

I.FAST

Innovation Fostering in Accelerator Science and Technology

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MILESTONE REPORT

Accelerator Communication and Outreach (ACO) workshop

MILESTONE: MS5

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ABSTRACT

This report details the Accelerator Communication and Outreach workshop that was carried out in the context of milestone MS05 of the I.FAST project. This report represents the completion of said milestone. The ACO workshop was organised under the requirements of Task 2.2 with the goal to engage the network of communication officers from the major institutes of the European accelerator community in knowledge-sharing and in developing a synergistic communication and outreach strategy. The ACO workshop was successfully held on March 20 – 21, 2025, at CERN with 15 participants from accelerator facilities around Europe. The report covers the details of the workshop and the outcomes from the discussions that were held.

I.FAST Consortium, 2021

For more information on IFAST, its partners and contributors please see <https://ifast-project.eu/>

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Delivery Slip

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES.....	4
2	THE WORKSHOP	5
3	NETWORKING.....	6
4	OUTCOMES	6
5	ANNEX	7

1 Context and challenges

The purpose of the Accelerator Communication and Outreach workshop, as stated in the proposal, was to “engage the network of communication officers from the major institutes of the European accelerator community in knowledge-sharing and in developing a synergistic communication and outreach strategy”.

The idea of this workshop follows two previous, similar workshops organised under the ARIES project, I.FAST’s predecessor, that provided a broader opportunity to discuss communication strategies related to accelerator facilities and technologies.

The proposal originally called for two ACO workshops to be held during the project. However, two significant obstacles made this very challenging. The first was the COVID-19 pandemic that posed difficulties in organising a workshop in the first 18 months of the project. The second was a change to the Task 2.2 leader in early 2024. In the end, due to disruptions, it was decided that just one ACO workshop would be held during the span of the project.

Preparations for this workshop began in the summer of 2024 with a March 2025 date selected in order to provide ample time for participants to prepare travel and active participation.

A specific theme was chosen for this iteration: Competitiveness.

Europe’s research and innovation landscape is in a period of political development, moving towards a stronger focus on competitiveness and links to industry. This has been highlighted by Europe-wide reports published since 2024, such as those by former Italian prime ministers Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi and the so-called Heitor report, as well as European Commission president Ursula Von der Leyen’s speech at the CERN 70 event and calls by research associations for Europe’s next R&I framework programme to boost European industrial competitiveness.

This represents a new challenge for the communication output of Europe’s major institutes in the accelerator community: How best to showcase the contribution of accelerator facilities and technologies to European competitiveness?

A series of talks from those at the heart of conversations about European competitiveness was delivered to participants of the workshop to highlight the direction the R&I landscape is likely to take in the coming years. There were also participant-driven workshops where accelerator science communicators worked together to come up with ideas to communicate accelerator facilities and technologies in this new era.

In addition to this, the event provided an opportunity for communicators working at accelerator facilities to network, share ideas and build stronger collaboration channels.

2 The workshop

Over 20 participants from particle accelerator facilities around Europe were invited to attend the ACO workshop. 15 participants attended, representing facilities and institutions such as CNRS and Synchrotron Soleil in France, SOLARIS National Synchrotron Radiation Centre in Poland, Elettra Sincrotrone in Italy, ALBA Synchrotron in Spain, European XFEL in Germany, ELI ERIC from Czech Republic and Hungary, the John Adams Institute and the Cockcroft Institute in the UK, as well as two representatives from CERN in Switzerland.

The event took place over two half days on 20 and 21 March, 2025.

Four speakers were invited to speak about specific topics. The first talk was held by Alexander Blūms, research counsellor at the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Latvia to the European Union. He talked about why scientific competitiveness is a growing priority in Europe, as well as giving a and a summary of recent policy trends in research and innovation.

Following his presentation, participants discussed in small groups the following questions:

- Do communication officers working at accelerator facilities need to care about Europe's increasing focus on competitiveness?
- What is your personal experience of trying to communicate about the contribution of accelerator facilities to European competitiveness?

The second talk was held by Goda Naujokaitytė, an editor at news publication Science|Business, on how communication officers can build networks with journalists, tips for writing press releases, and insights into which stories attract media attention -- especially in times of increasing scientific competitiveness.

Following her presentation, participants discussed in small groups the following questions:

- What are the main challenges you have in working with journalists?
- What are some things that the media misunderstands about accelerator facilities? How can we correct this?
- Which stories tend to attract the most media attention for accelerator facilities?

The third talk was held by Arnaud Marsollier, head of Education, Communication & Outreach at CERN on his experience of communicating accelerator facilities and the importance of building inter-institutional networks in the science communication community.

Following his presentation, participants discussed in small groups the following questions:

- Should we be communicating each other's news?
- How can we stay connected and continue to collaborate?

A final short talk was given by Agnieszka Cudek from the SOLARIS National Synchrotron Radiation Centre on the work being done by the Lightsources.org consortium.

3 Networking

A key element of the event was offering participants the chance to get to know each other better and to network. With this in mind, a tour of CERN's Antimatter Factory was organised. Participants had the chance to learn about the work being done there and also to learn more about how CERN organises tours of its facilities.

On the evening of the first day a dinner was held at CERN's restaurant to provide participants with an informal opportunity to get to know each other.

Some participants also took the chance to visit CERN's education and outreach centre Science Gateway, which was opened in 2023, with the intention of learning more about how CERN's interactive exhibits attract visitors.

4 Outcomes

In a two-hour session on the second day the conclusions of the discussions that took place in smaller groups were opened up to the larger group. Participants gave their frank opinions on the questions asked and found several challenges in common. The group also heard about positive experiences and were able to ask participants for the ideas on how to replicate this at their own facilities. This workshop session provided an excellent opportunity for the participants to discover the common challenges that communication officers at accelerator facilities face.

The participants expressed a strong interest in maintaining the relations built during the workshop and in participating in future, similar workshops. As one concrete outcome of the workshop, a private LinkedIn group has been created to help the participants remain in touch and to continue to expand the network of communications officers working in Europe's particle accelerator facilities.

[The Accelerating News newsletter](#) was also explained to the participants during the workshop. This newsletter is published quarterly and features stories about accelerator facilities, technologies and related European Union-funded projects. Participants were informed of the possibility of writing stories for future editions of the newsletter.

Another outcome of this workshop will be a short article on the summarising the meeting that will be published in the June edition of Accelerating News.

In addition to this, one participant will write a short article about the workshop for the CERN Courier's Field Notes section.

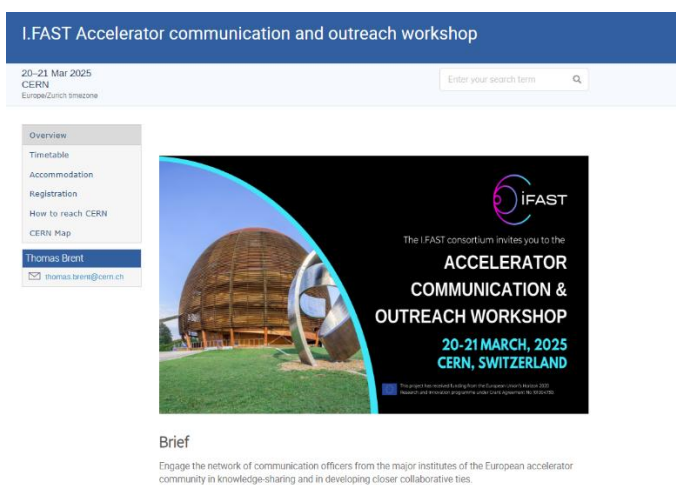
The initial feedback from the participants has been overwhelmingly positive. Many stated that the interactive format of the workshop helped to bring about more interesting and open discussions. There is also a strong demand for more regular gatherings to continue to work collaboratively on overcoming challenges facing communication officers at accelerator facilities.

5 Annex

1. Group photo taken at CERN's Antimatter Factory.



2. Screenshot of [the public Indico page](#).



3. Outline of the event's agenda.

