



1st Biotech Hub Workshop for
stakeholder engagement:
“Communication for impact”
Post-event report

ERA CoBioTech

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WP7 European Biotechnology Hub

Task 7.2 Biotech Hub Workshops for stakeholder engagement

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Executive summary

The ERA-Net Cofund on Biotechnologies (ERA CoBioTech) is funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 Programme and aims to maximize synergies between current mechanisms of biotechnology research funding in Europe, to highlight the benefits of a bio-based economy for society, and to maintain and strengthen Europe's position in biotechnology.

The current document describes the content and outcomes of the first European Biotechnology Hub Workshop "Communication for impact" held on 11.-12.06.2018 in Schmerlenbach, Germany. The workshop was organised by Task 7.2. "Biotech Hub workshops for stakeholder engagement" leader FNR, in order to provide support to the starting projects funded within the ERA CoBioTech cofunded call in the early project phase, and to ensure that synergies and wherever appropriate effective collaborative work between the projects and the ERA CoBioTech executive team would be achieved.

The main objectives of the workshop were to clarify how important strategic thinking is for successful communication activities of the projects, provide the researchers with necessary skills and tools needed to effectively carry out communication and outreach activities in their projects and identify success factors in order to effectively measure the impact of their projects. Furthermore, the project coordinators and communication managers had an opportunity to get to know each other and to meet the representatives of ERA CoBioTech executive team mainly responsible for communication activities of ERA CoBioTech.

The attendees were highly motivated and actively participated in the exercises and break out session prepared by the workshop moderator Rhonda Smith (Minerva, UK). They learned about strategic thinking when planning and implementing communication activities, and had the chance to practice, in an imaginary situation, presenting their project briefly to policy makers. By practising direct communication, they gained skills and self-confidence, which will be useful for their work as ambassadors of their projects and the concept of bioeconomy in general.

In an open discussion on possible activities between the projects and ERA CoBioTech, the participants emphasised the advantages of joining forces to achieve higher outreach and impact, as the projects address similar target groups. Projects aiming to carry out LCA or other kind of socio-economic assessment will especially benefit by reaching stakeholders in other relevant European countries with the help of other ERA CoBioTech projects. The participants also stressed the importance of interlinking their websites with the ERA CoBioTech website, as well as the potential of social media and other communication channels for raising higher attention of their project's achievements. The establishment of the European Biotechnology Hub online platform for sharing and exchanging information between projects, the biotech community (academia and industry) and the general public were discussed. These are considered as viable options for consolidating communication efforts of the cofounded projects and attracting early-career researchers. The early-career researchers are highly motivated and interested in using modern communication technologies and would benefit of such online community platform.

For a future Biotech Hub Workshop, the participants proposed putting the focus on RRI, getting new skills to use social media, communication methods and channels.

1. Background and Introduction

ERA-Net Cofund on Biotechnologies (ERA CoBioTech) is funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 Programme and aims to maximize synergies between current mechanisms of biotechnology research funding in Europe to highlight the benefits of a bio-based economy for society, and to maintain and strengthen Europe's position in biotechnology.

Effective communication is an essential element of ERA CoBioTech and any ERA CoBioTech funded research project because:

- European tax-payers are providing the funding for research and have a moral right to know where their money is going and that they are receiving 'value for money'
- Communicating about the relevance of the research work and its potential outcomes to society and everyday life of citizens will help ensure that innovations, products, knowledge, and thinking, are accepted and utilised by society, rather than ignored or opposed.
- Everyone is a citizen, whether President, MEP, policy-player, teacher, student, entrepreneur or industrialist who watches TV, reads the news, accesses online sources and has interests beyond their immediate network. Effective communication raises awareness of the research project and of the professionals working on it to mutual advantage, potentially laying the ground for more funding or support.
- ERA CoBioTech wishes to ensure that the funded projects make the best use they can of the 'results' each of them generate. This means ensuring that as many groups in society as possible know about the excellent work that is being conducted and their potential results so decision-makers in policy, industry or science will take them up. Strategic communications plans utilising creative but accessible actions with measurable outcomes are required to deliver this.

As a part of WP 7 the European Biotechnology Hub established by ERA CoBioTech, which aims to initiate and sustain active engagement from a broad range of stakeholders across biotechnology (and related) value chains, two primary instruments to reach the different stakeholder groups are applied. The European Biotech Hub meetings provide a one-of-a-kind opportunity to align different European strategic instruments in the area of biotechnology, with the goals of the KET biotechnology programme under Horizon 2020 and potential fields of application of the technologies in question. While the Biotech Hub Meetings have a strategic focus, the Biotech Hub Workshops for stakeholder engagement aim to engage scientific and industrial biotechnology stakeholders and empower them to make the most of their involvement in transnational RD&I.

The first Biotech Hub Workshop "Communication for impact" was carried out with support of Minerva Communication (coordinator of former CommBeBiz project, currently partner in H2020 project BIOVOICES) back-to-back with the CoBioTech co-funded call kick-off event at AICHEMA 2018.

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The main objectives of the workshop were to define how important strategic thinking is for successful communication activities of the projects and to provide the researchers with the necessary skills and specific tools needed to effectively carry out communication and outreach activities in their projects, as well as to identify success factors in order to effectively measure the impact of their projects. Furthermore, project

coordinators and communication managers had an opportunity to get to know each other and to meet the representatives of the ERA CoBioTech executive team mainly responsible for communication activities of ERA CoBioTech.

2. Workshop "Communication for impact"

The first Biotech Workshop "Communication for impact" was organised by the German Agency for Renewable Resources (FNR) and was held in the Congress Centre in Schmerlenbach, Germany. Coordinators and communication managers of the cofounded projects, early-career researchers and researchers from projects funded under ERA-IB-2, ERA SysAPP and ERA SynBio were invited to participate in the workshop. Representatives of 15 cofunded projects, as well as members of the ERA CoBioTech executive team,



attended the workshop. Rhonda Smith (Minerva Communication, UK) moderated the workshop. Rhonda is the Founder and Director of Minerva Communication, a UK based micro SME specialising both in the transfer of knowledge from research & academia to targeted stakeholders— such as industry, professional and trade associations, policy-makers, NGOs and consumers— and in developing capacity and confidence within the research and

FIGURE 2: WELCOME AND PRESENTATION OF ERA COBIOTECH

bioeconomy communities in communicating to the wider world. Minerva has an established reputation in leadership and contributory roles across EC funded projects (FP5, 6 & 7, H2020), delivering training for projects in strategic communications planning and delivery, and managing effective communications programmes. At the beginning of the workshop, the participants were welcomed on behalf of ERA CoBioTech by Boris Vashev (FNR), responsible for Task 7.2., Biotech Hub Workshops, and organiser of the current workshop. In a short presentation, the attendees were informed about the history of ERA CoBioTech based on the successful work of its precursor ERA-Nets, as well as the ongoing and planned activities of the ERA-NET.



FIGURE 2: GET TOGETHER

Box 1. Introduction of RHODOLIVE project

Olive oil is delicious, but the by-production of 1000 liters of olive oil is 1500-2000 liters of wastewater. The disposal of olive mill wastewater causes environmental problems that Alper Karakaya (Duzen, TR) and his partners from the RHODOLIVE project want to tackle by developing a fermentation approach which will clean the wastewater and produce added-value products from it.

After the presentation of the former and ongoing projects of Minerva Communication in a "Get together" session, all participants had the chance to introduce themselves and briefly explain their projects. After this

introduction the participants discussed which person and/or project introduction they remembered and why. Finally, all participants agreed that every person and project have an interesting story to tell, but must tell the story in a way to show its significance. There are different ways to make a story more meaningful, either by using facts and numbers or by sharing personal details and thoughts, but regardless the story should transmit a clear, simple message. Here, clarity is imperative, as non-specialists might not know much about molecular biotechnology, metabolic engineering etc. and might not be able to follow.

FIGURE 3: GREG BOKINSKY (TU DELFT, NL) COORDINATOR OF IRONPLUGNPLAY PROJECT PRESENTS



THE DEFINITIONS OF C&D ELABORATED IN HIS WORKING GROUP

In the second session, the participants discussed in small groups how communication, dissemination and outreach can be defined, and each group explained their definitions to other participants. With the help of the moderator, the participants realised why communication in the context of a research project is addressed by Horizon 2020, and why ERA CoBioTech puts a special emphasis on this topic. The researchers are now aware that while they still need to disseminate their results and outcomes by publishing articles in peer reviewed journals and giving talks at scientific congresses, in order to create sustainable impact in society and gain acceptance and recognition by policy and decision makers and the general public, they must also send tailored messages to and receive feedback from all relevant stakeholder groups—not only the scientific community. At the end of the day during the joint dinner in an informal atmosphere, the participants had an opportunity to learn more about each other and to explain more about their projects.

The second day of the workshop started with a role-play called “elevator pitch”, where after a short introduction on the key elements of a successful project pitch, all participants had to explain their research in go seconds to a fictive Member of the European Parliament (the role of the MEP was kindly played by Irina Kobrin (JUELICH, DE), Alan Goddard (Aston University, UK), Rhonda Smith (Minerva, UK) and Boris Vashev (FNR,DE)), and do their best to convince the MEP of the importance of their work—and of continued funding—for EU citizens and society. The participants were very motivated, and did their best to achieve the maximal outcome from their brief meeting by leaving a permanent impression on the MEP, and by causing a call of action for further conversation and action. After each pitch, the moderator and the other

participants discussed what everyone could remember from this talk, what the good strategical methods were, what good information was used, and what needed to be improved for future talks. Finally, all participants agreed that they had a lot of fun doing this exercise, and that such exercises are very helpful in developing the concept of how to explain projects and their benefits, simply. The necessity of praxis was underlined. Good preparation in advance to improve self-confidence is necessary in order to be able to use such unique chances to get the most out of such situations. This kind of experience is also useful when explaining such complex work—and its benefits—to colleagues, family and laypersons.



FIGURE 4: ELEVATOR PITCH

Box 2. Mission: Streamlined *Streptomyces* cell factories for industrial production of valuable natural products

Liliya Horbal (University of Saarland, DE) explaining to the MEP (Rhonda Smith) the importance of research to be conducted in the Mission project tackling problems with antibiotic resistant bacteria. By developing an innovative, sustainable and environmentally friendly approach for production of antibiotics, Liliya and her colleagues from the Mission project want to provide a solution for protecting the life and wellbeing of millions of people around the world.

After the elevator pitch session, the workshop focused on stakeholder relevance. The participants were reminded that they needed to clearly define the key stakeholders of their projects, and tailor relevant messages for each stakeholder group. This should refresh the background ideas fixed in the C&D plans that the projects have developed in their full proposals and emphasise again the importance of strategic view when plans are further implemented. The participants presented the stakeholder groups envisaged by their projects and which means of communication and messages they would spread.

Some examples and hints were given by Rhonda Smith on how to make communication more effective, raise more attention and create greater impact by telling stories—especially by making these stories visual, interactive and personal.



FIGURE 5: RAMON GONZALEZ (ICVV-CSIC, ES) COORDINATOR OF THE COOLWINE PROJECT EXPLAINS THE C&D PLAN OF HIS PROJECT

Box 3. Model-guided evolution for balanced attenuation of wine ethanol content by developing non-GMO yeast strains and communities

Climate warming affects the sugar content of grapes in some traditional Mediterranean wine regions like La Rioja (Spain). This causes an increase of the alcohol content of wines consumed by many of people. It is not only a challenge for CoolWine consortium to develop an approach to reduce the alcohol content of wines by maintaining their taste, but also to convince the consumers about the advantages of wine with less alcohol and to contribute to healthier moderate wine consumption

Another important aspect for many of the participants, which was discussed, was what exactly the impact of their project is, and how to measure it. Indeed, impact is expected by all funding bodies and especially pushed in H2020, but many of the researchers are not sure what they are expected to deliver. The participants discussed what the potential impact of their research projects could be, such as: i) changing the population's perceptions &/or understanding, ii) fulfilling a need in society: be it an improvement or something new; iii) changing the direction/priorities of the scientific agenda for the common good; iv) delivering 'improvements' for policy, economics, quality of life; v) 'making a difference' – alternative solutions etc. It was very positive to see that many of the projects have focused on societal and environmental aspects and included LCA or other approaches to survey the potential implications on society of their projects and the products, processes and technology to be developed.



FIGURE 6: LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENT IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF SUSTAINABLE CO-PRODUCTION PROJECT

Box 4 Tobacco as sustainable production platform of the natural biopolymer cyanophycin as co-product to oil and protein

Antoniya Hauerwaas (Leuphana University Lueneburg, DE) is a social scientist working on life cycle analysis of the tobacco based biopolymer cyanophycin (CGP). Due to the reduced consumption of tobacco, many farmers in Argentina and Europe may lose their source of income. Growing a variety of nicotine free tobacco that produces a high amount of seeds, from which the remaining biomass could potentially be used as feed or feedstock for biopolymers, seems to be a win-win solution—but the stakeholders need to understand and accept this.



FIGURE 7: ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS AND DEVELOPING BEST PRACTICES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF SOCIETAL VALUES IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE SUCCESS OF SUSPHIRE PROJECT

Box 5. Sustainable Bioproduction of Pheromones for Insect Pest Control in Agriculture

Pest control is a very sensitive issue; ecofriendly alternatives, which do not harm ecosystems and which preserve biodiversity are needed. In the SUSPHIRE project, a process for the production of sex-pheromones in plants and fungi will be developed. Janine Gondolf of TU Darmstadt (pictured left) explains that her task in SUSPHIRE is to focus on RRI aspects in the project, and to convince the stakeholders of the benefits of genetically engineered organisms for bioproduction of sex-pheromones.

During the final part of the workshop (the wrap up session), the participants discussed how they could collaborate on particular projects, and how they could be supported by ERA CoBioTech in order to save time and resources, as well as to achieve higher impact in society, as most of them aim to address the same stakeholder groups. The participants also received an evaluation form with which they could rate the organisation of the workshop, propose topics for future workshops according to their needs and leave other comments. Major outcomes of the workshop are summarised in the next chapter.

3. Workshop outcomes

The workshop was held in a constructive atmosphere, and the participants were very motivated to learn more about how to better implement the communication plans of their projects. The workshop proved to be a good opportunity for all involved in the project communication to get to know each other and some of the members of the ERA CoBioTech team. The quiet hospitable venue of the former monastery of Schmerlenbach inspired the participants to look for new collaborations and synergies between the projects. Unfortunately, not all projects could send a representative due to delays in national funding. Several project partners have yet to receive funding, and the staff responsible for communication is not yet hired. However, organising the workshop at such an early stage was still advantageous, as those dealing with project communication could begin to look for collaboration opportunities from the start of their projects.

Major ideas for joint actions and support from ERA CoBioTech are based on the discussions held during the workshop and the evaluation form, and are as follows:

- Websites of ERA CoBioTech projects
 - ERA CoBioTech provides brief information about all cofunded projects., but further to this some participants asked whether it would be possible for ERA CoBioTech to host and support the creation of specific project webpages
 - Most project representatives stated that their projects plan to launch their own webpage
 - In order to keep diversity and project identity, it is not practical to host individual project pages on the ERA CoBioTech webpage
 - All participants agreed that it would be very beneficial to link the individual project websites and social media contacts to the ERA CoBioTech site
- Social media (twitter, Facebook, Instagram, research gate and co.)
 - Only a few of the participants are familiar with using social media (e.g. twitter)
 - Most projects will create a social media account
 - Interlinking the accounts of all projects and ERA CoBioTech will be beneficial for the spreading of messages around the entire community
 - In general, there is a demand for training in how to effectively use social media
- Other common means and methods for easy and effective communication between the projects and ERA CoBioTech
 - It was proposed that an online communication and networking platform (online community) as a part of the European Biotechnology Hub should be established. Here, the projects and other stakeholders can exchange information about ongoing activities and project outcomes , and look for partners in future ERA CoBioTech calls
 - The advantage of this platform would be that the projects will be able to easily spread information to interested stakeholders without the need of assistance by the ERA CoBioTech executive team
 - Early-career researchers may benefit from a platform where information about training and job possibilities is exchanged
 - Higher visibility for the projects and their activities
- Topics for future Biotech Hub workshops
 - How to set up and use social media
 - communication methods, obtaining new skills
 - responsible research and innovation
- ERA CoBioTech Communication Award
 - The projects presented at the workshop have effective C&D strategies for creating project videos, games or “biotech school lab experiments” for children, as well as stakeholder surveys. Therefore, it would be additionally motivating if ERA CoBioTech would carry out a competition and award the best project in terms of communication
 - This option was discussed during the ERA CoBioTech kick-off held in 2017 in Berlin, and if this is still a viable means of higher engagement, it should be decided on and announced soon in order to give the chance to plan the project more fully

- Young scientists are open to undertaking interdisciplinary work and pursuing knowledge, the ERA CoBioTech communication award will provide an additional motivation and push their creativity by the implementation of the C&D plans of their projects

As a follow up of the workshop, additional learning materials and guidelines with examples of good practices of communication released by the EC, as well as other supportive projects (s. end of this document), were sent out to the workshop participants and all project coordinators. This will provide necessary knowledge and some new ideas on how to make a greater impact with the communication activities within the cofounded projects. It has already been decided by the ERA CoBioTech CC that the second Biotech Hub workshop - which will be organised back to back with the Midterm seminar of the projects and the kick-off of projects from the second call of ERA CoBioTech - will be focused on RRI.

4. Workshop evaluation

The participants in the workshop expressed a very high level of satisfaction. 83 % of survey respondents (s. Annex C) found the organisation of the event very good, 47 % found the provided materials very useful and 41 % useful. 61% of the respondents found the workshop very relevant for their work, while 33 % found it relevant. The role-play "Elevator pitch" was definitely the most favoured exercise during the workshop, and the section "C&D plan for CoBioTech to deliver impact" was also strongly enjoyed. A great majority found the premises and catering very good, or good.



FIGURE 8: GROUP PICTURE WITH ALL WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Agenda


CoBioTech Hub workshop: “Communication for Impact”

Conference Centre Schmerlenbach

Schmerlenbacher Str. 8

63768 Hoesbach

11-12 June 2018

Time	Topic	Who & What
13:00-14:00	<i>Registration & Lunch</i>	
14:00 - 14:15	Welcome	<i>FNR</i>
14:15 - 14:45	Introduction of CommBeBiz/ Minerva Communication Presentation of workshop objectives and agenda	<i>Minerva Communication</i>
14:45 – 15:30	Get together (tour de table)	<i>Presentation by all present of themselves and the projects they represent</i>
15:30 -16:00	 Coffee break	<i>all</i>
16:00 - 17:00	The Dissemination & Communication Plan for CoBioTech & to Deliver Impact Working session 1	<i>CoBioTech – what is expected by the ERA-Net of your projects?</i> <i>Definitions & Rationale</i> <i>Plenary discussion - all</i>

18:00 -19:30 Joint Dinner

Tuesday, 12th June 2018

Time	Topic	Person in charge
09:00 - 10:30	The Elevator Pitch: Mission & Vision Working session 2	<i>The Elevator Pitch – the 90 second 'pitch'</i> <i>Clarity of Purpose, Clarity of Message</i> <i>All delegates to present their project's mission & vision</i>
10:30 - 11:00	 Coffee break	<i>all</i>
11:00 - 12:30	Stakeholders: Relevance Working Session 3	<i>Stakeholders – priority targets: who, why, what know, what tell, when</i> <i>Group work – preparation & presentation - all</i>
12:30 - 13:15	 Lunch break	<i>all</i>
13:15 - 14:45	Project Plans: What is planned? Working Session 4	<i>What's planned? Actions, materials, resources, budgets</i> <i>Project based session – preparation & presentation – all</i>
14:45 - 15:00	 Coffee break (short)	<i>all</i>
15:00 - 16:00	Impact: What will be achieved? Working Session 5	<i>Impact – what is planned? How will it be achieved? How will you know whether you are on track? Checking the Message Chain</i> <i>Plenary session – input & feedback from all</i>
16:00 - 16:30	Wrap up session	<i>Key questions & feedback</i> <i>Potential collaborations across projects/issues – is this possible?</i> <i>Support for projects – what is available - from ERA CoBioTech, from EC, from other sources?</i> <i>Take home messages</i>
16:30	Closure of meeting	<i>all</i>

Links to learning materials and guidelines for communication, scientific publishing and RRI

- CommBeBiz-project: <https://www.commbebiz.eu/> in the section: library under “Videos” or “Training and Webinars” you can find a lot of materials related to:
 - Communication:
 - https://www.iprhelpdesk.eu/sites/default/files/EU-IPR-Brochure-Boosting-Impact-C-D-E_o.pdf
 - <http://www.streamdis.eu/commsworkout2/>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvpwljZTs-Lheowu6uy8gr7JFfmv8EZuH>
 - <https://commbebiz.eu/?post=top-tips-on-short-videos-for-bioeconomy-researchers>
 - <https://commbebiz.eu/?post=commbebiz-webinar-6-how-to-write-a-communication-plan>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kujzJL2gtI>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTxNQISB7Uo>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSdFH2wuz-s>
 - Social media
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l82DytrtRoA>
 - http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/docs/guidelines_social_media_en.pdf
 - Intellectual property rights
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RdU3h6s3Uo>
 - Responsible research and innovation
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1vildlATsl>
 - Impact creation
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gy3Xq2ahqs>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJDOZ9gdPIM>
 - Open Science and Data Sharing
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYDm8BYfbdg>
 - Social innovation
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pY4QFtcv7o
- Examples of good communication praxis:
 - short videos
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xvXkOMRTs4&list=PLbr45QY_c7MgomoMc4Z2iYH4-h3Z89rEC
 - <http://www.allthings.bio/materials/biomaterials/>
 - bioeconomy quiz
 - <http://www.allthings.bio/quiz/are-you-ready-for-the-bioeconomy/>
 - Games, puzzles and memory for kids related to renewable materials created by the FNR unfortunately only in German L
 - <http://www.bauerhubert.de/spielen-und-raetseln/>
 - Other useful links:
 - Project Biovoices: <http://www.biovoices.eu/>
 - Project KETBio: <http://ketbio.eu/>
 - IPR Helpdesk: <https://www.iprhelpdesk.eu/>
 - BBI JU: <https://www.bbi-europe.eu/>
- EURAXESS: How to improve your science communication skills–Idea Books
 - <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/worldwide/asean/how-improve-your-science-communication-skills-tools-researchers-available-here-o>
 - https://cdn1.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/news/scicom_idea_book_1_communicating_scienc_e_2017_1.pdf
 - https://cdn3.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/news/scicom_idea_book_2_presentations_2017_1.pdf
 - https://cdn3.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/news/scicom_idea_book_3_graphs_graphics_2017_1.pdf
- Wissenschaftskommunikation.de: collection of examples for formats for science communication in German
 - <https://www.wissenschaftskommunikation.de/formate/>