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# ECHA Communications Strategy 2019-2023



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## 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.*

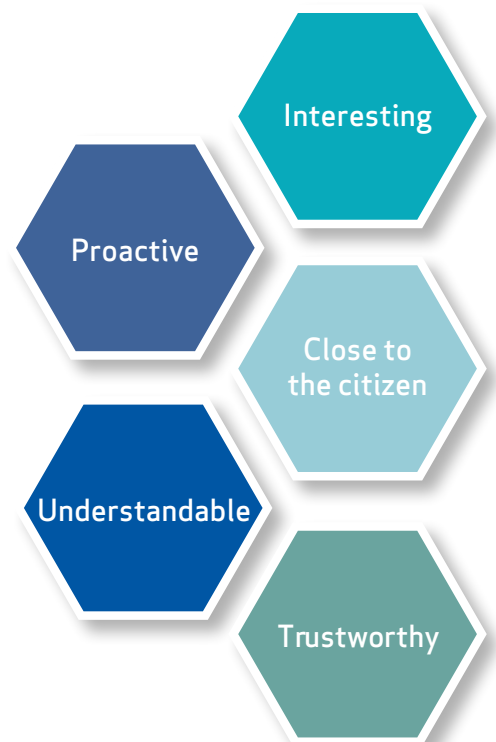
The EU's policies on circular economy and the sustainability goals help set the Agency's work more firmly in a larger political context. At the same time, there is growing public interest in chemicals. The overall communications landscape is also changing: the role of public authorities is strongly questioned 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:



# 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.**

## **ECHA's MISSION:**

We, together with our partners, work for the safe use of chemicals.

## **ECHA's VISION:**

To be the centre of knowledge on the sustainable management of chemicals, serving a wide range of EU policies and global initiatives, for the benefit of citizens and the environment.

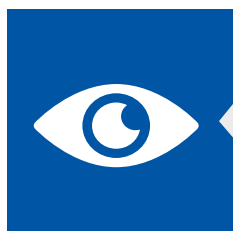
The priority areas for action are presented below.

### 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



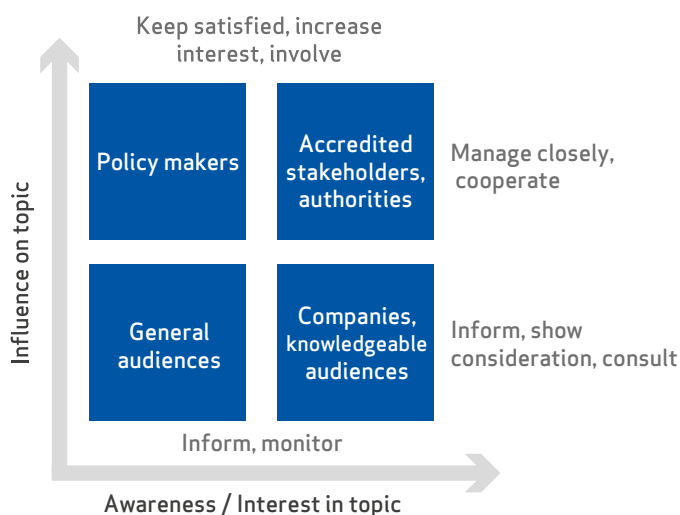
- Establish an editorial policy covering all communications products.
- Make our messages relevant, understandable and attractive to the target audiences.

## 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.

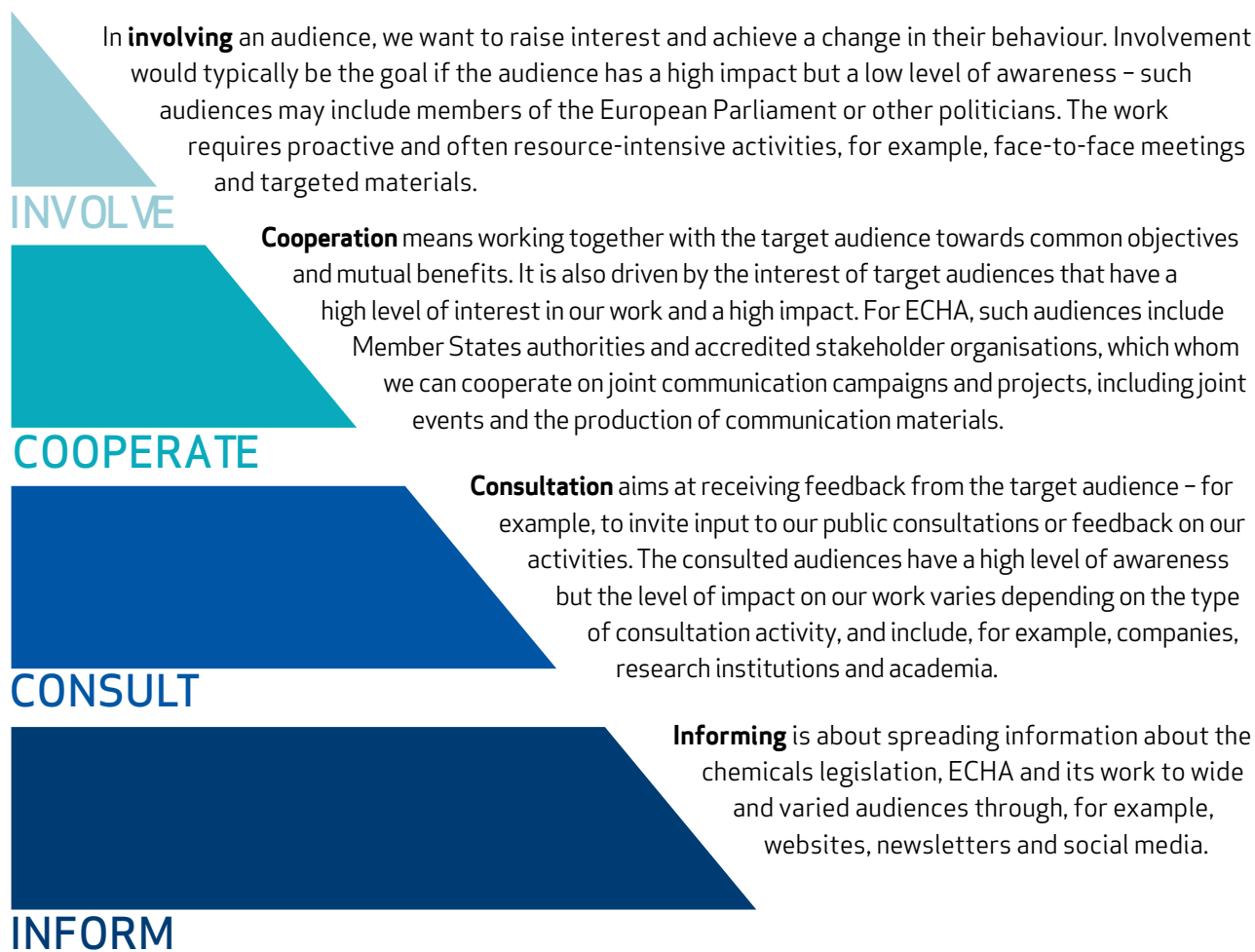
The main target audiences are:

Companies <sup>1</sup>	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.



<sup>1</sup> 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.



*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.

### ECHA's strategic priorities

Identification and risk management of substances of concern

Safe and sustainable use of chemicals by industry

Sustainable management of chemicals through the implementation of EU legislation

### ECHA's strategic objectives

Accelerate data generation and intensify identification of substances of concern

Accelerate regulatory action on substances of concern

Effective communication up and down the supply chain becomes mainstream

ECHA's information, knowledge and competences on safe use of chemicals support the implementation of EU legislation

ECHA's strategic priorities translate to communications objectives towards **different target audiences**.

Target audience	Audience needs	Communications objective	Measurement
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.

## WORK WITH PARTNERS

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

## ENGAGE AND EMPOWER

We consult and involve our partners, stakeholders and staff in matters affecting them.

## 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.

## BE RELIABLE

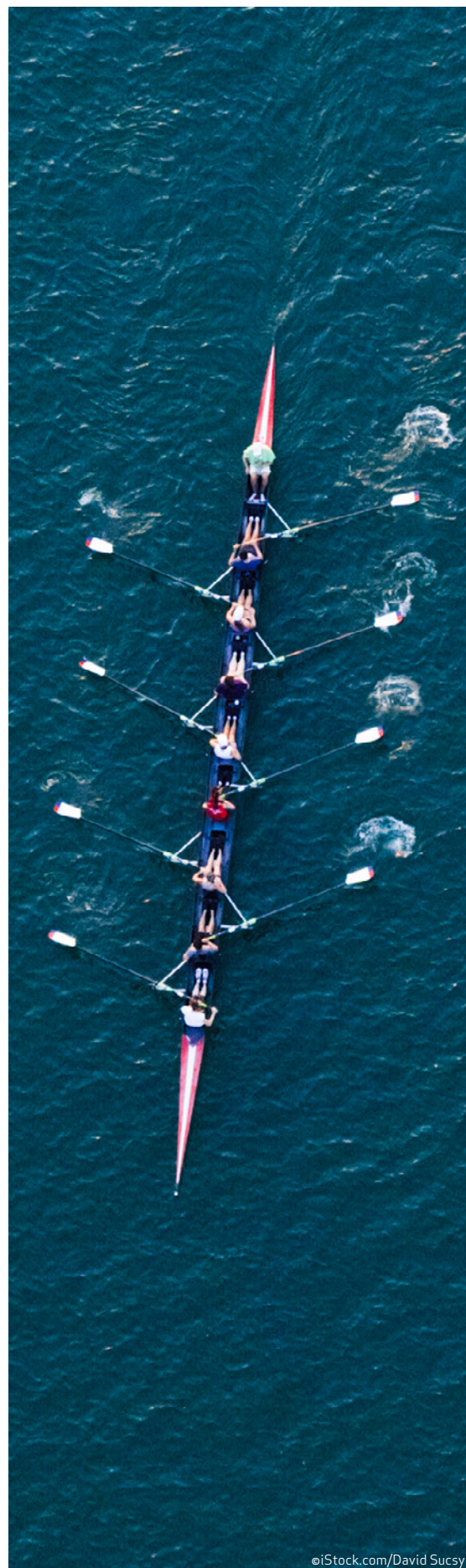
Our communication is trustworthy, balanced, accurate and predictable.

## BE TIMELY AND PROACTIVE

We proactively bring topics to the public agenda and take part in relevant public discussions.

## 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.



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## 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.

Channel	Companies	Knowledge-able audiences	Authorities and policy makers	Accredited stakeholders	General audiences	Staff
ECHA's website	■	■	■	■		
Weekly	■	■	■	■		
Newsletter	■	■	■	■		
Social media	■	■	■	■	■	■
Stakeholder update				■		
Webinars	■	■	■	■		
Events	■	■	■	■		
Publications	■	■	■	■		
Videos	■	■	■	■	■	
Citizens' site					■	
Face-to-face meetings			■	■		
ECHAnet						■
Infoscreens						■
Communication networks			■	■		
Network of journalists in specialised and general media	■	■	■	■	■	■

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.



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## 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:

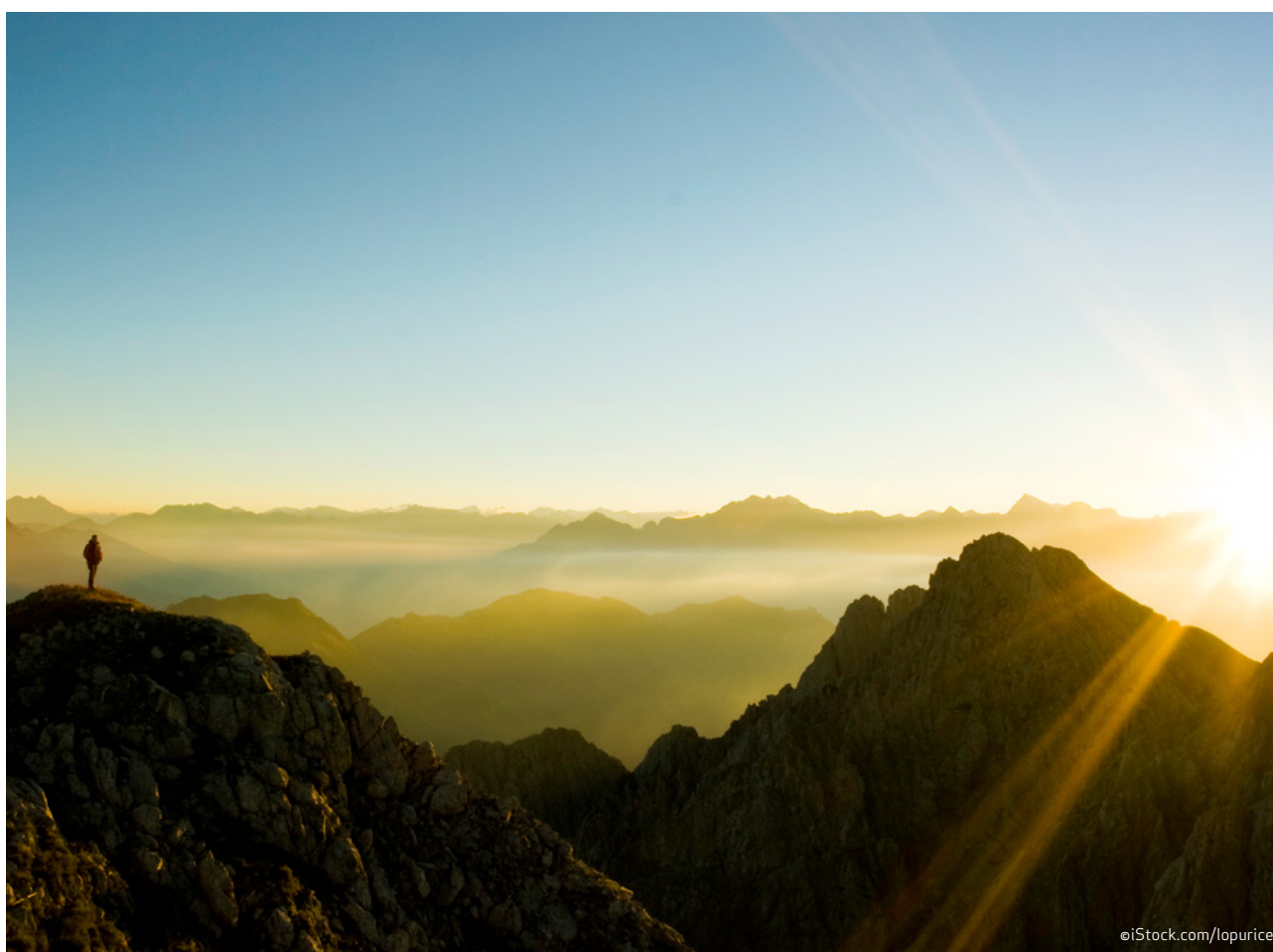
- **quantitative** – e.g. website visits, media and social media coverage, the number of social media followers, event participants, video downloads, newsletter readers; and
- **qualitative** – e.g. feedback from events and joint projects, stakeholder surveys, web user surveys, readership surveys, staff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



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