eu-LISA

eu-LISA External Communication Strategy

2021-2027

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the 2021-2027 multi-annual External Communication Strategy (Strategy) of the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA or the Agency) is to lay out the long-term framework for a structured approach in the area of eu-LISA communication with external stakeholders and the general public to support the Agency in achieving its strategic goals, objectives and specific outputs.

While operational activities are the principle mandate of eu-LISA, Regulation (EU) No 2018/1726 outlines the legal requirement of the Agency to perform institutional communication and information tasks. The clear communication and information-sharing mandate, specified in Article 34, requires eu-LISA to communicate in accordance with the Union legal acts governing the development, establishment, operation and the use of large-scale IT-systems. The Agency also needs to ensure that the public, and all other interested parties, are given objective, accurate, reliable, comprehensive and easily understandable information on its work. The language arrangements, defined in Article 33 of the aforementioned Regulation, oblige eu-LISA to publish both corporate and general public information in line with the set linguistic regime of the Union. Therefore, this Strategy provides the framework within which annual action plans, detailing the precise communication activities to be undertaken to meet the legal obligations, are defined, implemented and evaluated according to set objectives and metrics as parts of the annual programming and reporting process.

This Strategy is a follow-up to the eu-LISA External Communication Strategy 2016-2020, adopted by the eu-LISA Management Board on 03/03/2017. It takes into account the new legal framework[1], in which the Agency operates, the eu-LISA governance documents[2] and implementing documents[3] relevant to the communications domain. It also relates to the strategic priorities of the EU Agencies' Network Strategy 2021-2027[4] and the cooperation principles of the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies Network. The updated Strategy aims to meet the needs of the Agency deriving from eu-LISA´s transformation to operate within the broadened mandate, with the reshaped organisational structure and the growing number of stakeholders.

The Communication Sector (COMS), within the Executive Support and Stakeholder Relations Unit (ESU) of eu-LISA, is in charge of coordinating the operational execution of tasks related to external communication and dissemination of information. COMS is responsible for implementing the Strategy through multiannual action plans and annual operational plans, outlining in detail the structured performance of result-oriented communication and information activities.

The Strategy follows all the Data Protection requirements applicable to communication on both the organisational and individual stakeholder levels.

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[1] Regulation (EU) 2018/1726 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 on the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA), and amending Regulation (EC) No 1987/2006 and Council Decision 2007/533/JHA and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1077/2011

[2] Multi-annual Work Programmes; Internal Information and Communication Strategy, Stakeholder Management Strategy 2018-2022, eu-LISA Strategy 2020-2024

[3] Annual Information and Communication action plans, Corporate Communication Standards and Guidelines, Social Media Guidelines, Visual Identity Manual

[4] 2021-2027 Strategy of the EU Agencies Network, approved 08/10/2020

1. Background

The European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA) was established in 2011 in order to provide a long-term solution for the EU's internal security domain and to support the implementation of asylum, migration and border management policies with the help of Information Technology. Since then, eu-LISA has run Eurodac, SIS and VIS and has been providing Member State authorities with expert training to help them with the constant exchange of information across Europe via these systems. Under the enlarged mandate the Agency is also developing new IT systems - EES, ETIAS and ECRIS-TCN – and is establishing four interoperability components - ESP, sBMS, CIR, MID – to ensure interoperability between all six systems. In addition, the Agency has a clear responsibility to perform research and development tasks as well as training, in compliance with its mandate.

The headquarters of eu-LISA are in Tallinn, Estonia, whilst its operational centre is in Strasbourg, France. The Agency also has a technical business-continuity site based in Sankt Johann im Pongau, Austria and a Liaison Office in Brussels, Belgium.

eu-LISA external communication and information efforts focus on strategic communication, implemented through integrated communication activities. Strategic communication is consistent with the Agency's mission, vision and values and enables eu-LISA to enhance its positioning with its stakeholders. This process is managed as per the statutory and legal obligations of the Agency, with the aim to further foster transparent and mutually beneficial relations between the Agency and its stakeholders, provide added value through synergies with key partners and deliver the best value for money services also in the communication and information domain. To this end the Agency will continue to build on proactive relations with target audiences such as the Member States, Schengen Associated Countries, the EU institutions and agencies as well as industry and academia with regular, factual and timely on- and offline information regarding its mandate, activities and responsibilities, while remaining accountable to the general public. Communication objectives, goals and messages will be associated with the eu-LISA overall strategic objective to develop and maintain strong corporate culture and a positive image with its stakeholders and partners.

Communication initiatives will support the extension of eu-LISA's positive reputation. as a reliable and trusted contributor to the implementation of policies in the area of freedom, security and justice. with an enlarged mandate of responsibilities regarding the current and new large-scale IT systems in its domain. Data-driven communication will focus on highlighting the benefits that the Agency brings to its stakeholders and the support it provides to citizens through strengthening European values.

The Agency will continue to further develop, modernise and promote its main public communication tools – the eu-LISA websites and online communication platforms - related to the new systems under the responsibility of the Agency. Priority will be given to digital communication channels, formats and products to further showcase all the large-scale IT systems, interoperability, and the areas that have grown in prominence with the Agency's broadened mandate – training for Member States, research and development, as well as reporting and statistics. Further development of self-contained, modern, infographic-style micro websites will be an important part of the communication tasks of the Agency.

Advocating the various communication initiatives through social media channels and online networks, both valuable means for keeping public information updated, will be an integral part of all external communication actions.

Since the setting up of the Agency and the staffing of the communication function in 2013, this function has evolved both from the structural as well as the performance point of view. The function combines, as of 2016, both external and internal communication, to provide for synergies and to benefit from the added value. The resources-base of the function needs to be further strengthened on both sites to allow the Agency to perform its complex set of communication services via innovative formats and modern engagement channels in a sustainable manner. A stronger resource-base would also allow for the development of an in-house content production capability to further facilitate the swift creation of audio-visual communication as the most rapidly developing format for efficient communication with stakeholders and the general public.

2. External communication core values

eu-LISA´s external communication guiding principles tie in with eu-LISA´s corporate values as defined in the eu-LISA Strategy 2020-2024[5] - *accountability, transparency, excellence, continuity, teamwork and customer focus* - and include core management values that shape a modern and well-functioning organisation. The following values provide for the success of the Strategy and are the prime drivers in the area of external communication for 2021-2027:

- **Transparency** – information is easily accessible and conveyed in a clear, understandable and timely manner to eu-LISA stakeholders and the general public;
- **Excellence** – everybody involved in the communication process will follow the rules of professionalism;
- **Customer focus** – the needs and demands of the external stakeholders are covered at all times, similarly to those of the internal stakeholders

The external communication function also follows five communication principles while implementing the strategy and adhering to corporate values. These principles provide for credibility as the ultimate benchmark for information and communication activities. External communication delivers information as:

- **Factual** – objective and balanced;
- **Informative** – giving insight and understanding of a broader context of the role and added value the Agency provides
- **Audience-appropriate** – using proper language, messages and channels as most suitable for the different stakeholder groups
- **Relevant** – timely with tailored content that best meets the needs of external audiences
- **Consistent** – aligned in terms of language, style, tone and the visual identity of the Agency.

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[5] eu-LISA Strategy 2020-2024, page 5

3. Strategic priorities, key objectives and key messages

Efficient communication is central to achieving organisational success and realising its strategic goals. The Communication Sector, within the Executive Support and Stakeholder Relations Unit, takes the lead with regard to implementing the external communication function and coordinating it across all sites of the Agency towards external audiences. However, productive collaboration among various Units and Sectors and support from senior and middle management are crucial to achieve successful results. In addition, external communication, linked to internal communication, is managed in a coherent and mutually reinforcing manner, which further supports resource-efficient implementation of the function and the achievement of strategic goals.

External communication's multi-annual strategic objective is linked to the corporate strategic goal of the Agency - *evolve further into an efficient, agile and resilient organisation in compliance within the EU regulatory framework*[6] - and, as specified in the programming documents, focuses on:

DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING A POSITIVE IMAGE TOWARDS ITS EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

3.1. Strategic Priorities and Key Objectives

eu-LISA supports the implementation of EU policies in the areas of freedom, security and justice.
It contributes to the internal security of the Schengen Area and facilitates the free movement of people, one of the core freedoms of the European Union. With the help of technology, eu-LISA increases the security of the people residing and travelling in Europe and supports Member   States
in their efforts towards creating a safer Europe. Through IT solutions, the Agency allows information exchange among national police, customs and judicial authorities, supports border control and assists in the frame of migration and asylum. eu-LISA enables EU law enforcement authorities to provide, with technological means, integrated responses to threats to the EU's internal security.

- The overarching strategic priority of eu-LISA's External Communication Strategy 2021-2027 reflects the support factor, which provides added value to the above core role of the Agency and indicates what is to be done to achieve said goals. Three specific key objectives support achieving this strategic priority:

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[6] eu-LISA Strategy 2020-2024, page 10

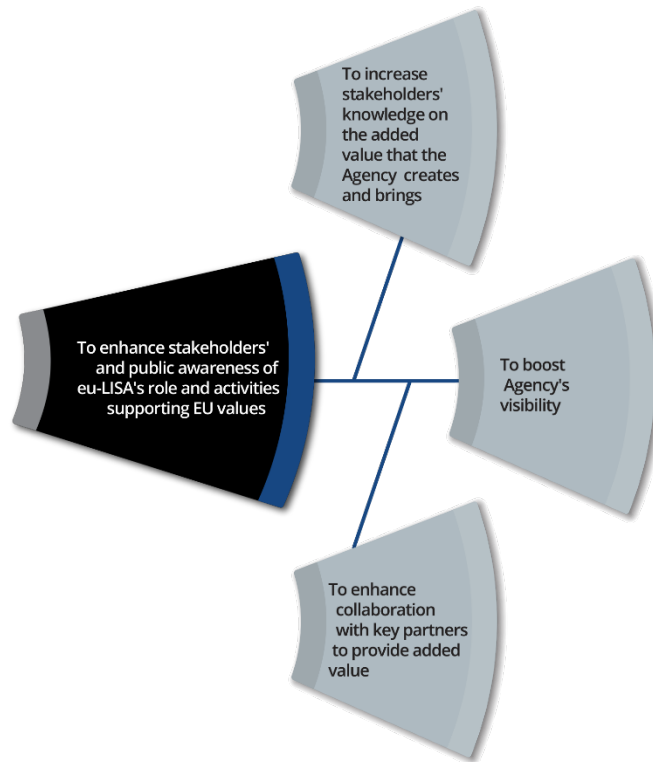**Figure 1:** Overarching primary strategic priority and related key objectives

- The complementing strategic priority for eu-LISA communication and information focuses on the goal to further strengthen the image, reputation and level of interactions of the Agency. This priority is supported by three specific objectives:
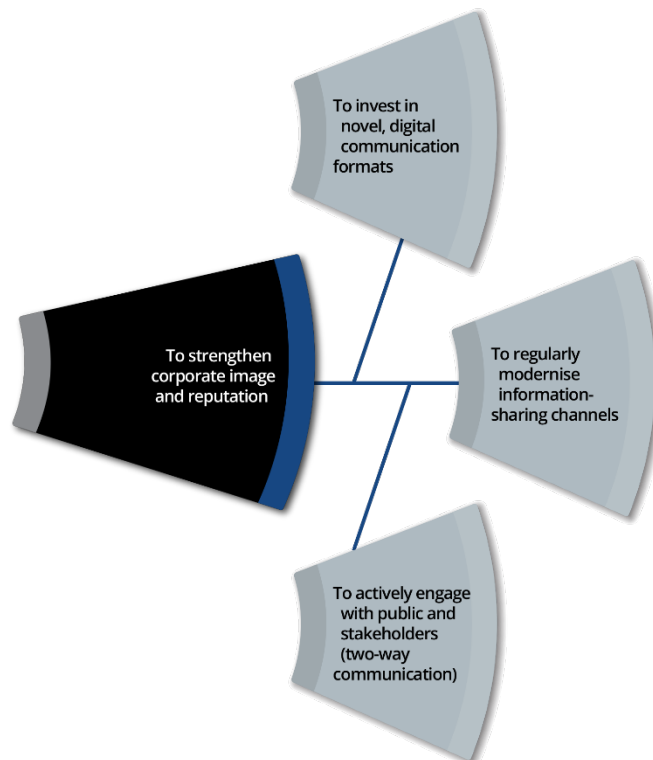

Figure 2: Secondary strategic priority for communication and related key objectives

The communication principles – as defined in the initial Strategy[7] – set the communication standards for eu-LISA, are followed to achieve the specific communication goals, and provide credibility as the ultimate benchmark for information and communication activities. To this end, eu-LISA remains determined to deliver information which is factual, informative, audience-appropriate, relevant and consistent.

3.2 Messages

The mission, vision, values, role and position of eu-LISA within the European Union organisational architecture define the nature of its communication messages, which focus on technological and practical benefits for people as well as on the core values of the EU, fostered through the daily performance of the Agency. The key-message for eu-LISA communication actions comprises thus both sides, the practical and the value-based one:

"THROUGH TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION,
EU-LISA SUPPORTS SECURITY, JUSTICE AND
FREEDOM FOR EUROPEAN CITIZENS."

The key message underlines the main idea of all the communication and information actions undertaken by eu-LISA. **The specific messages are developed for each specific communication and information action and are based on three distinctive principles**:

1 Come as proof point of the key messages and make use of the key-words and concepts that characterise the role and mission of the Agency:

• Security
• Innovation
• Justice
• Information-driven
• Transparency
• Biometrics
• Artificial Intelligence
• Mobility

2 Provide an element of differentiation compared to other JHA agencies to highlight eu-LISA's specific role

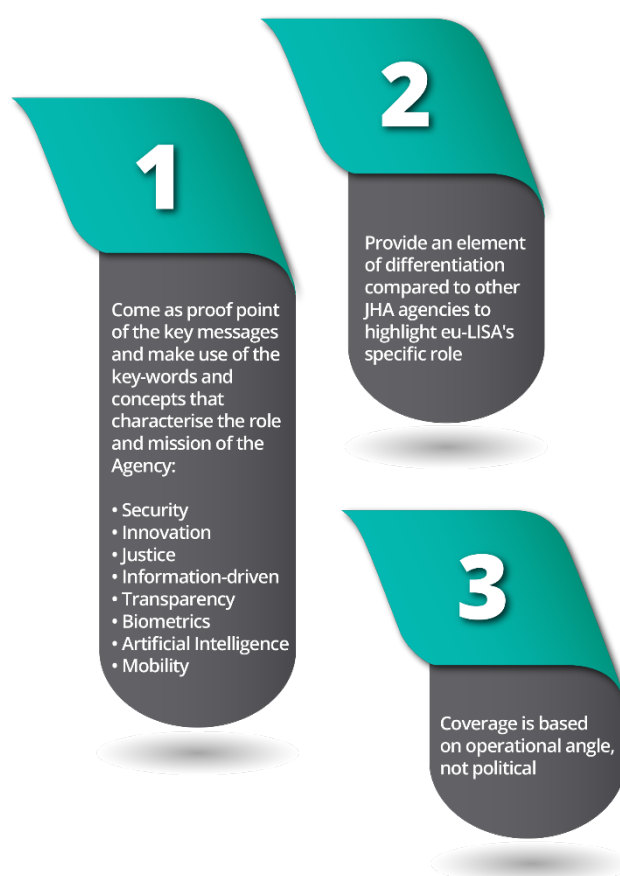**3** Coverage is based on operational angle, not political

Figure 3: Principles for specific messages and communication actions

Messages and Line to Take (LTT) are tailored according to the editorial planning for external

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[7] eu-LISA External Communication Strategy 2013-2016, page 5

communication and managed as a process to reach specific audiences via the most appropriate channels:
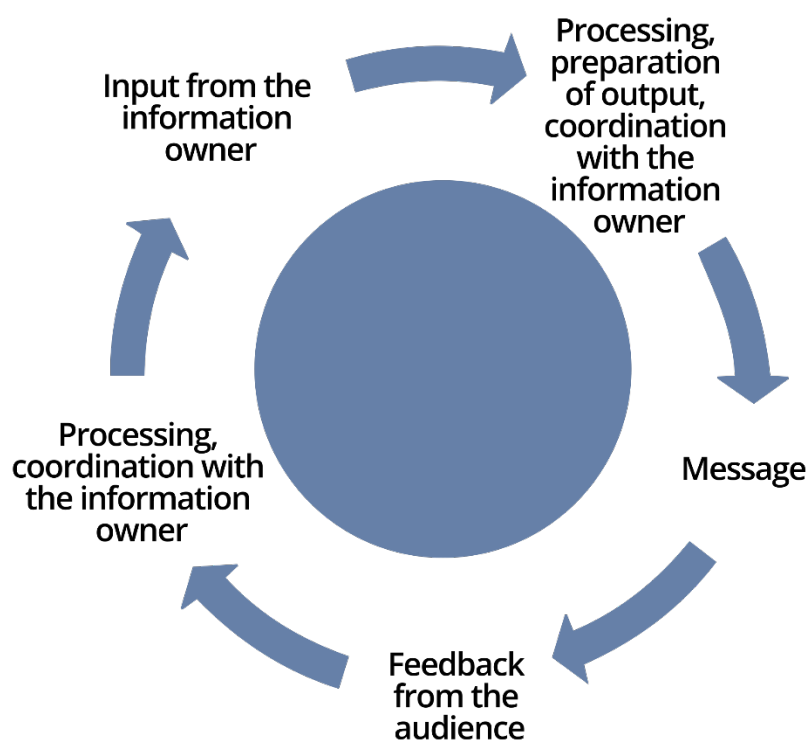

Figure 4: Facilitation process of message-management

4. Target Audiences

Building efficient business relations and facilitating sustainable engagement with the external communication stakeholders is crucial for the successful implementation of the communication function, which strives towards strengthening the positive impact of the Agency on an EU level and beyond. eu-LISA stakeholder groups are not comprised of a unique homogeneous audience. The external audiences and the contributors to external communication content can be divided taking into account the mapping presented in the eu-LISA Stakeholder Management Strategy 2018-2022 and in former external communication strategies. The outlining of the target audiences for communication and information activities follows the Regulation, according to which the primary stakeholders of the Agency are the EU Institutions, EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries as well as the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies (JHAA). The general public, as a target audience for communication and information actions, is also clearly stated in Article 34 of the Regulation. Therefore, the updated target audiences for eu-LISA communication and information actions are clustered in line with the set specific communication goals and divided into groups of primary and secondary stakeholders:

Goal 3

Enhance collaboration with the key partners

Primary Stakeholders & Key Partners

› EU Institutions
› EU Member States
› Schengen Associated Countries
› Cluster of JHA Agencies
› EU Agencies beyond the JHAA Cluster

Goal 1

Increase stakeholders' knowledge on the added value that the Agency creates and brings

Primary Stakeholders & Key Partners

› EU Institutions
› EU Member States
› Schengen Associated Countries
› Cluster of JHA Agencies

Secondary Stakeholders

› EU DGs and Offices beyond direct JHA domain
› International Organisations
› Industry
› Academia & Research Partners
› EU Agencies beyond the JHAA Cluster
› Non-Governmental and Civic Society Organisations

Goal 2

Boost visibility towards the public

Primary Stakeholders

› General Public
› Media
› Non-Governmental and Civic Society Organisations

Figure 5: Goals per target audiences

4.1. Targets for GOAL 1 – Increase stakeholders' knowledge on the added value that the Agency creates and brings

The updated Strategy follows the definition presented in the initial Strategy, and considers stakeholders to be "bodies (and individuals) with direct involvement (stake) in the work of the Agency".

For Goal 1, the stakeholders are divided into two sub-groups based on the level of their impact and role on eu-LISA's operations and communication activities as well as their potential for cooperation and support in the area of communication and information.

PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS

The primary stakeholders for eu-LISA communication and information activities constitute the target-group for proactive actions:

- **EU Institutions**
  - **The European Commission**
    - **DG HOME -** The European Commission Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) is one of the primary stakeholders and key partners of eu-LISA. EC DG HOME is the policy context provider for eu-LISA in the domain of border management, migration, asylum, the fight against serious and organised crime and building the new IT architecture for justice and home affairs in the Union. Cooperation is regulated and formalised through a Working Arrangement between the EC and eu-LISA. DG HOME is part of eu-LISA's Management Board and the Advisory Groups.
    - **DG JUST** - The European Commission Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) is one of the primary stakeholders and key partners of
    eu-LISA. DG JUST is the policy context provider for eu-LISA in the domain of justice (in the framework of ECRIS-TCN and e-Codex). DG JUST is part of the ECRIS-TCN Advisory Group.
  - **The Council of the European Union**
    Sets the political directions that can have a direct impact on eu-LISA's activities and strategic goals. At the same time, the Agency feeds into the policy and legislative discussions of relevant Council preparatory bodies with which eu-LISA regularly liaises regarding its tasks and obligations.
  - **The European Parliament**
    - **LIBE Committee** - The European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), which deals with protecting civil liberties, human rights, citizens' rights and fundamental rights within the territory of the Union, is a highly important primary stakeholder for information and eu-LISA engagement actions. The LIBE Committee has a direct and decisive impact on the work and scope of actions that the Agency performs.

➢ **Member States and Schengen Associated Countries**
   - Member States and Schengen Associated Countries constitute another primary stakeholder group for eu-LISA. Member States are the main direct beneficiaries of the practical services delivered by eu-LISA to the end-users of the IT systems. They also participate in the governance structures of the Agency by being represented in the eu-LISA Management Board, Programme Management Boards and Advisory Groups.
   - **JHA Counsellors and representatives of European Diplomatic Missions in the host countries of eu-LISA -** JHA Counsellors, based at the Permanent Representations to the European Union in Brussels, belong among the primary target groups for eu-LISA information actions and communication activities. Similar to the group of the representatives of the diplomatic missions of the European countries, associated with the IT systems that are under the responsibility of eu-LISA, they provide for an additional important information dissemination channel and require a proactive approach from the side of eu-LISA.

➢ **The Cluster of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Agencies**
   Further to eu-LISA the JHA Agencies include the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust). This cluster of agencies complements one another's actions to ensure an area of freedom, security and justice and contribute to enhanced judicial and police cooperation in Europe, increased awareness of equality, respect of everyone's fundamental rights, the fight against serious cross-border crime, better cooperation in external border management, migration and asylum. eu-LISA provides contributions to the instruments, documents and communication produced by the JHA Agencies Network. The activities of the network help to streamline ongoing cooperation between the Agencies and future activities to make sure that efforts are coordinated.

All key partners, as primary stakeholders, have a strong impact on eu-LISA communication actions and carry the potential for operating as additional information multipliers and disseminators.

SECONDARY STAKEHOLDERS

eu-LISA secondary stakeholders are characterised by their interest and/or concern with the issues at stake in the area of eu-LISA's responsibility. They are not directly involved or affected by the actions of the Agency and, considering their profile, are provided with all the relevant information   about eu-LISA activities on request. The established form of relations between eu-LISA and secondary stakeholders aims at sharing best practices and discussing expert topics falling within the scope of eu-LISA's mandate. The nature of this cooperation and communication needs not to be altered but can be strengthened further within the frames of annual and multi-annual concrete actions directly targeted at secondary stakeholders.

- ➤ **EU Directorates-General and Offices beyond direct JHA domain**
  - ▪ **Directorate Generals**

    The group includes other **Directorates-General of the European Commission**, in particular Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM), Directorate-General for Budget (DG BUDG), Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
    (DG CONNECT), Directorate-General for Informatics (DG DIGIT) and Directorate-General Human Resources and Security (DG HR) as well as Cabinet and Press Service of Commissioner(s) Communication cooperation and information sharing between eu-LISA and this target group is based on case-by-case actions depending on the nature of the topics to be highlighted.

    The mode of collaboration needs to be sustained and advanced in case of specific, campaign-type communication actions.

    The group also encompasses other **Directorates-General of the Council of the European Union**, including DG Communication and Transparency; the **EP Press Service and EP Budget Committee (BUDG) of the European Parliament**;
    - ▪ the **European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS),**
    - ▪ the **Joint Research Centre (JRC),**
    - ▪ the **Research Executive Agency (REA**), and
    - ▪ the **European Court of Auditors (ECA)**.

    In particular:
    - ○ The Council sets the political agenda and determines the priorities, which can have direct impact on eu-LISA's activities and strategic goals. The results of eu-LISA data collection and research are fed into the policy and legislative discussions of relevant Council preparatory bodies, including Working Parties and Committees, with which eu-LISA regularly liaises.
    - ○ For JRC/REA cooperation entails following the research on ICT innovation, important in empowering the Agency with relevant knowledge and excellence.
    - ○ The relationship with the EDPS is relevant in respect to data protection, with an independent external supervisor, ensuring that the processing of personal data is carried out in line with the requirements of the different legal frameworks for the information systems managed by eu-LISA.
    - ○ Close cooperation and regular exchange of information and reports with ECA ensures the constant improvement of public accountability of the Agency at an EU level.

➢ **International Organisations**

The group embraces non-EU institutions, such as Interpol, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). They are part of a larger international environment relevant to the area of eu-LISA responsibilities and belong to the eu-LISA communication landscape of information sharing.

➢ **Industry**

The group encompasses vendors working in the field of information and communication technologies, in particular IT and border security, electronic identity solutions, digital fingerprinting, biometrics, automated border control systems, secure communication services and data management. eu-LISA has established regular and efficient relations with this target-group which allows to further strengthen the nature and scope of communication and information actions to provide for increased awareness and engagement.

➢ **Academia and Research Partners**

The group includes lecturers, researchers and other members of the scientific community from research institutes and universities that have an interest in ICT, digital innovation, security, border operations, international relations and international affairs. Their communication role is related to the added value they provide to the eu-LISA visibility actions and multiplication of information.

4.2 Targets for GOAL 2 – Boost visibility towards the public

➢ **General Public**

The target group encompasses EU citizens and citizens of the countries associated with the large-scale IT systems under eu-LISA's responsibility. The obligation of eu-LISA to provide information to the general public is specified in the establishing regulation of eu-LISA with the aim to facilitate outreach to the citizens, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the work of the Agency. The information, targeted at the general public, follows the criteria defined in the "Communication Handbook for the EU Agencies" in terms of easy language, simple explanations, appealing visuals and engaging communication. The eu-LISA communication initiatives aimed at the general public, launched and regularly implemented under the previous Strategies, have clear potential to be fostered in line with the updated Strategy principles. These can be complemented with efficient use of on- and offline communication tools that have been created and developed since 2013 (online information products, social media channels as of 2016) and, if further developed and strategically used, will increasingly add value to the overall communication and information work of the Agency.

➢ **Media**

Media is a key communication channel that notably helps to reach the general public, decision-makers and beyond, by increasing awareness about and the visibility of the Agency. Targeted media-relations, highlighting the practical benefits that eu-LISA creates through specific projects and regular operational actions, add to the positive perceptions of the Agency. The already established network of journalists in the host countries (Estonia and France) and in Brussels can be further strengthened by advancing media relations in cooperation with key partners such as the EC and the JHA   Agencies   Network.

Considering the sensitivity of eu-LISA subject matters, media relations will continue to be managed under the internally approved guidelines for content production and workflow, aiming to minimize the risks for media to misinterpret or misuse facts and figures related to the Agency.

➢ **CSOs and NGOs**

This group comprises Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organisations, in particular those working with questions of civil liberties in Europe, data protection and minority-related issues. The members of these groups directly or indirectly represent the public interest of citizens and have the ability to act as a link between the Agency and the general public. Consequently, these groups can play an important role in information-sharing to reach particular segments of the general public and the media.

4.3. Targets for GOAL 3 – Enhance Collaboration with Key Partners

➢ **The European Commission**
  ▪ **DG HOME -** The processes for cooperation between EC DG HOME and eu-LISA are set and in place under clear principles and formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by both parties on 11/06/2014 and updated on 17/12/2019. Common communication actions and good contacts are established between the communication teams of the two institutions. Additional mutually beneficial synergies are achieved through exchange of regular information on best practices as well as through the planning of joint actions. To this end, standard planning meetings between the communication teams, similar to meetings between policy and administrative planners, provide an efficient tool to stream actions and messages. Sharing of joint content through the available and appropriate channels (web, social media) can further enlarge the scope of activities and reach target groups. The collaboration which has developed into strategic and systematic cooperation, making the link between the EU policy priorities and their operational execution on the level of the Agency more understandable as well as visual and clear, needs to be maintained.

➢ **Cluster of JHA Agencies**

Cooperation in the area of communication between these Agencies is formalised through working arrangements and memoranda of understanding. The practical cooperation within and among the cluster of these agencies is executed in the area of social media actions and campaigns as well as event management and media relations. The scope of joint communication actions can be further broadened and deepened, in order to create new and build on the existing synergies to reach common communication goals.

➢ **EU Agencies beyond the JHAA Cluster**

Cooperation in the area of communication between these Agencies is formalised through the Network of the EU Agencies Strategy and the Network Working Programmes. Practical cooperation in the network of these agencies is executed through a sub-network of communication and information activities in the area of social media actions and campaigns as well as event management and media relations.

5. Methods, Tools, MOL Classification and Performance Evaluation

Research and analysis performed related to this updated Strategy, as well as the achievements accomplished under former Strategies, identify the most efficient and appropriate communication tools to be used by eu-LISA, taking into account its operational specifics and communication goals. To efficiently and effectively communicate the goals of the Agency, two main methods are used for external communication:

- Information sharing methods;
- Engagement and communication facilitating methods.

The communication tools used are classified according to their level of impact to reach the communication and information primary objectives supported by the specific goals.

5.1. Communication Tools for All Goals

The common communication tools are appropriate for the specific communication goals and help achieve the primary communication objective of eu-LISA.

Figure 6: eu-LISA external communication tools

WEBSITE

The eu-LISA website constitutes the main public communication channel of the Agency and has been functional since July 2014. In 2016-2017 the SharePoint-based website underwent a thorough evaluation (a User Experience Assessment) of the information it presents, functionalities it offers, as well as the look and feel it carries. An updated architecture, advanced interactivity, new functionalities and additional formats of publications and visuals were introduced in 2018 in order to modernise the website and make it more user-friendly. Content-wise the website was further developed in line with the key messages supporting the annual and multi-annual action plans for communication. As the main communication channel of the Agency, the website is further developed into a functional hub of eu-LISA online information and actions. Public content is gradually being introduced in other EU official languages, according to the formal eu-LISA approach to EU multilingual practice approved by the eu-LISA Management Board on 12/01/2015. The website has become integrated with social media in order to make the most of the synergies from the two communication methods.

PUBLICATIONS

Publishing of mandatory corporate publications is a communication and information obligation that derives from the Regulation of the Agency. The standards achieved and requirements followed by eu-LISA when publishing will be maintained under the updated Strategy. The public information materials of generic nature and in different formats (leaflets, factsheets, brochures, executive reports) continue to be an essential element of eu-LISA public information and a useful tool to introduce the Agency and its specific activities to existing, as well as new, stakeholders among civic society and the general public at large. These publications help translate complicated information into clear, concise and to-the-point summaries. Ensuring their regular update, keeping their uniformity, ensuring their high visibility on the website and making them part of the multipliers toolkit is a priority of the communication and information actions on an annual and multi-annual basis. E-formats have been developed for most of the information materials allowing for easy updates and downloads. The scope of targeted emailing is further enlarged in cooperation with partners and networks of the EU Agencies to proactively reach out to, not only the primary but also secondary target groups of stakeholders. Based on stakeholder feedback and needs-analysis, new formats of publications, a newsletter and newsfeeds have been developed to proactively provide updated information on the Agency's achievements, successes and upcoming key developments. These new formats merit further attention and to be broadened in terms of design and substance. This will allow dissemination to a wide range of potentially interested readers who are thus led to the main communication and information channel – the website – for better engagement and reach purposes.

MULTIMEDIA

Infographics and videos have proven to have considerable potential in engaging audiences, due to their visually appealing nature and ability to concisely convey information. Taking into consideration the complexity of the eu-LISA remit, multimedia has been introduced to advance the regular information tools of the Agency, in order to enable audiences to understand more easily the complex sets of eu-LISA task-related information packages.

The use of videos, graphs/charts and illustrations is also applied to explain the mandate and services of the Agency, as well as demonstrate the main functions and contributions of the IT-systems operated by eu-LISA.

In line with the mandate and to the extent legally permitted, statistics and analytics are to be presented in the form of infographics regularly published on the website. The already produced multimedia content needs to be regularly updated and new edits produced to visualise the complex work of the Agency, in an easily understandable manner. Visuals are to be increasingly shared via social media in order to garner attention and effectively relay information to audiences. In the scope of Multimedia, eu-LISA has also developed mini-websites with targeted purposes such as **discover.eulisa.europa.eu** which presents the core duties of the Agency in a visually pleasing, interactive and concise fashion, as well as mini-websites that support visitors to eu-LISA facilities by highlighting local transport and accommodation possibilities. Other projects include an interactive quiz and bi-annual newsletter/ news-magazine that provides an overview of the Agency's recent progress and the state-of-play on the development and management of the large-scale IT systems that govern the Schengen Area's internal security. Such topic-based packages also provide a clear added value to the more traditional publications like brochures, press-kits and stakeholder tool-kits.

EVENTS

eu-LISA has a well-established tradition of organising targeted and tailor-made events in the form of annual conferences, industry round-tables and briefings to a broad range of (key) stakeholders, multipliers and media. These are a valuable tool to increase stakeholders' awareness of the benefits the Agency creates and the synergies it provides with partners. These events also help to facilitate positive engagement with important target groups and need to be continued on a regular basis by extending their scope to new interest groups in order to facilitate direct information-sharing and deeper discussions. In order to meet the resource issue as well as restrictions on physical events, deriving from external factors such as the covid-19 pandemic and potential future restrictive measures, the format of various online and hybrid events with no or limited physical presence need to be further developed and the tools for visually appealing events obtained. Representing the Agency at large-scale EU and national level public visibility events (Europe Day in Brussels, Tallinn and Strasbourg) needs to be continued, to proactively establish and enlarge direct on- and off-line contacts and disseminate eu-LISA information through face to face interaction, which is the characteristic of such events indifferently of their format – physical, online or hybrid.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The potential of social media will be further enlarged and exploited in line with the eu-LISA Social Media Strategy and the related internal guidelines by making an increased use of the existing corporate social media accounts. However, considering that maintaining active and engaging social media requires resources and time, these tasks need to be attributed to dedicated staff within the Communication Sector. The Sector needs to have adequate resources to perform the tasks in a sustainable manner, meaning statutory staff, especially considering that messages, and sometimes visuals, have to be tailored to each platform (ex: message length restrictions on Twitter; optimal image size for carousels on Facebook, etc.).

To this end, not only the eu-LISA original content - which highlights key news - is shared via social media channels, but so is cooperation among the JHA Agencies by liking/re-sharing each other's social media posts. In addition, the social media channels of eu-LISA information multipliers are made use of to relay key information rapidly and efficiently. In recent years eu-LISA has taken part in social media coordinated campaigns with the other JHA Agencies and the wider circle of all the EU Agencies. These actions have provided additional outreach to eu-LISA and will be pro-actively continued.

MEDIA RELATIONS

Media relations, based on the already established networks in Tallinn, Strasbourg and Brussels, can be further developed as proactive information sharing through tailored on- and offline briefings, as well as reactive responses and replies to media inquiries and information requests. The scope of media relations can be enlarged in cooperation with key partners (EC DG HOME and the JHA Agencies Network) by sharing media- and press products providing additional visibility as well as reach via publication on the updated Europa website (europa.eu). However, a careful balance between the pro-active and re-active media relations needs to be sustained taking into account the overall sensitive nature of the operations that eu-LISA manages and the resources available for communication and information actions in the near future.

MULTIPLIERS

Stakeholders and actors, who do not have an interest as such but rather a direct in-reach to some of the target audiences of eu-LISA, comprise a valuable channel to highlight the Agency's communication messages and empower said messages with an additional angle of credibility. This may reveal particular importance towards the media and the general public. To this end the engagement of the multipliers will be further facilitated through dedicated toolkits including newsfeeds, factsheets, and leaflets but also dedicated e-banners and action buttons that are suitable for the websites of the multipliers and are related to eu-LISA.

5.2. MOL Classification of Communication Tools

The level of communication actions of eu-LISA varies and is defined per action in the annual action plans, which are drafted in line with the annual priorities of the Agency. The levels are classified in three categories, which define the impact of each action, managed as a communication tool, to achieve the primary communication objective and reach the specific goals. In line with standard communication analysis, the MOL classification is followed to mark the individual level of each action:

[M]UST   needed to achieve the objective

[O]UGHT   should be done, ideally

[L]IKE   may be envisaged in addition to others, provided that resources are sufficientThe eu-LISA communication and information tools, according to MOL classification, are as follows:

M Revamping website	**O** Develop a multipliers toolkit with e-banner/action button
M Produce new or update current factsheets	**O** Organise media briefing at annual conference
M Produce new or update current leaflet	**O** Organise regular media briefings
M Produce new or update current brochures	**O** Organise webinars for journalists
M Publish Newsletter	**O** Develop a virtual tour
M Create Newsfeed	**O** Develop press packs/ kits
M Organise Annual Conference	
M Organise tailored events for stakeholders (by type)	
M Participation in key stakeholder events	
M Enhance use of social media	**L** Organise field visits
M Produce multimedia content	
M Draft and publish press releases	
M Produce a monthly planner	

5.3. Performance evaluation and key performance indicators

Evaluation of performance in eu-LISA's external communication area is carried out in line with the standards set for the Agency and is part of the business process cycle.

The purpose of monitoring and evaluating activities is to ensure that all stated goals, objectives and specific outputs meet the specified needs and to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the Strategy. In this context, the *monitoring* phase seeks to check progress against planned objectives and specific outputs and can be defined as formal reporting to highlight, whether specific outputs have been successfully delivered or not. The *evaluation* is the assessment of the effectiveness of the different actions. It seeks to measure the effect of the planned outputs and impact as well as to assess whether the anticipated strategic goals and objectives are met, and if so, in what way or why not.

The eu-LISA KPI No 29 – eu-LISA external communication impact – takes into account the results of analysing the statistics and trends gathered from the Agency's website and social media accounts. These analysed results are used to facilitate the creation of appropriate messages in order to reach broader audiences, boost the image of the Agency and comply

with transparency requirements. Data from the analysis related to attendance and satisfaction with eu-LISA stakeholder visibility events is used to develop content and adapt to customer needs.

The overall evaluation methods include:

- Website visitors and absolute values logged by a dedicated analytics tool (Matomo installed on SharePoint server);
- Followers, impressions and interactions on social media: reports generated from the absolute values logged in the administrator areas of each platform (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube);
- Participation and satisfaction rates from stakeholder engagement events: evaluation forms and analysed data.

Impact monitoring dashboards will be introduced to further visualise communication performance outcomes and indicators in order to shape communication action plans based on the results of the analysis. The multi-annual External Communication Strategy of eu-LISA is reviewed regularly to reflect the corporate level follow-up actions implemented through the annual and multi-annual operational action plans. The implementation of every annual plan is monitored on a quarterly basis in order to identify problems, assess success and make adjustments if required. Operational decisions are taken at weekly sectorial meetings in line with the specific editorial plans prepared to outline the tasks needed to execute the action plans.

6. Implementing the external communication function

As a core management competence, external communication enables the Agency to do more than just keep the various external audiences informed. It facilitates the creation of a positive image of the Agency and its role in implementing EU policies in the area of justice and home affairs.

In order to better identify strengths, weaknesses and the diversity of the external communication function as well as the opportunities and threats to which it is exposed, a SWOT assessment was performed. The purpose of the SWOT analysis is to identify factors that influence the efficiency of the management of the external communication function.

The specific definitions below guided the parameters in which the SWOT analysis was made as a part of the analysis performed in order to update the Strategy:

- **Strengths** – internal factors which may be used to support and help achieve the desired objective(s) and goals;
- **Weaknesses** - Internal factors which may hinder activities and impede the achievement of the desired objective(s) and goals;
- **Opportunities** - External factors which may be used to support and help achieve dissemination objective(s) and goals;

- **Threats** - External factors which may hinder activities and impede the achievement of dissemination objective(s) and goals.

Strengths

- Dedicated and experienced team
- All relevant strategies and processes already in place
- Communication is supported by top management
- Regular updating of communication channels
- Regular awareness-raising briefings
- Regular involvement in public visibility meetings
  (Europe Days, info-stands)

Weaknesses

- Dealing with complex sensitive content
- Political sensitivity of issues related to eu-LISA tasks
- Content is too technical for the general public
- No mandated staff on the operations site in Strasbourg
- Publishing online content delayed by technical restrictions
- Unavailability of tools and software to produce visually
  engaging modern communication products in the format
  of quality videos and easily manageable newsletters

Opportunities

- Best practices shared within EU Agencies network
- Multipliers of partners and stakeholders
- Involvement of stakeholders and opinion leaders in social media
- High-level visibility events in cooperation with EU presiding countries
- Engagement in EU level public visibility events

Threats

- Insufficient human and IT resources to perform
- Decision makers overlook the importance of external
  communication
- Dependence of COMS on external support
- New website postponed due to reprioritising of corporate IT projects
- Inability to install dedicated A/V software
- Limitations applied to travelling and public attendance at events

Figure 7: eu-LISA external communication SWOT analysis matrix[8]

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[8] In the SWOT matrix the external factors are mapped in order to consider them in the planning of communication activities to achieve the long-term goals in the best way. The external factors under *threats* refer to those that may occur if not addressed well in advance through close internal cooperation

7. External communication function and crisis communication

The principles for eu-LISA crisis management and the related crisis communication follow the overall Business Continuity Management Strategy approved by the Management Board in 2013 and the related policy. Crisis communication is implemented in close cooperation with the Security Unit and the Management as part of the Business Continuity Management System.

The eu-LISA Crisis Communication Plan has been developed as part of the overall eu-LISA Corporate Business Continuity/Crisis Management Plan, to support the consistent application of best practices during incidents related to eu-LISA's operations or to crisis situations affecting the physical well-being of the Agency's employees. The Crisis Communication Plan is designed to meet the need for accurate, clear and practical information of external and/or internal audiences during situations identified as an incident or a crisis. It defines the responsibilities and roles of spokespersons and outlines the internal liaison links to be used for eu-LISA crisis communication depending on the nature of the topic and the location of the incident, in order to make the information available in a swift manner and easily accessible to the relevant stakeholders.

The type of actions, use of communication channels, template messages and checklists which the Agency uses for crisis communication, based on the communication objectives and the target audiences of each specific situation, are also defined in the Crisis Communication Plan in order to be able to respond efficiently, in a timely manner and in proportion to the scale of the crisis. Crisis communication staff and procedures for 24/7 availability foresee the inclusion of the communication function as an instrumental tool in case or urgency.

8. External Communication Strategy 2021-2027 end-line

The External Communication Strategy 2021-2027 is an elaboration of the External Communication Strategy 2016-2020 that takes into account the achievements and experiences from the previous years in establishing, maintaining and developing the communication function. The updated Strategy sets the baseline for the communication function objectives and outlines the tools and channels to be used to reach the target audiences and collaborate with stakeholders. The Strategy serves as a guide that allows the Agency to respond to external communication needs in a flexible manner, while choosing the best means and formats. At the same time, it outlines clear, value-based principles to be followed and distinct communication objectives to be achieved.

The Strategy is a corporate level framework document, which needs to be periodically reviewed in order to reflect the evolving nature of the Agency's tasks and responsibilities and the related impact on the communication function. A midterm-review of the Strategy is foreseen to take place in 2024.