

## Headline 3.5 External Communication

### 1. Definition

External communication involves the strategic exchange of information between the organisation and external entities such as other organisations, groups, and individuals. Utilising channels like newsletters, websites, events, and social media, the goal is to effectively convey messages, inform the public and stakeholders, and present a positive image of the organisation. A well-thought-out communication strategy is crucial for attracting and retaining sponsors and managing unexpected or negative incidents. The approach and channels vary depending on circumstances, purpose, and target audience.

An effective external communication strategy also includes a crisis communication plan to ensure quick, organised responses during crises, maintaining the organisation's credibility. Overall, external communication is vital in shaping public perception, enhancing the organisation's reputation, practising transparency and increasing its influence within the sports community and beyond.

External communication is closely linked to “Internal Communication” (3.4) and to the “Availability of Documents” (3.3).

### 2. Ideal scenario

The organisation has adopted a well-developed communication strategy. An employee, a team or a volunteer is in charge of implementing the strategy on a daily basis. This strategy relates to an interactive web presence as well as the use of social media. The website includes a wide range of information on the history of the organisation, its activities and governance structure, the main documents (e.g. statutes, rules, regulations and policies, financial information, agenda of General Assembly), contact details, a list of member organisations, publications, latest news and services and is being updated regularly and easily accessible. The organisation is active on various social media channels to promote its activities and to spread information about its activities, as well as competitions and results. The organisation is aware that the communication strategy magnifies messages that influence societal norms regarding sports and their societal significance and uses it to widen its outreach. Regular communication is made to encourage members and other stakeholders to follow these social media pages or accounts. As part of its communication strategy, the organisation has also defined basic guidelines for the use of social media by its staff as well as athletes and other stakeholders. A regular assessment of the communication strategy is foreseen to ensure that the organisation is effectively reaching the various target groups. In addition to positive communication, another element present in the communication strategy is the management of communication when a crisis occurs. A crisis communication strategy is in place to ensure quick and organised communication depending on the nature of the crisis.

### 3. Risks

- Inability to promote its activities and to spread its messages.

- Negative or unknown public image due to lack of communication or bad communication.
- Inability to deal with negative news when an issue arises.
- Difficulties to keep current and/or attract new sponsors.
- Misunderstanding of the mission, main expertise, and activities of the organisation.
- Low level of awareness of the organisation.
- Lower participation and difficulty in attracting new members.
- Inability to engage with specific target groups (e.g. youth / young athletes).
- Misunderstanding between the organisation and other actors such as sponsors, public authorities, media and the general public.

#### 4. Instruments and key elements

<i>Instruments</i>	<i>Key elements</i>
<b>External communication strategy/plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General principles for external communication.</li> <li>• Identify the different target groups and define which channels and strategies to be used to reach them.</li> <li>• Agree on messages to be sent in the direction of which target group on which channel.</li> <li>• Strategy regarding web presence and the various features of the organisation’s website.</li> <li>• Strategy regarding social media (X, LinkedIn, Instagram or other).</li> <li>• Strategy on how to deal with media and public authorities.</li> <li>• Regular education and training for the staff.</li> <li>• Responsible person for external communication and implementation/review of the strategy (communication manager/committee/press service).</li> <li>• Involvement of the whole internal structure in the delivery and implementation of consistent external communication activities.</li> <li>• Crisis communication strategy is embedded in the external communication strategy.</li> <li>• Linked with the availability of documents (availability strategy).</li> <li>• Regular assessment and re-adjustments.</li> <li>• Confidentiality and privacy arrangements.</li> </ul>
<b>Online platform/website</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative and attractive format and layout.</li> <li>• Regular updates.</li> <li>• List of officials to understand governance structure, roles, and responsibilities.</li> <li>• General Assembly/other major events with agenda, relevant documents and press releases/articles from main decisions.</li> <li>• Statues, vision, mission, audit report available.</li> <li>• Responsible person(s) in the organisation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion and link with social media (including the possibility to share content via social media).</li> </ul>
<b>Social Media Guidelines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General guidelines for the use of social media.</li> <li>Differentiation between employees, board members, athletes and other stakeholders.</li> <li>Encourage the use of social media by athletes.</li> <li>Providing tools or education on how to use social media for its employees and athletes.</li> <li>Procedures for dealing with breaches of guidelines.</li> <li>Moderation guidelines and procedures for dealing with libel by externals (defamation policy).</li> </ul>

## 5. Good practice examples

### Example “External Communication Plan”

**Organisation:** Sport Ireland

**Description:** Sport Ireland’s “Communications Planning” document, featured in their “Governance and Leadership” section, serves as a comprehensive guide for organisations seeking to enhance their communication strategies. This document emphasises the importance of effective communications planning, detailing the responsibilities in the process. It provides clear guidance on how to develop a structured communications plan that aligns with organisational objectives. Additionally, the document includes crucial information on crisis communication, offering strategies for managing and mitigating the impact of unexpected events or issues that could affect the organisation’s reputation. By outlining these elements, Sport Ireland aims to equip organisations with the tools necessary for proactive and responsive communication, ensuring that they are well-prepared to handle both routine interactions and emergencies effectively.

**Further information:** [Governance & Leadership | Sport Ireland](#)

### Example “External Communication Plan”

**Organisation:** Sport New Zealand

**Description:** Sport New Zealand provides an eight-step communications planning framework. A stakeholder communications plan is essential for any organization as it outlines who needs to be communicated with, what the communication will involve, how it will be executed, and the frequency of these interactions. This plan not only supports achieving organizational goals and improving operational effectiveness but also helps maintain positive relationships with key stakeholders and delivers measurable results. Despite its straightforward nature, the real challenge often lies in ensuring the plan can be effectively implemented with the available human and financial resources. The eight-step communications planning framework, designed for those without a communications background, provides a structured approach to developing a pragmatic plan. The steps include setting communication objectives, defining key messages for the organization, identifying and prioritizing key stakeholders, crafting additional messages tailored to each stakeholder group, developing communication tactics, allocating budget and responsibilities, creating a quarterly communications calendar, and assessing

results to adapt the plan. This framework is a public relations strategy that may incorporate broader communication tools, ensuring that all communications align with stakeholder objectives and are manageable within the organization's resource constraints.

**Further information:** [Stakeholder communications plan | Sport New Zealand - Ihi Aotearoa \(sportnz.org.nz\)](#)

#### Example “Social Media Guidelines”

**Organisation:** Scottish Athletics

**Description:** This guide offers suggestions rather than strict rules, encouraging athletes to use social media thoughtfully without seeking to control their online activities. As the athletic career progresses and they become a more public figure, it's important to consider the potential benefits and pitfalls of social media. It suggests asking two questions before posting: 1) Would you say this in front of your parents or grandparents? 2) Would you say this to journalists at a press conference, sitting next to your coach? If the answer to either is no, the advice is to think carefully before sharing, as anything posted could be seen by anyone, including family members or the media. These guidelines aim to help athletes, their coaches, and the broader athletic community work together to build a positive reputation both online and in real life, without stifling their individuality or enjoyment of social media. While it may feel restrictive to think more before posting, this is a small aspect of the higher profile that accompanies athletic success. The increased attention will also bring new, enthusiastic followers who can offer positivity and support, providing you with a direct channel to engage with your growing fan base.

**Further information:** [Social media guidelines - Scottish Athletics](#)

#### Example “Online platform/website”

**Organisation:** Comite Olympique et Sportif Luxembourgeois

**Description:** The website includes a part about “Team Letzeburg” but also about COSL as an institution. The institutional section of the website provides detailed information about COSL's governance structure, including profiles of the Board members, the Executive Office, the Administrative Office, and various Commissions. This transparency ensures that visitors have a clear understanding of how the organization operates and who is responsible for its strategic direction. Additionally, the site features a rich historical overview of the NOC, tracing its evolution and milestones, alongside up-to-date news that keeps stakeholders informed about current events and developments. For members, the website offers a directory, facilitating easy access to contact information and connections within the sporting community. There is also a dedicated section outlining the array of services available to members, ensuring they are well-supported in their athletic and administrative endeavours.

**Further information:** [COSL - COSL \(teamletzebuerg.lu\)](#)

#### Example “Online platform/website”

**Organisation:** CEV

**Description:** The website is split between CEV and its sport-related news, activities, calendar and the institutional website, which includes a list of officials, clearly outlining the governance structure, roles,

and responsibilities. Coverage of major events, such as the General Assembly, includes agendas, relevant documents, and press releases or articles on key decisions. It also provides access to critical documents, such as the CEV's statutes, vision, and mission, ensuring transparency. The site identifies responsible individuals for various functions within the organisation and actively promotes its social media presence to enhance engagement.

**Further information:** [Home](#) | [CEV](#) ; [Inside CEV](#) | [InsideCEV](#)

#### Example “Social Media Guidelines”

**Organisation:** ANOC

**Description:** As part of the ANOC Digital Accelerator Programme, ANOC has released the Paris 2024 Social Media Handbook, aimed at helping National Olympic Committees (NOCs) optimise their social media presence leading up to, during, and after the Olympic Games Paris 2024. This handbook, available online, offers strategies and tactics for enhancing social media impact by incorporating lessons learned from Tokyo 2020, insights from industry experts at Redtorch, and data from the ANOC Social Media Dashboard. Leading up to the Games, the handbook equips NOCs with tools to develop a robust content strategy, build an engaged community, leverage existing platforms and partners, and make the most of available resources. During the Games, it guides NOCs on creating real-time content and effectively telling the stories of their athletes, offering tips on community engagement, maximizing impact with limited resources, and adapting tactics through ongoing measurement. Post-Games, the handbook advises on sustaining and building momentum to ensure continued audience growth and engagement long after the Olympics have ended. It also includes industry learnings, case studies, and key takeaways relevant to NOCs.

**Further information:** [ANOC publishes Paris 2024 Social Media Handbook for NOCs : ANOC \(anocolympic.org\)](#)

#### Example “Social Media Protection Service”

**Organisation:** FIFA

**Description:** Established in 2022, the Social Media Protection Service was designed to safeguard players, teams, and officials from online abuse, ensuring their social media feeds remain free from hate and enabling them to participate in FIFA events without distress. This service also aims to protect their followers from encountering abusive, discriminatory, and threatening content, thereby preventing the normalisation of such behaviour. It provides three levels of defence against online abuse: Monitor—where it tracks public accounts for harmful comments and replies; Moderate—where it automatically hides abusive and offensive content if permitted by the account owner; and Report—where it flags and reports offending comments and replies to social media platforms for further action if they violate the platforms' terms of service. FIFA also assists member associations and local law enforcement in pursuing real-world consequences for online abusers and is exploring measures to restrict offenders from purchasing tickets to future events.

**Further information:** [Inside FIFA](#)

## 6. Steps to the next level

<p>To level 2 ★★ “Emerging”</p>	<p>To level 3 ★★★ “Developing”</p>	<p>To level 4 ★★★★ “Established”</p>	<p>To level 5 ★★★★★ “Embedded”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the target audience of your communication. Bear in mind that this could be different depending on what you intend to communicate.</li> <li>Initiate discussion on the external communication of your organisation at the next board meeting. Consider the use of different social media platforms being realistic for your organisation.</li> <li>Create a corporate identity/visual identity of your organisation allowing the audience to identify your content with one glance. Be consistent with your visual identity.</li> <li>Create a basic website for the organisation including essential information such as contact details, the vision,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convene a discussion at the next board meeting on your organisation's external communication strategy and its intended areas of coverage.</li> <li>Define specific communication goals to be achieved through your outreach efforts.</li> <li>Ensure that your organisation has a website that includes rules, regulations and policies, main activities and decisions, the latest news and services, a list of member organisations and names and positions of elected/appointed officials.</li> <li>Ensure that the website is updated regularly and that the annual activity report is communicated to member organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt an external communication strategy encompassing website management, social media engagement, crisis communication and other forms of interaction with external stakeholders. Identify the key messages you want to convey to your target audience.</li> <li>Appoint a communications coordinator responsible for overseeing communication efforts. This individual develops communication strategies, coordinates media relations, manages internal communications, and oversees branding efforts.</li> <li>Ensure that the website of your organisation includes annual audited financial statements and the awarding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a fully-fledged external communication strategy covering the website, use of social media and all other channels of communication and interaction with external stakeholders. Assign a responsible person/department for each specific task and encourage the active involvement of the whole structure. Include provisions on confidentiality and privacy in line with applicable national law. Assess and review this strategy regularly.</li> <li>Experienced communications and social media managers collaborate to craft and implement a strategic communication plan tailored to the organization's objectives.</li> <li>Ensure that your website is interactive and user-friendly and that it includes</li> </ul>

<p>mission, goals and strategy, the organisational structure, a list of elected officials and the management structure. Assign a responsible person for the maintenance of the website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create social media accounts for the most relevant channels such as X and LinkedIn.</li> <li>• Publish information in at least the two languages most commonly spoken.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish news on the organisation's website and social media accounts. Include the possibility of cross-referencing both outlets.</li> <li>• A staff member is assigned responsibility for responding to general inquiries, drafting press releases and managing social media accounts.</li> </ul>	<p>procedures for events/tenders where applicable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organisation's website publishes the latest annual activity report and regular updates on institutional affairs (e.g. projects, elections, etc.).</li> <li>• In preparation for the General Assembly, link the agenda and relevant documents for participating delegates and publish news articles and press releases on key decisions afterwards followed by the Minute Report of the meeting.</li> <li>• Maintain active profiles on popular social media platforms and engage in direct contact with the target audience.</li> <li>• Publish up-to-date contact details of all members on the website.</li> <li>• Provide biographical information on the president, general secretary/CEO and members of the executive</li> </ul>	<p>various features and easy-to-understand information to engage and attract the public and stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The website includes a list of the officials on the governing body allowing stakeholders to understand who the main decision-makers are in the organisation, as well as their relevant experience and competencies. The priority should be the Board (or equivalent) and senior staff, even if the staff are not on the Board.</li> <li>• At least the three most recent annual reports are published and easily accessible on the organisation's website.</li> <li>• Ensure that the website interlinks directly with your social media channels as well as with the social media of member federations and athletes (including the possibility of sharing the content of the website via social media).</li> </ul>
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		<p>committee/board on the organisation's website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the organisational structure is transparent on the website, with explanations of roles, responsibilities and decision-making processes.</li> <li>• Ensure that the website is accessible by implementing descriptive alternative text for images, text-to-speech functions, high colour contrast, consistent navigation and responsive designs.</li> <li>• Circulate a regular newsletter to members with information on the latest activities, key decisions and updates.</li> <li>• Provide general guidance for athletes, staff, volunteers and members on how to deal with social media and other communication tools/channels.</li> </ul>	<p>Encourage the whole internal structure to be actively involved and promote the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible staff, but also athletes are regularly informed and trained about the use of social media and are aware of expectations, regulations but also remedy when faced with online hate.</li> <li>• Maintain active engagement with members, athletes, and stakeholders on social media.</li> <li>• Ensure that additional information about members (e.g. history, representatives, year of affiliation) is easily accessible on the organisation's website.</li> <li>• Publish full details of all elected/appointed officials (including for standing committees, judicial bodies and senior administration staff) on the organisation's website with additional data and</li> </ul>
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