



European Network of Heads of Nature Conservation Agencies (ENCA). ENCA is an informal network which fosters exchange of information and collaboration amongst its partners, identifies future challenges and offers information and advice to decision-makers in the field of nature conservation and landscape protection. ENCA brings together scientific evidence and knowledge of practical application together with experiences in administration and policy advice in the context of biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services.

More details can be found under www.encanetwork.eu.

Working documents are conceptual works which aim at improving the networks functioning, increasing the transparency of its activities and the increasing the networks impact in terms preparing efficiently statements.

WORKSHOP on BIODIVERSITY COMMUNICATION

Cost-benefit analysis on the technical convenience to networking on Communication of Biodiversity

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AIMS of the WORKSHOP

The ENCA Workshop on biodiversity communication aimed at:

- exchanging knowledge and experiences on biodiversity communication among ENCA members
- analysing and providing ENCA Plenary with technical advice on the current role of communication for biodiversity conservation
- analysing and providing ENCA Plenary with technical advice on whether to work on communication, by creating an IG on communication or by joining existing networks, such as the Green Spider Network

PARTICIPANTS' TECHNICAL VIEWS on the ROLE of COMMUNICATION for BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

I. Biodiversity communication is *the* tool to reach the target audience, both to raise awareness about biodiversity and to improve environmental behaviour, by providing tips and promoting educational tools to influence on behaviour and actions affecting biodiversity conservation. This is a long-term process: it may assume the role of education for the general public, especially adults, and the whole spectrum of stakeholders.

Communication is an essential tool to raise awareness among the public on biodiversity and therefore a base for its conservation

II. A large part of the public still doesn't understand the value of biodiversity because so far the value of biodiversity/nature has not been effectively communicated, except at political and economic level.

Biodiversity communication is not a policy priority; clear support and an agreed strategy with objectives and results are still missing. Additionally, most of European people lives are decoupled from nature. They don't experience nature or know its value, as long as they aren't educated about it and encouraged to live with it: unlike scientific studies, communication can provide means and ways to re-connect people to nature.

Society needs communication to value biodiversity and reconnect with nature

III. Scientific studies themselves cannot reach society.

Communication is crucial to convey scientific messages on biodiversity, providing commonly understandable simplified messages, translating scientific studies into clear and short key-messages for the general public. Communication needs scientific information, but communication of scientific information must be prepared by professional communicators to be effective.

Communication has a broader scope than scientific studies, as it includes preservation of cultural capital and values, not only science, policy and economy.

Communication of scientific studies has to be prepared by communication experts

IV. There is a need to communicate biodiversity by diversifying and adapting the language according to the target audience: easy and practical, ethical, emotional, esthetical, spiritual, not only economic and political languages need to be used and interchanged. Messages should be positive and focused on the link between biodiversity conservation and its value and direct utility for the wellbeing of humankind, additionally connecting biodiversity with our common experiences and daily life.

Communicative language is needed to grab people's attention and build awareness

III. Communication is a significant tool to achieve policy-makers' objectives and tasks. Effective communication depends on a planned strategy consisting of systematic preparation of key-messages to be prepared and launched by communication experts in cooperation with biodiversity departments. The strategy should avoid diverse or incoherent messages, and ensure consistency and success.

A good communication strategy requires working with specific objectives, supported by and agreed within the Agency. The development of specific indicators will enable the appropriate evaluation of the communication about biodiversity conservation, by measuring the increase of public awareness and engagement.

Communication on biodiversity needs an adequate political commitment as well as financial support. The suitability of involving private sector sponsors for communication initiatives needs to be assessed on a case by case basis.

Institutional messages on biodiversity and generally biodiversity communication need to be carefully planned in a strategy in order to be effective

V. It is crucial to gain and maintain the credibility of institutional messages: messages must be science-based, weighted, and launched after taking into due consideration the attributes of the messenger-organization.

The content of messages must be scientifically rigorous and balanced

VI. Diverse opinions exist on the efficacy of using the word "biodiversity". Communicators should define the most effective language, either to improve understanding of the word "biodiversity" (preferably at policy level) or to use the common word "nature" (preferably with the general public) to make biodiversity understood. In both cases, more crucial is the underlying message and its ability to educate and improve daily behaviour.

The alternative or complementary use of words "biodiversity" and "nature" should be considered in terms of communication objectives' effectiveness

PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS on the CONVENIENCE to NETWORK on BIODIVERSITY COMMUNICATION

I. Exchange of knowledge and experiences are relevant to learn from successes, failures, creativity and methods used by different Agencies. It is relevant and productive to come together to exchange knowledge and experiences on communication issues.

II. The benefits of meeting face-to-face cannot be substituted by email exchange. It is essential to learn by sitting together and analysing underlying factors of communication's work: communication experiences need to be lived and interchanged within meetings.

III. Coordination with existing networks can be useful. But even more important is the scope and focus of a communication group.

IV. A small ad hoc communication group constitutes the best option to work with specific clear objectives, outputs and focus, in order to exchange communication experiences centred on biodiversity and to optimize the dialogue within a relatively small group.

V. An ENCA IG on communication will enable Agencies to exchange experiences and improve their internal work. The chair of meeting, the JNCC representative and ENCA Secretary consider that meeting once per year during EC's Green week may enable the communication team to invite representatives from the Commission and take advantage of further external relations during the EC's Green Week.

CONCLUSION: FINAL STATEMENT

- Biodiversity communication is an essential tool for biodiversity conservation. It is the most appropriate tool to plan and launch institutional statements and messages.
- It is the best and nearly the only tool to reach civil society and stakeholders to improve voluntary environmental behaviour.
- In order to achieve biodiversity conservation through the joint contribution of society and stakeholders, the political commitment to, and work on, biodiversity communication need to be strengthened.
- Experience and knowledge exchange is vital to improve the work on communication and its effectiveness.
- ENCA participation in existing groups can help to bring ideas and join efforts.
- An ad hoc created group centred on biodiversity communication constitutes the best option to exchange knowledge and improve Agencies' work on communication.

The participants of the ENCA workshop on communication of biodiversity recommend the ENCA Plenary to support the creation of an IG on communication taking meeting once a year during EC's Green Week and discuss ad hoc topics.

ENCA plenary meeting in Mljet/Croatia approved the statement on September 7th 2010:

"The plenary approves working programme and gives the mandate to the group to meet on a regular base, focusing on sharing best practices and bringing forward ways of communicating to the relevant target groups and learn from each other."