

# EEHI/ESEI Communication Plan 2012-2016

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1. Introduction.....	1	Table 1: Communication Activities and Objectives	
Science Objective		Table 2: Communication Activities and Audiences	
Capacity Building Objective		Website	
Knowledge Transfer Objective		Newsletter	
2. Communication Aims .....	2	Briefing paper series	
External communication aims		Policy and Practice notes	
Internal communication aims		Specialist articles	
3. Audiences .....	2	Press releases	
Award holders		Popular media	
The scientific community interested in EEHI & ESEI		Journal special issues	
Funding and accreditation bodies		Social networking	
Stakeholders		5. Plans for legacy .....	8
General public		6. Delivery .....	8
4. Communication Activities.....	3		

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## 1. Introduction

**1.1** The overall aim of both the EEHI and ESEI programmes is the establishment of truly interdisciplinary teams of researchers, conducting high quality state-of-the-art innovative research, addressing national/international research priorities that will inform and impact on policy and practice. The programmes have the following specific objectives:

### *Science Objective*

To deliver innovative and collaborative interdisciplinary research of high quality that will advance understanding of the social, medical, economic, environmental and technological challenges faced by the Environment and Health agenda, and the relationship between them.

### *Capacity Building Objective*

To enhance and expand capabilities for a coherent, innovative and collaborative interdisciplinary research community.

### *Knowledge Transfer Objective*

To enhance the impact of research on policy and practice by involving stakeholders in all stages of the programmes, including research activities and communication of outcomes.

**1.2** The Communication Plan sets out how these objectives will be achieved through communication of purpose, work and results and the active engagement of stakeholders with the programmes.

**1.3** Communication and stakeholder engagement must be a continuous and iterative process, in which stakeholders are engaged as active partners in establishing the priorities and foci of the programmes, and not treated merely as the passive recipients of the results of the research when completed. The various communication activities have been designed to ensure this two-way communication process.

**1.4** Stakeholders are those organisations with an interest in the programmes. That includes the scientific community as well as the public, private and voluntary sectors. The programmes are expected to provide a

body of evidence to inform policy and practice. Communication activities will help to ensure that the programmes and its results are relevant to policy makers and practitioners and that they are presented in a manner that is accessible to a broad and diverse audience.

**1.5** The research community must be actively engaged in the programmes, not only to ensure that we achieve excellent research, but also to achieve the broader objectives of the programmes regarding both stakeholder engagement and promoting interdisciplinarity. On the one hand, the programmes will require effective networking and exchange between funded researchers and interested stakeholders. On the other hand, the programmes will facilitate the internal exchange of experience and good practice concerning interdisciplinarity.

**1.6** The Plan informs the communication activities of the programmes as a whole as well as those of individual projects. Project co-ordinators and researchers are expected to make a tangible commitment of their time to programme level networking, communication and dissemination actions

**1.7** This version of the EEHI/ESEI Communication Plan covers the communication activities for the period 2012 to March 2016.

## **2. Communication Aims**

**2.1** For operational purposes it is necessary to distinguish between internal and external communication aims while recognising that this is a somewhat artificial divide. Indeed, if external stakeholders are to feel that they have a genuine stake in the programmes and if grant-holders and researchers are to be engaged in the wider purposes of the programmes, it is desirable that the internal and external audiences are not segregated but overlap and interact.

### *External communication aims*

- to maximise the utility and responsiveness of the programme to a wide range of stakeholders and potential beneficiaries of the research;
- to highlight the contribution of the programmes to issues of public interest and to provide inputs into policy and public debate;
- to complement and inform other national and international research programmes relevant to EEHI/ESEI;
- to help develop an Environment and Health 'Brand' to which EEHI and ESEI are associated, through the LWEC Health Task Force, where appropriate; and
- to be openly accountable and demonstrate the value for public resourcing of the programmes.

### *Internal communication aims*

- to facilitate networking between programmes participants and wider research and stakeholder communities;
- to promote synergies, information exchange and interdisciplinary collaboration between projects;
- to maintain the profile of the programmes within the policies and activities of the Research Councils;
- to facilitate the effective execution of the programmes; and
- to acknowledge the intellectual contribution of the researchers, institutions and stakeholders.

## **3. Audiences**

**3.1** From these communication aims we can identify various audiences with which ESEI & EEHI must engage in different ways:

### *Award holders*

This group encompasses those conducting funded projects. It includes research staff and students, as well as research leaders.

### *The scientific community interested in EEHI & ESEI*

This group encompasses the biological, environmental, medical and social scientists with an interest in Environment and Health research. It includes those individuals, organisations and institutions with a specific interest in the direction of the programmes and the outputs they will produce.

### *Funding and accreditation bodies*

This group includes the BBSRC<sup>1</sup>, Defra<sup>2</sup>, DH<sup>2,3</sup>, FSA<sup>1,4</sup>, ESRC<sup>1,2</sup>, MRC<sup>1,2</sup> and NERC<sup>1,2</sup> as the sponsoring research organisations, as well as the umbrella Research Councils UK and LWEC Directorate / LWEC Health and Wellbeing Task Force.

### *Stakeholders*

These are organisations in the public, private or voluntary sectors that have an interest in the EEHI and ESEI programmes and particularly those that contribute to forming future policy and practice. Current stakeholders are identified in Appendix 1.

### *General public*

This includes the broader public beyond the scientific and stakeholder communities, but with an interest in the societal issues surrounding the broader Environment and Health agenda.

## **4. Communication Activities**

**4.1** The communication aims are realised through a number of activities which form the basis for enhanced interaction at the programme level:

- Stakeholder forums
- Stakeholder Engagement Plans
- Work shadowing scheme
- Visiting fellowship scheme
- Facilitation role of Science Coordinator
- Workshop and event series
- Publication and electronic dissemination actions
- Funders and LWEC communication
- Liaison with projects
- Communications advice and support for individual projects

**4.2** These activities are closely linked to the overarching communication objectives (Table 1) and to specific audiences (Table 2). These activities may be replaced or modified as EEHI & ESEI mature and in response to any periodic review.

**4.3** Stakeholder forums are a prime means to ensure that research is relevant to policy and practice. The current structure at the programme level is that of the Programme Executive Board (PEB) (NERC) and Initiative Management Board (IMB) (MRC), providing strategic advice on the programme's overall

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<sup>1</sup> ESEI funders

<sup>2</sup> EEHI funders

<sup>3</sup> AWESOME and TRAFFIC projects only

<sup>4</sup> *Campylobacter* project only

development. In addition, projects encourage stakeholder development through the use of fora, the structure of which is tailored to the individual needs of the project. Whatever the format, stakeholder forums should fulfil the following functions:

- sounding board on research development;
- sounding board on stakeholder and user engagement;
- rolling commission to explore core questions of public and policy interest related to research; and
- advice on communication.

The forums should meet at least twice a year, with individuals offering expert advice in a personal rather than organisational capacity. Individuals from particular projects and work packages can be invited to attend and discuss their research.

Projects will be commissioned to prepare focused policy and practice statements for critical comment by forum members prior to revision and dissemination (see 4.10).

Membership of the forums is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it includes representatives who can bring expertise and experience that is relevant to the breadth of research being carried out.

**4.4** Through bilateral meetings with the Science Coordinator and project personnel, stakeholders will continue to be involved as active partners in establishing priorities and focus. The meetings will also be used to explore the expectations and potential role of a selection of key stakeholders in relation to EEHI/ESEI.

Sustained involvement of stakeholders in the programmes will continue to be sought. The modalities of engagement with stakeholders will vary and, where appropriate, they will be set out in unique Stakeholder Engagement Plans (SEPs) set up with a selection of key stakeholders. The SEPs are brief and outline the main modes of engagement between the stakeholder and the programmes. The SEPs provide:

- the basis by which the stakeholder can inform its own members, as well as broader interests, of its links with EEHI/ESEI;
- mechanisms whereby stakeholders can inform the development of the programmes, to maximise the value and impact of the research;
- a basis for coordinating the relationship between the stakeholder and researchers interested in engaging with it; and
- a basis for tailoring the communication of research results to the stakeholders needs and providing bespoke mechanisms for engagement in the programmes.

The SEP is based on a menu of possibilities, which could include:

- support of EEHI/ESEI stakeholder forums;
- work shadowing and visiting fellowships;
- sponsorship of specific events;
- provision of data or other services; and
- nomination of a named stakeholder contact to receive EEHI/ESEI communications, to disseminate these as appropriate and to be a main point of contact for consultation in relation to programmes development and knowledge transfer.

SEPs are to be established with key partners (to be identified).

Table 1: Communication Activities and Objectives

Communication Activities	External Communication					Internal Communication			
	Maximise utility and responsiveness	Contribute to policy and public debate	Informing other research programmes	Developing brand	Be openly accountable	Networking with research and stakeholder communities	Collaboration between projects	Maintaining profile within the Research Councils	Effective programme execution
4.3 Stakeholder forums	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4.4 Stakeholder Engagement Plans	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
4.5 Work shadowing scheme	✓	✓				✓			
4.6 Visiting fellowship scheme	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		
4.7 Facilitation role of Science Coordinator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.8 Workshop and event series	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
4.9 Publication and electronic dissemination actions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.10 Funders / LWEC communication	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
4.11 Liaison with projects	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓

Table 2: Communication Activities and Audiences

	Award Holders	Interested scientific community	Funders / LWEC	Stakeholders	General public
4.3 Stakeholder forums	✓		✓	✓	
4.4 Stakeholder Engagement Plans				✓	
4.5 Work shadowing scheme	✓		✓	✓	
4.6 Visiting fellowship scheme	✓			✓	
4.7 Facilitation role of Science Coordinator	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4.8 Workshop and event series	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.9 Publication and electronic dissemination actions					
<i>Website</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Newsletter</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<i>Briefing papers</i>		✓	✓	✓	
<i>Policy and practice notes</i>		✓	✓	✓	
<i>Specialist articles</i>				✓	✓
<i>Press releases</i>		✓		✓	✓
<i>Popular media</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Social networking</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Special issues</i>	✓	✓			
4.10 Funders / LWEC communication	✓	✓	✓		✓
4.11 Liaison with projects	✓				

**4.5** All the individual projects within the programmes have stakeholder involvement – this needs to be mapped and ‘gaps’ identified as a priority.

**4.6** The Work Shadowing Scheme can support capacity building and knowledge transfer objectives by providing an opportunity to introduce research staff to the action-contexts in which their research may be used, whether within commercial organisations, voluntary bodies or public agencies. Potential hosts for placements include stakeholder partners of the programmes or of individual projects. The placements last the equivalent of between one week and one month with the programmes covering eligible travel and subsistence costs to a maximum of £500 per week and £2000 in total per placement.

**4.7** Visiting Fellowships, which are organised in a similar way to the Work Shadowing, enable policy makers and practitioners from the commercial, voluntary or public sector to visit a research team or cluster of teams, so that they can explore the implications of the research for their work and raise awareness of their interests among the researchers. The placements last the equivalent of between one week and one month with the programmes covering eligible travel and subsistence costs to a maximum of £500 per week and £2000 in total per placement.

**4.8** The facilitation role of the Science Coordinator will be pursued through meetings and presentations at national and international gatherings, media interviews, meetings with decision makers, and engagement in key stakeholder forums. The Coordinator will also seek to ensure that EEHI/ESEI complements, learns from and informs other relevant national and international research programmes.

**4.9** It is intended that a series of online seminars are run, themed around shared experiences of the projects. At the outset these will be open to researchers from the seven projects, although it might be that these can be recorded and made more widely available, if appropriate. In addition these may be supplemented by more open meetings for stakeholders.

Programme Wide Events can bring together large numbers of award holders and stakeholders. These will play an important role in encouraging the formation of an EEHI/ESEI research and stakeholder community. Where possible we will look for opportunities for ESEI and EEHI to contribute to major events (e.g. LWEC Health and Wellbeing Task Force event October 2013). Where this is not appropriate, we will look to hosting bespoke events, at an appropriate scale. As the programmes come to maturity the emphasis will move towards a dissemination phase – it is essential we have suitable events lined up to help this. Major events of this kind should be planned for during the communication period 2012-2016 (suggested autumn 2014 and 2015).

It is also intended that the online seminars shape the development of Scoping and Thematic Review Workshops. These will be more focused than the programmes-wide events and aim either to establish the scope for collaborative investigation around key cross-cutting themes or to pursue a synthesis of research outcomes and their policy implications relating to key synoptic topics of public policy. These workshops may also form the basis for special edition publications. The necessity for these workshops will be regularly reviewed.

Other, more public events may also be organised, particularly for the ESRC Festival of Social Science/National Science and Engineering Week.

**4.10** Information about the programmes is disseminated through a shared website and an online newsletter. Press releases will be issued on newsworthy events and research findings, working with press officers from the funded research organisations and funding agencies. These are a means of informing the wider public about the results of the programmes. Specialist articles should be prepared for technical and professional magazines.

### *Website*

The website is maintained as the prime source of general information about the programmes. Key features of the site should include:

- Aims, information and policies
- Project information and links to project web sites
- Key contacts for projects
- Stakeholder information and links to stakeholder websites
- Access to newsletters and programmes briefings
- Event and workshop announcements and diary
- Links to Data Support Service
- Contact registration

### *Newsletter*

This will be an electronic news sheet produced annually and distributed to interested stakeholders and researchers. The newsletter will include project level information, news stories and articles on projects and events. This can be supplemented by newsflashes on major news items, if required. The news letter will be distributed through funders and project contacts, in addition to any built up at the programme level, over time.

### *Briefing paper series*

The opportunity for a briefing paper series that reviews the scope and outcomes of programmes research will be monitored. The series would provide a means by which EEHI/ESEI research can impact on science and innovation policy. Themes that might be addressed in the briefing papers would include good practice of interdisciplinary research, Environment and Health futures, guidance on data management and Knowledge Exchange.

### *Policy and Practice notes*

Each project will produce at least one policy and practice note, which will be a short document outlining the most important findings from the research and the policy and practice implications. These will be produced in accessible language, using a common format and will provide a concise means of communicating the results of the research as widely as possible to a range of audiences. If appropriate, groups of projects may also be commissioned to produce similar documents that cut across all of their findings.

### *Specialist articles*

Articles should be prepared for technical and professional magazines to raise the profile of EEHI/ESEI and to disseminate its research findings.

### *Press releases*

Press releases will be issued on newsworthy events and research findings and these will increase as more research results become available. Key contact links to research organisation and funding press offices need to be made early on.

### *Popular media*

The potential for dissemination of EEHI/ESEI research in various popular outlets, including film and popular books needs to be investigated. These would make the research available to a wider audience and stimulate public discussion about the challenges facing the environment and health agenda.

### *Journal special issues*

The Science Coordinator will seek out possibilities for special issue journals, in consultation with project researchers and LWEC.

### *Social networking*

The potential for the use of social networking (e.g. twitter & blogs) for making research accessible is as yet fairly untested. It is hoped that this method can be encouraged within the programmes. Monitoring of this at appropriate intervals will be necessary.

**4.10** The Science Coordinator reports to the PEB (EEHI) and IMB (ESEI), and to their respective programme managers on the suite of activities and overall programmes objectives. An overarching objective will be to maintain the accountability of the programmes and to ensure its profile within the Research Councils. A Programmes Annual Report will be prepared for the Research Councils in March 2013, March 2014, March 2015 and March 2016.

**4.11** There needs to be full 'buy in' to the Communication Plan on the part of project leaders.

Close liaison will be maintained with project co-ordinators (for example requesting highlights for the newsletter concerning progress and dissemination). The Science Coordinator will visit each project at least once a year.

Projects will be encouraged to take up the opportunities presented by an Inter-research project exchange/workshop fund which will reimburse minor travel expenses to allow researchers from different projects to meet and plan joint research and dissemination activities.

## **5. Plans for legacy**

In conclusion, over the next two to three years the Science Coordinator, in collaboration with the programme managers will be planning the legacy of the programmes in order to ensure a lasting resource for future researchers, stakeholders and the public. Wherever possible, we will look for opportunities to feed-forward into future funding, policy and practice opportunities.

## **6. Delivery**

Mechanisms for delivering strategy are agreed annually each year, depending on budget, with deliverables mapped through science coordinator workplan and a separate communications actions plan.

## **Acknowledgements**

In the light of the recent report on the successes of RELU<sup>5</sup>, this communications plan has been written, using the RELU template. Changes have been made to suit EEHI/ESEI and have taken onboard lessons learnt through the RELU programme.

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<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140102185900/http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/programmes/relu/findings.asp>