

Communication Plan

MATS Deliverable 7.2



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Summary

Effective and strategically planned communication is an integral component of the MATS project. Communicating project objectives, work and results will start at the outset of the project and continue throughout the project cycle. To ensure effective communication, a holistic communication strategy was prepared jointly with the whole consortium (D7.2 Communication Plan). The elaboration of the plan was led by the WP7 'Project Management and Communication' team and agreed upon with all project partners.

The Communication Plan identifies the communication principles and goals; the targeted stakeholders and various communication activities; channels and means for external communications; responsibilities; and the organisation of continuous monitoring and refinement. Attention in all communication and dissemination activities is given to strong connections with relevant multipliers, and existing organisations, networks and their platforms and media channels.

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¹ R = Report, P = Prototype, D = Demonstrator, O = Other

² PU = Public, CO = Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)

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1 Introduction

Effective and strategically planned communication and engagement is an integral component of MATS. Communicating project objectives, work and results starts at the outset of the project and continues throughout the project cycle.

MATS aims to build a society–stakeholder–policy community interested in fostering sustainable agri-food trade and to enhance the related discussions. The strategy is to ensure an effective communication with and meaningful engagement of relevant actors.

The elaboration of the Communication Plan was led by the WP7 'Project Management and Communication' team and agreed upon with all project partners. It outlines the full suite of communication activities and coordinates the communication of all WPs.

The Communication Plan identifies

- the communication principles and goals;
- the targeted stakeholders and related communication activities;
- channels and means for external communications;
- responsibilities regarding communication; and,
- continuous monitoring and refinement.

The planned communication activities range from organising workshops, events or communication of civil society and policy dialogue to providing contents for the project's interactive platform.

The core instrument in MATS for connecting the project with relevant decision-makers, stakeholders, and other food system actors and initiatives is the 'Sustainable Agricultural Trade Hub'. The project's 'Sustainable Agricultural Trade Hub' is to contribute to more informed exchanges and consultations. It serves as an online repository of resources and as a place where those interested in the project and topics addressed can interact with each other and with the MATS consortium.

MATS initiates and contributes to policy dialogues, participates in relevant fora, and provides cutting-edge information to decision-makers in the private and public sectors. The aim is to foster an effective collaboration between researchers, policymakers, CSOs and the wider stakeholder community.

WP7 deliberately connects project management with the coordination of all communication activities, as effective communication is critical in the project implementation. Direct links allow the Project Management Team to effectively coordinate communication activities across all WPs. The WP7 team monitors progress in implementing the plan and sustains a supportive, ongoing dialogue on communication with all consortium partners.

2 Communication goals and principles

2.1 Communication goals

This Communication Plan (D7.2) is to provide the basis for effective communication and the related coordination. The project's communication activities have the following specific objectives:

- 1) Provide up-to-date information on the project to relevant decision-makers, stakeholders and food system actors.
- 2) Increase interaction and engagement between the project and the diverse actors interested in the topic and project.
- 3) Disseminate and make available the project reporting and scientific results to a diverse audience, including researchers, policy makers, farmers, food traders, and other food system actors.

2.2 Principles guiding communication

The main goal of project communication is to foster effective collaboration between researchers, policymakers, CSOs and the wider community. This target group-oriented Communication Plan provides the basis for the related coordination.

Project communication also comprises the clustering with other trade-related research projects, the elaboration and management of an innovative evidence-based communication platform, and a targeted use of interactive formats, tools, and social media. MATS therefore pays attention to an early and effective conversation with relevant actors from early on during implementation.

The key findings of the MATS project are translated into major EU languages and made available for download through the project's evidence-based communication platform. Some of case study reports can be translated into Arabic for helping interact between CSOs in Tunisia and the wider North African region. Executive summaries tailored to the needs of different actors are provided directly to policymakers, regulators, CSOs and stakeholder organisations.

The documentation of the progress achieved is connected with project-level reporting. Regularly updated news, especially from the 15 case studies, are published in the project website, and, more widely, through the project's social network channels Twitter and LinkedIn.

The more specific principles that guide MATS communication are:

- *Communication activities are coordinated*: all our communication is based on our joint work in WPs. Co-creation characterises the project, also in communication. Our goal is to promote and support joint actions for sustainable agri-food trade.
- *Communication is effective*: through communication, we promote policy dialogues, participate in relevant forums, and provide cutting-edge information to decision-makers in private and public sectors. The evidence-based communication platform and set of transdisciplinary methods and tools facilitate effective collaboration between researchers, policymakers, CSOs and the broader community.
- *Communication is diverse*: clustering with other trade-related research projects, the development and management of innovative evidence-based communication platform, and the targeted use of interactive formats, tools, and social media.

3 Target groups

MATS has three main target groups and for each target group dedicated communication activities are foreseen. These range from workshops, public events, and civil society and policy dialogues to providing tailored, relevant content through the project's Sustainable Agricultural Trade Hub, as well as relevant platforms and channels of other actors and organisations.

The three main target groups are:

- The first target group are policymakers, actors from civil society and stakeholder organisations, and decision-makers in private production and trade sectors actively involved in promoting and implementing sustainable agriculture trade at local, regional, national, EU, and international levels.
- The second target group are members of the academic community involved in scientific research on the linkages between agricultural trade, investment, environmental sustainability, and human well-being.
- The third target group are the potential beneficiaries of the policies and initiatives promoting trade sustainability. This will include the wider community including actors in food value chains, and external experts in the fields of social and environmental sustainability.

The main communication activities envisaged for each target group are as follows:

- For the first target group, the main communication activities include active clustering with relevant networks; policy dialogue, discussion, and briefs; engagement in case studies and project workshops, as well as participation of consortium partners in events organised by external actors; joint communication activities, and sustainable trade webinars.
- For the second target group, the main communication activities include participation and contribution in scientific conferences and forums; project launch press release and continuous maintenance and public relation; publication in scientific journals; dissemination of scientific results

using appropriate channels, e.g., Open Research Europe. Relevant journals, magazines, events and conferences will be announced at the project's Sustainable Agricultural Trade Hub.

- For the third target group, the main communication activities include the Sustainable Agricultural Trade Hub and social media channels; continuous updates, and outreach to policy journals and media; and final press releases.

For all food system actors and stakeholders, the common communication activities will make use of the Sustainable Agricultural Trade Hub and the project's social media channels; continuous updates about project work and outcomes; case studies documentation and workshops; outreach to specialist policy media; policy and civil society dialogue; accessible communication, policy briefs and documentation; active engagement in workshops and events centred around the 15 MATS case studies; and the sustainable trade policy forum.

The related planning will be regularly updated in consultation with all project partners and key food system actors.

4 Communication channels

In the following we briefly describe the communication channels we will use in MATS. A more detailed description will be provided in Deliverable 7.3. 'Communication toolkit and suite of templates for all project communication'.

The dedicated channels and tools for MATS external communications are

- Project website which will evolve into an interactive hub on sustainable agricultural trade;
- Social media channels;
- Blog posts; and
- Partners' own communication channels and means.

The project website, social media, and blog posts are managed and updated by WP6 and WP7 teams with the contributions from the project partners as

well as external actors. Key items will be updates related to research reports, discussion papers, live events, meeting, workshops and seminars.

Additionally, all partner's own communication channels and means play an important role in spreading the project's messages to a wider audience. All partners are expected to also make use of their own communication channels in communicating and disseminating project news and results. Generally, it is important that the project is visible and known among relevant food system actors and stakeholder groups.

The Sustainable Agricultural Trade Hub and a suite of engagement activities and materials on agricultural markets, trade, and sustainability will play a central role in achieving an enhanced civil society dialogue by providing improved data, analysis, and methods. Project website and social media performance metrics will be recorded in the project activity reporting.

4.1 Sustainable Agricultural Trade Hub

The Sustainable Agricultural Trade Hub – <https://sustainable-agri-trade.eu/> – is central in all external communications for MATS. The top menu contains 'About', 'Case studies', 'Outputs', 'Knowledge hub', 'Community'. Direct links to the project's social media channels are also included on the homepage.

The 'About' section provides information on the project's vision, goals and partnership. 'Case Studies' will be a continuously updated section with all major developments and insights produced by the 15 MATS studies.

Users will be able to access and download public deliverables and publications related to the project through the 'Outputs' section. The 'Community' section will be a space for news from the broader agri-trade community, including links to relevant initiatives, organisations and data sources. The same section will also include a forum for discussions with external actors.

The Sustainable Agricultural Trade Hub will also provide deeper insights from the project's 15 case studies as well as the systems modelling and institutional analysis, presenting findings, related discussion papers and infographics. Some of the data will facilitate further research by interested actors.

The hub structure follows an easy to use and intuitive path that allows users to easily explore the site. The hub is used as a regular project website to

promote the project and disseminate its objectives, work plan, etc., and to provide a space for disseminating project results to and discussing with a wide audience, including all stakeholders and potential users.

The hub will remain active after the end of the project, serving as a valuable public resource for this research topic and disseminating the results of publicly funded research after the project ends. It complies with the EU Web Accessibility Directive.

4.2 Social media channels

Given that external networking is one of the key success parameters in our progress reporting, MATS is active on Twitter and LinkedIn, with channels dedicated to the project in both platforms. Our Twitter channel @MATS_H2020 is primarily for external communication and raising awareness about the project work. It provides succinct information on project work, conferences, workshops and discussions, and the work of others. Of particular importance in this regard are connections with others engaged in research and advocacy around agri-food markets, trade, investments, sustainable development, trade regimes, governance, and policy. Tweets will also be used for event announcements and invitations. The MATS Twitter channel is planned to be a lively forum for discussion, and it has already in the first month reached almost 100 followers.

A LinkedIn channel is planned for deeper discussions on agri-food trade, investment and sustainability issues with professionals interested and working in these areas.

4.3 Blog posts

Regular blog posts will be used to provide interested actors with the latest news and results of MATS. Interested parties can register for regular updates. The registration form complies with EU GDPR rules, informs users of data use, and obtains their explicit consent.

4.4 Partners' own communication channels and means

All project partners will also use their own communication channels to communicate and disseminate project news and results to a wider audience.

For key project moments, issues of general interest or importance, partners' communication sectors often take proactive communication steps to share information on social media. For project meetings, workshops, and webinars, it is recommended that they be displayed on the partner's external and intranet calendars and that informational news be shared.

5 Communication materials

The WP7 team supports partners in communication activities. Templates and materials can, if necessary, be adapted to partner-specific applications for different types of communication, e.g., technical reports about methods, case study reports, policy briefs, and discussion papers, which are designed to suit the needs and interests of different types of audiences.

The team also provides a project logo, templates, and other materials for partners, following the project's visual identity and branding. The project logo was agreed through all partners. All material is internally available in the project's MS Teams communication channel.

5.1 Project logo, colours and fonts

A key element of the project's visual identity is the project logo:



The second key element are the project's brand colours:



The font family used for the PowerPoint and Word templates is Verdana. However, a more common font, Calibri, can also be used.

5.2 Office templates

MS Word and PowerPoint templates have been designed for all project deliverables and for discussion papers and made available on MS Teams.

The WP7 team will ensure that all publications and deliverables published online comply with the EU Web Accessibility Directive.

5.3 Press release templates

Templates for press releases in key moments of the project will be provided, and the press release template can be modified for use in partner's own channels. Partners are encouraged to regularly inform the press about project progress and results. Information can be also published as a news piece or blog post at <https://sustainable-agri-trade.eu/news-blog/>, and all relevant press releases will be featured and stored in the Sustainable Agricultural Trade Hub.

6 Responsibilities and acknowledgement of EU funding

Regular updates of the Communication Plan are coordinated by the WP7 'Project Management and Communication' team and carried out in consultation with project partners.

The WP7 team also provides support in materials and templates, which follow the tailored visual identity for strategic and unified project communication. The WP7 team maintains a supportive and continuous dialogue on communication with all consortium partners, and all partners are responsible for participating in project communications, sharing the work they have done and disseminating the results. The documentation of the progress achieved for all WPs is also connected with project-level reporting to the research funder.

MATS partners are committed to acknowledging the EU funding in all dissemination and communication activities, as stated in the Grant Agreement.

Unless the Research Executive Agency (REA) requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, any dissemination of results (in any form, including electronic) must:

- (a) display the EU emblem and
- (b) include the following text: "This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000751".

When displayed together with another logo, the EU emblem must have appropriate prominence. For the purposes of their obligations under this Article, the beneficiaries may use the EU emblem without first obtaining approval from the Agency. This does not however give them the right to exclusive use. Moreover, they may not appropriate the EU emblem or any similar trademark or logo, either by registration or by any other means.

The EU emblem and all needed material is provided in MS Teams for the project.

7 Continuous monitoring and refinement

We will regularly evaluate our communication activities and encourage partner to share their experiences in organising different activities. Each consortium partner will identify one person responsible for communication and engage in the bi-monthly meetings of the project's communication group. During these meetings communication information and experiences will be shared and efforts to increase the effectiveness of all communication activities discussed.

As required by the European Commission, all communication activities are collected in a joint online database. For the MATS project, we use a joint Excel file in our internal platform MS Team. The project partners provide information about the types of activities, when the activity occur, and estimate target group participants involved. This jointly created document update is available to all partners.

In addition to focusing on the number, reach, and other metrics of publications, workshops, seminars, etc, data from MATS' social media accounts and analytics from the MATS website are used to analyse the effectiveness and reach of information posted on these channels.

The quantitative metrics used include:

- Number and reach of communication activities by all MATS partners
- Media coverage
- Number of followers on Twitter
- Tweet visibility on Twitter
- Website analytics on page views
- Number of submitted research abstracts and articles

In addition, a qualitative analysis will be conducted to ensure that project communication principles are embedded in all communications in MATS.