



European Science Foundation Communication Plan 2006-2010

Mission and Values

Effective communication is a crucial tool for the ESF to be able to fulfil its mission and to operate by its core values. There is a self-evident need for a communication plan which is closely aligned with the objectives outlined in the 2006-2010 Strategic Plan. The primary focus is on cooperation and coordination between ESF and its Member Organisations, in order to promote researcher-led scale and scope of European science. Communication will play a significant and primary role in implementing the Foundation's strategy.

In order for the ESF to have an influential position, the target audience must receive information, understand it, trust the source, and act upon it. Communication is the only tool that achieves this.

As this plan shows, a wide range of communication initiatives are necessary for the implementation of the ESF Strategic Plan for 2006-2010. The mission and values stated in the strategic plan provide the basis of the Communication Plan. These are as follows:

ESF Mission

The ESF provides a common platform for its Member Organisations in order to:

- *Advance European research*
- *Explore new directions for research at the European level*

Through its activities, the ESF serves the needs of the European research community in a global context.

ESF Values

- *Excellence: will be the gatekeeper criterion for all scientific activities; it will also drive the management philosophy and operating procedures;*
- *Openness: to all scientists and disciplines; no barriers between disciplines; open sharing of results; transparency to stakeholders and partners;*
- *Responsiveness: in its procedures and structure;*
- *Pan European: rising above national interests to the benefit of science in the whole of Europe;*
- *Ethical awareness and human values: sensitive to societal and ethical considerations in all its activities; attention to gender aspects.*

Communication objectives

- To strengthen the ESF's relationship with its Member Organisations. MOs must be continually kept informed in a comprehensive and transparent way, therefore the ESF, should connect and work closely with the all of MO's communication departments.
- To provide the scientific community with information about ESF activities
- To reach out to policy makers, make them aware of ESF's work and engage with them to develop an influential position for the ESF.
- To position ESF as an agenda setter for research on a European level.
- To actively develop and support internal communication and thereby promote corporate identity throughout the organisation.
- To engage all staff in the process of communicating the work of the ESF and make each person aware of this responsibility.
- To develop links with the media in order to use them as a tool to reach all target groups and thereby communicate to the wider public.

Excellence in communication

The messages that are communicated and the means of communication should differ according to the target audience. For communication to be effective the audience must be selected and directly targeted with the appropriate message and means of distribution. In doing this we will achieve excellence.

- **Clarity**

Messages must clearly convey information to create the environment for the audience's understanding and to limit the chances of misunderstanding. Clear messages contain as few technical or bureaucratic terms as possible, and eliminate information that the audience does not need in order to make necessary decisions. A major consideration is the fact that for the majority of our audiences, English is not their native language.

- **Consistency**

On any issue, ESF's position must be communicated clearly and must be consistent. Any message conveyed on the behalf of the ESF must adhere to this principle.

- **Tone and appeal**

A message should be reassuring, challenging, straightforward, even controversial, depending upon the desired outcome and the target audience. Messages should always be truthful and honest. Regardless of context, ESF must speak with an authoritative and trustworthy voice.

- **Credibility**

In all its communications, the ESF must be believable and trustworthy and should be recognised for its scientific credibility.

- **Openness**

In this current information age, openness is of particular significance. The ESF is open to receiving ideas and initiatives from its stakeholders and should be presented as such. It should assume the position of being the natural place to find an overview of European science and engage in open dialogue.

Target groups

Many different groups are interested in ESF and our activities. For a message to break through the information clutter, messages should be based on the needs of the target audience, and not on the priorities of the sender of the message.

- **Member Organisations (MOs)**

- Research funding organisations
- Research performing organisations
- Academies

- **Other Stakeholders**

- Public funding organisations outside of ESF membership
- Trusts and private foundations
- Funding organisations outside of Europe
- Industry

- **The Scientific Community**

- Universities
- Research institutions
- Disciplinary interest organisations
- Individual researchers

- **Policy makers**

- Council of Europe
- European Commission
- European Parliament
- Business and Non Governmental organisations

- **Employees**

- All staff in Strasbourg and Brussels offices

- **Media**

- Press, radio, TV and other digital media
- Scientific media.

There are several groups excluded by this list that will be targeted indirectly via strengthened links with the media. For example, the general public, who are an important group, but not a direct target for ESF communication.

Responsibilities

The responsibility to communicate honestly is an important part of the decision making process and is necessary to build trust. Communications' most valuable tool is the personal meeting. It is a fundamental managerial responsibility to inform and discuss with co-workers.

Communication co-ordinators should be selected for each ESF scientific domain, activity and resulting action, to be a continual contact for the communication department, in order that external audiences can be reached effectively.

The Communication Department's responsibilities are: co-ordination; advice; quality control; tactical support and day to day communication tasks. This includes:

- Communication of different ESF activities and corporate communication activities.
- Engaging ESF staff in internal communication.
- Continual monitoring of the ESF's position within the European Research Era.
- Web communication.
- Press/news releases and science stories.
- Visual identity, particularly with regard to the logo.
- ESF MOs communication network.
- Monitoring the ESF profile and public discussions relevant to ESF.
- Raising awareness of the value of communication as a tool for success in delivering our mission.
- Practical training to develop competence in communication throughout ESF.

Primary Communication tools

• **The Web**

www.esf.org is our basic information resource. All other communication channels refer to the web; everything from job ads and business cards to event information material. The ESF site should have a clear scientific focus but at the same time make sure that other groups, especially media, find accurate information that is accessible, understandable and up to date.

The web is changing rapidly and more and more dialogue based elements are used. ESF should actively follow the development and when relevant try new web tools to understand and benefit from the potential. This includes blogging, podcasting, videocasting, RSS and network tools.

The communications department will develop a clear structure of responsibilities for publishing on the web. Publishing rights are to some degree decentralised, according to agreed publishing routines. It is each individual publisher's responsibility to maintain high standards of quality, which in turn means that publishers must be given opportunities and knowledge to do so.

MOs should have a password-protected section on the web site ("extranet") to enhance information distribution and collaboration. Documents, meeting notes and other types of basic information should be accessible through the extranet. Regular news updates for MOs should be published, and when relevant the extranet should support dialogue with and information sharing from MOs as well.

Main measurables:

- Unique web visitors per month
- Citations / Links
- Search Engine Ranking
- MOs activity on the extranet

- **Media Relations**

Media is one of the most credible channels we have to reach our target groups. Media relations include both mechanical measures (e.g. news release distribution) and personal contacts with journalists. ESF should have efficient structures for news distribution as well as media monitoring. Distribution should be possible to segment along a number of dimensions; topics, countries, type of media, media size etc.

While news distribution is a necessary basic function, the part of Media Relations with the greatest potential is personal contacts. It is vital that ESF establish and build relationships with key journalists and this should be done for the ESF as a whole and for specific scientific topics.

Press conferences are a method we should use when relevant; however, as a pan European organisation we face major difficulties. Few news organisations attend press conferences in countries where they are not represented. To solve this problem ESF should have online press conferences as an option. Other media communication tools, such as Alphagalileo, Eurekaalert and PR Newswire should also be used as a means of reaching a wide group of journalistic contacts.

Media forms the official image of ESF and has a major impact on the organisation's widely perceived image. All press activities must be planned together with the Communications Department.

Main measureables:

Media coverage (quantity/quality)

News stories aimed at media coverage

- **Network of ESF- MOs' Communication Units**

The ESF's Communication Department should establish and lead a network of communicators throughout Europe via the communications departments of the MOs. It will be a project based on mutual interest and the sharing of methods of best practice. ESF will gain better understanding of MOs and, in turn, will support their communications departments in their efforts to act as ambassadors for pan European research and ESF.

MO communication contacts will have the opportunity for secondment within the Communications Department of ESF, thereby allowing ESF and its MOs to work together directly.

Main measureables:

Establishment of the communications network

ESF information in national communication channels.

- **Support for Communication of Research**

While the Communications Department will play a lead role in communicating our activities, this should be supported by providing others within ESF with easy-to-use packages of pre-defined communication materials. These will include advertising, printed material, web communications, presentation templates, PR planning, poster production and more depending on the needs of different activities. The primary purpose is to make ESF activities more visible and to present them in a professional fashion that underscores the high quality nature of ESF activities.

It is important to remember that for certain parts of our target groups, especially the scientific community, the main point of contact is in the context of activities. What and how we communicate there will form their impression of ESF.

Events and exhibitions are crucial communication fora for reaching the scientific community directly, as well as for targeting the media via reports and stories which emerge from such events.

Support for activities is necessary when they are decided and announced, when they are implemented and finally, when results are ready to be communicated.

For each unit and specific activity of the ESF, there must be a point of contact for the Communication Department, so that all parties can be updated and included in any communication relating to them and their work.

Main measureables:

Interest in activities: Media coverage

Interest in activities: Applications, attendance etc.

• **Personal contacts**

Effective communication is much more than just mass communication. A meeting between an ESF representative and a policy maker could be our most vital communication tool in certain situations. Influence and engagement with specific personal contacts and organisations are important elements in ESF's communications.

All senior staff should be given necessary support to handle such situations, including preparations/planning, messaging development and training.

Main measurables:

Communication and media training for senior staff

Other documents

This Communication Plan will, where and when necessary, be followed up by specific policy documents and guides. Examples:

- Web policy
- Writing guide
- Guide for dealing with media
- Visual identity manual including guide for the use of ESF logo

2006- 2007 Objectives

Outlined above is the strategy and policy for ESF communication during the period 2006-2010. Presented below are specific targets for 2006 and 2007:

- Establish a network of communicators within MOs
- Build and launch the new ESF website, which will include the use of podcasts and RSS technology
- Produce stories about the research supported by the ESF, to be published on the website in order to be accessible to the media.
- Implement the new ESF logo and visual profile

- Build a network of freelance writers
- Establish a media monitoring service
- Organise tailored communication strategies for events and exhibitions. This will include the production of a detailed global event calendar, which will include all events where the ESF should be visible
- Produce all ESF posters and printed material
- Recruit and build the ESF communications team