EURAXESS TOPIV

Open EURAXESS – To strengthen the effectiveness and optimize the services of all partners in an innovative and open EURAXESS network

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Evaluation of implementation of the communication plan

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04/03/2020	Version 1.0 by BZN incorporating input from Nuffic
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Executive summary

This report follows up on the deliverable *Share, Engage & Motivate* (D6.4, Communication Plan of EURAXESS TOP IV). The report assesses the state of art regarding the implementation of each activity in D6.4 was assessed, both qualitatively (by a survey targeting the national EURAXESS network coordinators) and quantitatively (by collecting the available dissemination and usage data). The combined results of the assessment suggest that parts of the Communication Plan have been adequately implemented generating interest and impact in the network; however, there areas which need improvement, most importantly in making the results available and then making them known and used by the EURAXESS network. The last section of the report lists a number of recommendations on how to make the Communication Plan work better for EURAXESS, focusing chiefly, but not exclusively, on the remaining lifetime of the EURAXESS TOP IV project (until summer 2021).

The author is grateful for the input provided by Nuffic to the contents of the report.

Evaluation of implementation of the communication plan

1. Introduction

A strength of the pan-European EURAXESS network is the knowledge it has accumulated in diverse fields pertaining to the career and mobility of researchers. Network member institutions and staff have at hand various long-term cooperative partnerships, networking platforms and online tools to link the researchers' community and the business world through the EURAXESS services. In addition, network members are encouraged to use the network as a professional resource to learn, develop and refine knowledge and competences needed for their daily work.

Serving the principles above, the specific objectives of Work package 6 in EURAXESS TOP IV are to design, create support for and implement a comprehensive communication philosophy and cooperation strategy; to enhance the attractiveness of the EURAXESS network and embed EURAXESS stronger in the European Research Area; and to raise the visibility and the impact of the EURAXESS network. As one of the deliverables in the work package, a communication plan entitled *Share, Engage & Motivate* was published to this end by Nuffic in February 2019. The communication plan lists 13 activities to be implemented, targeting three distinct target groups, all within the EURAXESS network.

The present evaluation follows up on *Share, Engage & Motivate* and aims to assess the following:

- how well the Communication Plan is known among the national EURAXESS networks;
- to what extent it is being used in EURAXESS related communication activities; and
- how it could be improved for better impact.

To ensure a wide take-up of the evaluation, it will be shared with the whole EURAXESS network, following its finalisation, in April 2020.

2. Methodology of the evaluation

The evaluation focuses on two distinct aspects:

- assessing qualitatively the use and effectiveness of the communication activities developed or proposed in *Share, Engage & Motivate* by the EURAXESS national networks themselves, typically represented by their Bridgehead Organisations (BHOs),
- assessing quantitatively the dissemination measures that have been implemented up to date with respect to the same communication activities.

By looking at both aspects, a combined picture will be available about the implementation status of *Share, Engage & Motivate* which will in turn lead to proposing further measures and recommendations for improvements. The recommendations will especially focus on implementing communication activities through the Network Call vehicle, the direct support scheme running within EURAXESS TOP IV that is available to all national EURAXESS networks to implement national level activities.

2.1 Qualitative assessment

For the qualitative assessment of the Communication Plan, an online survey was designed, comprising of 10 questions. The contents of the survey are included in Annex 1. Out of the 13 activities in the Communication Plan, 12 activities are referred to in the survey. (The present evaluation, included as activity 2, was excluded).

The request to fill in the survey was sent primarily to those BHOs in each EURAXESS country that are also managing Network Call projects in EURAXESS TOP IV. This is due to the specific questions in the survey that refer to the Network Call. Before the deadline, a reminder about the survey was also sent to all Bridgehead Coordinators (94 persons).

2.2 Quantitative assessment

For the quantitative assessment, the state of play regarding each of the actions listed in the Communication Plan was outlined. This included data on the completeness, availability, potential updates, and planned use of each action. It is clear that the communication plan needs appropriate dissemination measures within the EURAXESS network to be adequately known and used. Therefore emphasis was given to collecting data on the dissemination and usage of the actions, to be able to assess the already achieved impact of each action.

Data for the quantitative assessment were provided by Nuffic, task leader of EURAXESS TOP IV Task 6.2 (A coherent communication plan for EURAXESS) and author of the deliverable *Share, Engage & Motivate.*
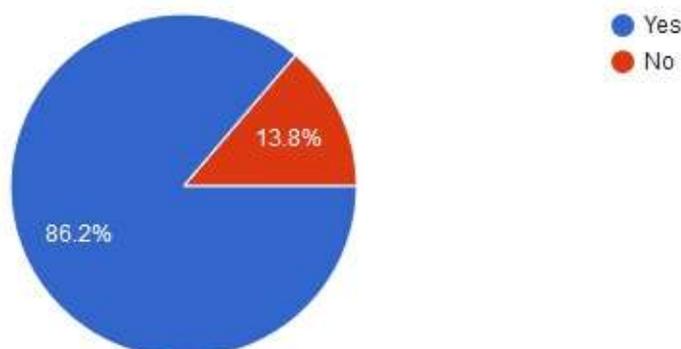
3. Survey results

The survey was filled in by 29 BHOs, representing 29 countries (out of the 42 total). This gives a response rate of 69%.
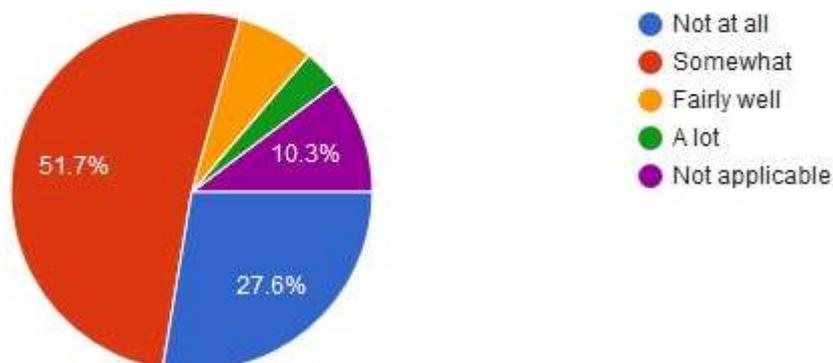
Section: Basic questions

2. Do you know the document Share, Engage and Motivate (Communication Plan – D6.4 of EURAXESS TOP IV)?

29 responses

3. If you answered Yes to question 2, to what extent have you used the above Communication Plan in your own work or in your EURAXESS network?

29 responses

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Fairly well
- A lot
- Not applicable

51.7%
10.3%
27.6%

4. To what extent do you think you need assistance with communication in your own work or in your EURAXESS network?

29 responses

- Not at all needed
- Somewhat needed
- Fairly well needed
- Very much needed

31%
58.6%
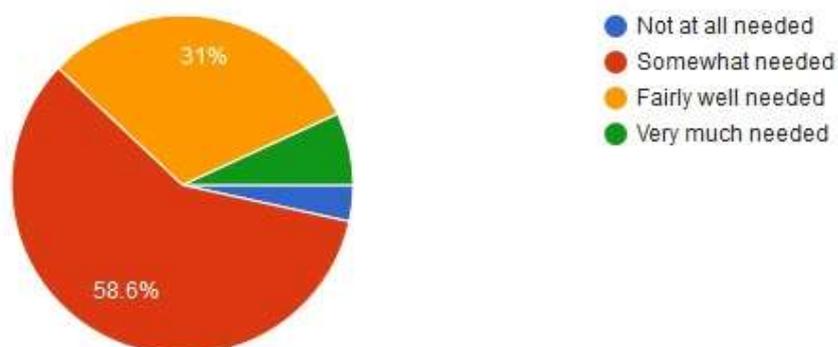
Results of section:

The majority of respondents know the Communication Plan. However, overall usage of it (up until the time of the survey) is limited. Half of the respondents have used it "somewhat" and almost 38% have either not used it or have not even known about it. Only about 10% have used it "fairly well" or "a lot".

In general, assistance with communication in EURAXESS related work is seen as "somewhat" to "fairly well" needed. Only one respondent (out of 29) does not need assistance.

Section: Implementation of the Communication Plan

5. How much have you used the activities / tools provided in the Communication Plan?
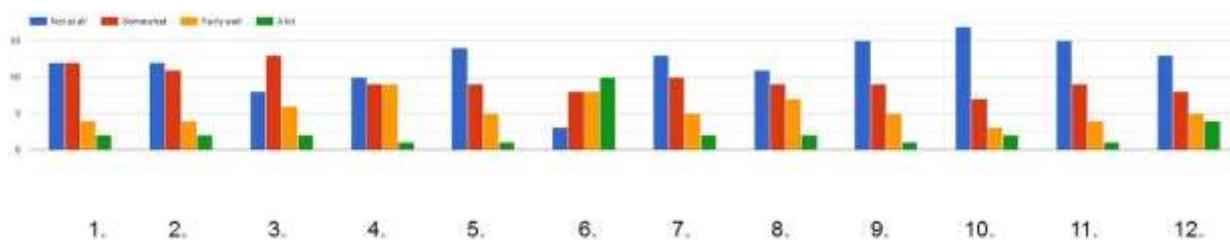
Key to answers:
Blue – Not at all
Red – Somewhat
Orange – Fairly well
Green – A lot
Activities are numbered from 1 to 12.

Results of section:
The majority of respondents, despite knowing the Communication Plan, have not used it. The answer "Not at all" is the most frequently chosen for 10 actions (out of 12), with the other answers (from more to less negative) coming in decreasing order. The three least used activities are:
- EURAXESS Ambassador train the trainer module
- Elevator pitches explaining the EURAXESS network and its services
- Communication facility for the TOP IV project

The one exception to the trend is the EURAXESS4me online newsletter, which is used "a lot" or "fairly well" by most respondents. Only 3 respondents (~10%) have not used it at all. The newsletter is also ranked as one of the most useful activities in the plan (see question 7).

Section: Evaluation of the Communication Plan

6. Please indicate how relevant you think the EURAXESS TOP IV Communication Plan overall is for your work.

29 responses
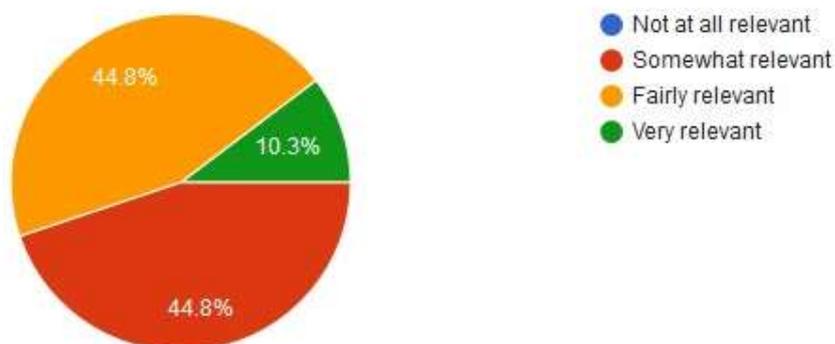
7. Please rank the activities of the Communication Plan according to usefulness, from 1 being the most useful to 12 being the less useful. Please mark only one response in each column.
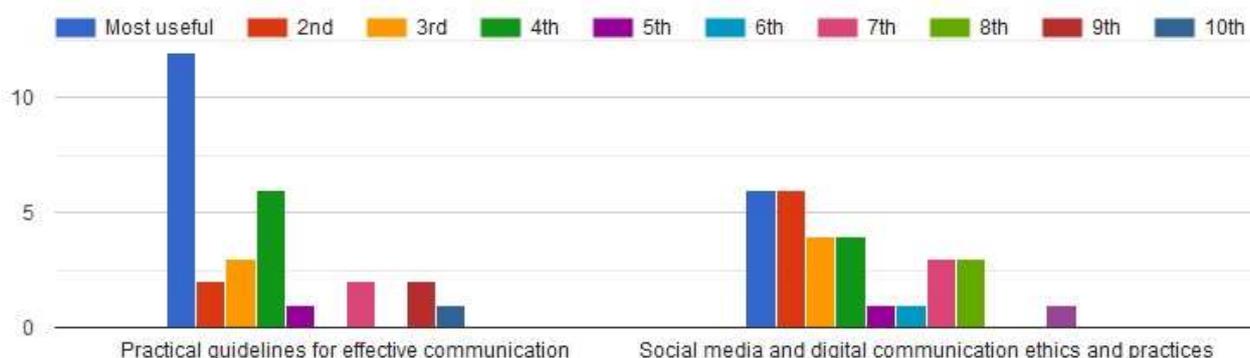

Key to answers: Respondents needed to assign a rank to each activity (from 1 to 12, 1 being the most useful and 12 the least useful.) Because of technical limitations of the survey platform, each rank could be used more than once, resulting in an uneven distribution of high-ranking versus low-ranking activities. respondents preferred assigning mostly high ranks (1 to 4), then low ranks (12-13) but not the middle ones. Still, the frequency of highest and lowest ranks gives a faithful pictures of the usefulness assessed by the respondents.

Results of section:

Respondents think the Communication Plan overall is either "somewhat" relevant" or "fairly relevant" for their work (either answer is equally chosen by 45% of respondents). Only 10% think it is "very relevant" for them. This coincides with the planned usage data (see question 9).

As for the usefulness of the individual activities, the most useful are (in decreasing order):

- Practical guidelines for effective communication (12 times assigned to 1st rank)
- Online EURAXESS newsletter (EURAXESS4me) (11 times assigned to 1st rank)
- Social media and digital communication ethics and practices (6 times assigned to 1st rank)
- Horizontal network of communication contacts within the EURAXESS network (6 times assigned to 1st rank)
- EURAXESS Ambassador training (6 times assigned to 1st rank)

Looking at combined ranks, the activity chosen most frequently as most, 2nd, 3rd or 4th useful is the Overview of instruments to communicate about EURAXESS and its services (chosen 26 times as either of the first 4 in rank). The runner up to most frequently chosen is Practical guidelines for effective communication (chosen 23 times).

Section: Your recommendations

9. Please indicate to what extent you plan to use the activities of the Communication Plan in your national Network Call project.

29 responses

- Not at all / Up to 2 activities
- Somewhat / 3-5 activities
- Fairly well / 6-8 activities
- A lot / 9 or more activities
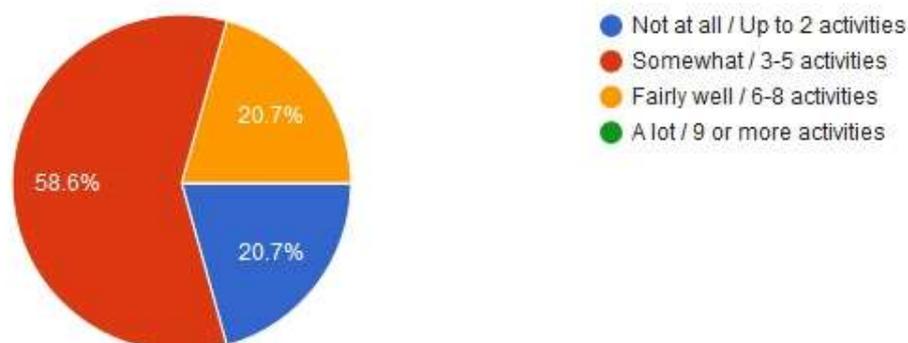
Results of section:

Planned usage is mediocre. Significantly, no respondent plans to use more than 8 activities (out of the 12 surveyed). The majority of respondents plan to use 3-5 activities. Planned usage that is less (up to 2 activities) or more (6-8 activities) is evenly distributed around the majority.

Conclusions of the survey results

Despite widespread general knowledge about the Communication Plan (the degree or depth of which is not known), it is not well used and the activities in it are not frequently implemented. One exception is the EURAXESS4me newsletter, which is both well used and deemed as useful. (This might be due to its intensive dissemination among the EURAXESS community).

Notwithstanding the above status quo, the Communication Plan is evaluated as of medium relevance and future usage corresponds to this evaluation with 5-6 activities (out of the 12) selected on average as those that will be used in the future. Plans for the future use by the national EURAXESS networks therefore exceed the degree of past use.

4. Dissemination and usage of *Share, Engage & Motivate*

With respect to the initial version of *Share, Engage & Motivate,* the completion date and availability of some of the listed actions have changed. These changes obviously impacted the take-up of the respective actions by the EURAXESS Network. In the cases when an action was not completed and available by the time of completing this report, efforts need to focus on the subsequent dissemination after the action is available and still within the duration of EURAXESS TOP IV.

Assessment of actions from *Share, Engage & Motivate*

Activity	Dissemination / usage data
Practical guidelines for effective communication	Not available/finalised yet. It will be available jointly with "Overview of instruments to communicate about EURAXESS and its services" and "Analysis of existing communication channels within the EURAXESS network". The initial version

	will be available in project month 25 (September 2020). Testing and finalisation will follow and the final version will be available in month 34 (June 2021).
Social media and digital communication ethics and practices	Available as EURAXESS TOP IV deliverable D6.5 Presented to the participants of the EURAXESS TOP IV Network-wide training in November 2019 (50 participants from EURAXESS centres).
Overview of instruments to communicate about EURAXESS and its services	See the first activity above
Horizontal network of communication contacts within the EURAXESS network	Work in progress, launched in February 2020 via the Online EURAXESS newsletter (EURAXESS4me). It will be finalised and available in month 22 (June 2020).
Analysis of existing communication channels within the EURAXESS network	See the first activity above
Online EURAXESS newsletter (EURAXESS4me)	The online EURAXESS newsletter was launched in May 2019 with the first issue. To date five newsletters have been published at two-month intervals. Material for the newsletter is contributed by the EURAXESS network members via the editors' call for content and directly by the editors themselves. Each edition of the newsletter is distributed by e-mail to all EURAXESS extranet users (more than 1300 persons) and they are also available directly on the EURAXESS Extranet.
EURAXESS Ambassador training	Several opportunities have been and are planned to be used to implement this training within the EURAXESS TOP IV project lifetime. Past events: • Portal Administrators meeting, March 2019 (presentation, 40 participants) • BHO meeting, March 2019 (presentation, 40 participants) • Biannual EURAXESS conference, May 2019 (presentation and elevator pitch contest, 200 participants) • EURAXESS TOP IV Network-wide training, November 2019 (150 participants) In total, to date approximately 325 network members were informed about and trained in how to become a EURAXESS Ambassador. Future opportunities: • EURAXESS TOP IV regional trainings • Network Call national trainings and Book the Trainer Scheme • Biannual EURAXESS conference, 2021 The online training module will be developed and made available for either standalone use or in combination with training events by project month 27 (November 2020).
Fan explaining the EURAXESS network and its services	In May 2019 the first version of the fan was developed for the biannual EURAXESS Conference. An updated second version was produced in November 2019. The fan of services as a hard copy is available from Nuffic upon request. The same goes for the online do-it-yourself edition. 250 copies of the first version were produced and disseminated during the biannual EURAXESS Conference. 400 copies of the second version were produced (125 copies have been sent for free to ENO's in 8 different EURAXESS countries). Three countries have applied and received the virtual module to translate the fan of services into their national language.
Elevator pitches explaining the EURAXESS network and its services	This activity will be integrated into the online EURAXESS Ambassador training, see above
EURAXESS Ambassador train the	This activity will be integrated into the online EURAXESS

trainer module	Ambassador training, see above
Communication facility for the TOP IV project	This activity is meant for the EURAXESS TOP IV project and its implementation depends on whether the project coordinator shows sufficient interest in it. Up to now the existing communication channels to communicate with project partners -like email- proved to be sufficient.
TOPIV project website (https://euraxess-top.eu/)	The project website has been set up technically, but has no content yet. Time and resources permitting, content is now available for upload to the website. The foreseen finalisation date is project month 22 (June 2020).

In addition, *Share, Engage and Motivate* in its entirety was presented to the participants of the EURAXESS BHO Meeting in March 2019 (40 participants from BHO institutions).

Conclusions from the dissemination and usage data

The activities of *Share, Engage and Motivate* show a varying degree of completeness, availability and usage by the EURAXESS network. The activities that have been available first, such as the EURAXESS 4me newsletter and the fan of services, are adequately disseminated and used, as also confirmed by the survey.

The update from the first version of the document confirms that some activities will be available at a later point in the project, including the Guidelines, the overview of instruments and the analysis of existing channels. This creates the risk whether adequate resources will be devoted to making them known and used in the network – especially because the Network Call, which would provide funding for this, will close in June 2021.

5. Recommendations

Based on the results of the evaluation, five recommendations can be made:

1. **More intensive and focused dissemination is needed for the contents of the Communication Plan.** The individual actions and their supporting tools / project results need to be made better known in depth. Their relevance and use in assisting specific communication goals need to be emphasised. At the same time, efforts must be made to avoid confusion with similar ongoing initiatives – for example, the *Promotion plan/model with instruments* (D6.7 of EURAXESS TOP IV) and its adaptation now forming part of the network strategy in the Promotion Assessment Tool)
2. **Better promotion of the individual activities**. The goal, intended use and available support for each of the activities need to be clarified and actively promoted to the relevant target groups.
3. **The resources related to the activities need to be made easily available**. Currently, some of these resources (e.g. selected project deliverables, PowerPoint presentations) are available in the EURAXESS Extranet library (also referenced in this report, whenever it is the case). Others are available on request from the author. However, they are not collected systematically and their use is not facilitated by easy access. Therefore available channels should be better used to make them accessible, such as the EURAXESS4me newsletter, the EURAXESS TOP IV project website, the Extranet Wall or targeted emailing through the EURAXESS emailer.

4. **Advice on opportunities and measures to implement the activities is needed.** Once the EURAXESS network is aware of the relevance and use of the Communication Plan, they need clear advice on how to implement it. Since a number of useful opportunities for this already exist in EURAXESS, the link needs to be clarified and the opportunities spelled out (including: upcoming trainings, study visits, network meetings, conferences, project events and any further opportunities provided by the Network Call).

5. **The Communication Plan needs to be updated and version 2 released.** The content of the original plan, released in May 2019, is now obsolete. The details of some actions changed, and several were merged with thematically related others. None of the actions in the first release have links or references to resources (see point 3 above). Furthermore, a possible update should also consider the set of recommendations provided here and by the survey respondents and include details on the practical application of the communication actions.

For the complete list of recommendations by the survey respondents, please see Annex 1 below.

Annex 1

Survey form

EURAXESS TOP IV
D6.6 Evaluation of implementation of communication plan
Survey for BHOs for the evaluation

Background and objectives
The aim of this survey is to gather information on the working, results and impact of *Share, Engage and Motivate* – the communication plan produced as Deliverable 6.4 in EURAXESS TOP IV.
BZN as the responsible partner for the evaluation kindly asks all BHOs to fill in the survey. By submitting the answers, the BHOs thus contribute to learning about:

- how well the Communication Plan is known among the national EURAXESS networks;
- to what extent it is being used in EURAXESS related communication activities; and
- how it could be improved for a better impact.

The outcome of this survey will feed into the deliverable *D6.6 Evaluation of implementation of communication plan*, a document that aims to boost the usage and the impact of the Communication Plan during the second half of the EURAXESS TOP IV project. A specific section of this deliverable will focus on how to use the Network Call funds for communication activities.
The deliverable will be shared with the network in April 2020.

References:
"Share, Engage and Motivate" - EURAXESS TOPIV WP6 Communication Plan:
https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/file/64306/download?token=jghRBYNF
Presentation about the Communication Plan:
https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/file/53746/download?token=q38tbIBa

Questions of the survey

1. **Which country do you represent?** (free text)
2. **Do you know the document *Share, Engage and Motivate* (Communication plan – D6.4 of EURAXESS TOP IV)?** Yes/No
3. **If you answered Yes to question 2, to what extent have you used the communication plan in your own work or in your EURAXESS network?**
   1-Not at all
   2-Somewhat
   3-Fairly well
   4-A lot
   5-Not applicable
4. **To what extent do you think you need assistance with communication in your own work or in your EURAXESS network?**
   1-Not at all needed
   2-Somewhat needed
   3-Fairly well needed
   4-Very much needed

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNICATION PLAN
5. **Please indicate how much you have used the activities/tools provided in the communication plan. Provide an answer for each of the 12 activities.**

Activity/Usage	Not at all	Somewhat	Fairly well	A lot
Practical guidelines for effective communication				
Social media and digital communication ethics and practices				
Overview of instruments to communicate about EURAXESS and its services				
Horizontal network of communication contacts within the EURAXESS network				
Analysis of existing communication channels within the EURAXESS network				
Online EURAXESS newsletter (EURAXESS4me)				
EURAXESS Ambassador training				
Fan explaining the EURAXESS network and its services				
Elevator pitches explaining the EURAXESS network and its services				
EURAXESS Ambassador train the trainer module				
Communication facility for the TOP IV project				
TOPIV project website (https://euraxess-top.eu/)				

EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNICATION PLAN
6. **Please indicate how relevant you think the communication plan overall is for your work.**
    1-Not at all relevant
    2-Somewhat relevant
    3-Fairly relevant
    4-Very relevant

7. **Please rank the activities of the communication plan according to usefulness, from 1 being the most useful to 12 being the less useful:** (rank)

Activity	Rank
Practical guidelines for effective communication	
Social media and digital communication ethics and practices	
Overview of instruments to communicate about EURAXESS and its services	
Horizontal network of communication contacts within the EURAXESS network	
Analysis of existing communication channels within the EURAXESS network	
Online EURAXESS newsletter (EURAXESS4me)	
EURAXESS Ambassador training	
Fan explaining the EURAXESS network and	

its services	
Elevator pitches explaining the EURAXESS network and its services	
EURAXESS Ambassador train the trainer module	
Communication facility for the TOP IV project	
TOPIV project website (https://euraxess-top.eu/)	

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. **Please describe what content you would add to the communication plan to make it better.** (free text)

9. **Please indicate to what extent you plan to use the activities of the communication plan in your national Network Call project.**
   1-Not at all / Up to 2 activities
   2-Somewhat / 3 – 5 activities
   3-Fairly well / 6 - 8 activities
   4-A lot / 9 or more activities

10. **Any further comments on the Communication Plan are welcome!**(free text)

List of answers to Question 8

"Content recommended to make the plan better":

- I think a simple generic matrix of stakeholders, products, and outcomes. Something like: external stakeholders (for example the Municipality), what products EURAXESS can offer and what is the benefit to them.
- Power Point or YouTube general presentations of Euraxess, and also focusing on industry
- Extracts from the "Communication Strategy FINAL_ogilvy"
- Perhaps the (organizational) scheme or a flowchart with listed general policy activities is missing.
- Direct links for communication with EURAXESS worldwide contacts...but it has emerged in one of the Newsletters after the Prague
- NO ADDITIONAL CONTENT - TRAINING IS NEEDED
- examples of possible Google Adwords campaigns and/or Facebook campaigns in order to increase the visibility at national level
- Examples from national network communication
- attractive elevator pitch Youtube clip to promote euraxess on our social media channels
- I would appreciate the links to the already implemented deliverables. This is really a good and ambitious planning tool for the partners taking part in the WP. I appreciate to have an overview of what is planned in the WP and the activities are interesting indeed. However, as the final output I would suggest for it to be structured around the delivered outputs, not the process.
- Communication strategy for different target groups and ways to make the services as useful as possible to wider range of talents.
- Ways to better exploit national portals. It may overlap with PA administrators work, but I am sure that most would be happy to have content suggestions for news, events, service centres activities, etc.
- As Georgia is newcomer, we are developing services step-by-step and this communication plan is quit useful and meets our current needs.

- I would appreciate an overview of all documents (deliverables) of the Communication Plan or access via one source.
- Either in 3. "developing social media and digital communication ethics and practices" or 4. overview of instruments to communicate about EURAXESS and its services: would be interesting to consider TECHNICAL ASPECTS (add ons, social media support programmes that proved useful for (certain) EURAXESS (members) in the past for an efficient spread of content. / Equally interesting from my perspective: INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS FOR SPREADING EURAXESS RELATED CONTENT that have been identified inside the EU and worldwide network (overlaps across countries, since heterogeneous national institutional landscapes)
- None at the moment

List of answers to Question 10

"Any further comments":

- I am not well aware of the communication plan in practice.
- Good job! The future emphasis perhaps should be on networking.
- Thank you for your work. The problem is not the plan, but the time and resources. That is why we have to prioritize our activities.
- Thanks for a great and very useful work ! our National network is so limited and present but I will be definitely using the activates to work with our stakeholders/network - motivate them to become a very well aware component of EURAXESS Ireland family
- Just a comment on a response that might be surprising with view to the degree of knowledge about the Communication plan: I was not aware of the document before, but read it to be able to duly answer the survey. Thanks for your efforts with giving us valuable instruments at hand!
- For the time being, we have not used many of the CP activities, but we plan to refer to them in the future.