



**AgriFoodResults**

*European Initiative for a better use of results of agri-food research*

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# Final guide of good practice for communication towards policy makers

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## Executive Summary

Influence on political decisions is extremely difficult – not only for researchers but for all stakeholders. Secondly, researchers work independently from political opinions. Their core task should be to supply the background information which justifies the political decision. However, it is also interesting for researchers to know how the legislation process works and where they may be important.

This guide explains the legislation setting in the European Union and the lobby work of food associations. It lines out on how researchers can communicate their research results to policy makers. As indicated, the process of communication research results to policy makers depends on the individual issue. Therefore some examples are made to illustrate who to speak and how. This guide shall help in understanding of policy makers. With their research project researchers have a certain assignment. This may be fundamental research which has an important part in knowing our world and the related processes better. But it may be also applied science which will result into new legislation. In the moment where these results are available there is a need to disseminate them. In order to get the message policy makers it is necessary to speak in their language that the message is well conveyed.

This guide was developed by AgriFoodResults. This project was funded by the European Commission from May 2009 to April 2011 and intends to answer the need for a better dissemination of results of food research.



## 1. Introduction – EU food legislation

This guide focuses on how to communicate efficiently with policy makers in the food sector. Politicians set the rules and the operating framework for the agri-food sector in the European Union. Therefore it is important for researchers to know how the EU food legislation works. Bernd van der Meulen wrote 2009 in his article “The System of Food Law in the European Union” [1] that the food law presents itself as an endless number of provisions of technical and detailed nature because in almost 10 years 1359 measures addressing the food industry were published in the Official Journal. Indeed, legislation giving effect to EU food policy has been based on a combination of Treaty provisions, such as the provisions on agriculture and on the internal market because the EC Treaty of 1957 does not provide a basis for food law.

The three European institutions i.e. the European Commission (EC), European Council and European Parliament take decisions in the food legislative field. The Commission is the initiator of proposals for new legislation; however it has limited legislative power. The legislative power in the Community will be exercised either by the Council or jointly by Parliament and the Council, who can only act on a proposal from the Commission.

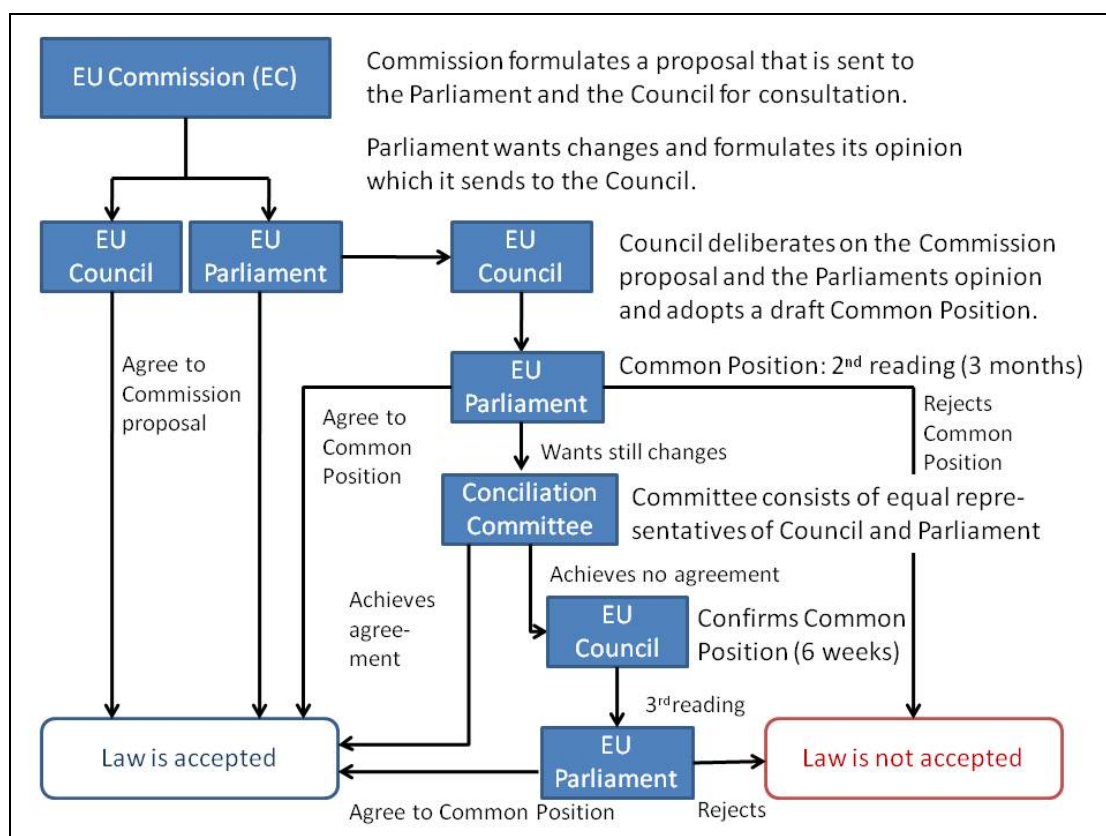


Figure 1.1: EU legislation (according to [2])

To understand the whole procedure we will have a closer look to the different institutions.

## EU Commission

The Commission is divided into several departments and services. The departments are known as Directorates-General (DGs). Each DG is classified according to the policy it deals with (see [http://ec.europa.eu/about/ds\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/about/ds_en.htm)). The Commission services deal with more general administrative issues or have a specific mandate, for example fighting fraud or creating statistics [3].

Within the European Commission, the Directorate-General (DG) SANCO (Health and Consumers, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health\\_consumer/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm)) is responsible for the domain of food law. It initiates legislation and it acts as executive. DG SANCO has to ensure that food and consumer goods sold in the EU are safe, that the EU's internal market works for the benefit of consumers and that Europe helps protect and improve its citizens' health. In order to succeed in this mission DG SANCO works with other EU Institutions, national governments and agencies, consumer organisations, health interest groups, business groups, scientists, researchers and experts. The DG SANCO has around 960 staff: about 660 are based in Brussels and about 120 are based in Luxembourg and another 180 in Grange, near Dublin.

For a researcher it is important to know the right person to address within his line of research. The responsible persons are listed in an organisational chart, which is updated regularly: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health\\_consumer/chart.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/chart.pdf). Additionally, the staff directory will guide the researcher to the selected person: [http://ec.europa.eu/staffdir/plsql/gsys\\_tel.display\\_search?pLang=EN](http://ec.europa.eu/staffdir/plsql/gsys_tel.display_search?pLang=EN)

For researchers it is necessary to be informed on the topics of the Commission in order to support the decisions with their knowledge. The following table gives an overview on the press releases on different topics:

Topic	Link for press releases
Consumer Affairs	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/dyna/press_rel/press_rel_cons_consumers.cfm">http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/dyna/press_rel/press_rel_cons_consumers.cfm</a>
Public Health	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/health/press_material/index_en.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/health/press_material/index_en.htm</a>
Food Safety	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/food/dyna/press_rel/press_rel_ff_en.cfm">http://ec.europa.eu/food/dyna/press_rel/press_rel_ff_en.cfm</a>
Animal Health and Welfare	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/food/dyna/press_rel/press_rel_ah_en.cfm">http://ec.europa.eu/food/dyna/press_rel/press_rel_ah_en.cfm</a>
Plant Health	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/food/dyna/press_rel/press_rel_pl_en.cfm">http://ec.europa.eu/food/dyna/press_rel/press_rel_pl_en.cfm</a>

Part of DG SANCO is the **Food and Veterinary Office (FVO)** located in Ireland. The FVO is an inspection service that oversees national inspections, both within the European Union and in third countries wishing to export to the European Union, with the aim of ensuring that they



perform up to EU standards [1]. The mission [5] of the FVO is, through its audits, inspections and related activities, to:

- check on compliance with the requirements of EU food safety and quality, animal health and welfare and plant health legislation within the European Union and on compliance with EU import requirements in third countries exporting to the EU,
- contribute to the development of European Community policy in the food safety, animal health and welfare and plant health sectors,
- contribute to the development and implementation of effective control systems in the food safety, animal health and welfare and plant health sectors,
- and to inform stakeholders of the outcome of its audits and inspections.

The **European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)** located in Parma is responsible for scientific risk assessment. As a risk assessor the EFSA operates independently of the European Commission, which is responsible for risk management. The Commission cannot give instructions on the opinions [1]. For a researcher it is very important to get an overview on the scientific output of the EFSA. The overview on all different Scientific Outputs and Supporting Publications is given here: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/riskassessment/scdocdefinitions.htm> and <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/new.htm>

From time to time EFSA invites scientific experts to join its Scientific Committee and Panels through a call. EFSA wants to renew the membership of its panels and to expand the reserve list of its Scientific Committee and its other 8 Scientific Panels. Scientists are invited to respond to the call. The last was carried out in 2010. A renewable three-year mandate was offered to selected applicants. The selected applicants will join Europe's network of leading food safety scientists from summer 2011.

Additionally, EFSA regularly publishes calls for data on scientific subjects specific to its remit: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/calls/data.htm>

## EU Council

Among the institutions the Council is the main decision-making body of the European Union. It consists of the Ministers of the Member States who represent therefore the political government of the Member States. The work in the Council is not static, depending on the issue on the agenda of the meetings each country will be represented by the minister responsible for that subject (foreign affairs, finance, social affairs, transport, agriculture, etc.). Actually, it meets in ten different configurations depending on the subjects under discussion.

All the work of the Council is prepared or co-ordinated by the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER), made up of the permanent representatives of the Member States working in Brussels and their assistants. The work of this Committee is itself prepared by more than 150 committees and working groups consisting of delegates from the Member States [6].



Among these, certain committees have a specific role of providing co-ordination and expertise in a given area, such as, for example, the agriculture and fisheries committee. The content of the agricultural and fisheries policies essentially involves regulation of the markets, organising production and establishing the resources available, improving horizontal agricultural structures and rural development.

The acts of the Council can take the form of regulations, directives, decisions, common actions or common positions, recommendations or opinions. The Council can also adopt conclusions, declarations or resolutions. When the Council acts as a legislator, in principle it is the European Commission that makes proposals. These are examined within the Council, which can make modifications before adopting them. The European Parliament is an active participant in this legislative process. On a broad range of issues, Community legislation is adopted jointly by the Parliament and the Council using a procedure known as «co-decision» [6].

If a stakeholder (mostly represented by associations) wants to influence the legislative process they have to inform enough ministers with their “votes” to get a qualified majority. The number of votes each Member State can cast is set by the Treaties. The Treaties also define cases in which a simple majority, qualified majority or unanimity are required. A qualified majority will be reached if the following two conditions are met:

- if a majority of Member States approve (in some cases a two-thirds majority);
- a minimum of 255 votes is cast in favour of the proposal, out of a total of 345 votes.

In addition, a Member State may ask for confirmation that the votes in favour represent at least 62% of the total population of the Union. If this is found not to be the case, the decision will not be adopted.

#### Distribution of votes for each Member State

Germany, France, Italy, United Kingdom	29
Spain, Poland	27
Romania	14
Netherlands	13
Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Portugal	12
Austria, Bulgaria, Sweden	10
Denmark, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Finland	7
Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovenia	4
Malta	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>345</b>

## EU Parliament

The European Parliament is the only directly-elected body of the European Union. The 736 Members of the European Parliament are there to represent the citizen in the EU. They are



elected once every five years by voters right across the 27 Member States of the European Union on behalf of its 500 million citizens.

The work of the European Parliament is important because in many policy areas, decisions on new European laws are made jointly by Parliament and the Council of Ministers, which represents Member States. Parliament plays an active role in drafting legislation which has an impact on the daily lives of its citizens: For example, on environmental protection, consumer rights, equal opportunities, transport, and the free movement of workers, capital, services and goods. Parliament also has joint power with the Council over the annual budget of the European Union [7].

The Parliament has 20 policy Committees, which meet, mainly in Brussels, throughout the year for specific issues: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/committeesList.do?language=EN>. A key priority for the European Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy is that EU funds for research should be doubled to €100 billion in the coming EU financial period. MEPs endorsed a Report on the mid-term review of the current EU Research Framework Programme in April 2011 [8].

Within the Committees the “Environment, Public Health and Food Safety” (ENVI) is dealing with food issues. It is one of the largest committees with 64 members in the European Parliament and deals with many issues which affect the daily lives of EU citizens. In the field of environmental policy, ENVI looks at issues relating to climate change, measures against pollution of air, land and water, waste management and recycling, the handling of dangerous and toxic substances and the protection of biodiversity. Sustainable development, international and regional measures to protect the environment and civil protection fall within its remit. In the field of health policy, ENVI works in areas which relate to the internal market and where there are cross-border effects, e.g. the safety of pharmaceutical and cosmetic products, the fight against counterfeit medicinal products or the defence of patients' rights. In the field of food safety, the Committee above all deals with information about, and labelling of, foodstuffs and the hygiene and safety of all of the foods that EU citizens consume every day.

## Excuse: National Governments

It is probably easier and also a good expertise to start with the national policy makers if researcher want to inform on their research results. However, in this guide we are not able to display all detail to national policy makers. We have therefore selected interesting pages of local Ministries:

- German Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection ([http://www.bmelv.de/EN/Homepage/homepage\\_node.html](http://www.bmelv.de/EN/Homepage/homepage_node.html))
- Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/eleni>)



In Netherlands there is not a single Ministry whose main task is consumer policy, consumer protection and consumer affairs. However the Minister of Foreign trade of the Ministry of Economic Affairs is responsible for the general consumer policy as well as some specific sectors as energy and telecommunications.

- Spanish Ministry of Environment, Rural and Marine Affairs (<http://www.mapa.es/en/alimentacion/alimentacion.htm>)
- Italian Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico (Ministry of Economic Development) (<http://www.sviluppoeconomico.gov.it/>)

More national links are listed here: [http://thepublicvoice.org/issues\\_and\\_resources/consumer\\_protection\\_02.html](http://thepublicvoice.org/issues_and_resources/consumer_protection_02.html)

## Responsibilities of Scientists

Scientists usually research with publicly-funded money. Therefore they have an obligation to reduce wasted time and inefficiency. Scientists working in applied research are familiar with terms such as accountability, relevance, significance and the measurable outcomes used to justify or evaluate their research. Among other activities, research results must be exploited to justify the received money. One of the exploitation issues is the information of policy makers to support their decision making. It is very important that every decision on a national or European level is based on scientific knowledge if possible and takes into account all new scientific developments. It is the responsibility of scientists to make this kind of information (e.g. summaries of results, interpretations and opinion letters) for policy makers available. As outlined in the “Guidance Notes on Project Reporting, Version June 2010” [9] a publicly-funded project has the obligation to report on the spent money and the achieved results in regular reports or scientific papers. This guide will go beyond this obligation.

## Aim of the Guide

It is the aim of this guide to facilitate the communication process between researchers and policy makers. It will first highlight the Process of Knowledge Transfer between researchers of applied science and policy makers. In a following chapter the needs of policy makers are identified. Different channels and different communication tools may be used to reach policy makers. Last but not least the barriers to communication and the evaluation of the activities are highlighted.

## 2. *Process of Knowledge Transfer to policy makers*

It is very important to understand that knowledge transfer (e.g. research results dissemination) has to be seen as a management process. This process consists of several parts: plan, do, check and improve. In terms of dissemination it means that the researcher has to appoint a responsible person for the process within the own institute/research



organisation. This person should plan respectively outline the concrete activities. The plan includes the objectives and expected results of the project for policy makers, target audience (here: policy makers), dissemination activities (aims, time frame, key message, channels, tools and budget) and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the dissemination. The plan is only the first step in the process. After planning the implementation will start. That is the “Do-“Phase. The dissemination manager should document his/her activities along the way. From time to time the actual achievement should be checked against the plan. If there are discrepancies the plan has to be adjusted or other corrective actions should be undertaken. Also these steps should be documented. Figure 2.1 gives an example.

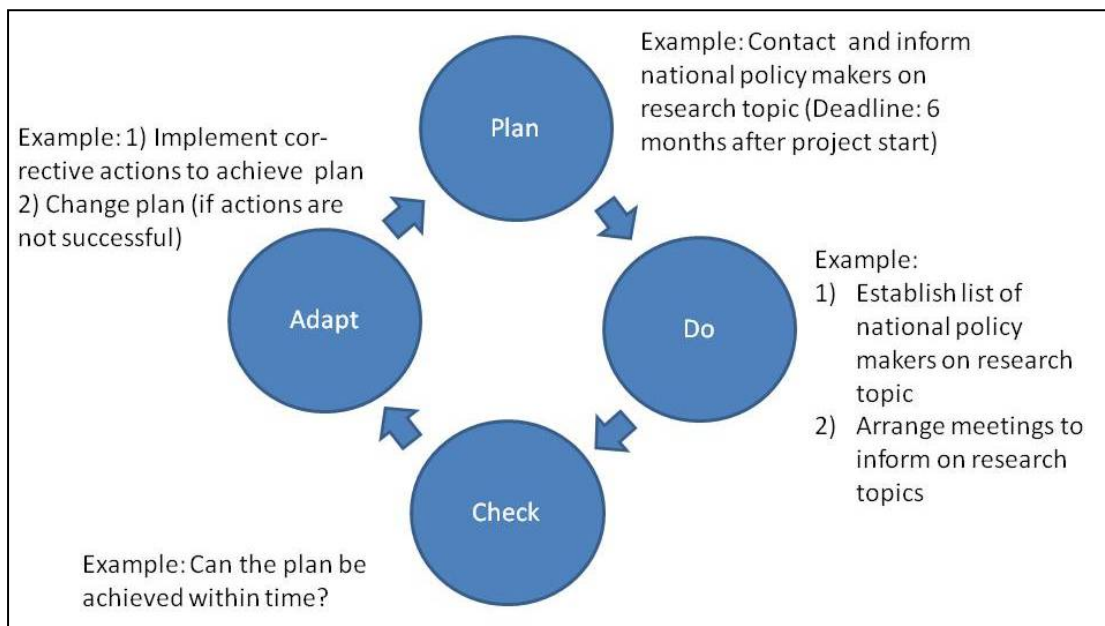


Figure 2.1: Example for the communication process to policy makers

Communication is a two-way process of giving and receiving information through a number of channels for example via publications, face-to-face meetings, emails or websites. When researchers talk about their scientific results it is crucial that they do this in a way which enables the person or target group addressed to understand the message(s). The aim of communicating research results towards policy makers should be the availability of independent knowledge.

The message for policy makers has to be translated in an understandable version. This means to convert the results in not-scientific, mainly short statements or presentations. Researchers may select the responsible person in the EU Commission, the EU Council or EU Parliament for their specific topic (see Introduction). After the communication has started efforts should be made to ensure that a dialogue is established with the policy makers. The comments from this dialogue and the practical experiences of the users should be feed back to the research management and the research activities should be modified as necessary.

By regularly evaluating how the research results match with the actual and future interests of policy makers, research activities and their outputs can be adjusted and a better compliance can be achieved. At this stage the messages, the communication channels, the tools used, the timing and the responsibilities have to be specified and regularly updated.

After the results are well consolidated a systematic transfer of knowledge can be carried out to a wider group of policy makers. If this transfer of knowledge is effective the likelihood of successful exploitation of the research results for policy makers and legislation is increased.

In 2010 Hyder et al [4] analysed the process of communication to national policy makers in the health research related sector. The aim was to understand the perspectives and attitudes of policy-makers towards the use and impact of research in the health sector in low- and middle-income countries. They found the following key messages:

- ☑ Key barriers to evidence-based policy-making cited by policy-makers included poor communication and dissemination of research; lack of technical capacity in policy processes and their own inability to understand technical data and the diverse influences of the political context.
- ☑ Policy-makers had a variable understanding of economic analysis, notion of equity and burden of disease measures, and were vague in terms of their use in national decisions.
- ☑ Policy-maker recommendations regarding strategies for facilitating the uptake of research into policy included improving the technical capacity of policy-makers, better packaging of research results, use of social networks and institutionalization of an evidence clearinghouse function in ministries of health.

### ***3. Identification of interests of policy makers***

Researchers may use the overview on the EU Food Law designed by Bernd van Meulen 2009 [1] to select the corresponding issues for their research topics.

Researchers for applied science need to identify their target in the group of policy makers and to define the professional interests to establish a relationship and a good communication. It is important to include the original background (e.g. culture and language) of the policy makers. There are important differences between policy makers at regional, national or European level. The sources of information for policy makers include contacts with interest groups, such as food industry federations, industry branch associations, European and National technology platforms and other intermediates [10].



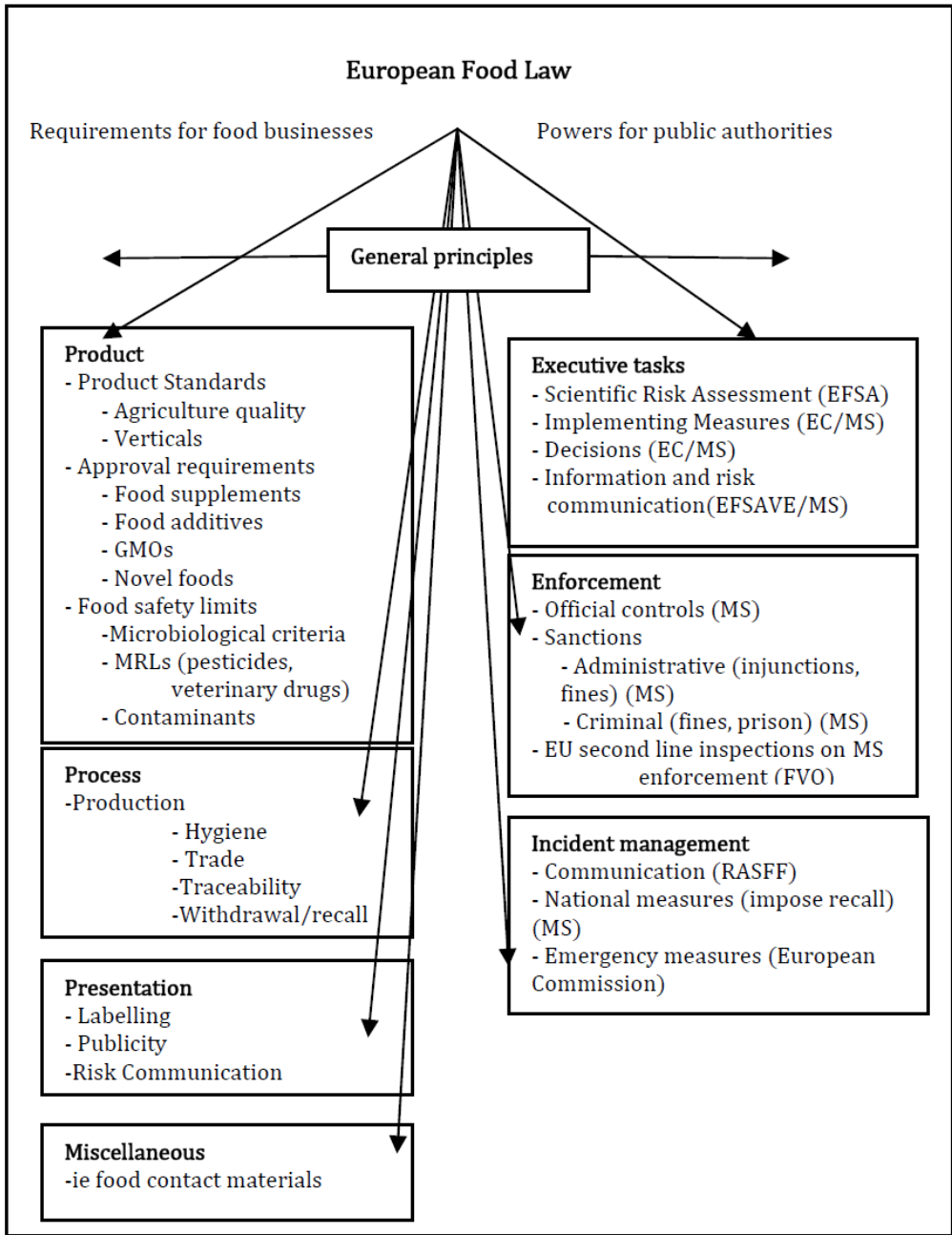


Figure 3.1: Structure of EU Food Law [1]

Most policy makers do not have a scientific background and may not even appreciate the relevance of science in their work. In addition, policy makers are generally very busy and only have time to get their scientific information from secondary sources rather than from direct contact with researchers or scientific sources [11].

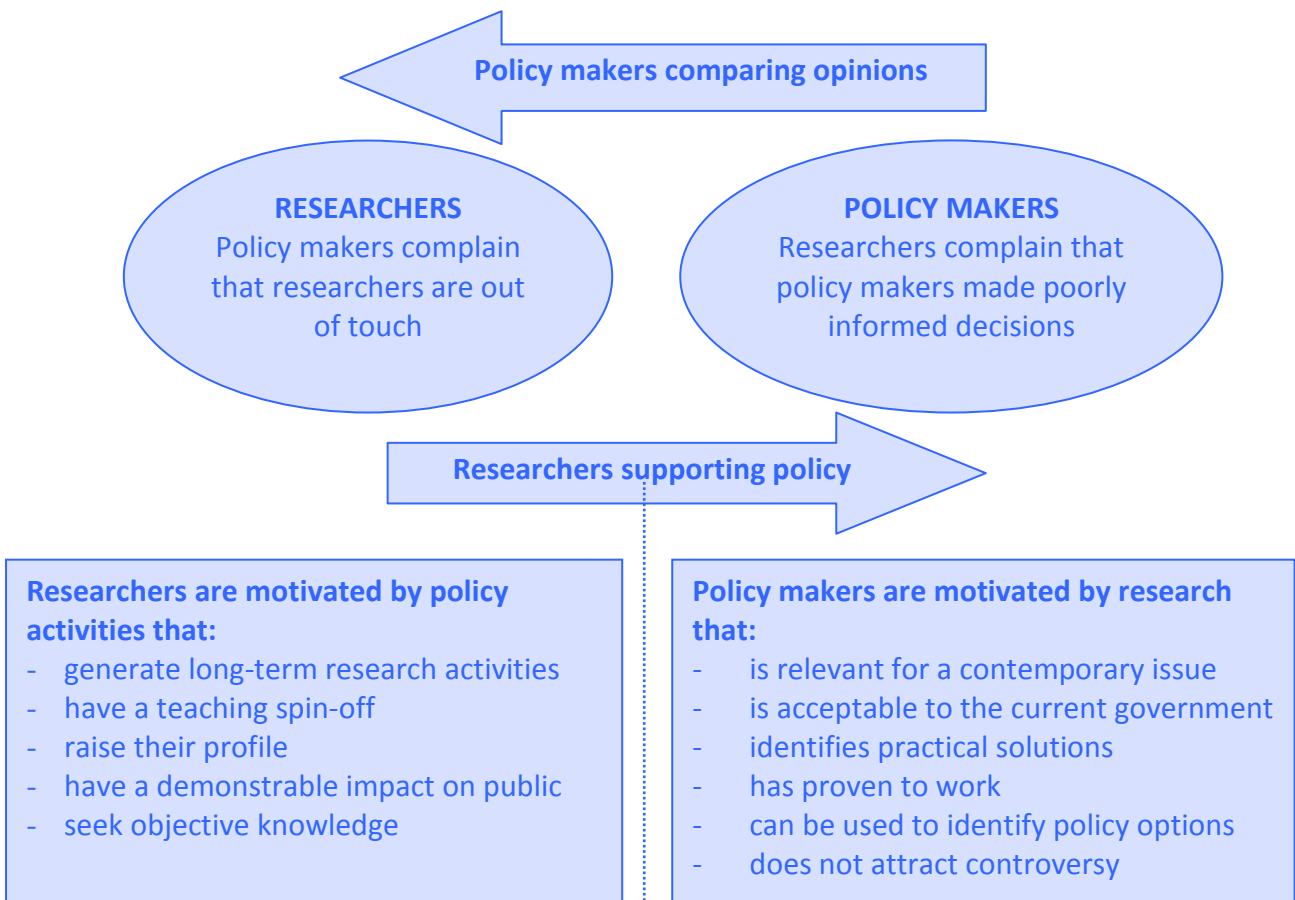


Figure 3.2: Source: Gibbons, Zammit, Youngentab, 2008 [12]

For all research projects it is crucial to identify and analyse the needs and concerns of different stakeholders particularly when the project aims to support decision making in the political process. In order to bridge the gap between research and policy, a stakeholder analysis can be used to identify all parties engaged in conducting the research, those who set or implement policy, and the intermediaries between them. It can help define a way to engage stakeholders so that the impact of research on policy can be maximised.

Stakeholders can be organisations, groups, departments, structures, networks or individuals, but the list needs to be complete to ensure nobody is left out. The following grid shows some of the policy makers that may be important for research results.

Business Sector	Public Sector	Civil Society
Agri-food corporations and business	Ministers and executive advisors	Media
Agri-food associations and food industry federations	Civil servants and departments	Schools and Universities
European and National Technology Platforms	Elected representatives	Social movements
	Local government	Non Governmental Organizations
	International institutes (e.g. EFSA, EU Commission, EU Parliament, EU Council)	Scientific bodies of the academia

Source: [13]

Policy makers ensure fair business environment and do not favour any specific players of business, research community or civil society without selecting them through a public contest or tendering activity. Therefore, they use different inputs to their policy process. By using inputs from several sources it is easier to demonstrate their independency. The main types of results from research which can be used by policy makers if they are clear, short and interpreted are the followings:

- Statements and facts, which can be used for timely identification of problems;
- Recommendations, guidelines, studies such as strategic research agenda, recommended strategies and implementation plans, which can be used for policy formulation;
- Expert opinions for all stages of formulation and implementation of policies and legislation and for evaluation of the impact of legislation and policies,
- Tools for evaluation of alternatives and supporting decision making;
- Impact assessment studies and tools (including benchmarking tools) which can be used for evaluation of the impact of implementation legislation and policies at the design and implementation phases;

Research results as they are described in the research reports of the projects or in the scientific publications are usually not in a user friendly format for policy makers. Therefore these have to be converted into practical inputs for policy making and decision making. For an outline of the research results the proposed form in Annex 1 can be used. Researchers should imagine the situation of policy makers:

- What is the problem for which this input, recommendation or solution is offered? What are the additional benefits for policy making compared to the



- former solutions? What are the benefits in general?
- What is new in the results/information/solution offered compared to the already available knowledge/information/solutions?
  - What are the tangible results or the practice for policy makers: data, findings, statements, methods, tools, recommendation, guidelines etc.?
  - How the new results can be used in policy making and legislation? What are the principles, stages, procedures, methods for the application? This has to be described only briefly in the style of a users' instructions.
  - What is the impact of the research related to policies or legislation?
  - Are there any risks, limitations associated with the application of the new results? *It is crucial, that the researchers are very honest about the risks, potential difficulties and limitations. A fair overview is expected by the policy makers, which can be the basis of the future trust. An over-optimistic view presented by the researcher may compromise the whole relationship in the future.*

The information has to be phrased in a **clear, simple language, not in scientific style**. There must be a clear distinction between facts, verified statements and assumptions, scientific views, judgements. Also, long, complex sentences, the use of specific scientific terms and technicalities should be avoided.

#### ***4. Reaching the policy makers – communication channels to policy makers***

Policy is more and more directed by public opinion made by NGOs and media. Scientists should communicate with the public and policy makers to give neutral support through independent research [11]. Conveying information to governments can contribute to the strategies and policies of relevant governments departments, and vice versa. This can be done through different communication channels. Communication channels and tools to policy makers include:

- personal contacts and meetings;
- expert panels and advisory groups of the government and the public bodies (e.g. committees or working groups of EU institutions) ;
- expert panels and position papers of the mediator organisations representing the interest groups of the private sector (such as food industry federations and associations), working groups, committees, elected scientific bodies of the academia;
- events organised by policy makers;
- events organised by other people, including other projects;



- events organised by the researchers on their own projects/results;
- written and electronic media;
- web-sites;
- other written documents in printed and electronic forms.

The impact of the research result will be significantly higher if it is integrated with other state of the art knowledge to form an expert opinion. In an expert opinion the new knowledge based on the results of the research is not presented in itself, but it is shown in the context of the full problem, the available measures for solving the problem and in context to uncertainties of the research.

Every stakeholder has a certain interest to influence policy in their direction. Either they represent food companies, consumers or specific issues like nature protection. It may be therefore a good advice to seek other scientists who have a similar interest to combine efforts in supporting policy makers.

<b>How to establish contact as a researcher?</b>	
When we talk about to communicate research results to policy makers and stakeholders, researchers should emphasize personal contacts, but a face-to-face contact is a difficult channel if the researchers do not have privileged contacts in the agri-food policy field. Contact details for the EU Commission, EU Council and EU Parliament are given on the Internet.	
Try to disseminate information about current research projects as widely as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invite concerned government officials, European and national technology platforms' and industry federations representatives to conferences, presentations of research and similar events;</li> <li>- Send notes and abstracts to relevant ministries and other stakeholders like national food authorities and advisory boards of institutions and make sure to get feed back;</li> <li>- Distribute research results via email, publications in specific magazines and websites to government agencies but also to NGOs, European and national technology platforms, industry federations and others like consumers associations.</li> <li>- Write opinion paper rather than scientific paper.</li> </ul>
Establish contact and build a long-term cooperation with relevant ministries.	
Access to high-ranked officials at ministries can be facilitated by involving higher-level representatives at universities (deans, vice-chancellors...) in the establishment and maintenance of contacts. However, more decentralised cooperation can also be productive if the procedures within the university tend to be very hierarchical and bureaucratic.	



How to make applied research available for policy makers?	
Make sure that your research addresses policy relevant issues of your country by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending national or international conferences whenever possible;</li> <li>• Consulting websites of national government and institutions;</li> </ul>	
How to communicate research findings to policy makers and disseminate your research	
<b>Create trust and credibility:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be honest about underlying assumptions used in models and other methodologies. Researchers also have the responsibility to explain the caveats of a model. Do not assume that policy makers understand the assumptions without you pointing them out. Use sensitivity analyses to show the range of potential outcomes. Provide a benchmark case and various scenarios which are based on the same assumptions in your simulation analysis.</li> <li>• Show the uncertainties which are related to your research</li> <li>• Make sure that data sources are credible.</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure that policy-makers understand your research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make your findings readable and understandable to non-scientists: use simpler language, provide a brief and concise non-mathematical outline, and focus on the application rather than the theoretical background. Provide targeted research with suggestions that can be implemented by policy makers.</li> <li>• Policy briefs which are "custom-tailored" to policy makers' needs and case studies can be useful formats to illustrate findings and communicate the main results to policy-makers</li> </ul>

## 5. *Communication tools to policy makers*

Communication may use different channels and different tools to spread messages. Communications tools to policy makers can include:

- **Personal visits, face-to-face meetings and discussions:**  
 This kind of communication is the most appropriate when we want to communicate research results to policy makers and stakeholders. Personal visits, face-to-face meetings and discussion are the best way to find out about policy priorities and research requirements, or to identify possible areas for potential collaboration. This is not an easy way of communication, it depends of the policy maker availability and it requires a preparation. Researchers



should talk to the right person and prepare a face-to-face communication. It is more effective to meet face-to-face than sending an email or make a call. Nevertheless a first approach by phone or email is necessary before you may agree on a face-to-face meeting.

- **Project reviews**

Although mainly the scientific officer (not the policy maker) of DG Research or DG Sanco will be present at project review meetings it is a chance to deliver your policy recommendations. The scientific officer will forward the recommendations to the next level. For project reviews you may prepare relevant documents such as

- a. **Short summaries of the research results:**

It is useful to prepare a summary of the research results in order to keep policy makers informed about your activities. This summary should have 2 pages maximum and a template is provided in Annex 1;

- b. **Guidelines, manuals:**

Research guidelines and manuals are appropriate when we want to communicate research results to stakeholders especially the industry. However, also policy makers are interested if they see an exploitation of research projects.

- c. **Inventories of successful cases:**

An inventory of successful cases of implementation of your research results may explain better what you are doing and it is a tool of evaluation of the results.

- **Workshops, seminars and conferences:**

The organization of workshops, seminars and conferences are good communication tools to share your achievements with experts in the field. However, it is a difficult tool to involve policy makers who will just make a short welcome of the participants.

- **Trainings organised for policy makers:**

Organising training can be a useful tool to inform policy makers. It can help researchers to understand policy makers' needs and help to develop key communication skills and establish a networking that can facilitate ongoing discussion and share of good practices.

- **Expert advice directly or through government advisory panels;**

Expert advice or government advisory panels have access to all relevant



information including previous analyses and official responses. They are well informed and it is to them that policy makers consult before make a decision, thus they are in great position to make recommendations to policy makers.

- **Recommendations for policy makers:**  
Sending recommendations based on scientific results to assistants of policy makers helps to alert and advice them, in order to provide solutions.
- **Expert advice through industry, NGO or scientific panels:**  
Interaction with industry, some NGOs and scientific panels can be an appropriate science-to-policy approach. These organizations can be useful partners in research and usually have privileged contacts with policy makers and others stakeholder, so they can be an intermediate to reach policy makers. It is advised to send notes and reports to them.
- **Involvement with media:**  
Engagement with media, dissemination of news releases or organisation of press conferences is a good tool to communicate scientific results. This kind of disseminations requires a good preparation. News releases are often used as a way to inform the media and generate interest for future interviews.

There are several ways to communicate with policy makers, but not all are appropriate for all types of policy makers. For example, a face-to-face meeting or a visit is more suitable to ministers and individual parliamentarians whereas presentations, workshops, trainings and conferences are more appropriate to staff of the EU institutions.

A survey of AgriFoodResults in 2009 [10] showed that activities effective for one audience are not necessarily adapted to a different one. In general, the most effective communication activities were workshops, visits to policy makers as well as interviews, trainings and press releases. In terms of financial redemption the order is different.

## **6. *Communication practices – dialogue with policy makers***

In order not to reinvent the wheel we would like to reference to the “Science-Policy-Dialogue” project of EASAC. EASAC - the European Academies Science Advisory Council - is formed by the national science academies of the EU Member States to



enable them to collaborate with each other in providing advice to European policy-makers [14].

In the project "Science-Policy-Dialogue", the academies of EASAC are trying to address a better dialogue with policy makers. The National Academies of EU member states are working together to improve this dialogue – both on a national and on an EU-level [15]. A draft Good Practice Guide is available on the Internet: <http://www.easac.eu/home/dialogue-project.html>.

The different workshops revealed the position of policy makers. They are constantly in need for useful summaries of the state of scientific knowledge relevant to particular policy issues, reflecting a scientific consensus or a range of scientific opinions. However, this has to be fast delivered not years after ending of the project. Scientists have the responsibility to explain scientific uncertainties in a way that policy maker may understand the associated open questions. It would be a wish from the policy view that also science will integrate other disciplines like the natural and social sciences. However, in many instances policy communities prefer to make the synthesis themselves. Overall, to be more effective in science and policy dialogue, science communities need to match their dissemination and explanation of research results more closely to the requirements of policy communities [16].

Another example of enhancing communication is a new activity of the Joint Research Center (JRC) of the EU Commission: In line with one of the commitments of the Innovation Union Communication, the JRC has launched the "TTO (Technology Transfer Offices) Circle", which met for the first time at the premises of the European Space Agency in Noordwijk (NL).



*Commitment 21  
European Commission  
collaborative research  
within the research*

*establishes that "The  
will facilitate effective  
and knowledge transfer  
Framework Programmes*

*and beyond. It will work with stakeholders to develop a set of model consortium agreements with options ranging from traditional approaches to protect IP through to more open ones. Mechanisms are also needed to further strengthen knowledge transfer offices in public research organisations, in particular through trans-national collaboration".*



Helpful questions in organising your communication to policy makers:	
1	Who are the key people to advice?
2	Who will make the decisions?
3	Has anybody in your network made experiences with these decision makers?
4	What are the decision maker's current attitudes? Are they neutral, friendly, hostile or apathetic?
5	What is the most appropriate way to approach the decision maker?
6	What networks or groups is the decision maker a part of?
7	What programs or services will improve with your research?
8	How will your information benefit the decision maker?

In many cases it is easier and more effective to keep contacts with the people in policy making, who are dealing with the subject on a regular basis at the administrative level (e.g. assistant to MEP – member of EU Parliament), not at the high the decision maker level. These more junior people are the specialists, who prepare the proposals for the decision makers and have more time to deal with specific subjects.

**Barriers to Communication**

Anything that prevents understanding of a message is a barrier to communication. Many physical and psychological barriers exist: cultural background, noise, way of thinking, perception, message, environmental and stress.

Communication Barriers	
Culture, background, and bias	Past experiences change the meaning of the message. The culture, background and bias influence always the behaviour in communicating and interacting with each other. The behaviour is an expression of the values and norms of one society as well as of one's milieu and surrounding.
Noise	Equipment or environmental noise (e.g. phone calls during a meeting) impedes clear communication. The sender and the receiver must both be able to concentrate on the messages being sent to each other.



Communication Barriers	
Language	The main barrier for communication is the use of a different language. It may be worth to start with a policy maker who is from the same nationality. If a person is talking too fast or not understandable in a non-native language it should be pointed friendly out.
Message	Distractions happen when the researcher focuses on the facts rather than the idea. Semantic distractions occur when a word is used differently than be known.
Stress	People do not see things the same way when under stress. What one sees and believes at a given moment is influenced by our psychological frames of references - our beliefs, values, knowledge, experiences and goals.

### Evaluation of Communication

Again we do not want to reinvent the wheel. In 2008 Asibey Consulting has developed a “Communications Evaluation Guide” [17] which outlines the steps for a successful evaluation of the communications. Although the aim of this guide is to evaluate all methods used for communicating (e.g. different activities such as person-to-person engagement, email, reports, and radio, television and web-based campaigns), we transfer the evaluation work sheet to the communication towards policy maker:

**STEP 1. Determine What You Will Evaluate**  
 What are you evaluating? A strategic initiative? A tactical effort? Something else? Be specific.

It is important to define your evaluation basis: for example “How well is our institute/research organisation known at policy level?”



**STEP 2. Define Your Goal**  
 What type of outcome are you pursuing?  
 What is the change your organization is trying to achieve over five to ten years?

Equal important to your basis is the outcome of your evaluation. It will give you the direction for your efforts: for example “We want to establish a database with 20 national and European policy makers related to our research area in the project time.”

**STEP 3. State Your Objective**  
 What is your SMART objective? Run your objective through the SMART test below.  
 [Note: If you have more than one objective, you need to fill out a separate worksheet for each one.]

OBJECTIVE	SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ATTAINABLE	RESULT-FOCUSED	TIME-SPECIFIC

SMART Score (out of 5): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Your SMART score should be at least 4. If your score is 3 or less, go back and refine your objective.

The objectives should be verified according to the SMART test. For example

Objective	S	M	A	R	T
Database with 20 national and European policy makers	Yes	Yes	????	Yes	Yes (project time)

Helpful in measuring the outcome of your approach are performance indicators. Here are some performance indicators for communication towards policy makers listed:

- number of communication activities by types and in total;
- number of contacted policy makers, decision makers; politicians; lobbyists; advisors; mediator organisations
- number of proposals made to policy makers for new, modified actions, policies, legislations;
- number of trainings for policy makers (all types)



Although these are very difficult to measure you may focus more in the content with performance indicators for knowledge transfer:

- number of proposals made versus proposals successfully converted into policy and legislation development and modification;
- number of new, modified elements of policies, paragraphs of legislations, proposed actions implemented;
- number of new, modified policies;
- number of new, modified legislations;
- number of actions implemented by policy makers or through their support and/or public fundings based on the research results;



## Top Ten Tips on Research Communication

1. Check external perceptions of your centre/programme among potential target audiences before you start. This will help you develop a communication strategy that gives you a distinct and credible voice.
2. Begin with a statement of your objectives in communicating the project; don't simply restate the objectives of the project itself. Make them clear, simple and measurable.
3. Be concrete on the principles underpinning your strategy. Some may be self-evident, like using honest, succinct, credible and cost-effective communications. But also think about what you are prepared to do, and not do, as part of your communication strategy.
4. Develop some simple messages and model how these might work in different contexts – a news release, a report, a newspaper article, a website page. Remember that you can be succinct without 'dumbing down'. Make sure your project is branded in line with your communication objectives.
5. Be clear about your target audiences and user groups, and prioritise them according to importance and influence relative to your objectives. Don't just think about the 'usual suspects'.
6. Think about both the actual and preferred channels your target audiences might use and challenge yourself about whether you are planning to use the right ones for maximum impact.
7. Include a full list of all the relevant communications activities, developed into a working project plan with deadlines and responsibilities. Keep it flexible but avoid being vague.
8. Keep it manageable and don't underestimate the time involved in communication. Include key deadlines, milestones and review points.
9. Estimate the time and money involved.
10. Build in some simple evaluation measures at the start so that you'll know if and how you have succeeded in meeting your communication objectives.

Source: "Top Ten Tips", ESRC Societytoday [18]



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## Annex 1: Description of project results for policy makers

Title of the project: \_\_\_\_\_  
Acronym (when applicable): \_\_\_\_\_  
Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_  
Project Duration: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sub title (if necessary): \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Details: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Context and problematic**  
What is the problem which was solved or for which at least progress was achieved having relevance for policy makers? What are the potential areas of development and implementation of policies or formulation and enforcement of legislation, where the results, methods, information can be used by policy makers?

**2. Results and Applications**  
What are the tangible results for the practice of policy makers: data, findings, statements, methods, tools, recommendations, guidelines, project results/solutions? (The reference to the methods/calculations should be kept at the necessary minimum, except in that case if the method itself is the result).  
How can the new results be used in policy making and legislation (brief explanation)?

**3. Novelties, benefits, risks and added value**  
What is new in the results/information/solutions of the project for policy makers compared to the formerly available knowledge / solutions / information?  
What are the additional benefits compared to the former solutions/tools and what are the benefits in general? Are there any risks associated with the application of the new results?

**4. Successful applications, success stories**  
Short reference to successful applications if they exist.

