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# Communication Plan

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## Executive Summary

The main objective of the project COMET (COordination and iMplementation of a pan-European instrument for radioecology) is to strengthen the pan-European research initiative on the impact of radiation on man and the environment, by facilitating the integration of radioecological research. COMET is being built upon the foundations laid by the European Radioecology Alliance and the on-going FP7 Network of Excellence in radioecology STAR (Strategy for Allied Radioecology).

In this Deliverable the **Communication Plan** (CP) for COMET is described. The goals of the CP are to identify COMET's various stakeholders and to develop a matrix of communication needs, delivery schedules and metrics of success. The success of COMET is dependent not only on what is accomplished, but also on our effectiveness at communicating the outputs to our various stakeholders. Effective communication means that we provide information in the correct format, at the correct time, to the correct audience, and with the desired impact.

Within the CP, COMET has broadly divided its stakeholder needs into three categories: mandatory communication, informational material, and marketing communication. Key stakeholders are then grouped by their general communication needs within these three categories. The CP provides for contact with many of the COMET's key stakeholders (especially the Steering Committee and the European Radioecology Alliance) Contact information for other important stakeholders (listed in the CP) will be collated in the initial year. The CP also identifies STAR's planned communication events and the key messages that COMET intends to deliver to its stakeholders.

## List of Acronyms

**COMET** (Coordination and Implementation of a Pan-European Instrument for Radioecology): A combination of collaborative project and coordination and support action (CP & CSA), funded by FP7-Fission-2013 and supported by the radioecology Alliance platform. It will extend the work of the STAR Network of Excellence and focus on collaboration with NERIS and MELODI platforms.

**CP:** Communication Plan

**DoReMi** (Low Dose Research towards Multidisciplinary Integration): An EC-funded Network of Excellence in radiation biology under the MELODI framework

**European Radioecology Alliance:** An Association whose members bring together parts of their respective research and development programmes into an integrated programme that maintains and enhances radioecological competences and experimental infrastructures, and addresses scientific and educational challenges in assessing the impact of radioactive substances on humans and the environment ([www.er-alliance.org](http://www.er-alliance.org)).

**IAEA:** International Atomic Energy Agency

**IUR:** International Union on Radioecology

**MELODI** (Multidisciplinary European Low Dose Initiative): European framework for radiation biology

**NERIS:** is a European Platform on Preparedness for Nuclear and Radiological Emergency Response and Recovery

**NoE:** Network of Excellence

**R&D:** Research and Development

**SC:** Steering Committee

**STAR:** (Strategy for Allied Radioecology): A Network of Excellence supporting the Radioecology Alliance platform in radioecology. STAR is funded from February 2011 through June 2015 within the European Commission's 7<sup>th</sup> framework. Website: [www.star-radioecology.org](http://www.star-radioecology.org).

**WP:** Work Package

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# COMET Communication Plan

## 1. Topic Background and Objectives

The main objective of the project COMET (COordination and iMplementation of a pan-European instrument for radioecology) is to strengthen the pan-European research initiative on the impact of radiation on man and the environment, by facilitating the integration of radioecological research. COMET is being built upon the foundations laid by the European Radioecology Alliance and the on-going FP7 Network of Excellence in radioecology STAR (Strategy for Allied Radioecology). COMET's research activities involve researchers from Ukraine and Japan, countries where major nuclear accidents have occurred.

The success of COMET is dependent not only on what is accomplished by the research, but also in our effectiveness at liaising with the other European and global frameworks and at communicating about the outcomes with our various stakeholders.

Research activities developed within COMET are targeted at radioecological research needs that are complementary to research priorities identified by NERIS and MELODI platforms. The open calls in COMET will enhance the participation of other research groups and thereby strengthen communication with them.

The communication of COMET's outputs is essential for enhancing the visibility of the science of radioecology within Europe and worldwide, and to make it more relevant for the user community.

Effective communication means that we provide information in the correct format, at the correct time, to the correct audience, and with the desired impact. We need to provide the information that is relevant and appropriate for our different stakeholders. We also need to focus our efforts to produce information which will have the most benefit to the right people for our particular discipline.

Because some communication activities will provide more value than others, the CP will need to prioritize COMET's communication efforts. Achieving this will involve identifying the different types of stakeholders, determining the communication needs for each and prioritising amongst them. The Communication Plan will therefore help determine the effort required and feasibility for each communication activity targeted to the appropriate stakeholder. It will also address scheduling of communication activities and responsible WPs and beneficiaries.

This document outlines the framework and fundamental strategy that COMET will adopt to ensure effective communication. The Communication Plan defines the goals, strategy and the necessary means to produce good dissemination of the results targeted to the desired audience and using the appropriate resources.

## 2. Goals of communication

The global objective of the Communication Plan of COMET is to show the usefulness of radioecology, by making this discipline not only more visible but also more understandable, valuable, interesting and attractive for a wide range of stakeholders. Relevant stakeholders include: students (university), funding agencies, regulators, industry, the researchers of other disciplines (such as emergency preparedness, low doses, ecotoxicology, ecology) and (to a limited extent) the general public.

To reach this global objective, the specific goals will be to:

- Increase knowledge about research in radioecology, targeted appropriately, but including some efforts focused more widely at the general public.
- Effectively, accurately and transparently communicate the objectives of radioecology.
- Optimize resources in R&D in Europe and minimise the duplication of efforts by effectively transmitting the outputs of COMET via the European Radioecology Alliance.
- Provide appropriate channels to join the common European efforts in radioecology for small research groups within Europe.
- Provide to industry, stakeholders and end-users an overview of key outputs concerning environmental radioactivity to avoid misunderstandings or undue concern.
- Facilitate the application of COMET outcomes for regulators, the industry and other end-users.

## 3. Target audiences

The communication should reach different audiences in different forms. The audience that COMET will consider providing information includes:

- Regulators at all levels (local to international).
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), specifically those involved in ecology.
- Companies wishing to make use of outputs of results obtained in radioecology research (tools, improved methods, other).
- European High school students.
- European University students.
- Professors of European and International Universities.
- Local, national and international administrations, Policy makers.
- Enterprises related with the results obtained with advances in radioecology



(electricity production industry, NORM industries).

- Media interested in the impact of radioactivity in the environment.
- People living near nuclear installations or in high natural radiation areas.
- General public.

#### 4. Available Resources

Two web sites have been developed in COMET: one public website ([www.comet-radioecology.org](http://www.comet-radioecology.org)) describes the activities within COMET and will provide access to all the project outputs and one website (i-share) only for COMET partners and the COMET Steering Committee. Both web pages are essential components of our communication strategy.

The project i-share website, **only for COMET partners and Steering Committee members**, will be a working tool to share documents and other relevant data for the project, facilitating the communication between participants, as well as the project planning, or the document sharing and archiving. This website will be very important to communicate with COMET Steering Committee.

COMET will also develop and contribute to the public Radioecology Exchange website ([www.radioecology-exchange.org](http://www.radioecology-exchange.org)) created during the STAR project. Project specific information will be hosted on separate websites [www.star-radioecology.org](http://www.star-radioecology.org) and [www.comet-radioecology.org](http://www.comet-radioecology.org). There will be a link from [www.radioecology-exchange.org](http://www.radioecology-exchange.org) to the STAR project website ([www.star-radioecology.org](http://www.star-radioecology.org)) and the COMET project website ([www.comet-radioecology.org](http://www.comet-radioecology.org)). This approach, maintained by COMET once STAR finishes will ensure that STAR NoE outputs will remain available. **Social media accounts** (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) initiated in STAR have been retained and are accessible from the [www.radioecology-exchange.org](http://www.radioecology-exchange.org). The use of the Radioecology Exchange in this way ensures a sustainable long-term access to useful general information with a wider target group of stakeholders than that of STAR and COMET. **The European Radioecology Alliance web site** (<http://www.er-alliance.org/>) will link to the radioecology exchange.

The public Radioecology Exchange website was created using a wiki platform, since this type of platform is more flexible than traditional web pages, facilitating the input of consortium partners and people outside of the consortium (e.g. to continue dialogue initiated within workshops) and allowing open access to 'blog' or even add/edit pages. The public Radioecology Exchange website (together with associated Twitter feeds and Facebook page) currently provides the gateway to project outputs and other on-line radiation protection and radioecological resources.

As STAR and COMET projects interact closely together and with the European Radioecology Alliance, the Radioecology Exchange will be modified to become a 'hub' for information related to European radioecology. All generally applicable information on environmental radioactivity will be made available on this site.

### Highlighted aspects of the Radioecology Exchange site include:

- News blog – Items announcing project outputs, training courses, jobs, studentships etc.
- Virtual laboratory – These web pages, initiated under STAR, will provide information which encourages integration through joint research and integrated use of data and sample materials. They will focus on four categories:
  - Methodological: descriptions and video clips of commonly used analytical methods and protocols and the procedures used in STAR and COMET.
  - Informative: databases made available by STAR/COMET partners together with details of sample archives held. Factsheets on radioecologically important radionuclides and ‘topical descriptions’ which show absorbed dose estimations for humans and wildlife for typical environmental exposure scenarios.
  - Models: Brief descriptions on how to use two models in-part maintained by the COMET collaborators (CROM and the ERICA-Tool).
  - Training and Education Platform: a focal point for students and professionals interested in radioecology/environmental radioactivity. These pages will present an overview of course modules; course curriculums and learning outcomes; access to some training videos, lectures, presentations and summary notes from STAR and COMET training courses and include a FAQ section.
- Observatory sites – STAR has identified two contaminated field sites (in Ukraine (Chernobyl) and Poland) at which collaborative studies could be focussed to test hypotheses and approaches. Data collected from these sites under COMET/STAR will be openly available, maximizing sharing of data and resources. Further research at the sites is planned by COMET and could also be planned in the future by the European Radioecology Alliance partners.
- Outputs from previous EURATOM projects – reports and deliverables from EC funded projects have been compiled to facilitate easy access.

The COMET web pages will be promoted in different ways, for example:

- *Getting found in searches*: Referencing the site in search engines and directories (either manually or automatically). Making sure that the website is registered into all the major national and international search engines and directories of the Member States.
- *Linking*: The more relevant sites that link to the site, the better. This will boost the web sites ranking and helps potential users to find the site. We need to keep related web portals and sites (other institutions, universities) informed about the web site using mailing lists, RSS feeds, discussion groups, social media, online newspapers, etc. We need to provide links to COMET in STAR, ALLIANCE and partners' webpages. Links to relevant organisations and networks will also be provided on COMET website (and

on Radioecology Exchange website).

- *Newsletters on-line:* A yearly electronic newsletter will be an effective marketing tool for a webpage as it will draw attention to the news published on the website.
- *Participation in workshops, seminars and congresses:* Presenting in relevant workshops, seminars and congresses the webpage as a relevant site where our target audience can find relevant information on different issues related with Radioecology (including the work done in COMET and the results obtained).

We will interact with the coordinator of a recently funded EC project, EAGLE (Enhancing educAtion, traininG and communication processes for informed behaviours and decision-making reLAted to ionising radiation risks) led by Tanja Perko, who attended the initial meeting of COMET in Ghent. The objectives of EAGLE are complimentary to the communication aspirations of COMET and should be of great benefit to the project. The background to EAGLE and objectives are summarised below.

**EAGLE project** considers that education, training and information to the general public are key factors in the governance of ionising radiation risks. Communication about ionising radiation with the general public has to be further improved, as highlighted also by the 2011 accident in Japan. An effort is needed to analyse the state of the art and the existing needs in education, training and information, and to coordinate information and communication about ionising radiation at a European level.

EAGLE aims specifically at coordinating the information and communication strategies related to ionising radiation for the general public, to get a better understanding of the effects of ionising radiation, taking also into consideration the lessons learnt from the 2011 accident in Fukushima (Japan).

EAGLE will also help to identify and disseminate good practices in information and communication processes related to ionising radiation. For this purpose, the consortium intends to review national and international data, tools and methods as well as institutional work in order to identify education, information and communication needs and coordination possibilities at European level. The lessons learned from the nuclear accident in Fukushima will also provide a valuable input. The main goal of the project is to enhance public understanding of ionising radiation and to facilitate a coordinated communication approach. Moreover, EAGLE will foster a move towards the ideal of citizen-centred communication, including a participative component. The project will bring together representatives of nuclear actors, users of ionising radiation, authorities, mass and social media, and informed civil society.

COMET will benefit from the results obtained in EAGLE on good practices in information and communication processes. The EAGLE review on national and international data, tools and methods will also be directly applicable.

For issues directly related with radiation protection of wildlife, COMET will consult EAGLE when identifying education, information and communication needs.

## 5. Key messages.

The language used for each audience should be different; therefore messages will be generated accordingly. We will try to ensure that key messages are clear at all levels and will be brief, focused and using language appropriate to the target audience. In particular, we need to ensure clarity but not lose the key points such as the importance of variability and

uncertainty. More complex messages for other researchers, including technical results and key lines for research will also be generated. Key messages should include:

- Optimization of resources when addressing issues concerning environmental radioactive contamination (public and politicians).
- Importance of independent advice in Radioecology (public and politicians).
- Improve the protection of the public and the environment (public, students, professors, NGOs, media) by enhancing radioecology models.
- Better prediction of the impact of radioactive discharges, not wasting resources in unnecessary protection (public, politicians, industry).
- Assessments of spatial and temporal variation in doses in late phase of emergencies (including terrorist attacks) to guide mitigation efforts (government, public, regulators).

## 6. Channels of communication.

The various communication channels will be more effective for some stakeholders than for others. The various communication activities envisaged in COMET (either directly associated with the project or in collaboration with other EC platforms, notably the European Radioecology Alliance) will therefore be focused on different types of stakeholders. The focus for the different types of activity is listed below:

- **European Radioecology Alliance.** Web pages in English and in other languages (wiki), including FAQs in different languages (from general public to scientists).
- **Social networks.** Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, ResearchGate (addressed to: young people and NGOs; media in twitter; industry and regulators and researchers respectively).
- **COMET Scientific Workshops, Seminars and Congresses** (scientific community).
- **European Radioecology Alliance, COMET, EC platforms.** Extend involvement in relevant meetings (to local media and NGOs).
- **COMET Publications** in scientific and technical journals (scientists).
- **COMET Participation/leading international activities** at IAEA, ICRP etc.
- **Info news items** in popular science journals (general public, students, media).
- **European Radioecology Alliance, COMET, EC platforms** Meetings with educational establishments, authorities, NGOs, policy makers).
- **COMET** - Organization of training in radioecology, including information on integration of the different institutions within the European Radioecology Alliance (general public, educators, students in radioecology).

## 7. COMET's planned Communication events

Many of COMET's planned activities have a strong communication focus, reflecting the wide objectives of COMET. The relevant current activities are shown in table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Overview of COMET's activities with communication aspects. DoW activities plus additional activities in italics.

Planned Month * (actual)	Type of event	Partners responsible
3 (4)	COMET web site	NERC
5	Steering Committee meeting to discuss SRA, Roadmap, open call	SCK•CEN
6	Communication Plan	CIEMAT, NERC
6	Training events specified	UMB
6	<i>Meeting to discuss web sites interaction</i>	<i>NERC, CIEMAT, NRPA</i>
6	Open call	SCK•CEN, AII
10	Ukrainian field studies course	UMB, NUBIP, Chernobyl Centre
11 (16)	First COMET workshop on uncertainties in estimation of effects on wildlife in radioactively contaminated sites	IRSN, CEH + WP4
16	<i>ICRER Conference, Barcelona</i>	<i>SCK•CEN, AII</i>
19 (25)	Second COMET workshop on Fukushima as a special session on the ICOBTE conference, Japan	FU, NERC, SCK•CEN
22	Agree topics for workshops 3 and 4	NERC
29	Polish field studies course	UMB, GIG
34	Workshop 3	
41	Workshop 4	

\* Month 1 = June 2013.

## 8. Evaluation mechanisms.

There is the need to evaluate how much each communication activity contributes to the goals defined in the Communication Plan. To do so, information can be gathered by tracking visits to the COMET web pages, or through direct feedback from the specific audience(s) to which the communication was directed. Other quantifiable evaluation mechanisms are:

- Electronic based systems to collect data on number of visits, depth of the visits, etc.
- Number of publications in peer reviewed scientific journals and chapters in books.
- Number of publications in media (newspapers, media).
- Completed questionnaires to NGOs and policy makers.
- Number of questions sent by organizations not involved in the European

Radioecology Alliance to the institutions within COMET.

- Changes in regulation (local to international) where COMET publications are mentioned.
- Number of students in organized courses and involved in multi-partner activities.
- Number of workshops, courses and conferences in radioecology
- Number of conferences, workshops and events where COMET related research/ activities/work is being presented.

## 9. Possible difficulties to achieve the goals

Some of the difficulties we could encounter to implement the COMET Communication Plan are:

- Social media. A constant flow of news and other actions is needed to keep the site vibrant and updated.
- Logistics to organise a big number and types of meeting. Organisation of a workshop in Japan.
- Costs may escalate, available travel funds will limit activities.
- Web sites manpower requirements – experience shows these are often greater than anticipated

Regarding COMET Communication Plan we need to be realistic about what can be achieved with the resources available.