



External project communication strategies: ways to ensure sustainable high-level research impact in earth science projects

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External project communication as well as dissemination and exploitation/utilization of project results is in many projects part of successful project management. Accordingly, project managers have an often underestimated influence on the impact of research projects. Research impact can generally be defined as 'the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy' (Research Councils UK). To provide for societal-relevant research impact, an early and comprehensive identification of users, their needs and potential products or solutions has to be conducted. A sound knowledge about and identification of the requirements of the users fosters a targeted, purposeful and focused project communication and promotion. A communication strategy should be based on goals and milestones, it should define target groups and develop appropriate communication tools to verify the effectiveness of the applied communication measures. This enables the project manager to respond adequately to any challenges the project is facing throughout its lifetime by adapting the external communication strategy. Hence, professional communication, dissemination and exploitation/utilisation strategies should be thought through already during the proposal phase and should continuously be evaluated and updated throughout the different project phases, ideally up to the time beyond the project lifetime. It is inevitable that the strategy has to be prepared according to the projects needs considering the set-up of the consortium (pure scientific vs multi-sectoral), the multidisciplinary/transdisciplinarity of the project, the research topic landscape, the targeted stakeholders, the resources required and the societal, political, and economic requirements.