


ECHA External Communications Strategy 2024-2028

An abstract graphic consisting of three overlapping, rounded, teardrop-like shapes in a vibrant yellow color. These shapes are set against a solid dark blue background. The shapes are arranged in a way that they appear to be part of a larger, stylized letter or symbol, possibly 'E' or 'A', though they are not fully defined. The top shape is on the right, the middle one is on the left, and the bottom one is on the right, overlapping the middle one.

Legal notice

This publication is solely intended for information purposes and does not necessarily represent the official opinion of the European Chemicals Agency. The European Chemicals Agency is not responsible for the use that may be made of the information contained in this document.

ECHA External Communications Strategy 2024-2028

Reference: ECHA-24-R-01-EN
ISBN: 978-92-9468-353-3
Cat. Number: ED-05-24-224-EN-N
DOI: 10.2823/301732
Date: March 2024
Language: English

© European Chemicals Agency, 2024
Cover page © European Chemicals Agency

If you have any comments in relation to this document please send them (indicating the document reference, issue date, chapter and/or page of the document to which your comment refers) using the information request form. The information request form can be accessed via the Contact ECHA page at:

<http://echa.europa.eu/contact>

European Chemicals Agency

P.O. Box 400, FI-00121 Helsinki, Finland



Introduction

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has, since its establishment in 2007, transparently communicated its priorities and activities to its different audiences.

One of the key challenges facing ECHA is to ensure that its role, objectives and policies are effectively communicated to a diverse range of stakeholders via appropriate communications channels. One of the priorities for the period 2024 to 2028 will be the effective communication of ECHA's role in implementing its mandate, its achievements in its work for chemical safety, and the preparation for any new areas of responsibility.

Communications is the responsibility of everyone in the organisation, with the Communications Unit ensuring it is implemented, measured and supported across ECHA.

Aim of the Strategy

The aim of the External Communications Strategy 2024-2028 is to support the delivery of ECHA's vision of:

chemical safety through science, collaboration and knowledge

This strategy sets out how external and stakeholder communications, including the ECHA Stakeholder Engagement Approach, support the delivery of ECHA's Strategy 2024-2028 in a coherent and coordinated way. Implemented effectively, it will support the delivery of ECHA's mandate, purpose, vision and goals by:

- building, maintaining and protecting ECHA's reputation by enhancing its visibility and stakeholder engagement;
- promoting chemical safety through science, collaboration and knowledge;
- positioning ECHA as the EU's chemicals agency;
- ensuring that relevant, reliable and objective information is available for the public and interested parties; and
- optimising communications channels for effective outreach.

The strategic communications objectives support ECHA's strategic objectives and activities, as defined in the ECHA Strategy 2024-2028, the 2025-27 Single Programming Document, the Annual Work Programmes. The ECHA Stakeholder Engagement Approach is an implementing element of the external communications strategy.

Strategic communications objectives

ECHA's communications focus on proactive, clear and strategic activities, promoting its work and achievements. The communications objectives, included in the Annual Work Programme, are designed to reflect, align with, and support, ECHA's corporate goals and evolving mandate. They serve as the foundation on which all communications activities are built.

The objectives, which the Communications Unit's work will support in liaison with colleagues across the organisation, are to ensure that:

1. ECHA's communication is effective, transparent, targeted and timely; and
2. ECHA maintains open and transparent engagement with all stakeholders.

Guiding Values

The communications objectives will be guided by ECHA's values of integrity, transparency, collaboration and innovation.

These values will inform our work in the following manner:

1. Integrity – our communications activity will be conducted in a fair, consistent and independent manner, while upholding the highest professional standards;
2. Transparency – we will be open, understandable and accessible in our communications;
3. Collaboration – we will collaborate, cooperate and consult with our partners and stakeholders to support the delivery of our shared goals and priorities;
4. Innovation – we will exploit new media channels and methods to disseminate and promote ECHA's work, continuously reviewing and responding to changing circumstances.

Adhering to these values in our working methods will allow us to consistently engage with our external audiences, while communicating about our work in a more accessible manner.

Activities in Support of Communications Objectives

The Communications Unit, with the aim of supporting the agency's communications objectives, will undertake the following activities:

- identify the outcomes that communications activities aim to achieve for individual actions;
- forward planning to identify key issues and linked communications opportunities;
- implement ECHA's stakeholder engagement approach to identify audiences, their needs and how we should interact;
- develop key messages on ECHA's key activities;
- use appropriate channels for messaging according to topic and audience;
- ensure consistency in delivery of messages and presentation;
- work closely with colleagues across ECHA and National Competent Authorities;
- cooperate closely with EU agencies and EU institutions;
- use integrated project-based approach to communications activities and;
- develop metrics to measure communications activities impact.

A communications action plan will be produced annually defining ECHA's key communications activities, priorities, objectives, key performance indicators and actions.

Key messages

ECHA's mandate, purpose, vision and goals provide ECHA with its base high-level messages which should be reflected in all our activities and highlighted in communications with stakeholders.

The agency's high-level key messages in the period 2024 to 2028 are that ECHA:

1. supports chemical safety through science, collaboration and knowledge;
2. delivers on its legal mandate using independent expertise and robust data;
3. is ready for new tasks and will inform the development of EU chemical and environmental policy;
4. collaborates with stakeholders and partners, and strengthens public confidence; and
5. works together with its partners and stakeholders to achieve its vision.

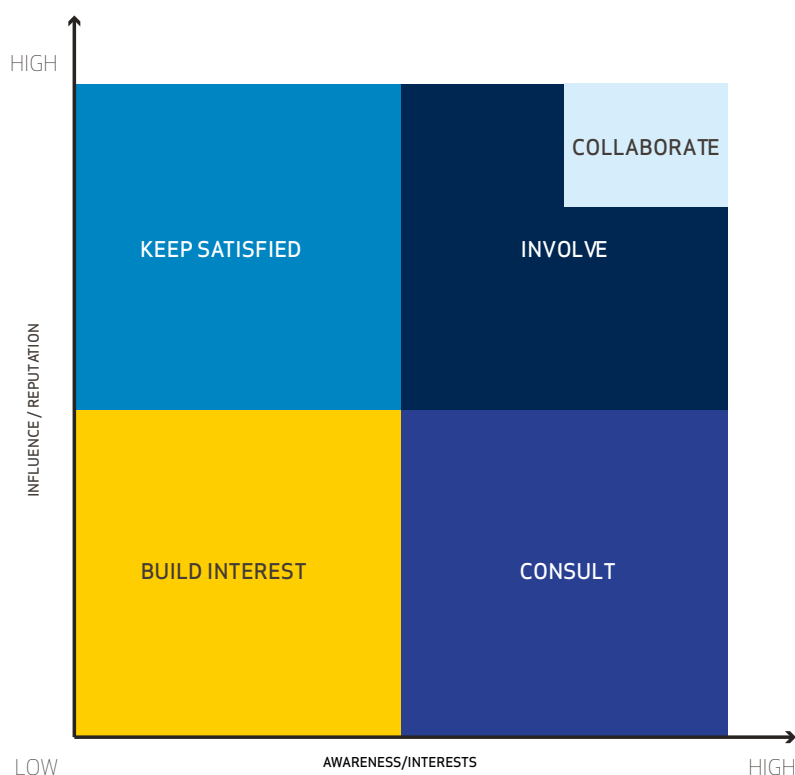
These are the corporate level key messages that will inform, and be referenced in, all our communications activities. In addition to these high-level messages, more specific key messages will be systematically developed for different topics and stakeholder groups.

Key audiences

The effectiveness of our communications activities depends on reaching our key stakeholder audiences – those we want to speak to – with relevant, reliable and objective information. This helps them comply with the EU's chemicals regulations, engage with ECHA and contribute our work. Understanding our stakeholders' needs, allow us to tailor messages accordingly and use the appropriate communications methods and channels to engage them effectively.

Stakeholders are defined as any organisations, associations, groups, or individuals capable of impacting or being impacted by the work and goals of ECHA. Our main stakeholder groups are those having the highest impact and so should be especially considered in all ECHA's activities to ensure effective engagement.

The audiences outlined below are based on ECHA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach which has identified the different stakeholder categories with whom ECHA needs to engage, based on an influence-interest mapping grid.





ECHA's key target audiences are:

- Industry – Chemical manufacturers, importers, downstream users small-medium sized enterprises (SMEs), and other companies involved in chemicals supply chains having regulatory obligations under the EU chemicals legislation in ECHA's remit. This often includes small, medium, and micro (SME) sized companies;
- European industry associations – EU level trade associations representing duty holders and actors in the chemical supply chain, but also broader industry impacted by EU chemicals regulation and ECHA's activities, who have compliance obligations but also influence opinion and policy;
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) – bodies representing parties or sectors that have an interest in ECHA's work, may be affected by it and can influence public opinion and policy. These include NGOs representing public health, environmental and animal welfare interests and consumer bodies;
- Trade unions and workers' representatives in relation to chemical safety for workers in the workplace;
- Academia and scientific community – academics, scientists, universities and research institutions focusing on chemicals and regulatory science who are a source of knowledge, research and innovation in the field;
- General public – as the end users of regulated products, but also capable of influencing opinion;
- Authorities in EU/EEA/EFTA Member States – National authorities with responsibility for the EU legislation under ECHA's remit in the EU and EEA/EFTA countries. These bodies influence and decide on chemical safety policy but also determine its application across the EU;
- EU Institutional Partners and Agencies – EU institutions, particularly the European Parliament, Commission, Council, Court of Auditors and Ombudsman, as well as EU agencies particularly in the environmental (ENVI) domain, including European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), European Environment Agency (EEA), European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA); and
- ECHA staff and community – all ECHA employees, committee members and potential recruits.

5. Communications channels and tools

ECHA uses an array of channels and tools to promote its activities and achievements to its key stakeholder audiences. This section outlines the primary communications vehicles and methods that will be used by ECHA in support of its communications and corporate goals.

The aim is to use the appropriate channels and tools, individually and in combination, for messaging to stakeholder audiences according to each initiative, its relevance and the aim of the communication i.e. to raise awareness, inform or encourage/require action. This approach will ensure that our communications are comprehensive and targeted. The effectiveness of the different channels and tools in achieving will be assessed and adapted accordingly.

Their use will be guided by our values of integrity, transparency, collaboration and innovation.

The channels and tools are:

Media Outreach

Media relations:	establish and maintain relationships with key journalists across the EU through regular contact programmes;
Press releases and news items:	regular and proactive updates to mainstream and specialised media aimed at driving media coverage of ECHA's activities;
Interviews and briefings:	proactively provide opportunities for the media to interact with ECHA senior management and experts on key topics and activities;
Media issues management:	actively monitor thematic discussions related to ECHA's activities and proactively identify potential issues;
Key Messages:	systematic development of key messages per topic/issue for use with media and stakeholder groups as appropriate;
Newsletter:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • weekly highlights newsletter email to media contacts and stakeholders; • the newsletter may be developed to include articles on areas targeting specific stakeholder audiences;

Stakeholder Communications

Stakeholder engagement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess and refine ECHA's approach to stakeholder engagement with the introduction of the new approach • NGO-ECHA Dialogue and regular interaction with trade associations, consumer bodies, trade unions and environmental advocacy groups; • develop and maintain relations with counterparts at key stakeholders;
Events:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECHA Conference to be held at regular 2-year intervals; • Accredited Stakeholder Organisations (ASOs) introductory sessions;
Speaking appearances:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leveraging ECHA's standing to use these opportunities for the consistent promotion of our messages; • identifying the topics ECHA wants to speak about based on ECHA's annual stakeholder priorities; • targeting audiences, based on internal and external feedback, who ECHA wants to reach with its message; • proactively ensuring ECHA is represented in key fora and on key topics, in line with ECHA's annual stakeholder priorities;
Member State Communicators' Network:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborate with national authorities' communication teams to support their work and leverage ECHA's message; • develop MS-ECHA joint campaigns around selected topics with an EU-wide impact;

Webinars:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing updates on thematic work, user training and technical updates to interested audiences; • Digital Communications.
Social Media:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance ECHA's online presence, reputation, and engagement; • create and share relevant content on social media to engage with users, build brand awareness and show transparency; • partner with EU institutions, sister agencies and relevant stakeholders to communicate key topics; • run awareness campaigns on relevant topics adapting the content to different stakeholders; • use paid search advertising and social media advertising to raise awareness of top priorities among different stakeholders; • actively monitor discussions related to ECHA's activities to proactively identify potential issues; • train staff on good social media practices and cultivating a community of brand advocates to promote ECHA's messages on their channels; and • monitor the latest developments in social media and adapting our ways of working;
Website:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • update the website for better user experience and information access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » identify stakeholders' needs' regarding the website structure and usefulness; » plan and implement the required changes for better user experience; • improve exploitation of ECHA's website including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » better information on ECHA's areas of competence; » continuous approach to updating website information in response to new identified needs; » improved transparency about ECHA's upcoming activities; • develop new website based on user input to ensure an enhanced user experience and incorporating the latest;
Audio-visual:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use diverse media formats for broader reach; • live broadcasting of ECHA events, webinars, training courses, podcasts, etc.; • videos on ECHA topics designed to appeal to, and have an impact on, broader audiences; • infographics to provide access to complex topics to broader audiences, and support key ECHA activities;
Visual identity:	update the Agency's corporate branding to give it a refreshed and modern identity in keeping with its development as the EU's chemical agency.

Measurement and Evaluation

Under this strategy, ECHA aims to develop its capacity to measure the success of its communications activities so that it can objectively evaluate the efficacy of its chosen channels, tools and tactics and adapt as appropriate.

We will set goals for our communications activities and monitor our effectiveness in reaching these goals. Regular reviews of our activities against our objectives will allow us to adapt to changing circumstances, revise our approaches and react accordingly to ensure our communications continue to have the desired impact. KPIs, measurement and evaluation techniques will be reviewed and developed as appropriate.

The expected results and linked key performance indicators (KPIs), as set out in the 2024 Work Programme, are:

Objective: ECHA's communication is effective, transparent, targeted and timely		
Expected results		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved coverage of ECHA's work in protecting citizens' and workers' health and the environment; Stakeholder audiences better understand ECHA's role, aims and activities; and Increased trust in ECHA's science-based decision-making on chemicals safety 		
Indicators	Estimate 2023	Estimate 2024
Share of neutral and positive coverage of ECHA	>85%	>85%
Website unique visitors/traffic to web content	4.2 M	4.2 M
Growth in social media followers	100K	120k

Objective: Open and transparent engagement with all stakeholders		
Expected results		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECHA can identify its key stakeholders across relevant sectors. Stakeholders feel able to approach ECHA and contribute to its work where appropriate. 		
Indicators	Estimate 2023	Estimate 2024
ECHA engagements with stakeholders	n/a	200
ECHA Conference survey results	n/a	Positive

For the first phase of measuring our activities in 2024, the focus will be on output (quantitative) and outtake (qualitative) measures to establish a baseline of communications activities conducted by ECHA.

The next phase, beginning in 2025, will focus on the development of measures for outcomes in terms of what we want to achieve through our communications activities, and then the measurement of the impact of those activities in relation to achieving our strategic objectives and goals. Identifying these measures will in turn allow us to adapt and adjust our messages, channels, tools and tactics used in pursuit of our objectives.

The measures will include, but are not limited to:

Quantitative (Outputs)	Qualitative (Outtakes)
News releases and items published	Media coverage sentiment, reach, geographical spread analysis
Media queries and meetings	Social media sentiment and most relevant topics
Interviews and briefings	Stakeholder surveys
Social media followers	Website analytics - on website usage and see what is of interest allowing us to target specific areas
Social media paid campaigns - KPIs meet (clicks, reach, engagement)	Web user surveys
Social media advocacy programme - visits to the website, users of the platform	Feedback from events
Media and social media coverage	
ECHA event participants - conferences, webinars, training courses	
Website visits	
Podcast listens, video views and downloads	
Newsletter subscribers	
ECHA staff speaking appearances	

Monitoring will be conducted on an ongoing basis with reporting at regular intervals, across all facets, both internally and externally.



Timeline

The annual Communications Action Plan sets out the expected yearly activities based on the Annual Work Programme.

As the strategy will roll out over a five-year period several planned key communications actions, to support the objectives, are already identified. These include:

	<p>2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New stakeholder approach rollout; • Communications Strategy 2024-2028 rollout • ECHA Conference 2024 • NGO Dialogues and ASO Introductory Sessions • Member States Competent Authorities Communicators Network Meetings • Contribution to Eurobarometer survey • Stakeholder Perception Survey • Developing baseline communications activities measurements
	<p>2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECHA Corporate branding project launch • New website project launched • Developing new communications indicators
	<p>2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECHA Conference 2026 • New ECHA corporate branding implemented
	<p>2027</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New website launched