in our work and a high impact. For ECHA, such audiences include Member States authorities and accredited stakeholder organisations, which whom we can cooperate on joint communication campaigns and projects, including joint events and the production of communication materials.

**Communications goals:** The width refers to the scope of the target audience and the height to the resource intensity of required activities – we inform larger audiences and involve targeted audiences.

**Communications objectives**

The communications objectives support ECHA’s three strategic priorities and four strategic objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECHA’s strategic priorities</th>
<th>ECHA’s strategic objectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>Identification and risk management of substances of concern</td>
<td>Accelerate data generation and intensify identification of substances of concern</td>
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<td>Safe and sustainable use of chemicals by industry</td>
<td>Accelerate regulatory action on substances of concern</td>
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<td>Sustainable management of chemicals through the implementation of EU legislation</td>
<td>Effective communication up and down the supply chain becomes mainstream</td>
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<td>ECHA’s information, knowledge and competences on safe use of chemicals support the implementation of EU legislation</td>
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ECHAs strategic priorities translate to communications objectives towards different target audiences.

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<th>Target audience</th>
<th>Audience needs</th>
<th>Communications objective</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
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| Companies, industry associations        | Information on complying with obligations, advice and hands-on support, early warning, transparency and predictability of regulatory processes | Companies understand how they can comply with the law and see its benefits, improving the safe use of chemicals and substituting dangerous ones | Surveys to companies and industry associations, website user survey, readership survey, feedback from events and webinars  
   Number of companies using ECHA's tools  
   Number of sectors or associations joining the existing networks |
| Third parties, such as academia and research institutes | Information on how to contribute to and benefit from regulatory processes | Academia, research institutes and other third parties understand how to contribute to regulatory processes and see the benefits, improving the safe use of chemicals and substituting dangerous ones | Number of third party contributions |
| Authorities and policy makers           | Information relevant to their role (authorities), understanding the big picture on chemicals safety (decision-makers) | Key partners and stakeholders understand the impact of our work and support our strategy | Feedback from decision-makers  
   Outreach of joint communications projects with national authorities |
| Knowledgeable audiences                 | Information about what we work on and how we work, with the possibility to provide input, understanding the impact of our work | Interested audiences are aware of and trust in our work and their ability to contribute | Feedback in stakeholder surveys, feedback from meetings, correspondence |
| General audiences                       | Trustworthy information on chemicals safety, concrete consumer-relevant topics on the use of chemicals | EU citizens are aware that the EU is taking action to identify dangerous chemicals and protect them from the risks that these pose | Number of social media followers, number of citizens’ website visitors, Eurobarometer feedback, media coverage |
| All audiences                           | Know more about chemicals safety and risks and the big picture on how the EU contributes to it | Our data and knowledge on chemicals become more known and useful to different audiences | Number of users of ECHA's data, media coverage |
| Staff                                   | Information to do their work well and to cope with the changes affecting them, to be involved and given channels for feedback and dialogue, to learn from good practice | ECHA staff are informed and have the culture of sharing and collaborating as 'one ECHA' | Internal services survey, staff survey |
Guiding principles

To achieve the communications objectives, we need to be ambitious, strategic and consistent in our communications. Our guiding principles are to:

**BE STRATEGIC**
We focus on annually defined priority topics and target the key audiences.

**BE RELIABLE**
Our communication is trustworthy, balanced, accurate and predictable.

**WORK WITH PARTNERS**
We engage EU-level partners and Member State competent authorities to enable targeted messaging and efficient outreach.

**BE TIMELY AND PROACTIVE**
We proactively bring topics to the public agenda and take part in relevant public discussions.

**ENGAGE AND EMPOWER**
We consult and involve our partners, stakeholders and staff in matters affecting them.

**BE EFFICIENT**
We strive for efficiency in our communications by streamlining the way the functions are organised in the Agency, setting measures and monitoring input-output of our channels and activities.

**USE THE APPROPRIATE TONE OF VOICE**
Our communication vehicles are easily accessible, transparent and use understandable language according to the needs of the target audiences.
Channels and tools

We employ a variety of channels in communicating with our various target audiences. The main communication channels relevant to each target audience are outlined below.

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<th>Channel</th>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>Knowledgeable audiences</th>
<th>Authorities and policy makers</th>
<th>Accredited stakeholders</th>
<th>General audiences</th>
<th>Staff</th>
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<td>ECHA’s website</td>
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<td>Weekly</td>
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<td>Newsletter</td>
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<td>Social media</td>
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<td>Stakeholder update</td>
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<td>Webinars</td>
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<td>Events</td>
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<td>Videos</td>
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<td>Citizens’ site</td>
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<td>Face-to-face meetings</td>
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<td>Infoscreens</td>
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<td>Communication networks</td>
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<td>Network of journalists in specialised and general media</td>
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Websites, digital communications products, and virtual events such as webinars are the key channels for communicating with the Agency’s external audiences.

We continuously aim to:
- further develop ECHA’s websites’ content and structure to easily onboard new tasks given to the Agency;
- research and understand user needs to consequently adapt our online products; and
- become the main online source of knowledge on chemicals.

The citizens’ website and social media are the main channels for reaching general audiences. The importance of social media as an interactive communication channel continues to increase.

We will:
- develop the content of the citizens’ website in cooperation with national authorities and stakeholders;
- develop audio-visual products, infographics and interactive elements to increase our outreach;
- start an employee advocacy program to increase our staff’s outreach on social media.
Emailed communications products like the ECHA Weekly, ECHA Newsletter and the accredited stakeholder update will be further developed. We will explore opportunities to tailor content better to the audiences' interests.

Media relationships, including press office services for answering enquiries and providing interviews with ECHA’s experts, will also be further developed. We will continue to organise special media events and briefings (physical and online), as well as to develop the publication of our main news as interactive press releases.

We will:
- continue to develop proactive media relationships, with increased collaboration with the mainstream media; and
- increase collaboration with the Member State authorities and utilise their contacts.

We will continue to organise events for the Agency’s external audiences, also offering possibilities for interaction and online access.

We will also continue to maintain the Agency’s network of accredited stakeholder organisations, and increase cooperation with contacts at Member State authorities, working on joint communication campaigns and events.

We aim to decrease the use of printed communication materials, in line with ECHA’s green policy.

Intranet, internal events and line manager communications are the key communication channels for ensuring balance between one-way and two-way communications as well as top-down and bottom-up communications. Line managers are key actors in the communication processes within ECHA, particularly when managing and communicating change. We will continue to help managers with these tasks. We will continue to provide new vehicles for staff involvement and dialogue.

**Planning**

When planning communications activities, we will set up annual plans that define more specific communication priorities, objectives, key performance indicators and operational tasks. This will be done every year as part of ECHA’s planning process at the unit level. For larger projects and activity areas, we will draft specific communication plans.

For every year, ECHA’s Communications Unit will propose a few priority topics for which specific activities are to be planned. Other topics will be considered normal communications outputs for which our usual channels apply.
Measuring success

We will continuously set goals for our communications activities and monitor our success in reaching these goals. The regular feedback received will be examined against the communications objectives, and enable us to adapt to changing needs, revisit our approach if needed and increase the impact of our work.

The monitoring is to be both:

- **quantitative** – e.g. website visits, media and social media coverage, the number of social media followers, event participants, video downloads, newsletter readers; and
- **qualitative** – e.g. feedback from events and joint projects, stakeholder surveys, web user surveys, readership surveys, staff surveys.

Based on considerations regarding the communications goals, the monitoring activities may be conducted:

- **monthly** – media and social media coverage;
- **annually** – website and intranet use and the related feedback, overview of media and social media coverage, communications key performance indicators, stakeholder survey;
- **biennially** – larger surveys, e.g. readership survey, web user survey, internal surveys;
- **following the implementation of main communications outputs**, such as website launches, the publication of major reports, or events – media and social media coverage, user and participant feedback; or
- **every four years** – research using deep customer insight to better understand stakeholder needs for online communications and to develop ECHA’s websites.

The feedback on our events will be collected immediately after each event.

We will also systematically collect lessons learnt from campaigns and projects through feedback and wash-up meetings, using the learnings to improve our work.