

# Communicating Biodiversity



**Workshop background document for capacity building in the framework of the Life+ supported project, European Capitals of Biodiversity.**

**Prepared by: IUCN Regional Office for Pan-Europe  
Updated by: Deutsche Umwelthilfe**



**Deutsche Umwelthilfe**



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# 1. Background

Local authorities are pivotal in safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services in **your country**. They have a statutory responsibility, through forward planning and development control, to afford protection to biodiversity. Furthermore, being landowners and land managers, they are able to promote nature as a component of community well being, as an educational resources, and as a magnet for business and tourism. Indeed, the impact of local government on nature conservation is exceptionally powerful. Local authorities can influence central government policy and respond to local communities, promoting and enabling local action. Local authorities are also the only organisations capable of acting locally for nature conservation that are democratically accountable to their own local communities. (Association of Local Government Ecologists 2009)

In the framework of the LIFE+ supported project, *European Capitals of Biodiversity*, this background document has been prepared by IUCN to support a series of capacity building workshops for municipal staff in France, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia and Spain. Local authorities can, and should, play an instrumental role in communicating biodiversity through, *inter alia*, delivering education, training, and business support. This module aims to provide an introduction to effective biodiversity communication. Its precise objectives, expected outcomes, and target audiences are outlined below.

This document was updated with project examples taken from all European Capital of Biodiversity competitions. This update was done By Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH) after the end of all competitions.

## **1.1 Objectives and expected outcomes**

In undertaking the module, Communicating Biodiversity, participants should:

- Understand the main challenges faced in communicating biodiversity;
- Acquire useful tips on how to communicate effectively;
- Gain an understanding of the characteristics of different target audiences and stakeholders;
- Learn to communicate with these audiences using specially tailored messages in a targeted manner;
- Gain an understanding of the intricacies of effectively working with the media including:
  - how to construct press packs and compose eye-catching news releases;
  - how to prepare for, and successfully undergo press interviews;
- Understand the communication potential of Web 2.0 technologies and feel confident to begin using them.

- Recognise key opportunities for communicating biodiversity

## **1.2 Target audiences**

This module is designed to train the following audiences:

- Local and regional decision makers;
- City and regional managers;
- Heads of departments;
- Interested council members;
- Officers and experts of local and regional governments with responsibilities in the field of urban planning, strategic nature protection, environmental management and municipal services; and
- Communication staff.

## **2. How to communicate biodiversity**

### **2.1 Biodiversity – a complex issue**

The term biodiversity is a simple contraction of “biological diversity”. The term is complex, has many interpretations and is often misunderstood. Even scientists argue over the correct definition. However, the most commonly used definition is that provided by the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity:

*"Biological diversity" means the variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.*

To ensure that recipients of your message understand this concept, you can adapt this definition accordingly. Using examples, especially visual aids can help the audience in this respect.

### **2.2 Tips for communicating effectively**

**Make it personal.** Emphasise how biodiversity affects people personally. Convey biodiversity as a tangible concern that contributes to the quality of their lives and crucially the lives of their children. Remind parents that they are role models for their children and so should be setting the right examples.

**Make it ‘me’.** Avoid using cliché associations with green Wellington boots and tree-hugging. Biodiversity should be communicated as an issue of central importance to all people, no matter where they live or work, not just

environmentalists. Recruiting well-known non-environmentalists to endorse and promote your message is a great way to catch the attention of some hard-to-reach audiences.

**Make it local.** Biodiversity isn't just a picture on a postcard from the Serengeti, or a nature documentary about the Amazon Basin. Prized assets of local biodiversity, such as the village park, residential gardens or a locally iconic species, can induce much stronger connections with local people.

**Make it easy.** Emphasise in your communications that small and simple actions can make a big difference in the long run.

**Make it immediate.** To better mobilise people, convey an urgency to act now rather than later e.g. the need to save a disappearing local beauty spot or the habitat of a locally endangered species.

(SNH *et al.* 2009)

### **2.2.1 Create a personal link**

Effective biodiversity communication should engage with people and encourage them to enjoy and protect the biodiversity that is all around them and make the most of their natural world. It should outline the steps, both large and small, that people can take in order to enhance their biodiversity and maximise its long-term benefits. Your communications should also induce a deeper sense of shared responsibility and ownership of biodiversity, thereby persuading people to protect it.

It is highly effective to communicate the concept of biodiversity by appealing to emotions. Helping people to undergo poignant and personal experiences in nature can invoke in them a sense of compassion for biodiversity.

Using individual species to tackle complex biodiversity issues can be an effective 'hook', but you have to be selective, ensuring it is a species that people can relate to. Nationally or regionally emblematic species will appeal to people's pride. When people are 'hooked' you can then begin to communicate about other less familiar species and habitats. For local campaigns try concentrating on a species that is found in the local area and will be recognised by the community.

Places such as public gardens, zoos, natural history museums and environmental societies, provide important opportunities for personal experiences and should be utilised wherever possible. Children are particularly receptive to their surroundings and experience long periods of rapid learning. Therefore opportunities for children to play in nature should be promoted, so that they start developing an awareness, understanding and compassion for biodiversity early in life.

## 2.2.2 Clarity and consistency – speaking with one voice

Sending clear and consistent messages is paramount to successful communication. Avoid taking unnecessary u-turns, backtracking, or altering your stance significantly as doing so will undermine the credibility of your message. Join forces with other organisations that are voicing similar messages. The collective effort of you and others heralding the same resounding messages will strengthen your voice, helping to ensure that it is heard and understood.

## 2.2.3 Adding weight to your messages

Including 'big picture' messages in all communications, no matter how local the issue at hand may be, adds weight to your messages by placing them in a broader context. The following are examples of this communication technique:

*Your country's biodiversity is unique, remarkable and precious but under threat.*

*Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the protection of your country's biodiversity to ensure that future generations can enjoy its variety and richness and that it continues to contribute to our quality of life.*

*Your country's rich biodiversity is in decline and certain species and habitats are in danger of disappearing.*

*Protecting our country's biodiversity is everyone's responsibility.*

*All the creatures we share the Earth with are important in some way, however unprepossessing or insignificant they may appear. They and we are all part of the web of life.*

Some municipalities may harbour nationally or even internationally important species and habitats that require special protection. Invoking the wider importance of such natural assets can emphasise the responsibility that municipal residents and administrators bear in affording that protection. For example:

*Species X, was once widespread throughout Europe, is now restricted to just a few remnant habitat patches. Remarkably, this charismatic species is found in our very own municipality and we therefore bear a special international responsibility to protect it from further decline.*

### 3. Targeting your messages

Assess the profile of your target audience. Are there any notable leverage points with which to change their behaviour? Is there potential for partnerships? Are there certain people who could help by reinforcing your messages and accessing otherwise unreachable groups? What messages would work best for which groups?

Your messages should be tailored to suit the profile of the target audience. It can be highly effective to engage with target audiences at an early stage and to formulate messages together, built upon trust and consensus. Such stakeholder participation can greatly improve the acceptance and endorsement of your messages.

#### 3.1 General Public

Based on attitudes towards biodiversity, there exist three broad categories of general public. Each group has different characteristics and different levels of awareness, understanding and interest. As such, slightly different messages will work best for each group:

- Carers and doers
  - These people are already involved in enjoying, enhancing and protecting biodiversity. However, they may still be willing to do and learn more, and play a vital role in influencing others.
  - These people require clear messages that sustain and deepen their existing involvement. Messages should acknowledge the important contribution this group has already made perhaps illustrated through statistics and case studies.
- Carers and non-doers
  - This is the largest target group and consists of people who care about biodiversity but aren't actively involved in enhancing or protecting it. These are persuadable people who, in response to the right messages, can be inspired to take action.
  - A key message to communicate to this group is that action on their part is worthwhile and that small actions do amount to big differences.
- Non-carers and non-doers
  - This is the trickiest group to influence as they have a relatively ambivalent attitude towards biodiversity issues.
  - The key here is to position biodiversity, particularly in a local context, as something relevant and tangible to their everyday lives.

General messages that can be sent out to all audience segments include:

- *We are all part of **this country's** magnificent diversity of life – the birds, mammals, invertebrates, plants, microbes and fungi are everywhere around us and are ours to treasure. It is fragile and shrinking but we can all help to protect it.*
- *We all share the responsibility to protect our biodiversity to ensure that future generations can also enjoy its variety and richness and safeguard the contributions of biodiversity to our lives.*
- *Even small steps can make a big difference, and there are many ways that you can contribute by making small changes to your daily routine and helping within your local community.*
- *Find out more about what you can do to help **your country's** unique biodiversity – the results are valuable, rewarding and long-lasting.*

How to reach them?

- Local press and radio to promote events;
- Build partnerships with local newspapers and radio stations;
- Use community websites with forums, news sections and newsletters;
- Trigger word-of-mouth campaigns;
- Display and disseminate posters and leaflets in supermarkets, shopping centres, health centres, community centres, youth clubs, town halls, the post office, local newsagents etc.;
- Run articles in council publications;
- Link visitor sites and attractions to biodiversity;
- Facilitate partnerships between community organisations and environmental groups and charities;
- Have a bank of case studies readily available for your communications.

**Box 1. The Adopt-a-Stream Programme, Freiburg, Germany**

This project involved over 2000 “stewards” from the city of Freiburg and surrounding area. The stewards aim to educate the general public about the region’s waterways and to promote the conservation and quality of the water. In addition, the steward help to manage the waterways and contribute to the ecologically sound resolution of any disputes over water use. In 2007 the stewards received the Baden-Württemberg award for nature conservation and organized a national conference on waterways. The programme was initiated by the city of Freiburg which continues to provide support and coordinate activities. The former Mayor of Freiburg endorsed the programme whilst local energy, transport and radio companies have sponsored it. The programme is open to all groups and collaborates with local schools to educate young children about freshwater ecology and environmental stewardship, often manifested in hands-on stream cleaning and river bank planting activities.

For further information on this project, visit: [www.bachpaten-freiburg.de](http://www.bachpaten-freiburg.de)

**Box 2. Children teach the adults, Zábiedovo, Slovakia**

Best practice from the European Capitals of Biodiversity competitions

In spring 2007, a programme was started to increase public participation in the local waste separation programme of Zábiedovo. Unusual measures were taken: a children's eco-police was established and equipped with cameras, aiming to track the waste sorting in individual households, quality of sorted waste and record separated components of waste and its quantity. The most responsible households in waste sorting were publicly awarded. The young educated the adults, which proved effective: the head of the municipality managed to increase the number of households separating waste from 33% to more than 77% in the first year. Because of the lasting interest of children to work in the Children's eco-police and positive feedback from the citizens, the municipality of Zábiedovo has been continuing this project until today.

For further information on Zábiedovo, visit: [www.zabiedovo.eu](http://www.zabiedovo.eu)

**Box 3. Community Bird Survey, Ferintosh, Scotland**

This project was initiated and led by the Ferintosh Community Council, supported by the Moray Firth Partnership. The project aimed to: collate valuable information on local birdlife; to raise the community's awareness and knowledge of local wildlife; to encourage people of all ages to enjoy the outdoors; and to instil and strengthen community cohesion and cooperation. The project targeted the general public, especially families and children.

Communications were channelled through a variety of mediums including a schools pack, community events and a story book.

The Ferintosh Council covers an area of nearly 40 square kilometres of varied landscape including several settlements and some biodiversity-rich woodland areas. A steering group which included a representative from RSPB was created and funding was obtained from Scottish Natural Heritage, Leader+ and the Highland Council.

Recording sheets were disseminated to over forty local volunteers ranging from ages 8 to 86. An IT training workshop was offered to participants so that all could transfer their data into spreadsheet format. The steering group oversaw a publicity programme that advertised the project to the wider community. Schools were provided with a pack of supporting materials and a series of presentations was delivered by experts in the field. Community events were organized including guided walks at dawn, bird ringing demonstrations, and bird box and bird table building workshops. Many children participated in the workshops. These events generated much interest and local media coverage. Finally, a small book outlining the project and the results of the survey was launched at a public event. The cover for the book was designed by a local primary school child and selected through a competition.

The project was deemed to meet its objectives by strengthening community cohesion and cooperation. Furthermore the project helped to raise awareness and knowledge of local birdlife, and indeed, of other wildlife, particularly amongst children. Some participants commented that the project had also motivated people to spend more time outdoors thus conferring health benefits too. (SNH *et al.* 2009)

For further information on this project, contact the Ferintosh Community Council at: [ferintoshcc@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ferintoshcc@tiscali.co.uk)

### 3.2 Young People

The categorisation of “young people” is rather crude, as in reality this group represents a diversity of aesthetic tastes and opinions that are strongly related to age and gender. Nevertheless, all young people are important communication targets. By engaging with them today it is hoped that the compassion for biodiversity will be inherited by the next generation and so on. Young people must be encouraged to develop an interest in the outdoors and to learn outside the classroom. The following messages may be directed at young people:

- *We are all part of **this country's** magnificent diversity of life – the birds, mammals, invertebrates, plants, microbes and fungi are everywhere around us and are ours to treasure. It is fragile and shrinking but we can all help to protect it.*
- *Biodiversity enhances many areas of our lives and helps us to live healthily.*
- *Animals and plants are all around us and the outdoors offer lots of things to enjoy, as well as the opportunity to learn more about the country we live in.*
- *Doing just one simple thing can help nature survive and grow: we can all make a difference!*

How to reach them?

To communicate with young people alternative avenues may have to be utilised:

- If feasible, try advertising, sponsorship or endorsement opportunities in cartoons, children’s television, TV soaps, games, music, magazines (children’s, teenage, fashion, music, computer games);
- A local celebrity endorsement;
- Utilise web-based communication mediums like Bebo, Myspace, Facebook, emails, YouTube etc;
- Host a local event like a fun day at the local park to find different species and habitats and make this a day for the whole family with games, competitions, displays and demonstrations;
- Suggest reciprocal links between websites;
- Work with youth organisations, especially on outdoor trips to give them information on activities helping to conserve and enjoy **your country's** biodiversity;
- Get involved in summer festivals which are traditionally held in rural spaces by distributing information on local species and habitats, and outlining the steps people can take during the festival to ensure that they don’t damage biodiversity.
- Involve artists and musicians in communicating messages;

- Engage with local schools and press in launching competitions to develop biodiversity campaign slogans and posters;
- Identify young biodiversity ‘ambassadors’ who may trigger word-of-mouth marketing campaigns.
- Foster partnerships with environmental NGOs, local schools and parents’ associations to organise some of the aforementioned events.

#### **Box 4. Education project in Sucha nad Parnou, Slovakia**

Sucha nad Parnou is a municipality in the Trnava Region of Slovakia. This project targeted the general public, particularly school children and teachers, and aimed: to strengthen cooperation between stakeholders; to enrich the educational process through direct involvement with nature; to create new didactic tools; and to contribute to the personal development of the target groups. The project established a visitors’ eco-centre, an outdoor eco-laboratory and a nature trail. Posters, a biodiversity manual, and leaflets were also produced.

A partnership was forged between a number of national and local organisations. The Slovak Academy of Science elaborated the concept of an educational eco-laboratory and new forms of ‘hands-on’ environmental education. Villagers contributed to the building of the eco-centre whilst the Hunter’s association created the educational nature trail complete with signposts and information boards. The local church helped to raise awareness of the project.

The three components of the project are as follows:

- An **eco-centre** comprising an attractive information and advice centre with a permanent exhibition, information brochures and documentaries about the area. The eco-centre is situated at the start of the nature trail.
- An **eco-laboratory** comprising an outdoor educational plot to facilitate the study of nature. It demonstrates how characteristics of biodiversity such as species composition vary in relation to environmental variables. The eco-laboratory includes a miniature botanical garden and instruments to measure environmental components such as soil and water pollution.
- A **nature trail** that traverses through the most interesting sites of the village. On route, information boards describe the uniqueness of the flora and fauna, and present cultural and historical anecdotes. Additionally, some negative anthropogenic impacts on the local environment are highlighted and explained.

Collectively, these three components of the project facilitate the observation and analysis of natural phenomena and the impacts of human activities on biodiversity *in situ*. The facility has proved to be very popular for school excursions and attracted visitors from far a field. The project has provided local people with superb information on their local environment helping to enrich their experiences in nature. Additionally the project has established a number of related partnerships between local stakeholders, thereby augmenting community cohesion. (ALTER-Net 2010)

For more information visit: [http://www.alter-net.info/POOLED/ARTICLES/BF\\_DOCART/VIEW.ASP?Q=BF\\_DOCART\\_311686](http://www.alter-net.info/POOLED/ARTICLES/BF_DOCART/VIEW.ASP?Q=BF_DOCART_311686)

#### **Box 5. Forest school, Mórahalom, Hungary**

Best practice from the European Capitals of Biodiversity competitions

The Móra Ferenc General Cultural Centre in Mórahalom operates a Forest School („Zöld Közösségi Ház és Erdei Iskola”). The principle objective is to shape the attitudes of future generations towards a sustainable lifestyle. There are several nature walks where a lot of seasonal or rarely observable natural phenomena can be experienced: Field demonstration equipment, field laboratory equipment, field monitoring and measuring instruments are all available for a fun nature experience.

The forest school buildings provide interactive methods to teach more complex, systematic knowledge on the forest ecosystem: interactive presentation tools and games, and self-teaching methods, addressing both visual and tactile senses, deepen the knowledge. Examples for the educational facilities are a painted wall where bird song starts upon pressing the right buttons, a large wooden puzzle of 4m<sup>2</sup>, or a blind-folded touch-and-feel experience.

For further information on Mórahalom, visit: [www.morahalom.hu](http://www.morahalom.hu)

### **3.3 Decision-makers**

Decision-makers include policy-makers, mayors, local planning authorities, farmers and landowners. They make decisions and offer advice which affect biodiversity. The following messages may be directed at decision-makers:

- *Our diverse range of species and habitats contribute to the economic prosperity, health and well-being of people in **your country**.*
- *The survival of **your country's** natural environment is affected by the actions and decisions of individuals and organisations.*
- *Everyone has a responsibility to consider the impact that their decisions have on our wildlife and plant-life and to take positive steps to ensure the protection and growth of biodiversity in your country.*

How to reach them?

One size does not fit all, as this target group constitutes a wide range of people and organisations that in some way affect biodiversity, but here are some general suggestions:

- Reach your target audience through advisory and support groups that they trust e.g. reach landowners through local landowners' associations.
- Where there are already communication channels, use them to your benefit rather than spending time creating new ones.
- Businesses cover a broad spectrum so you need to have a clear objective. What will catch their attention? Ensure that messages are directly linked to the activities and behaviour of the businesses being targeted.

- Contact trade and business governing bodies and use their communication channels to reach their members. Complement this communication with features in relevant local business publications.
- Work with policy-makers and professional staff. Keep up-to-date with each other's planned communications. Build awareness of your campaign through your own internal communications and channels at other relevant public bodies, local authorities etc.
- Ask your local councillor, Mayor, or even your regional MP to endorse your message. Contact them clearly stating your aims and objectives and why their support will help your activity and the local community.

(SNH *et al.* 2009)

**Box 6. Environmental development guide, Montpellier, French Capital of Biodiversity 2011**

Best practice from the European Capitals of Biodiversity competitions

Since 2008, Montpellier has been working on the creation of a guide meant to improve urbanism through a development referential. It is a shared referential designed to take into account and continuously develop the environmental and social aspects of urban actions. Its aim is to evaluate the durability of any urban project in order for the city to try and choose the less impacting option, as far as environment is concerned. This initiative results from the regulatory impact surveys which take into account the global environmental context of the project. This referential tool has several purposes: improve decision making and evaluate the ecological impact of any urban project throughout the its implementation.

The guide is composed of three chapters, corresponding to the three steps of any urban action (programming, developing and building), and defines 9 priority actions and 30 indicators. It focuses especially on the green and blue infrastructures, as well as on preservation of biodiversity in projects. The chosen criteria are based upon more virtuous development concepts, and help to improve builders and developers' practices. Among the criteria chosen to evaluate the urban actions are: soil sealing ratio, infrastructures' layout, urban areas dedicated to natural spaces, surface of preserved canopy, water consumption and preservation ratios. Thus by evaluating projects' impacts before their realization, the guide helps appraising and respecting natural spaces and biodiversity inside the city. It will also enable architects and builders to take biodiversity into account, and will improve the master plan for green network which started in 2007. This document will also be added to the next Local Urban Plan so as to increase its impact.

A brochure has been created to sensitize and inform the public on the environmental impact of urban developments

### **Box 7. Postcard Campaign, Denmark**

In 2007, the Danish Environment Minister sent 'Happy New Year' picture postcards featuring threatened species such as the natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*), the small pasque flower (*Pulsatilla pratensis*) and the red kite (*Milvus milvus*), to the heads of every Danish municipality as well as local media groups. Simultaneously, every municipality was called upon to afford increased protection to a locally threatened species. The postcards were developed in collaboration with various environmental organisations with a view to reminding Denmark's newly expanded municipalities of their obligations to conserve and promote biodiversity, especially threatened species. The postcard campaign received strong media coverage and stimulated tangible improvements in both the public's and the decision-makers' awareness of local biodiversity. In several instances this heightened awareness was directly manifested through concrete conservation actions. The campaign was so successful that other countries including Norway and Scotland soon copied the idea. (Norden 2010)

Although initiated at the national level, the concept could be easily implemented at the regional or local level too. Local wildlife photographers and artists could be invited to submit their impressions of local wildlife. The best images could be selected through a competition process which in itself would raise awareness. The resultant postcards could be sent out to local representatives like church leaders and sports club presidents, and even disseminated amongst the general public.

For more information on the Danish postcard campaign, visit:

<http://www.environment.fi/download.asp?contentid=114803&lan=en>

### **Box 8. The example of Limburg, Belgium: 44 municipalities for 44 local species**

In the Province of Limburg, Belgium, each of the 44 municipalities adopted in 2008 a local species within the framework of a provincial project. The aim of this project is to encourage municipalities to take responsibility for their biodiversity. Actions can be 'field actions', like digging pools or planting hedges or educational, focused on raising the awareness of the public. Examples of these actions are the organisation of educational walks, naming a new street to the adopted species, commissioning a sculpture of the species by a local artists, etc. The Council of each municipality approved in 2008 an action plan and allocated a budget to this initiative. The regional authorities are providing support to the municipalities at the technical level (e.g. preparation of guidelines and help in the selection of species and actions). This initiative is matched by a communication campaign focused on the 44 selected local species. The public has responded very positively to this approach and is actively engaging with the different activities because they see the importance of working for their local biodiversity (IUCN, 2008).

### **3.3.1 Communicating to the private sector**

The private sector represents an exceptionally powerful group with enormous lobbying power and an equally large potential to achieve tangible benefits for nature. Often such benefits can be brought about through simple changes in business practices that cost little or nothing to implement. Businesses can make the following contributions:

- Reducing waste levels;
- Increasing recycling;
- Managing emissions to land, water and air;
- Becoming a corporate member of a conservation organisation;
- Providing financial support to biodiversity related projects;
- Integrating biodiversity protection into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes.

There are frequent occasions when the above measures are in fact economically profitable. Many of these cases are being collated in a major international study, The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) as detailed below in Section 9.

Businesses will readily act if those actions accrue economic gain. The ecosystem services approach entails the valorisation of the crucial services that nature renders to humans and their businesses. Businesses depend on biodiversity in a multitude of ways. Ecotourism companies which use nature and the environment as marketing tools to attract visitors constitute an obvious example. Peaceful green parks in urban areas can help to attract high-quality professionals and increase their job satisfaction and productivity (Relf 2009). Greening business districts can improve customers' perceptions of the businesses within those districts (Project Evergreen 2009). Biodiversity measures may also boost retail activity. Indeed, retail areas with flowers and greenery are considered to be more enticing to shoppers (Hauer 2006). Green spaces have also been shown to bolster adjacent property prices (Tirväinen 1997; 2000). Forested areas can confer economic benefits by thwarting storm runoff, thereby reducing the costs of both flood damage and flood defences. Vegetation can also reduce air conditioning costs by regulating temperatures, keeping buildings warmer in winter and cooler in summer.

So in summary, by protecting and enhancing biodiversity, businesses can take advantage of profitable opportunities such as: enhancing their image and marketing prowess; procuring and safeguarding ecosystem services vital for their business operations; and improving their readiness for impending environmental regulations. In communicating with the private sector, be sure to emphasise the existence of these opportunities and the economic rationale that supports them.

## **4. Working with the media**

### ***4.1 Understanding the media***

The media comprises newspapers, magazines, television channels, radio stations, community newsletters, online newspapers and e-magazines. Maintaining a good relationship with the local media will improve your communications.

The media must entertain its readers, listeners and viewers in order to make money through direct sales and selling advertising space. It is important to understand that the media will generally only publish content that people will be interested in.

#### **4.1.1 Media relations**

Media relations concern the promotion of key messages about your cause or organisation through editorial coverage in the media. Raising the media's awareness of biodiversity will in turn raise the awareness of your target audience. The right media attention can create a very positive profile of your organisation. Indeed, editorial coverage tends to be believed more than advertising, so good coverage can communicate your messages more effectively. Editorial coverage can also be more targeted than other means of communication, and provides additional scope to expand on topics with more in-depth information.

#### **4.1.2 Newsworthiness**

Use the following criteria to gauge the newsworthiness of your story.

- Happening now;
- Different, unusual, unique;
- Controversial, confidential;
- Relevant to many people;
- Extreme – very sad, very happy etc;
- Involving a conflict.

**Box 9. Environmental film festival Greenscreen, Eckernförde, Germany**

Best practice from the European Capitals of Biodiversity competitions

Every year in September the Green Screen© festival turns the small town of Eckernförde into a metropolis for nature filmmaking. For six days local cinemas and event centres present international nature films. The movie screenings are accompanied by a wide range of events with various target groups, such as lectures, discussions, competitions and workshops for the adults, film camps for young people, or special screenings for schools.

The festival allows an exceptional glance at the fascinating diversity of nature worldwide, and is a great opportunity for discussions with producers and experts. In 2010 alone, some 80 movies, classic nature films and thematic short movies were screened. Green Screen© has developed into a forum for the international nature film industry, which brings together film makers, TV producers and the audience. Wildlife and nature film makers appreciate the festival for the extraordinary opportunity to interact directly with the audience. As such, Green Screen© has been a great success from the start: 4,000 people of all ages visited the first festival in 2007. By 2010, the number had risen to 10,000. Some 120 film makers from 30 countries participated in recent years.

<http://www.greenscreen-festival.de>

## **4.2 Publishing your story**

### **4.2.1 Composing a press release**

A press release should include page numbers and the date. Try to use a snappy eye-catching headline that sums up your message. The headline should be bold, creative and original, stimulating curiosity in the reader.

The introductory paragraph should attract the readers' attention and summarise the story. Thereafter, the text should expand upon the introduction without losing sight of the key messages. Priorities facts starting with the most important and include details of any partners or sponsors as the nature of their involvement. Try to use only concise and simple language as opposed to long sentences and confusing jargon. Include quotes from key persons where applicable.

Ensure that you include your contact details so that the journalists can obtain more information should they require it. Also provide notes to editors comprising any information that is not entirely relevant within the main section but may be utilised as background information if needed.

Finally, keep it short, ideally no more than a page.

### **4.2.2 Your approach**

Timing is of the essence when working with the media. Find out what else is happening in the local media and, without precluding yourself from potentially synergistic partnerships with other event organisers, try to avoid being overshadowed by larger local events. Target your stories for uneventful news days and months. These are specifically: Mondays, the holiday season, and the Christmas and New Year periods. If necessary, apply an embargo whereby stories, describing events well in the future, are supplied to journalists with strict locks placed on them until a specified date. This gives the journalists time to prepare the stories.

Target your story by developing a media contact list and identifying those journalists or newspapers, who would be most interested in your story. Look for regular special sections or supplements that are relevant for your story and target them.

Ensure that you are aware of the local press deadlines by phoning and asking. Most journalists prefer emails. Try to send the news release within the body of an email, rather than as an attachment. This way is more eye-catching. Tailor how you submit information to different journalists' requirements. Although most prefer email, some may prefer otherwise so try to ascertain the best method on an individual basis.

### **4.2.3 Follow up and monitoring coverage**

Journalists receive many messages each day, so after issuing a news release, you should follow-up with a phone-call to remind them. Ensure that you are calling at a convenient time and make your point quickly and calmly. You should verbally sell the idea, and be able to supply the journalist with additional information, more photographs or an interview opportunity if requested. If the journalist requests additional information, send it out as soon as possible.

During your follow-up call, ask when they are planning to run the story. This allows you to monitor the coverage and may help to boost morale amongst your colleagues. Successful media coverage also motivates other organisations to take action and generate their own local media coverage.

## ***4.3 Building successful press relationships***

Building a successful relationship with the press will go a long way towards getting your message heard. Be cordial, trustworthy, and sincere to journalists, providing them with consistently interesting and well-written press releases and you will soon develop such good relations.

Understand the media you are targeting and get a feel for their agenda and audience by reading the press regularly and noting the names of any journalists who specialise in biodiversity or related fields. Whenever you have a good story, contact these journalists and offer to meet them face to face at conferences or bilaterally. If they accept, be sure to go fully prepared.

In smaller municipalities and rural regions, journalists working for local newspapers may have only limited knowledge of, or interest in, biodiversity. It usually takes time to convince these journalists of the importance of biodiversity, but this task can be streamlined by providing them with general background information and preparing simple answers to any predictable questions that they may have. If possible provide information that links biodiversity to the topics that the journalist is more interested in (e.g. using TEEB to illustrate the relationship between biodiversity and economic prosperity).

Inform journalists of your current activities and future plans. Remember that they must fill their pages just as much as you must promote your message. Never presume that a conversation with a journalist is 'off the record' and don't say anything that you would regret seeing in print.

Many journalists work late in the evenings and over weekends, so a member of your organisation should be on call, readily prepared with the contact details of colleagues, in case the journalist needs additional information.

Think widely, even beyond the conventional media avenues, as there are many alternative media communication channels e.g. business pages; lifestyle pages; sports pages; letters to editors (responding to a recent article); local radio phone-ins etc.

(SNH *et al.* 2009)

#### **4.4 Construct a press pack**

You can save journalists much time by providing them with all the information that they need to write a story in a single package. Such packs are particularly useful when holding press conferences and should contain the following:

- A press release;
- Relevant statistics;
- Quotes/comments from participants in the announcement;
- Background documents, e.g. speaker biographies;
- Case studies;
- Photographs and images;
- Contact details so any queries can be swiftly dealt with.

## **4.5 Managing press interviews**

Taking part in an interview can help to inform the public about your message. It can help to promote understanding and create trust among your community and others in the field. Press interviews can also raise awareness of the positive steps that you and your organisation are taking. Concentrate on your core messages and consider what you would like the readers to read and listeners to listen to.

4.5.1 Interview preparation  
Preparation is key. Come prepared with facts and figures and rehearse your messages and answers to likely questions. Set your own agenda for the interview and try to stick to it.

- Decide on your “headline”;
- Identify a maximum of three core messages;
- Think of examples and anecdotes that are short and relevant, ensuring that you know all the details.
- Remember to keep it simple and don’t be sidetracked into unfamiliar territory.
- Prior to the interview ask for a list of the questions so that you can prepare;
- Prepare responses to the most difficult and challenging questions that may arise.

### **4.5.2 The interview**

This is not an informal conversation, but at the same time, it’s unlikely to be heavily scrutinising, so try to relax. If you have nothing to say on the subject or it’s not your area of expertise, it’s probably best not to take part in an interview.

Key points to remember are:

- Get your message across;
- Say your thing and add no more;
- Don’t get trapped in the journalist’s agenda;
- Do not read off cue cards, it makes you look unprofessional and unprepared;
- Never say ‘no comment’ as it sounds evasive;
- Always try and turn a situation around into a positive message;
- Maintain control; and
- Don’t use jargon or acronyms if you want to avoid confusing people.

If you are asked a question that strays off the boil or into unfamiliar territory, try taking the following course of action:

1. Acknowledge the question;
2. Bridge the conversation back to what you want to communicate;
3. Communicate your message.

### **4.5.3 Unplanned interviews**

On occasions, you may be asked for an interview without time to prepare. If a journalist calls and asks for your thoughts on a topic, we suggest the following course of action.

1. Acknowledge that you are happy to comment;
2. Determine exactly what they want you to comment on;
3. Ask to call them back shortly – remembering the deadline;
4. Use this time to gather your thoughts and check relevant facts;
5. Note down any key points and have them to hand when you return the call;
6. When being interviewed, remember the advice given so far in this module.  
(SNH *et al.* 2009)

## **5. Using the latest technologies: Web 2.0**

### **5.1. What is Web 2.0?**

Web 2.0 refers to a new generation of web applications that facilitate information exchange, dialogue and interaction in simple, user-friendly ways. Web 2.0 technologies include blogging tools, messaging services, social networking sites, and content sharing services. They are becoming increasingly numerous and popular, and include, *inter alia*, Twitter, Flickr, Youtube, Vimeo, Facebook, Google Wave, and Delicious. To broadcast messages to your desired target groups you must use the right sites. But which medium is right for you?

### **5.2 How to use Web 2.0 technologies**

A defining characteristic of Web 2.0 is user-friendliness. As such, all of the aforementioned sites provide their own step-by-step user instructions. Web 2.0 technologies are designed to be accessible for all.

### **5.3 Finding the right medium**

Video sites can be used to convey strong messages, in utilising both visual and audible mechanisms. However, it is important to find a suitable channel and the task of creating a video may be rather laborious relative to other Web 2.0 communication options.

Blogs are a great way to communicate with your public, and receive feedback from them. Communication should be two-way and so there should always be an option for people to comment, and you should be sure reply to some of those comments.

Twitter has a rapidly increasing number of users and works like a large open version of a messenger programme. You can post interesting links, messages, advice, ideas, and topical issues to receive feedback and trigger discussions. Each post is limited to 140 characters so brevity is crucial when using Twitter.

Social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace are effective ways to reach out and share content, including videos, photos, links and news. Users may become friends or fans of other users or groups of users. Feedback may be posted on a wall for all to see, or sent as a private message. (Guardian 2010)

Examples of Web 2.0 applications that are communicating biodiversity include:

<http://twitter.com/WWF>

<http://www.facebook.com/UNBiodiversity>

<http://www.facebook.com/fundacionbiodiversidad>

### **5.4 Pitfalls to avoid**

The aforementioned Web 2.0 tools can slash your marketing expenditure to a fraction and facilitate useful feedback and discussions. However, there are some pitfalls to avoid.

A common mistake on Facebook and Twitter is to be overly self-interested, only posting out your own links and not responding to the comments of others. Remember that communication is a two-way process.

Other pitfalls include exaggeration and fakery. Internet users are becoming increasingly savvy and will most likely be irritated by such behaviour.

Web 2.0 doesn't take long to get used to, and neither does it take long to benefit from, provided that skill, patience and even bravery are employed. (Guardian 2010)

**Box 10. Web-based application for invasive species control, Gijón, Spain**

Example from the European Capitals of Biodiversity competitions

Through the Atlántico Botanical Garden, Gijón City Council has set up an interactive web-based platform for mapping invasive plants in Spain. The information is updated thanks to the participation of citizens who upload the exact locations of invasive species they observe in their immediate surroundings. The initiative aims to increase society's knowledge of invasive plants, how to identify them, why they are a threat to our ecosystems and why it is necessary to halt their spreading.

The city council has succeeded in dealing with this topic from an innovative standpoint, by setting up digital tools and applications to complement the traditional methods of dissemination.

For further information, visit: [www.botanicoatlantico.org](http://www.botanicoatlantico.org)

## **6. Opportunities for communication activities**

### ***6.1 International Biodiversity Day***

The United Nations proclaimed May 22 the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. When first created by the Second Committee of the UN General Assembly in late 1993, 29 December (the date of entry into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity), was designated The International Day for Biological Diversity. In December 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted 22 May as IDB, to commemorate the adoption of the text of the Convention on 22 May 1992 by the Nairobi Final Act of the Conference for the Adoption of the Agreed Text of the Convention on Biological Diversity. This was partly done because it was difficult for many countries to plan and carry out suitable celebrations for the date of 29 December, given the number of holidays that coincide around that time of year.

Each year a theme is selected for the celebration, in 2009 the celebration revolved around Invasive Alien Species, the theme selected for the year 2010 is Biodiversity for Development and for 2011 the IDB will focus on Biodiversity and Forests. For more information on the IDB, please visit the official website of the Convention on Biological Diversity <http://www.cbd.int/idb/> .

The IDB provides a great opportunity to promote biodiversity because in marking this date your efforts will be well-accompanied by strong media coverage of

biodiversity. On such occasions, there are usually ample opportunities to create communication synergies with other organisations that are also celebrating with events.

## **6.2 United Nations Decade on Biodiversity**



**Figure 1.** Official logo of the Decade on Biodiversity.

The UN declared 2011 to 2020 the International Decade on Biodiversity. The Decade on Biodiversity serves to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi targets as agreed in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010.

The goal of the decade on biodiversity is to mainstream biodiversity at different levels and to halt and eventually reverse the loss of biodiversity of the planet. Throughout the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, governments are encouraged to develop, implement and communicate the results of national strategies for implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. The Decade on Biodiversity is coordinated by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

### **The Aichi Targets are by 2010 to:**

- Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society;
- Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use;
- Improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity;
- Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services; and
- Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building

The official website of the IYB hosted by the CBD Secretariat: <http://www.cbd.int/2011-2020/>

**Partners please add national resources**

## 7. Sharing Experience

Local case studies - National Partners please add any relevant case studies from your home countries. This may be expanded into an interactive session in which participants can share their experiences and perspectives with one another.

## 8. A note of caution: Greenwash

To greenwash is to make an environmental claim which is unsubstantiated or irrelevant. It is growing alarmingly and it is severely damaging the public confidence in green products and initiatives. It is estimated that only approximately 10% of the public currently trusts green information from business or government. Please find below some useful suggestions to identify possible greenwashing:

1. Fluffy language (words or terms with no clear meaning)
2. Green products versus dirty company (e.g. efficient light bulb made in a factory which pollutes the environment)
3. Suggestive pictures
4. Irrelevant claims (e.g. emphasise one green action while everything else is not)
5. Best in class (declaring something is better than the rest when the rest is terrible)
6. Just not credible (greening a dangerous product or initiative does not make it safe)
7. Gobbledygook (use of obscure jargon)
8. Imaginary friends (a label that looks like a third party endorsement but it is not)
9. No proof (no evidence available)
10. Lying (fabricated data or claims) (Futerra 2009)

Local governments are often directly promoting green initiatives or working in cooperation with companies to do so. They should therefore make sure that their own initiatives are genuinely green and the companies they work with are reliable and trustworthy. For example, a local government joining a campaign for the protection of biodiversity which is actively lobbying against, for example, the Habitats Directive of the European Commission can hardly be accredited with green credentials. A communication effort associated with any greenwash element will lose all its impact and discredit the organiser. It is worth noticing that very few communication and advertising agencies have trained staff who can distinguish greenwash from real green initiatives.

## 9. Useful resources

### 9.1 Facts and Figures

Your communications will be more effective if they are backed up with credible statistics and case studies. Using up-to-date facts and figures on biodiversity will make your communications more informative and convincing. For example, some snappy statistics incorporated into a news release can reinforce the arguments you are making on the importance of biodiversity.

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), is a major international study that aims to highlight the value of the global economic benefits of biodiversity and the growing costs of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. The study draws together expertise from the fields of science, economics and policy to enable practical actions moving forward. Part of the study, namely, TEEB D2, is being tailor made specifically for regional and local policy-makers. TEEB D2, due to be unveiled in autumn 2010, will provide ample case studies and data in support of the economic argument to protect biodiversity at the local level. For more information visit: [www.teebweb.org](http://www.teebweb.org).

We recommend that, when available, you use local statistics to increase the relevance of your communications to local people. These local statistics should be linked to the bigger issues in the wider environment, stressing the role that your municipality must play in the collective effort to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

For some facts and figures on biodiversity, try using the following resources:

*Global facts and figures:*

Global Biodiversity Outlook 2: <http://www.cbd.int/gbo2>

Global Biodiversity Outlook 3: <http://www.cbd.int/gbo3>

IUCN Red List: <http://www.iucnredlist.org>

*National facts and figures:*

(National Partners please add relevant sources)

e.g. [www.\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*.fr](http://www.*****.fr)

[www.\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*.eu](http://www.*****.eu) etc.

## 9.2 Pictures

In the correct context, an apt image can convey powerful messages that invoke compassion for nature and inspire action. We suggest that generally you should try to use local photographs wherever possible, as this increases the relevance of your messages to local people.

However, if you are lacking such resources, we recommend exploring the following websites for excellent images taken by professional photographers.

(National partners, please add national photography websites here):

Landscape Photo: <http://www.landscape-photo.net/index.php?cat=6>

Natur Portrait: <http://www.natur-portrait.de/>

Wetter Foto: <http://www.wetter-foto.de/>

## 9.3 Definitions

The European Environment Agency has developed a comprehensive glossary on biodiversity-related terminology, available at:

<http://glossary.eea.europa.eu/EEAGlossary/A>

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