

# Eionet communications group meeting 2023

## Stories that move people: Time for change?

7-8 September 2023 (Copenhagen, Denmark)

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### Minutes

All the meeting documents, including these minutes, are available on Eionet Forum in the [meeting documents folder](#) and [designated Ext-Eionet teams channel](#). The following notes provide a detailed overview of the discussions held during the meeting, as well as some updates since then. The minutes are drafted in a comprehensive way to allow those who could not attend to capture the essence of the discussions.

**Action points** are marked with ‘!’.

*Please note that the document contains [active links \(in blue and underlined\)](#), so we encourage you to use the digital version for easy access to all the underlying information and to reduce paper consumption.*

#### Eionet Communications meeting at a glance

The 2023 meeting focused on the theme **‘Stories that move people: time for change?’** and highlighted the pivotal role we, as communicators, play in fostering trust and understanding during societal transitions.

We explored the significance and impact of narratives and their capacity to shape our communication approaches. Emphasising the value of **feedback**, we recognised its essential role in assessing the true impact of our efforts. The spotlight also turned to the use of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** in communication, with discussions focusing on AI training and its potential integration into our work.

The meeting also sparked a profound reflection on the pivotal role of communication in addressing environmental crises and the necessity of spotlighting transformative actions that drive positive change. Furthermore, there was a concerted effort to explore effective **communication strategies tailored to engage elderly individuals** and navigate environmental messaging across generations.

In the rapidly evolving communication landscape, an escalating challenge has emerged in distinguishing between **disinformation and misinformation campaigns** and accurate environmental information. This issue highlights the need for heightened vigilance and discernment when disseminating environmental data. Discussions also revolved around ways to enhance the **Eionet’s impact** and harness the power of knowledge sharing within the Network.

**Furthermore, the meeting marked the first session, brainstorming on the communication plan and outreach strategy for SOER 2025.**

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# 1 Welcome & Introduction

## 1.1 Welcome by Katja Rosenbohm (EEA)

After extending a warm welcome to all the participants, Katja set the tone by highlighting the critical juncture at which the European Commission's mandate is concluding just ahead of the next cycle. The current landscape is marked by increasingly severe extreme weather events, underscoring the urgent need for societal transformation. The European Green Deal stands as a shining example, and it signifies that we are already immersed in this transition.

However, it's important to recognise that implementing environmental measures can pose significant challenges for certain societies. This is where communicators play a pivotal role in raising awareness and fostering a deeper understanding for societal transitions and the actions required to bring about these changes.

## 1.2 Setting the scene and meeting objectives by Gülçin Karadeniz (EEA)

Every meeting, the Eionet group meeting explores new themes, approaches and tools to strengthen the impact of environmental communication. It was highlighted that **strong collaboration, cooperation and partnership** are crucial to the success of our communication activities. In this regard, the Eionet communications group meeting was described to be a platform for sharing experiences, ideas and knowledge, but also for reflecting on ongoing changes in the policy context and discourse.

In this context, Gülçin emphasised that the meeting presents an opportunity to inspire and to learn from one another. Additionally, the meeting should serve as a platform to take stock of external developments, including those related to Artificial Intelligence, and collectively explore, develop and foster personal connections.

Moreover, Gülçin highlighted that at the EEA, communications efforts are based on the priorities outlines within the EEA-Eionet comprehensive strategy and EEA communications framework. The primary objective is to establish the Agency as an independent and trustworthy source for knowledge and data. The EEA represents the collective voice of the Network, as we reinforce one another's value by doing so.

Gülçin also provided a recap of key highlights from the past 6 months and provided a preview of the significant events on the horizon, including the 30<sup>th</sup> EEA anniversary, SOER 2025, the introduction of a new European Commission, the web project, reinforced outreach).

The following objectives were the focus of the 2023 edition of the annual meeting:

- Preparing for **SOER 2025** outreach;
- Understanding the **importance** of Artificial Intelligence in communication;
- Innovating in **communicating** elderly and identify the generational gap;
- How to be aware of disinformation and misinformation;
- Complexity of climate and nature including the need for change
- **Share, learn, inspire** at the ideas market.

## 2 Communication updates

### 2.1 Updates by the EEA (Katja Rosenbohm, EEA)

The presentation by Katja Rosenbohm can be found on the [Ext-Eionet](#) as part of the overall EEA presentation.

Katja highlighted that in 2022, the **EEA-Eionet Strategy 2021-2030** started to be implemented, supported by our **Communication Framework**. This latter framework serves as both a roadmap and a guidance document for aligning and setting communication priorities with our strategy. The three main priorities outlined in the Framework are:

- Strong emphasis on brand communication – a new focus for the Agency.
- Increased value across Eionet
- Innovative and timely, targeted delivery of our knowledge



Furthermore, Katja presented key communication and outreach highlights, as presented below.

#### Main highlights

- **EEA-Eionet day on 1 March 2023 in Copenhagen:** The event brought together NFPs, experts from Eionet groups and Thematic groups, ETC managers and experts, and EEA staff. There were around 240 physical participants and more than 700 online visitors.
- **‘European environment network conference 2023: Delivering the European Green Deal in unprecedented times’** took place on 22 March 2023 in Brussels and online. It brought a lot of online and physical audience together, including high level participants such as the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for the European Green Deal, Frans Timmermans; the Belgian Federal Minister for Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal, Zakiya Khattabi; the Vice President (Europe) of Breakthrough Energy, Ann Mettler; the UNDP Administrator, Achim Steiner; the then EEA Executive Director, Hans Bruyninckx, and many others. Panel discussions,

keynote addresses and interviews addressed some of the most pressing environmental governance issues of our time (such as sustainability transitions), the simultaneous challenges we face in achieving the Green Deal and providing actionable knowledge to policymakers. The discussions were followed by hundreds of in-person and online participants, including on social media under the Twitter hashtag #EUGreenDealEEA.

- **Changes to the EEA governance:** Leena Ylä-Mononen became the new Executive Director of the EEA from 1 June 2023 and André Weidenhaupt from Luxembourg started his role as the new Chair for the Management Board on 1 September 2023.
- **New EEA website launched in March 2023:** The new corporate and targeted website offers improved usability, modern branding, enhanced web content, and user-friendly navigation. It also features a cohesive design system for the Agency's online presence, incorporating a new search function and datahub.
- **No-print policy:** EEA made a definitive shift towards digital communication, adopting a no-print policy since 2022.
- **Launch of the ZeroWastePIX 2023 photo competition** which was open for submissions until 3 October 2023.
- **EEA newsletters** were published, and the September issue will be published on 15 September 2023.

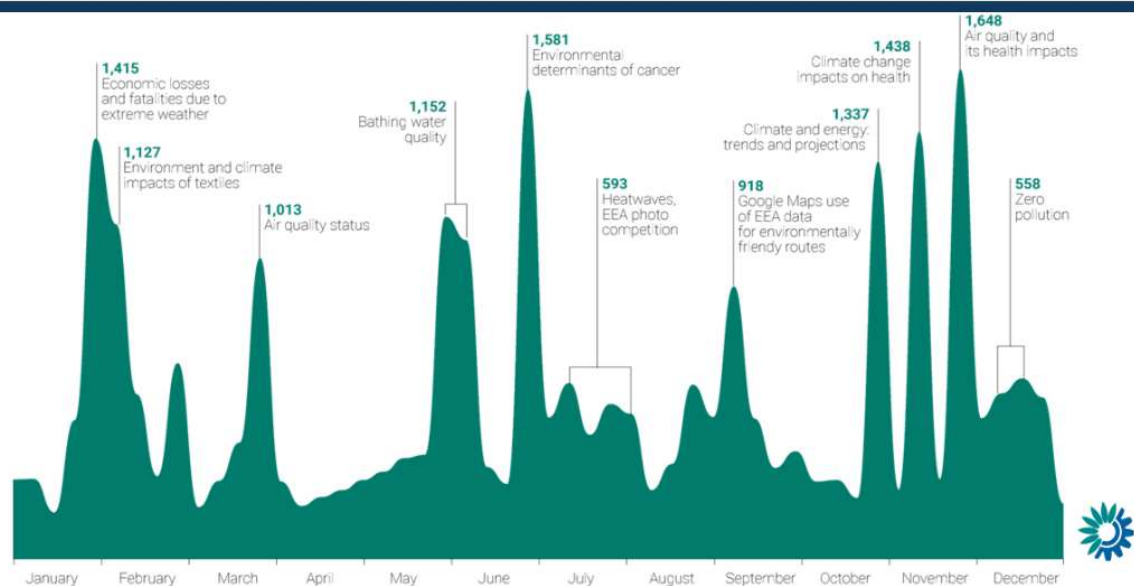
#### Main EEA outreach highlights:

- [Extreme summer weather in a changing climate: is Europe prepared?](#) – This product was published on 14 June 2023 and delves into the foremost climate challenges associated with extreme weather events, including heatwaves, floods, droughts and wildfires, and infectious diseases.
- [Beating cardiovascular disease – the role of Europe's environment](#) – A web report published on 22 June 2023. This report provides a brief overview of the evidence regarding the environmental determinants of cardiovascular disease in Europe and corresponding EU policy responses.
- [Air pollution and children's health](#) – A briefing published on 24 April 2023, which discusses the impact of air pollution on the health of children in Europe and provides potential policy recommendations to mitigate these effects.
- [EEA Signals 2023 – Health and environment in Europe](#) – Published on 21 June 2023, this edition of Signals provides a comprehensive overview of the intricate connections between health and the environment in Europe. It includes articles covering air quality, noise pollution, water, climate change and chemicals. Additionally, it features insightful expert interviews focusing on the enhancement of chemical safety and the launch of the European Environment and Health Atlas.
- [European environment and health atlas](#) presents information on how pollution and other environmental risks affect the health and well-being of Europeans.
- [Air quality in Europe 2022](#) – This web report was published on 24 November 2022 and includes annual assessments of air pollutant emissions and concentrations in ambient air across Europe, as well as associated impacts on health and the environment.
- [European bathing water quality in 2022](#) – This briefing was published in the context of the Zero Pollution Action Plan on 29 June 2023 and covers 21,658 officially designated bathing sites in the 27 EU Member States (EU-27), 119 in Albania and 196 in Switzerland.
- [Trends and projections in Europe 2022](#) – This report, published on 06 October 2022, explores the historical trends, most recent progress and projected future paths towards mitigating climate

change through reduced greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy gains and improved energy efficiency.

- [How pesticides impact human health and ecosystems in Europe](#) – This briefing, published on 26 April 2023, summarises the latest knowledge on how chemical pesticides impact human health and the environment and presents good practices to reduce their use and risk across Europe.
- [EU exports of used textiles in Europe’s circular economy](#) – this briefing published on 27 February 2023 delves into the patterns and trends in EU used textile exports from 2000 to 2019, based on data from the United Nations (Comtrade) (UN Comtrade, 2022a). It also touches on the challenges around what happens to used textiles in the importing countries.
- [Zero pollution monitoring assessment](#) – Published on 08 December 2022, provides a cross-cutting assessment on pollution centred around the themes of production and consumption, health and ecosystems.
- [From source to sea – The untold story of marine litter](#) – Published on 19 January 2023, this web report traces the problem of marine litter from source to sea to help policymakers and citizens understand what we can do about it.

## Outreach peaks in 2022



Katja also highlighted that the EEA is gearing up for future **outreach communication activities**. In 2024, the EEA will mark its **30th anniversary**. Another major event on the horizon is the **European Parliament elections** in 2024. The EEA is planning to proactively prepare for outreach efforts both before and after the elections, particularly to provide support to the new policy cycle.

Furthermore, the production and outreach strategy for **SOER 2025** is already in progress. Planning for the launch of SOER 2025 in Brussels and various countries is set to commence soon. Notably, there will be a stronger emphasis on country-specific outreach this time around. The EEA recently launched its new corporate website earlier this year, and the next phase will focus on the development of a new datahub and improving coherence with environmental information systems.

Additionally, the EEA is in the process of transitioning to a **new customer relationship management (CRM)** tool. The impact and implementation of this CRM system will be closely monitored through web reports, social media platforms, and other channels. The EEA also intends to cultivate stronger relationships with stakeholders, with a particular focus on structured interactions with social actors in the field, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and businesses in the years ahead. Efforts to enhance connections with various institutes and actors in Brussels are also on the agenda, leveraging the presence of EEA staff in the region.

Furthermore, the EEA is planning a series of **major thematic assessments** for the coming years. These assessments will primarily cover topics such as biomass, the 8th Environment Action Programme (EAP) monitoring report, European climate risk assessment, the state of water, the state of energy, and the state of mobility. These initiatives reflect the EEA's commitment to deliver valuable insights and information on critical environmental issues in Europe.

## 2.2 Updates by the European Commission (Emil Andersen, European Commission)

Emil Andersen, the Head of the Communication Programme at the Directorate-General for Environment of the European Commission (EC), provided an oral update on significant communication activities. He highlighted two core communication campaigns, namely **#ForOurPlanet** and the **water resilience campaign**. More information on these campaigns is detailed in the Ideas Market pitches section.

Following the launch of the European Green Deal, a comprehensive agenda encompassing climate, energy, food production, finance, and pollution was introduced. It marked a pivotal moment, as it was the first time the Commission had put forth such an ambitious agenda for the environment and climate. The Commission's primary focus has been on combatting pollution (air, water, soil), protecting and restoring biodiversity and nature, and advancing the circular economy. These actions are not only aligned with sustainability goals but also have practical implications (e.g. waste management).

Furthermore, the Commission has embarked on a substantial legislative agenda, covering areas like waste management, textiles, sustainable batteries, nature restoration, soil management, and industrial emissions, among others. Some of these legislative proposals are still undergoing negotiations. The Communication Department is actively engaged in disseminating information to the press and publishing press releases to promote current and forthcoming legislations and initiatives.

In 2022, the communication unit developed and endorsed communication strategies for DG Environment, marking a departure towards a more comprehensive communication approach aimed at achieving their 2030 goals. Biodiversity, pollution mitigation, and the transition to a circular economy are identified as the



three main areas of focus. The Commission aims to ensure that the broader public understands that nature plays a pivotal role in combating climate change by 2030. It is emphasised that addressing pollution is more cost-effective than ignoring it, and there is a need for a shift in the way we produce and consume.

In 2024, with the advent of the new European Parliament, communicators will be tasked with demonstrating achievements to date and projecting Europe's future direction for its citizens. Given that this marks the last year for the current Commission, fewer new initiatives are expected, and the focus will shift towards finalising ongoing efforts. In approximately November of the same year, a new parliament will assume responsibility, and communicators will play a vital role in shaping the new policy cycle and forthcoming Commission initiatives.

## 3 Ideas Market pitches

### 3.1 #ForOurPlanet by Bert de Meester (European Commission)

**Bert de Meester** from the European Commission, DG ENVI, [presented](#) the [#ForOurPlanet](#) campaign which is a tried and tested format. First organised in autumn 2022 by several DGs of the European Commission (ENV, CLIMA, COMM, NEAR, INTPA) as well as the European External Action Service, the campaign aims to create awareness about the interrelated climate and nature crises and calls for positive action. In particular, European Commission Representations and EU Delegations across the world were encouraged to take action on the ground, showing that the EU is not only talking, but also taking concrete actions. In the EU and beyond, the campaign focused on tree planting actions and thereby contributed to the Commission's ["#3BillionTrees"](#) pledge. Tree planting is an iconic action that perfectly links nature and climate in an integrated manner. It is also easily understandable for a mainstream audience.

The first season of #ForOurPlanet, organised in the context of the UNFCCC COP27 on climate change and the UN CBD COP15 on biodiversity, was a resounding success. More than 70 activities, including many tree-planting actions, were organised in 35 countries worldwide. The social media impact was significant, with 70 million reaches and almost 100,000 engagements. Assets, messages and the campaign hashtag were used not only by the DGs and EEAS, but also by third organisations such as NGOs and UN agencies.



Due to the positive experience as well as reactions from partners and citizens, it has been decided to make #ForOurPlanet a fixture of the annual communication calendar. "Season 2" will again focus on tree planting. In the EU, the campaign will be centred around a "European Tree-Planting Week" in January 2024. January is the middle of the dormant season and therefore a good time in many EU countries. This concentration is meant to allow for critical mass and maximum impact, while of course flexibility will be needed to take account of local circumstances.

The tree-planting week will significantly increase the visibility of #ForOurPlanet as well as the #3BillionTrees Pledge and strengthen the EU's image as "walker, not talker" that takes concrete action on the ground. In



addition, the event will help raise awareness about the European tree-counter and registration tool. The EU-wide tree-planting event could be a key driver in increasing the numbers in the counter and contribute to the success of the pledge.

Campaign partners will be able to benefit from a communication toolkit as in the first season, including a template press release, social media assets, key messages and a list of relevant tree planting organisations per country. See the example of [the toolkit of the first season](#). #ForOurPlanet is run on a shoestring budget, with partner relations managed by a small team in DG ENV and most assets generate in-house with a minimum of outsourcing.

The invitation to EIONET partners is to get involved in organising local tree-planting actions and supporting the digital campaign, united under the pan-European #ForOurPlanet brand.

### 3.2 The Night of the environment by Kees Schotten & Mieke Berkers



**Kees Schotten & Mieke Berkers** from Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) [presented](#) the bi-annual State of the Environment, which is published in September just at the start of the new parliamentary year. It is tradition that this flagship report is presented in [the night of the environment](#).

### 3.3 LIFE GoodWater IP – the importance of communication inside and outside the project by Agnese Pujāte (Latvia)

**Agnese Pujāte** from Latvian Environment Geology and Meteorology Centre [presented](#) LIFE GoodWater IP. The case of a LIFE program integrated project with 19 partners shows the importance of communication both within the project as well as to the outside audiences.

The main approach of the [LIFE GoodWater IP](#) is using social networks almost on a daily basis to inform both the project partners and supporters and using media relations to reach the broadest possible audiences. The project is implemented in Latvia.



### 3.4 Communicating data by Herdis Gudbrandsdottir and Gaia Russo (EEA)



**Herdis Gudbrandsdottir and Gaia Russo from EEA** [presented](#) the journey of environmental data that we communicate. Every day at the EEA, we receive, process, manage and quality check vast amounts of data, which we then communicate, share key messages with our audience and key stakeholders, inviting them to dig deeper. The mysterious case of bathing water quality is prepared as an example.

### 3.5 Copernicus communications at EEA by Jennifer Grant, Frida Hansson and Hayden Waller (EEA)

**Frida Hansson, Jennifer Grant and Hayden Waller** from European Environment Agency (EEA) [presented](#) EEA communication activities related to the European Commission's Earth Observation programme 'Copernicus'. Within this programme, the EEA has been entrusted with the coordination of Copernicus access to in situ data, and the implementation of the pan European and local components of [the Copernicus Land Monitoring Service \(CLMS\)](#). The EEA is increasingly making use of data from all Copernicus services. CLMS provides information on the land cover, land use, and characterisation of biophysical



parameters, including crucial input for environmental policies such as the European Green Deal. Besides this, the Service supports stakeholders working in a variety of domains including nature conservation and restoration, agriculture and food security, and spatial and urban planning. All CLMS data are freely and openly accessible, enabling high-quality decision making and innovation in the fields of land monitoring and environmental change. The Copernicus team presented successful communication activities from the past, discussed the challenges they faced and provided updates on upcoming activities.

### 3.6 Green Kindergarten Network of Hungary by Zita Gellér

**Zita Gellér** from the Ministry of Energy in Hungary [presented](#) the Hungarian Green Kindergarten Network. It is a network of 1102 kindergartens throughout Hungary. This means that approximately 23% of kindergartens in Hungary have joined the network since 2006, resulting in every fourth child attending a green kindergarten in Hungary. Green kindergartens use a whole-institutional approach. The pedagogical programme of green kindergartens includes dedication towards education for sustainable development (ESD), promotes the recognition, the protection and the preservation of local heritage and puts special emphasis on environmental education, building developmental activities on this while also reflecting these value choices in their infrastructure and operation. The Ministry supports the network by operating [a website](#), organising special events and the inner network of pillar kindergartens. Each year, kindergartens are invited to undergo an online application process to enter the network. Those that apply successfully, are eligible to use the Green Kindergarten title for 3 years and those having gained the title three consecutive times might apply for the Permanent Green Kindergarten title. In the application process, kindergartens undertake a reflective cycle of reviewing their activities, level of environmental education and the operation of the whole institution while reflecting on results as a community.



### 3.7 Water resilience campaign by Barbara Piotrowska (European Commission)



**Barbara Piotrowska** from European Commission, DG ENVI [presented](#) the “water campaign” (working title) which is still a project in the early making. As Europeans, we tend to take our access to clean and abundant fresh-water for granted. However, recurrent droughts and flooding - also in parts of the EU, which were not previously prone to such extreme events - has put water firmly on the environmental agenda. It is a trend set to increase with the impacts of climate change. Other persistent challenges pertain to different types of pollution: nitrates, PFAS...

Due to launch during Green Week 2024 (June) and run over the summer, the overall objectives of the campaign are two-fold: (1) to foster the understanding that water resilience is a pan-European challenge - that “we’re in this boat together” (emotional) - and (2) to build understanding for the European added-value of acting jointly on certain aspects of water (-policy) (rational).

Like #ForOurPlanet, this action aims to harness the power of partnership with relevant public and private entities. In particular, DG ENV is working closely with Member States’ environment ministries organized through the “Green Spiders Network” (GSN) of communicators. The collaboration with Member States is a first, aiming to turn GSN into a platform for co-creation and co-campaigning.

DG ENV is signing a contract with an external creative agency to develop the campaign concept – underpinned by a toolkit – which is clear enough on visuals and headline messages to maintain a consistent campaign identity across partners and Member States, yet flexible enough to accommodate local circumstances and priorities. The campaign will also have a budget for the amount of media buying.

Interested EIONET partners were invited to multiply the general water resilience messages, using the adaptable campaign tool kit. It was also noted that under the envisioned campaign, there is also an opportunity to share and showcase the best water practices of their respective countries with a wider European audience.

### 3.8 EcoAtlante by Arthur Pasquale (Italy)

**Arthur Pasquale** from the National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) in Italy [presented](#) the EcoAtlante, which allows access to the main environmental information collected as part of the National Environmental Information System (SINA) and provides a cartographic representation of the data, supplemented by synthetic texts and other graphic information, with the aim of allowing guided consultation to the information assets of ISPRA and SNPA with a narrative and informative language. The EcoAtlante does not constitute an exhaustive collection of the available data of ISPRA and SNPA, but a thematic path that brings to the attention of citizens aspects and themes of greater relevance and interest. It is an access point to environmental and territorial data that provides for the possibility of subsequent in-depth studies with the direct connection to the databases published on the ISPRA website, also through the creation of new thematic maps and forms of dissemination that are more effective from a communicative point of view.



### 3.9 Communication campaign for the visualisation of the Spanish biosphere reserve & Eurotextil circular by Rosario Toril Moreno (Spain)



**Rosario Toril Moreno** from the National Centre for Environmental Education in Spain [presented](#) a communication campaign, which is implementing a communication strategy on the economic, social, environmental, spiritual and cultural perspectives, and the advantages of biosphere reserves and the World Network of Reserves of Biosphere addressed to national governments, policy makers, journalists, local communities and other target groups.

She also [presented](#) another project on textile waste. This European project has been carried out by the regional Governments of Cataluña and Baleares in Spain and the Occitania Region of France. The aim of this initiative is: to raise awareness among the population, especially younger and adolescent audiences, the importance

of reducing textile waste and recycling it correctly; and to connect all the actors in the textile sector and seek new ways of reuse and recycling in a scenario marked by three key aspects: changes in the quality of the textile resulting from the fast fashion model, which affect its reuse and recycling; the obligation for administrations to collect textile waste in a differentiated manner; and the effects of the pandemic caused by COVID in the field of textile waste management. This event is part of the 14th European Waste Prevention Week (EWW) (19-27 Nov. 2022). It won the "Special Prize 2022" at the EWW on June 1 in Dublin

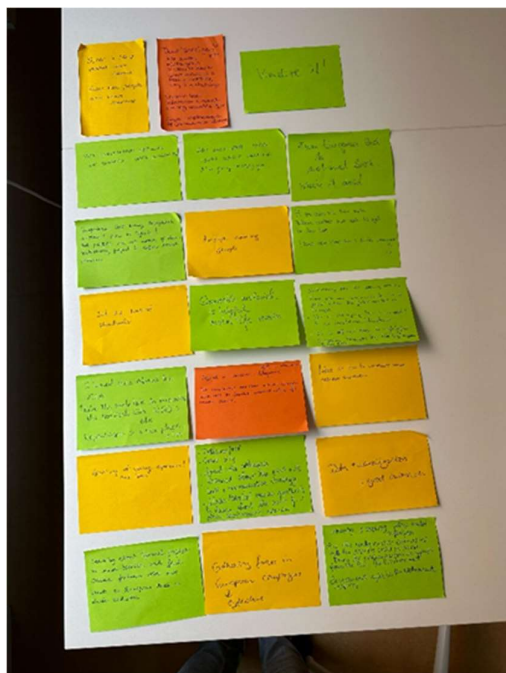
### 3.10 A multilingual EEA website? by Marie Jaegly (EEA)

Marie Jaegly from EEA [presented](#) how should the EEA website be multilingual. The new EEA website was launched on 22 March, introducing significant enhancements such as an improved search function and a new data section (Datahub). But more enhancements are expected.



One of the improvements that the EEA is currently considering is multilingualism on the EEA website. The ideas market stall was aimed insights on preferred translated content, desired content languages, multilingual challenges, and experiences with machine translation tools.

## 4 Walk & Talk



After lunch, an interactive exercise for the participants in this session was carried out. The aim was to fight the post-lunch fatigue and go for a 30-minute walk, where the participants could exchange their views (10+10 minutes -- each gets 10 to speak without being interrupted, plus 10 minutes of conversation). Participants were asked to pair up – ideally with someone they do not know well yet – before lunch. Guiding questions for this exercise were:

- What has left a lasting impression?
- What has inspired me?
- What has challenged me?
- What am I curious about?
- What can the network achieve together?

After the Walk & Talk, the key takeaways were captured on post-its on a designated wall outside of the conference room. These takeaways encompassed several crucial points, including the challenges associated with effectively communicating

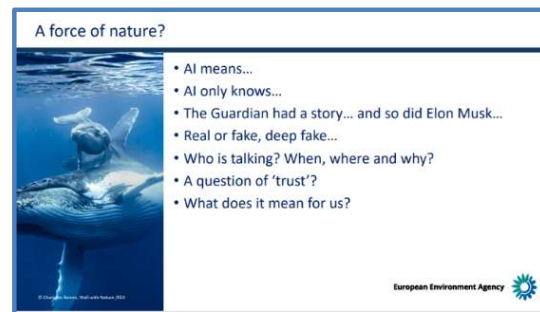
environmental reports, the value of national-level information and networks, the importance of concrete implementation of communication strategies, and the need to bridge European and national-level information.

Moreover, during the Walk & Talk exchanges, discussions centred around the various ideas market stalls. One noteworthy concept that garnered attention was Hungary's Kindergarten Network. Additionally, participants were surprised to discover the multitude of biosphere reserves in Spain. Conversations also revolved around engaging ordinary citizens, establishing moral standards, and adapting communication strategies to the evolving global context. Furthermore, the dialogue highlighted the transition from conceptualization to implementation, the inherent challenges of highlighting long-term successes, and the critical role of data visualisation.

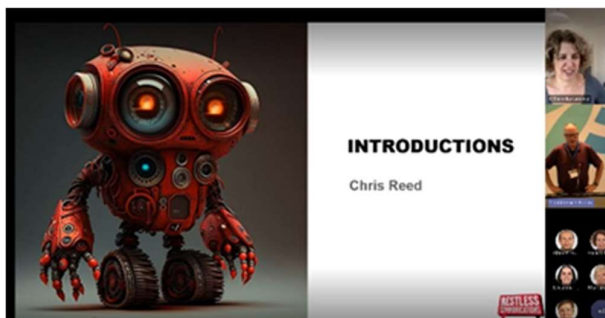
The meeting provided an inspirational platform for sharing ideas and fostering collaboration among attendees, highlighting the vital role of effective communication in addressing urgent environmental concerns. A comprehensive compilation of the harvested ideas can be accessed at the [Ext-Eionet teams channel](#).

## 5 Keynote presentation: Communication and Artificial Intelligence by Chris Reed

In this session, Gülçin began by introducing the topic and outlining what we could expect from the presentation. She started by discussing the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how it means different things to different people. AI has the potential to make our lives easier by assisting the elderly, organising tasks, and performing complex calculations. However, it's important to note that AI is limited to publicly available information.



For communicators, the key starting point is trust. We must question how much trust we can place in the information we receive, especially in light of instances involving fake and deep fake audio and videos. Therefore, we need to consider both the benefits and risks of AI. After this introduction, she handed the floor over to Chris Reed.

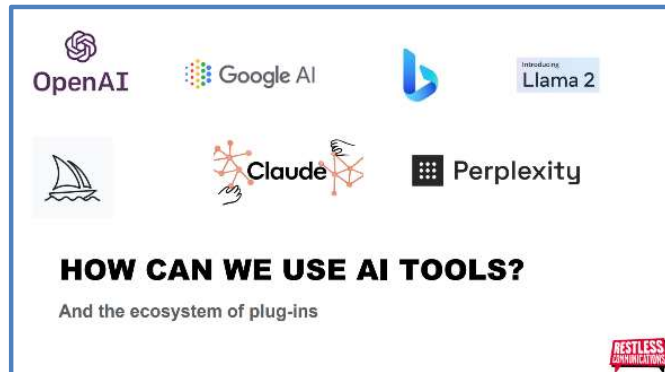


Chris delved into the use of AI in communications. The goal of the session was to explore the opportunities and challenges presented by AI tools. He covered various topics, including summarising content, working with documents, combating misinformation, and developing effective AI utilisation policies.

**Defining AI:** Chris emphasised that AI can be defined in multiple ways, but the important thing to

understand is that AI is not truly intelligent. It essentially acts like a highly efficient stochastic parrot, repeating what it has learned without true understanding.

**How can we use AI tools?** Chris stressed that AI tools should complement our work rather than replace it. They should be used with care. In the field of communication, AI tools can assist with content creation, media training, research and analysis, social media posts, blog posts, scriptwriting, explanations, data analysis, and more. There are already several AI tools available, including OpenAI and Google AI, for public use, although some may not yet be accessible in the EU.



There are already quite a bunch of AI tools available such as OpenAI, Google AI etc. for public use and some of them still not accessible in EU.

**To create a simple prompt**, it is vital to get better outcomes and what you expect. Free versions of AI tools are quite proficient in this regard. However, for more complex tasks like generating social media posts from reports or briefings, paid versions of these tools often yield superior results. It's also crucial to provide additional context, such as;

- specifying who the AI should emulate,
- the task at hand
- the target audience ( KFC rule for the audience which means to know, to feel our audience and what they are committed to do)
- the source material
- desired output format
- the tone or style of communication.

Additionally, some AI tools like Midjourney have the capability to create images based on text descriptions, catering to specific user needs.

Chris highlighted "**three big questions**" we should ask before using AI tools. First, we should question the accuracy of AI-generated results since AI is not infallible. It can provide correct answers, but we should never blindly rely on them and should always verify their output.

1. **How accurate is AI:** At this stage, AI is not accurate. Oftenly, it gives the correct answers and we should not rely on them and always check before using the outcomes. European Commission has proposed a [regulatory framework on artificial intelligence](#). This proposal addresses the risks of AI and positions Europe to play a leading role globally.
2. **What to upload into AI tools:** It's advisable never to upload sensitive or non-public material. Always cross-check references and assess bias and accuracy. Furthermore, it's important to credit sources and tools and not claim AI-generated work as our own.
3. **How to use AI effectively:** AI should make it easier for users to find information, interact with data and reports, and publish results. However, human judgment should remain a primary source. AI can

also play a role in combatting misinformation and disinformation, as well as addressing issues related to malicious bots.

If you would like to know more about the session, please click the links for the [presentation](#) and [recording](#).

## 6 Communicating SOER 2025: Spotlight on member countries

This session was composed of two parts. In the first half, a presentation was given on the State and Outlook for Europe's Environment Report 2025 (SOER 2025) followed by a brainstorming focusing on the narrative, tools, products and working collaboratively on SOER 2025 communications.

### 6.1 Presentation on SOER 2025

**Tobias Lung** from EEA shared insights into the strategic planning behind SOER 2025, with a particular focus on country-specific information. The key aim is to enhance the representation of individual countries in the report and improve its user-friendliness.



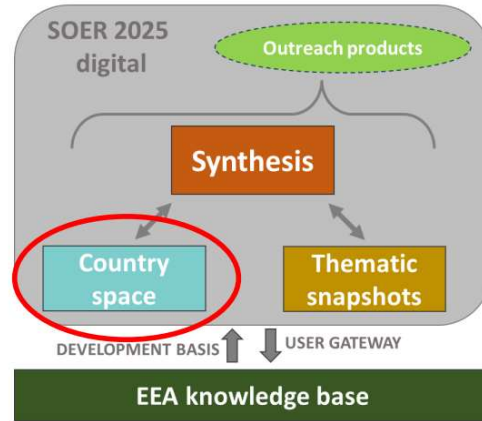
Tobias emphasised that these reports are part of a longstanding European tradition. In fact, Finland published its first national state and outlook report in 1972, a remarkable 23 years before the first SOER report by the EEA. These reports offer integrated assessments primarily centered around sustainability, covering environmental topics like biodiversity, climate change, and air pollution. They also address cross-cutting sectors such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. Recent shifts in trends highlight areas like food, energy, mobility systems, and sustainability transitions. The context is evolving, and the key idea behind SOER 2025 is to adopt a long-term perspective while taking immediate action by harnessing collective knowledge and imagination to drive urgent transformative changes. SOER 2025 will be grounded in the EEA-Eionet strategy and informed by global science-based policies and assessments. The priorities for SOER 2025 include:

1. Building upon SOER 2020 and further enhancing the integrated and solution-oriented approach.
2. Involving stakeholders throughout the development process, not just during dissemination.
3. Creating a fully digital product with a focus on interactive and dynamic visualisation of the EEA's knowledge base.



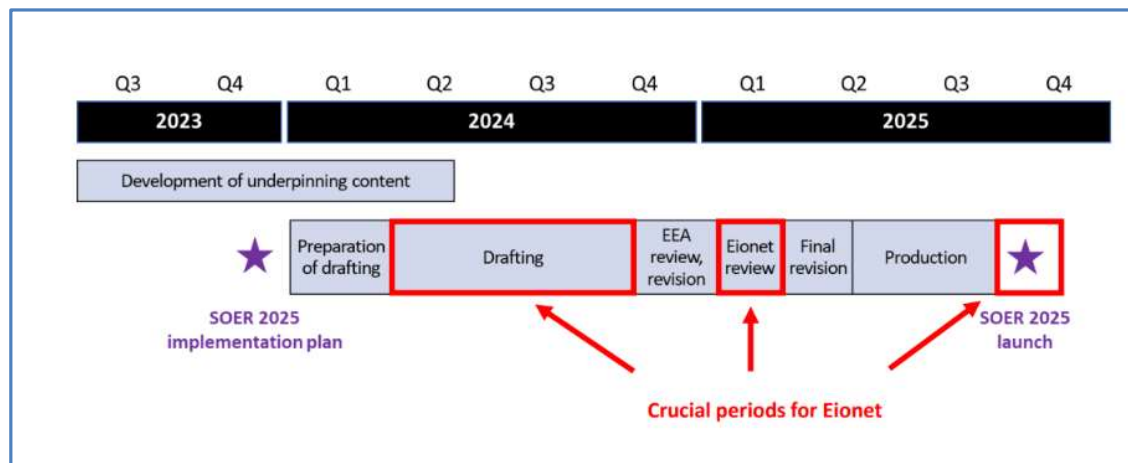
- Increasing country visibility through a dedicated SOER 2025 country space for all EEA member and cooperating countries.

SOER 2025 will consist of a synthesis, thematic snapshots, country space and outreach products. **Synthesis** will serve as the core of SOER 2025, providing a strong integrated narrative that connects the dots and emphasises solutions. It will be approximately 100 pages long. **Thematic snapshots** will consist of 30-40 concise cards summarising Europe's environmental and climate trends, featuring key messages and a summary assessment, similar to past SOERs. Each card will be 1 or 2 pages long. **Country spaces** will be allocated for each member country, which will be filled with mini-assessments by each country on their journey towards sustainability. These assessments will be developed through a collaborative effort between EEA and Eionet in 2024. For transitions monitoring, the plan is to collaborate with EEA, Eionet, and ETCs (European Topic Centres). Countries will create drafts based on an EEA template. These activities include:



- Assessing trends in environment and climate by Eionet, alongside a transitions gap scoreboard using 10 EEA indicators, with support from EEA/ETCs.
- Evaluating socio-economic change by Eionet, featuring a socio-economic change dashboard using 10 EEA indicators, with support from EEA.
- Assessing systems change for food, energy, and mobility by Eionet, assisted by country-specific information on aspects of change.

The pilot phase for this exercise is set to conclude in Q3-Q4 of 2023, with the full roll-out planned for completion between Q2-Q4 of 2024. Tobias concluded his presentation by outlining the timeline for SOER 2025.



## 6.2 Group discussions

The session was followed by an interactive brainstorming session focused on how we could make a meaningful impact by improving the country-focused communication of SOER. The brainstorming session revolved around discussions on narratives, tools, products, and collaboration.

The guiding questions were:

- What can we say to make a difference at local level?
- Common communication objective?
- Opportunities and challenges?
- Competing narratives?
- What are must-haves? And nice to haves?
- How can we prepare for and collaborate throughout the SOER communication campaign?

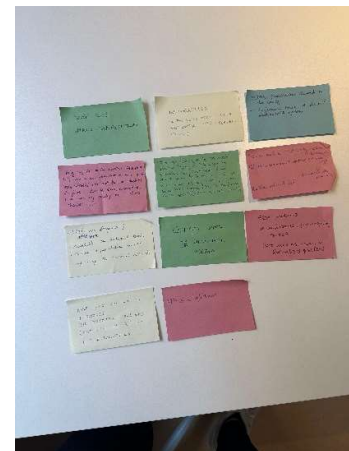
Participants were divided into three groups, each moderated by Katja Rosenbohm, Tobias Lung, and Brendan Killeen from the EEA. Following the breakout discussions, each moderator summarised the key points from their respective groups. The main highlights from these discussions are indicated below.

### Narratives:

- Bridge the gap between global and local concerns.
- Focus on moral and ethical actions that can positively impact society.
- Highlight success stories, case studies, and positive examples of transitions.
- Share tips and actionable advice, especially in areas like waste management.
- Use narratives that present problems, solutions, and hope by emphasising shared values.
- Encourage individuals to pledge support at the national and EU levels.
- Consider the book "Change the World for a Fiver" as an inspiration for showcasing success.
- Visualise future scenarios, including both positive sustainable and non-sustainable outcomes, and ask people about their preferences.

### Tools and products:

- Establish more frequent communication channels through Eionet communications group.
- Create newsletters at the national level to disseminate SOER information.
- Present SOER work through ERASMUS+ programs to reach a broader audience.
- Develop infographics that incorporate national data for easier comprehension.
- Reference EEA publications and data dashboards to enhance credibility.
- Maintain active social media profiles in native languages to engage the public.
- Utilise advertisements and printed materials with logos for awareness.
- Offer educational content, including tips and advice.



- Start local conversations with SOER to engage at the grassroots level.
- Share best practices from different countries and topics to encourage collaboration.
- Involve young people through innovative approaches like ChatGPT.
- Expand outreach efforts to other countries with successful strategies and experiences.

**Collaboration:**

- Leverage the Eionet network for sharing ideas and connections.
- Establish contact with national media to increase SOER visibility.
- Recognise National Focal Points (NFPs) as important guides in communication efforts.
- Collaborate throughout the SOER communication campaign with a comprehensive strategy.
- Aim to inspire future generations through youth engagement.
- Cater to diverse audiences by offering content in multiple languages.

## 7 World Café workshops | Background information

This session consisted of **four thought provoking World Café workshops**, each guided by a moderator. The aim of the workshops was to provide a platform for collaborative dialogue and knowledge exchange.

### 7.1 Environmental crisis communication by Greta Hopkins (European Commission)

The workshop, moderated by **Greta Hopkins (the European Commission, DG Environment Communications)**, delved into the intricacies of effectively addressing the triple crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity. It also highlighted the importance of identifying transformative actions that can drive positive change.



The workshop’s key discussion points included:

- Member Countries’ press coverage experience during the Summer
- Challenges in communicating about the triple crisis
- Desired outcomes in communication and communication campaigns

During the discussion on **press coverage experiences within Member Countries during the Summer**, valuable insights emerged, shedding light into the complex nature of communicating the triple crisis. Some Member Countries (e.g. Italy, Norway, Romania) shared their experiences of being significantly impacted by extreme weather events – some for the first time. These events provided them with tangible evidence to communicate and convey the urgency of the triple crisis to their audience, and in some cases, the topic of climate change became a prominent item on the political agenda for the first time. From the EEA perspective, it was noted that proactive efforts were made this year to inform journalists about the impending challenges posed by extreme weather events during the Summer. As a result, there was an increase in media requests during this period, leading to extensive national and broader European media coverage.

In addition, the participants offered valuable insights into the **challenges** of communicating sensitively on the triple crisis without instilling fear or despair among their audience. The challenges discussed included:

- Over attribution of **individual incidents** to climate change can lead to distorted perceptions and unnecessary alarm. It was emphasized that conveying the broader context of climate change is essential, while avoiding undue alarmism.
- **Climate anxiety**, particularly among younger generations. The punitive stance towards climate protestors was identified as a factor hindering constructive dialogue and intensifying climate anxiety.
- **Climate and crisis fatigue**, particularly in many mainstream national media outlets. This has led them to seek positive news and solutions. Discussions often shift to the costs of climate action for ordinary citizens (e.g. the transition to electric cars), which triggers substantial political debates. Furthermore, climate change negotiations have increasingly focused on adaptation and loss and damage funding, whilst diverting attention from mitigation. This shift has increased discussions about assigning blame, making it more challenging to focus on mitigation actions.

In response to the **outcomes** that we would like to achieve in our communication and communication campaigns, the workshop discussion raised the question of target audience. It was emphasised that policy makers should be a primary focus of our efforts. The essence of this targeting strategy lies in the recognition that the evaluation should not solely revolve around the absolute cost, which can often seem prohibitively high. Instead, the key consideration is the comparison between taking action and not taking any action at all. This perspective is especially relevant when addressing policy makers who have the potential to enact significant change at a systemic level. On an individual citizen level, it was acknowledged that motivating action can be challenging, given the perceived difficulty of making substantial changes.

## 7.2 How to use Eionet knowledge to make an impact in the EEA countries by Katja Rosenbohm (EEA)

Moderated by **Katja Rosenbohm (EEA)**, the workshop aimed to explore how the wealth of Eionet's knowledge and data can be harnessed to empower impactful communication and drive compelling narratives, particularly in the EEA countries.



The discussions focused around three questions:

- What can the EEA do better?
- What can we, in the countries, do better?
- What joint/collaborative initiatives can be explored?

An overview of the ideas exchanged and key takeaways in response to each of the above questions are provided below.

In response to the question **‘What can the EEA do better’**, the participants came up with several

recommendations that may enhance the Agency’s effectiveness and impact:

- **Knowledge accessibility and/or dissemination**

It was noted that knowledge often remains confined within the specific groups. As a result, this leads to a lack of awareness and understanding about the EEA and the Eionet, particularly among the Ministries within the EEA countries. Therefore, the need for greater efforts to disseminate knowledge at the country level was highlighted. This could be achieved through strategic measures such as country visits, robust branding and increased promotion of the Network. Promoting and delivering ‘new knowledge’ specifically tailored for policymakers in the EEA countries emerged as a significant recommendation to boost visibility and engagement.

- **Clarity on Eionet and its Groups**

The participants stressed the importance of explaining the distinct roles and purposes of the various groups within Eionet. This clarity would not only demonstrate the added value of Eionet, but it could also foster better understanding and synergies across the entire Network.

- **Parallel workshops for in-depth dialogue**

To facilitate in-depth exchanges of ideas and discussions, participants recommended the incorporation of parallel workshops following major meetings. This approach would allow for more comprehensive discussions of key topics and thereby encouraging improved country engagement within the Eionet.

- **Clear communication of objectives**

Participants highlighted the importance of clearly highlighting the Agency’s objectives and mission, with a strong focus on alignment and linkage with the objectives of the European Commission and the countries. This can be achieved in various ways, such as leveraging permanent representations, organising national meetings, utilising embassies, engaging with national influencers and conducting targeted (joint) information campaigns.

The workshop participants put forth a range of recommendations on how they thought **countries could enhance their contributions to Eionet**:

- **Social media sharing/engagement**

Social media was considered as an important platform to actively share insights and amplify the communication of updates and knowledge coming from Eionet to a wider audience.

- **Enhanced cooperation between countries**

Collaborative events and initiatives between countries were identified as a potential and impactful opportunity to amplify the Network's impact.

- **Expert-focused newsletter**

A dedicated newsletter, tailored to the specific interests and needs of the target audience was suggested by the participants to enhance the visibility of Eionet's knowledge and data. Drawing inspiration from Portugal and Bulgaria, the newsletter could be distributed on a monthly or quarterly basis. The newsletter could even provide a comprehensive reporting of the Eionet-relevant meetings. This would also ensure that the outcomes of such meetings do not only stay within the specific country representatives of the Eionet groups/meetings but facilitate the sharing of the outcomes within the Agencies/Ministries of the specific EEA country.

- **National utilisation of Eionet's knowledge and data**

Member countries should actively explore opportunities to adapt and utilise Eionet's knowledge and data at the national level, aligning it with their specific needs and objectives. The EEA/Eionet could support this initiative by making the methodologies behind the knowledge and data more accessible and easily available.

- **Sharing best practice**

Establishing a dedicated channel/platform for sharing best practices and for real-time questions was recommended. This would also in turn foster greater collaboration, and use of knowledge and expertise. There is currently a pilot Eionet channel for European Topic Centres (ETCs), for the Eionet Communications Group, and for the Eionet Data, Technologies and Digitisation, the use of which should be further encouraged.

A range of ideas were explored in response to these question on **joint/collaborative initiatives**, including:

- **Linking better the Green Spider Network and the Eionet**

Exploring opportunities to connect and synergise the efforts of the Green Spider Network and the Eionet.

- **Joint video/photo competition**

Organising a joint video or photo competition among the Eionet member countries to better engage the public, raise awareness about environmental issues.

- **Pan-European campaign adapted to countries**

The European Commission has informed that it is working on a water campaign due to be launched in June 2024 with the aim of:

- fostering the understanding that water resilience is a pan-European challenge and;
- building understanding for the European added value of acting jointly on certain aspects of water.

Therefore, this is an opportunity worth exploring to adapt the campaign to the unique circumstances of the countries.

- **Educational awareness projects**

Collaborative educational projects focusing on raising awareness on environmental, climate and sustainability issues, targeting schools, universities and community groups.

- **Best practices library**

Creating a library or a repository dedicated to collecting and sharing best practices among countries could provide a valuable resource for knowledge exchange and continuous improvement in environmental policies and practices.

- **Eionet train**

The 'Eionet train initiative' is a proposal to bring knowledge and experts across the member countries through for example a series of workshops specifically tailored to the country visited. The aim would be to promote the Eionet network and organise a series of workshops across the European railway network.

### 7.3 Disinformation and misinformation

Moderated by **Stina Söderqvist** (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency), the workshop explored the complexities of disinformation and misinformation in the context of environmental communication and serve as a platform for learning more about structures around misinformation and what strategies and actions that could be useful for handling it.

The focus of the discussion was a recent disinformation case in Sweden that had attracted considerable attention. Specifically, comments on the Environment Protection Agency's social media channels, regardless of the topic of the posts, consistently criticised windmills. These comments made several false claims, including the notion that windmills spread microplastics, poisoned the ground with hormone-disrupting substances, and contributed to biodiversity loss. Other baseless allegations included the burial of damaged rotors on-site, the use of rainforest wood in their construction, and assertions that windmills generated more emissions during production than they saved.

Notably, windmills had become a contentious issue in Sweden, but the claims made in these comments were demonstrably false. Moreover, similar false claims had also surfaced in traditional media, propagated by certain newspapers and politicians.

Stina took a moment to clarify some essential terms: "**disinformation**" was defined as the deliberate intent to mislead with harmful intentions, differentiating it from "**misinformation**," which lacks the clear intention to deceive. The discussion also touched on related concepts such as "fact resistance," "fake news," and "foreign malign influence."

The discussion also focused on "must-haves" and "nice-to-haves" in order to fight against misinformation and disinformation, which are highlighted below:

#### **Must-Haves:**

- **Proactive Preparation:** The European Commission responded to disinformation campaigns by proactively preparing statements and sound bites to debunk false claims.

- **Collaboration with NGOs:** Collaborating with non-governmental organisations to defend proposals and initiatives can be effective in countering disinformation.
- **Detection and Response:** Agencies should be prepared to detect disinformation and respond with factual information, even if it means addressing uncomfortable truths.
- **Engagement with the Public:** Building trust and transparency is crucial. Responding to questions and concerns honestly can help combat disinformation.
- **Addressing Social and Economic Aspects:** Ensuring that the sustainability transition considers the social and economic impacts is essential for winning public support.

#### Nice-to-Haves:

- **Astroturfing Awareness:** Greater awareness about astroturfing (e.g. a fake NGO created by an aluminium company in Iceland) is needed, as it is a lesser-known tactic used in disinformation campaigns.
- **Openness and Collaboration:** Public institutions should make journalists' work easier by being open and helpful. Collaboration within networks like Eionet can help address fake news campaigns effectively.
- **Continued Discussion:** A proposal to continue discussions on this topic in the future, acknowledging that disinformation challenges will persist and require ongoing attention and collaboration.
- **Myth-Busting Campaign:** The European Commission shared plans for a myth-busting campaign on climate change in October and pledged to keep the network informed of developments.

In summary, the discussion highlighted the critical importance of proactive measures, collaboration, transparency, and public engagement in combating disinformation effectively. It highlighted the need for continual vigilance and adaptation in the face of evolving misinformation landscapes.

## 7.4 From Gen Z to Baby Boomers: Navigating environmental communication across generations by Laura Cernahoschi (EEA)

The workshop, moderated by **Laura Cernahoschi (EEA)**, focused on the importance of effective environmental communication across generations, recognising the distinct perspectives and characteristics of Gen Z and Baby Boomers. **Gen Z** is often described as digital natives with short attention spans. They are highly aware of social and environmental issues, actively engaged in climate change mitigation and willing to support eco-friendly initiatives. However, they also experience anxiety and fear. **Baby Boomers** have enjoyed economic growth and tend to be high resource users. They may have limited awareness of environmental issues due to less exposure to climate education.





Their perspectives can vary based on nationality and lifestyle, but they are vulnerable to climate change impacts.

Within this context, the discussions focused around the following questions:

- Why is it important to reach the elderly?
- Is there a gap to be bridged?
- How can we instil hope to the young generation?

In response to the **importance of reaching the elderly**, it became evident that addressing this demographic presents challenges. The discussion revealed that this generation often lacks crucial information about current extreme events and may feel powerless in the face of climate hazards. Their primary source of information tends to be traditional television rather than SoMe platforms. Furthermore, it was also acknowledged that the elderly can display a degree of stubbornness and resistance to behaviour change. However, it is essential to validate their existing positive behaviours, such as reusing and upcycling items. There is therefore the potential in engaging them within a peer community so as to create a sense of belonging and shared purpose. The workshop also highlighted that this generation responds best to direct and undeniable evidence, as complex data and intricate graphs may not resonate with them. While communicating adaptation measures can be an initial entry point, it was evident that it falls short of being a comprehensive solution. To truly connect with the elderly generation, it is important to craft narratives that are both tangible and action-based, firmly rooted in the broader context of the climate crisis.

A range of ideas were explored in response to this question **bridging the generational gap** between the two generations, including:

- **Public car sharing programmes for elderly communities:** Recognising that Baby Boomers enjoy socialising and community engagement, the concept of public car sharing programmes was suggested. This would not only facilitate commuting for the elderly but it would empower 'educated' Baby Boomers to establish knowledge-sharing groups among their peers.
- **Interacting through generations:** Bridging the gap through intergenerational interaction was highlighted as a promising avenue. Reaching out to the elderly through their children and grandchildren can create opportunities for mutual learning. For instance, younger generations can impart skills like upcycling.
- **Leveraging influencers and associations:** Acknowledging the digital native nature of younger generations, it was suggested to collaborate with influencers on platforms like TikTok or Snapchat. Partnering with influencers, sharing data and encouraging them to disseminate information ethically, organising background events can help combat misinformation. Similarly, collaborating with associations active among the elderly, such as Rotary International, which organizes citizen-science projects, can promote knowledge-sharing. Word-of-mouth networks were emphasised as a particularly effective method for engaging the elderly, and multipliers can play a significant role. Notably, France and Finland have already implemented influencer-driven campaigns to promote environmental awareness and action.
- **Avoiding stereotypes,** particularly because within age groups, there are diverse personas.
- **Utilising social media for political influence:** The impact of SoMe on political preferences, especially among the younger generation, should not be underestimated. Utilising channels where young

generations are active were deemed essential. However, it was noted that there might be a degree of fatigue among young activists due to a perception of limited results from climate actions.

On the question of combatting **fatigue and climate anxiety** amongst the younger generation, it was emphasised that communication efforts should extend beyond the portrayal of negative aspects. Highlighting successful examples and the progress made was deemed essential. Furthermore, it was recognised that while extreme events have always occurred, they are now more frequent and intense. Involving the young generation in finding solutions was suggested as a means to channel their concerns into productive action. Effective communication, it was argued, should be intimately tied to concrete actions. Providing young individuals with a sense of responsibility and the opportunity to actively participate was considered crucial in countering feelings of despair.

Engaging them in local initiatives, such as tree planting, offers a tangible way to make a meaningful difference. It's worth noting that young individuals often learn best through practical experiences. Collaborating closely with schools, where education can be supplemented with gamified approaches, was seen as a valuable strategy. An illustrative example comes from Kosovo, where awareness-raising activities were implemented in high schools. Students were tasked with developing climate change mitigation projects, resulting in impressive and actionable ideas. This successful initiative was subsequently adopted by other schools, providing a valuable method for raising awareness across generations. Another notable success story emerged from Spain, where the 'Fridays for Future' initiatives have been highly engaging. These initiatives organise webinars, meetings and press contacts, showcasing the promising potential for cooperation with young associations.

## 8 Action points and what's next

! There will be a session about "How to use Eionet knowledge to make an impact in the EEA countries" workshop in the next NFP meeting between 10-11 October 2023 in Malta.

! A virtual webinar is planned for SOER 2025 communications in the countries during the first quarter of 2024.

! Webinar series on different topics, including disinformation, newsletter, CRM tools, and more will be planned for 2024.

! The strong presence of the European Commission had a significant impact and fostered a stronger connection with the countries. We will continue to extend our invitation to the European Commission for their participation in upcoming meetings.

! The participation of the ETCs communication focal points was very well-received from all participants and it brought a broader perspective to the meeting. We will continue to extend our invitation to the ETCs for their participation in upcoming meetings.

! A physical meeting will be organised every two years and shorter online meetings will take place on a quarterly basis.



We have taken some photos during the meeting and you can find them in our designated [Ext-Eionet teams channel](#). Please let us know if you have photos of the meeting, you would like to share with the rest of the group.