

Contents

Introduction	3
EMCDDA mission	3
Communication goals	3
Core communication values	4
Stakeholders and target groups	4
Our approach — integrated communication	5
Developing content	5
Cross-discipline collaboration	5
Communication expertise and synergy	6
Staff as ambassadors	6
Focus on: online and interactive content	6
Focus on: streamlining multilingual content	7
Communicating content	7
Website	7
Publications	7
Scientific publishing	8
Media relations	8
Social media	8
Audiovisual	8
Events	9
Multipliers/networks	9
Marketing and promotions	9
Engaging better with our audiences	9
Mapping	9
Dialogue	10
Evaluation — measuring success	10

Adopted by EMCDDA Management Board on 5 July 2012.

Introduction

Communication is a core activity of the EMCDDA both in supporting its role as an information agency and helping further its reputation as the 'reference point on drugs in Europe'. Much has changed since our previous communication strategies of 2000 and 2007. We now face a rapidly-changing communication landscape in which consumers 'pick and choose' the type of information they want, how and when they want it, and the quantity they need. These new information-seeking behaviours require the agency to respond with timely content, adapt to emerging needs and deliver its information via an ever-expanding set of communication channels and tools.

This update comes at a time of heightened need for an efficient use of resources, which calls for an integrated and multidisciplinary response that pools scientific and technical expertise to produce pertinent and cost-efficient results. The basis of this strategy is therefore 'integrated communication' — a concept also embedded in the agency's work programme for the period 2013–15. This represents an innovative step for the agency that will require a paradigm shift in the way we work.

This strategy provides overall guidelines for the EMCDDA's communication activities, outlining the core values governing our work and the tools and techniques used to serve, and nurture relations with, our audiences. This broad framework is underpinned by more detailed strategies, guidelines and action plans in the individual areas of communication expertise available separately.

EMCDDA mission

Independent, science-based information is a vital resource to help the people of Europe understand the nature of the region's drugs problem and better respond to it. The EMCDDA's recast founding regulation (enforced in 2007) stipulates that the agency will provide the EU and its Member States with 'factual, objective, reliable and comparable information at European level, concerning drugs and drug addiction and their consequences' and ensure its wide dissemination. It also broadens the remit of the agency to include: monitoring new drugs and trends; gathering and exchanging information on best practice; and transferring EMCDDA know-how to certain non-EU countries.

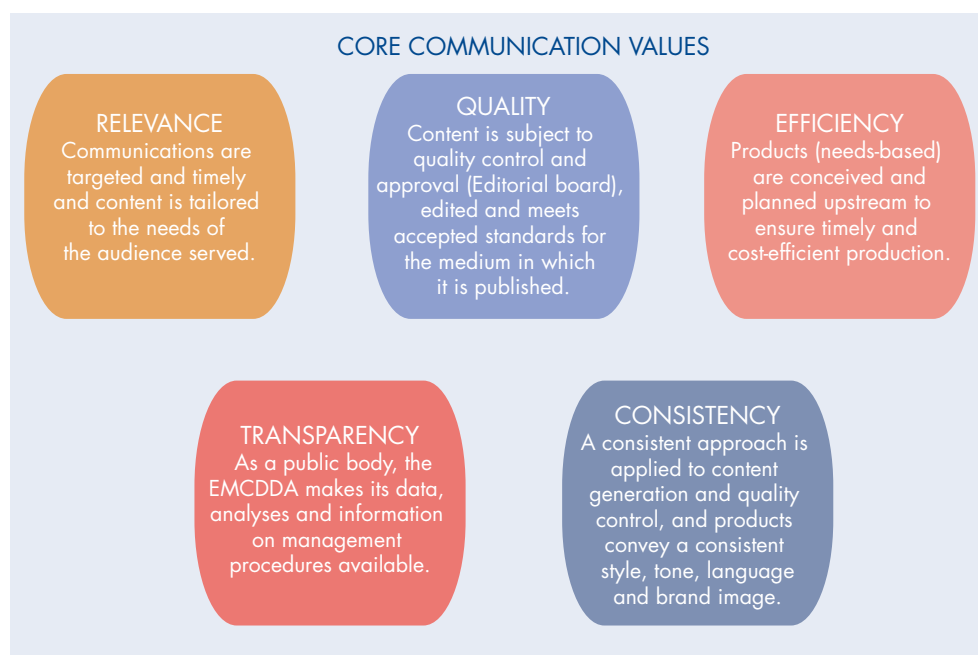
Communication goals

By offering a factual overview of European drug problems, the agency provides the evidence base to inform drug policy, pinpoint best practice and identify new areas of research. The strategy presented here is designed to help the agency better:

- furnish the EU and its Member States with the independent information they need to make informed choices in the field of drugs;
- enhance the EMCDDA's reputation as an authoritative source on drugs, increasing awareness of, and confidence in, the agency and its scientific work ('reference point on drugs in Europe');
- provide a platform for the exchange of expertise and knowledge;
- raise awareness on the European drugs problem.

Core communication values

All EMCDDA communications reflect a number of core values, namely: relevance, quality, efficiency, transparency and consistency. The agency also complies with accepted best practice in communication, such as scientific publishing conventions and standards for web publishing.



Communicating effectively with different target audiences relies on the correct use of style, tone and register in order to address an audience with credibility and authority. This calls for a range of skills and tools in writing, editing and multimedia presentation. To assist the development of this expertise within the EMCDDA, the agency uses a repertoire of guidelines and training courses for writers and editors. A style manual supports the work of editors and guides writers towards producing text that speaks in the recognisable voice of the agency. The quality of translations is supported by a multilingual glossary. Further tools will be developed as needed.

All EMCDDA communications are underpinned by a clearly defined corporate identity, perceived in the broad terms of design (logo) and voice (mission, personality). The agency's work in this area includes established design materials (corporate identity manual) and support functions to ensure coherent brand implementation (e.g. training for newcomers; brand implementation advice for staff). The EMCDDA brand strengthens its image as an authority in the drugs field. The agency will ensure its continual development via periodic refreshing.

Stakeholders and target groups

In order to deliver a high-quality information service on drugs, emphasis must be placed on developing user-focused products tailored to the needs of stakeholders and target groups. Collecting information from users on the accessibility and relevance of these products is a key part of the communications mix.



Stakeholders are defined as individuals or bodies with a direct (stake) involvement in the work of the agency. These include members of the agency's statutory bodies and Reitox network as well as national authorities in the Member States, representatives of EU institutions and international organisations working in the field.



Target groups are perceived as customers with a potential interest in EMCDDA outputs and authoritative information on drugs. The work conducted by the EMCDDA and its partners has importance for a variety of target groups including: policymakers; scientists and researchers; practitioners; and European citizens. The media serve as a conduit to permanently raise awareness and reach the various target audiences.

Our approach — integrated communication

The EMCDDA regards communication not as an isolated function at project-end but an integral part of the agency's daily scientific and technical activity.

An integrated communication approach supports the agency's relevant, timely and responsive analysis of the drug situation through the focused and dynamic production of information. It supports efficiency through early cross-discipline discussion on audience and channel and upstream guidance on the communication tool that can provide the highest impact for the content in question. And it promotes synergies and the concept of communication as a responsibility of all staff in their daily work and as they interact with the agency's audiences.

Developing content

Cross-discipline collaboration

The agency's outputs are collaborative efforts requiring input from multidisciplinary teams with different profiles (e.g. data analysts, statisticians, scientific experts, writers, editors, graphic designers, web developers, communication and IT specialists) involved in the various phases of development. The Editorial board provides the strategic and decision-making framework for content development and steers the scope and balance of outputs. A Products follow-up team oversees day-to-day progress and efficient allocation of writing and production resources. Applying a truly integrated approach to content development requires commitment from all parties.

This strategy ensures that the end product and its appropriate communication channel are identified at the outset. Content generation and production phases are closely linked to avoid content being rewritten and 'retro-fitted' to the desired output. Pooling expertise to shape content will maximise its relevance and facilitate its use to create differentiated products for varying needs. Clearly defined workflows ensure smooth progress and improve timeliness and quality.

Communication expertise and synergy

Today's multiple, and often converging, information channels also call for strong synergies between the different specialities in the agency's communication team. This transversal working allows the agency to shape and repurpose content efficiently and ensure consistent messaging.

Staff as ambassadors

As an information agency, a core aspect of the EMCDDA's work involves disseminating its knowledge in the field via face-to-face communication at conferences, seminars and expert meetings. EMCDDA staff members deliver around 300 presentations at such events every year reaching an audience of around 60 000.

The EMCDDA promotes this role of 'staff as ambassadors' via reputation management and coaching in representation. An ongoing 'Representing the EMCDDA' programme coaches staff to 'sing from the same song sheet' when communicating the agency's mission and results. This is complemented by a repository of marketing tools and periodic training in writing and presentation techniques. More strategic internal communication activities provide additional tools and support for implementing this knowledge-sharing approach, which is key to ensuring the integrated communication we wish to provide.

Focus on: online and interactive content

More and more, the agency will develop content tailored specifically for the website. As well as being an efficient way to reach a wide audience, there are a number of features specific to online content, which make it particularly attractive to an information agency such as the EMCDDA. These are: ease of updating (appropriate for periodically refreshed data); interactivity, which can be used, for example, to make it easier for end users to explore large data sets; flexibility, which makes it possible to re-use content in different formats and/or different locations on the website.

All of these advantages can best be exploited through an integrated communication approach. Updating content on the website can be made much more efficient by defining at the outset appropriate data formats to use (e.g. XML) and clear work flows (approvals and publishing rights). Similarly, interactivity is a feature which can best be developed by a multidisciplinary team of content and data experts alongside web and usability specialists.

Growing reliance on the web and a more agile approach to online content development bring requirements that form a key part of the agency's online communication strategy. We will invest more in our content management system to attain better workflow management, greater ease of content updating and flexible content design and formatting. We will also implement a web governance strategy with clear rules and roles on how decisions are made about web content.

Users are increasingly accessing content through handheld devices, such as smart phones and tablets. In most cases, by using responsive web design techniques, we can serve

content to these devices in more traditional online formats (e.g. online content and PDFs). However, it is only by developing apps specifically written for these devices that we can maximise their potential.

Focus on: streamlining multilingual content

EU citizens have the right to access information in their national language. Maintaining respect for linguistic diversity is vital for an EU agency, but it is also an ongoing challenge.

The EMCDDA produces a selection of its outputs in all EU languages plus Norwegian, Croatian and Turkish. Activities in international cooperation require the EMCDDA to accommodate new language groups, e.g. languages of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) beneficiaries. The agency's linguistic policy is based on a thorough assessment of need, privileging quality over quantity. In many cases, the target audience dictates the most sensible language policy for a given product (e.g. 'general public' outputs in national languages; technical outputs in English). This, combined with download and distribution figures on different language versions, forms the backbone to decisions on producing multilingual content. In order to improve its relevance and timeliness, the *Annual report* will be reconceived as a concise summary (to be translated into all languages) accompanied by a topic-based review (available in English with highlights incorporated into translated news releases).

Instruments to implement this policy include: multilingual summaries of longer documents in English; online translation tools; more tools to boost translation quality (e.g. multilingual glossary, external cross-language providers); short online information sheets in a range of languages and more needs-based communication in selected languages. The agency is pleased to note an increasing number of 'spontaneous translations' of its products (e.g. national focal point translations of practical manuals and guidance) and a new set of procedures and guidelines will be required to underpin these products.

Communicating content

The EMCDDA has a well-established set of communication channels and tools, which it uses to engage with its key stakeholders and target groups. An integrated and coordinated approach is crucial here as a mix of channels is mobilised to reach intended audiences.

Website

The EMCDDA website is the agency's primary means of communicating across all target audiences and is key to reinforcing the agency's profile as the central source of drug information in Europe. We will continue to develop it as an information hub and incorporate a user-centred approach to accessing content. Enhancing 'findability' via an improved search engine and better tagging will be priorities, along with boosting the visual presentation of data.

Publications

Publications (printed 'hard copy' and/or PDF) are among the principal means by which the EMCDDA makes its work available. To reduce publishing and distribution costs, the EMCDDA will streamline its outputs, focusing more on producing briefer web-based products and less on lengthy volumes in print. This has the advantage of making products more succinct and readable for the end user. It will increasingly adopt a 'print on demand' approach for more cost-efficient stock management. Drawing on client feedback,

the agency will strike a balance between print and online products and explore new formats (e.g. e-books, apps). Publications are of little value if they are not delivered in a timely fashion to those who need it. Distribution activities (electronic, postal) are therefore of high priority and the constant refining of mailing lists to achieve targeted distribution is essential.

Scientific publishing

Publishing articles in scientific journals is an effective way of reaching the wider scientific community and enhancing the agency's scientific authority. We will continue to incorporate the results of our work in the scientific communication channels through publishing in peer-reviewed scientific journals across a range of disciplines. Scientific publishing will be more firmly established and developed as an integrated communication option.

Media relations

The EMCDDA targets the media as a prime conduit of information to its target audiences and is committed to providing journalists with a high-quality, balanced information service on drugs. The agency's media relations activity is organised around four pillars: building sound relations with journalists (targeted contacts, press office response, media visits); providing media-friendly information (news releases, social media, alerts); assessing impact and issues via monitoring (press reviews, analysis); and offering media training (staff, Reitox). News releases/items are considered upstream as part of the content package and messages are developed in close collaboration with scientific staff to ensure sound content. Meanwhile a 'frontline' team of scientists is primed to service regular press requests. The agency continues to develop its index of drug-specialised journalists in Europe who act as effective multipliers. Contacts resulting from press office queries also help populate a database of diverse media contacts worldwide. Looking to the future, work will focus on: consolidating actions under the above pillars; adapting to new media; and improving 'curtain-raising' methods (news pre-announcements) and preparedness (crisis communication).

Social media

Social media have revolutionised how we communicate today, providing new opportunities to share content and opinion, promote discussion and collaboration and build communities and networks. They enable a broad public to be reached through a variety of formats, including text, pictures, audio and video. The EMCDDA has already established itself in various social media, such as Twitter and Facebook. While maturing as a user of the above, the agency will also develop its presence on other social media platforms and integrate social media into its website to boost content sharing. Existing social media guidelines will be expanded to include an approach for broader involvement of scientific staff in the use of these media. The possibility of using these tools for sharing best practice and engaging in thematic debate will be explored.

Audiovisual

The EMCDDA will invest in audiovisual productions in order to ramp up these outputs for use across today's multiple platforms. Various audio and video formats will be explored (e.g. podcasts, corporate and 'expert' video material and video news releases), as will the development of appropriate facilities.

Events

Conferences, seminars, expert meetings and visits to the EMCDDA offer an invaluable opportunity to connect with key audiences. In addition, the agency is increasingly moving into training and exploring the option of webinars with partners. As the EMCDDA's reputation grows, so too does the demand on it to host visits, which are particularly effective to brief policymakers on latest developments. The EMCDDA will maximise the potential of these events as opportunities to promote the scientific reputation of the agency and to solicit feedback on product relevance. Joint work to prepare tailored presentations, such as that developed for the *Annual report* results, has proved effective and resource efficient. A more integrated approach to events will better exploit the results of expert meetings and explore the potential of developing them as mini conferences. With regard to servicing events, we will continue to be proactive in ensuring our presence and product placement as well as develop new ways of supporting events.

Multipliers/networks

The EMCDDA works with multiple networks of partners and experts. Foremost among these are the Reitox national focal points which have always played an important role in distributing EMCDDA material. It is now planned to further develop their role as communicators of EMCDDA knowledge in the national context. Overall, the EMCDDA will ensure networks are better briefed on planned activities to facilitate their ability to disseminate results.

Marketing and promotions

A variety of promotional actions complement this work including: advertising; promotional mailings; exhibitions; promotional literature, blurbs and gadgets; and positioning the agency and its products on relevant websites (e.g. EUHealth, EUBookshop), in publications (specialised, directories) and at events.

Engaging better with our audiences

The EMCDDA will develop an audience engagement strategy, which will begin with an initial mapping exercise of its stakeholders and target groups.

Mapping

Cross-unit consultations will help map key persons, groups and multipliers to be consulted and reached via targeted dissemination. Creating appropriate input channels and forums will also be explored. This will allow audiences to inform the agency of their needs and expectations (e.g. language, format, topic) and share their perspectives from the field.

Drawing on learning from this exercise, the EMCDDA will be able to assess and evaluate its performance on an ongoing basis and remap its audiences where appropriate.



Dialogue

Ongoing dialogue with audiences is essential to gauge user needs, monitor feedback and shape future communications. Such dialogue is undertaken among others via: public consultations; surveys; interactions at events and expert meetings; training and webinars; social media engagement; and an information enquiry desk.

In addition to targeting specific audiences, the EMCDDA also promotes the exchange of information between them. The recast regulation states that the agency should facilitate the 'exchange of information between decision-makers, researchers, specialists and those involved in drug-related issues in governmental or non-governmental organisations'. Maximising the potential of this interaction will be examined closely under this strategy.

Evaluation — measuring success

The success of the EMCDDA's communication work is evaluated on the basis of information obtained through a variety of methods and tools. These include satisfaction surveys and user testing (active feedback) as well as download statistics, distribution figures, media coverage and the number of incoming requests and visits (observing and monitoring). While performance and monitoring work is already underway, the EMCDDA will examine this practice in the context of an overall evaluation plan and communication impact tracking system. Careful and systematic examination of feedback contributes to cost-efficient decisions and a more relevant coverage of issues.

Our integrated communication strategy is designed to be dynamic and to respond to the evolving needs of EMCDDA audiences. This in turn will allow the agency to adapt its outputs and contribute effectively to improving the dissemination of knowledge on drugs and drug addiction in Europe.



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

Cais do Sodré
1249-289 Lisbon, Portugal
Tel. +351 211210200
info@emcdda.europa.eu • www.emcdda.europa.eu



Publications Office

ISBN 978-92-9168-655-1



9 789291 686551