



EUROPEAN
POLAR BOARD



Best Practice Recommendations for Polar Research Communications

V 1.0

Author/s¹

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1.0 Executive Summary/Abstract

This document represents recommendations and best practices from a broad range of communities interested in polar research communications (including EU Polar Cluster members and non-members).

2.0 Introduction

During the Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW) 2023 in Vienna, Polar Research Communications Meeting took place on 21st February 2023. 20 in-person and 7 online communications specialists representing a broad range of communities interested in polar research communications (including EU Polar Cluster members and non-members) came together and shared knowledge and best practices on various polar research communications' related topics.

3.0 Communications

3.1 Issue being addressed

Polar Research Communications

3.2 Product of Best Practice

Improved communication internal and external to Arctic programmes

3.3 Best Practice Description

3.3.1 Output: Communication tools, Stakeholders, Challenges, Response to challenges, Best practices examples

Communication tools

- **Communications tools** used by polar research communicators: website (short info summaries and infographics are recommended because attention spans are very short), a newsletter (very effective), email list, social media (planning takes a lot of effort but it is possible to monitor campaign success), [Catalyst platform](#), working groups, events, short videos (recently very popular, but challenging), science festivals (powerful way of public engagement), meeting people face-to-face.
- **Social media** is sometimes underestimated. Within social media there is a faster reaction and engagement. Different communities can be reached on every account. There is a need for reflection on planning and results, also need to use common sense (being sensible with hashtags). Social media continual engagement and support can require sustained personnel investment.

Stakeholders

- There is a need to choose correct communications tools depending on stakeholder (**need for communications strategy**). **Stakeholders** who are being addressed by the polar research communicators: scientists, policymakers (local officials or European Commissioners), NGOs, industry, indigenous and local communities, school children and others.
- To reach **a specific group of stakeholders** like **policymakers**, it is recommended to first reach out through specific contact points.
- It is also important to educate **children**. Examples of engagement: Polar Educators, museums (example of good outreach is [Klimahuset](#) in Norway), a science festival for children, summer school.
- To reach **journalists**, it is recommended to have direct contacts across all types of media - long-term contacts to utilise (at BAS there is a comms team dedicated to that), university press offices, science-media centers or to have a journalist embedded in a project

Challenges

- **EU Polar Cluster projects** have a **short-term lifecycle** and figuring out how to communicate in such a short term is difficult (there is a need for communication about their existence, outputs). **Main struggles:** make outputs accessible for policymakers and industry, budget struggles, struggles to engage media and journalists, bring them close to the scientists, reach a balanced audience (change in title sometimes helps), ensure safety of scientists (for example make sure they are not asked difficult or uncomfortable questions), build confidence for early career researchers, find best practices.
- **Main questions:** What would be needed to change for future projects to make it easier to engage with the public? What would need to change right now to make it easier to engage with communication activities and practices?

Response to challenges

- There is a need for **a communications training** for polar research communicators
- It is recommended to **provide a training / guideline for scientists** ensuring their reputation safety, making them feel like the project / institute has their back. Practical training on how to deal with communications (including how to

simplify academic language, how to select the main message, how to deal with negativity/backlash online), media, public speaking etc. Each project has its own specifics that require training.

- It is recommended to **make external communications a core part of promotion and funding** (otherwise articles are not considered worthwhile) during the stage of development of grant agreement. Exactly identify who to engage with.
- It is recommended to **simplify language, provide summaries** of outcomes, peer reviews.
- It is recommended to **include all cluster projects' webpages** on the EU Polar Cluster website and to **have a projects' sub-page within the EU Polar Cluster website** in the future (rather than create a new website for each project). This could help with **legacy issues**.

Best practices examples

- [FACE-IT project](#): Seminar on 'Constructive Reporting' in collaboration with the university's journalism study programme.
- [INTERACT project](#): Internal communication that works well within a big consortium (60 partners, 1500 TA users throughout the years) - webinars divided by group, meeting people, external communications - science festivals and booths, mass media outreach, science storybooks, highlight of simple language - many schoolchildren attend webinars, scientists use animation and illustrations, MOOC Changing Arctic helps, glossary explains terms.
- [JUSTNORTH project](#): Developing pre-materials, such as a one-page summary to put on the front of documents, leading to other documents such as a Q&A, and then further to the whole report. More of a tool than a best practice, the EU has a publication platform Open Research Europe with open peer review for research stemming from Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe and Euratom funding across all subject areas.
- [SCAR](#): When working with scientists, they set up guidelines to representatives and make sure things are inclusive and accessible.
- [Antarctic environment portal by SCAR](#) (link between Antarctic science and Antarctic policy): The portal originated from the need for science at the fingertips of policymakers and provides understandable summaries of Antarctic science relevant topics, summaries of topics passed on to Antarctic treaty members. Community-driven approach, experts and topics when

something is missing, always looking for new authors.

- **[PROPOLAR](#)**: The Portuguese Polar Programme promotes the engagement of researchers in education activities twice per year in cooperation with APECS and polar Polar Educators International. Through this initiative they are able to engage many schools - this is important for the visibility and implementation of the educational objectives of PROPOLAR. Within the programme, they engage scientists in outreach, so they produce diaries from the field and bring scientists to schools. During the field season, projects funded by PROPOLAR engage also with the general public through weekly tweets reporting the activities.
- **[Ocean Best Practices System \(OBPS\)](#)**: One of the big challenges is to find the best practices and document them, then sustain those documents. OBPS, part of UNESCO IOC, provides coordinated and global access to best practices and standards across ocean sciences and applications (simplified and discoverable). Currently, OBPS has an Arctic Practices pilot to host a broad range of practices relevant to the Arctic including a capacity sharing hub.
- **[Arctic PASSION](#)**: HAs direct dialogue and cooperation with Local and Indigenous knowledge holders to co-create project services, i.e. the upcoming sharing circle; a popular offering has been [free webinars with a professional journalist on science communication and storytelling](#).
- **[ECOTIP](#)**: Has offered a summer school to Early Career Researchers, enabling them to be ambassadors and take over the project social media posts; hosted a webinar on project contribution to IPCC reports and joint policy briefing event to policymakers.

4.0 Main Recommendations and Best Practices

The Communications meeting at ASSW2023 in Vienna focused mainly on following areas related to communications: communication tools, stakeholders, challenges and best practices sharing. The main challenges identified by the projects included making outputs accessible for policymakers and industry, budget struggles, struggles to engage media and journalists, bring them close to the scientists, reach a balanced audience, ensure mental safety of scientists, build confidence for early career researchers, find best practices. In the context of these challenges, the participants came up with following recommendations:

- It is important to choose the correct communication tools and the right level of language depending on stakeholders (considering its advantages and disadvantages) without underestimating social media.
- To reach a specific group of stakeholders like policymakers and journalists, it is recommended to first reach out through specific contact points that have these trusted connections.
- Considering that communications products produced by projects may have a life longer than projects themselves, legacy planning is needed to ensure that these products remain available and useful well beyond the projects' lifetime.
- It is recommended to provide communications training both for communicators and scientists (each project has its own specifics that require training).
- More importance should be placed on communications of projects with relevant stakeholders who are not participating in the project, especially during development of their grant agreements.

Summary of best practices shared during the meeting:

- As it is important to choose correct communication tools, regarding external communications, FACE-IT focuses on media / social media, as well as INTERACT that focuses on mass media outreach, science storybooks, but also reaches a broader audience through in-person meetings, festivals and booths.
- In order to reach specific groups of stakeholders considering various communication tools, there are good examples of PROPOLAR that engages scientists in outreach to reach younger generations, SCAR reaches policymakers by providing understandable summaries of Antarctic science relevant topics via Antarctic environment portal. JUSTNORTH plans to use a publication platform called Open Research Europe to engage in an open and public dialogue.
- Considering legacy planning, the UNESCO IOC Ocean Best Practices System (OBPS) (www.oceanbestpractices.org) provides coordinated and global access to best practices and standards across ocean sciences and applications.

5.0 Annexes

5.1 Acronyms

APECS - Association of Polar Early Career Scientists

ASSW – Arctic Science Summit Week

BAS – British Antarctic Survey

IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

MOOC - Massive open online course

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

OBPS - Ocean Best Practices System

PROPOLAR - Programa Polar Português (Portuguese Polar Program)

SCAR - Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research

UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO IOC - The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO

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