

Communication strategy for the Arctic Council

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ARCTIC COUNCIL

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Communication Strategy for the Arctic Council

1. Function of the communication strategy

The communication strategy for the Arctic Council should provide an overarching framework for all of the Arctic Council's communication work. It should also provide a basis for individual Arctic Council actors (Member States, Permanent Participants and Working Groups) to undertake their communication activities.

1.1 Communication plans

More detailed communication plans for priority issues, projects and events (ministerial meetings, Senior Arctic Official meetings, etc.) should be prepared. This was previously decided in the Arctic Council Communications and Outreach Guidelines, and the Tromsø Declaration required all Working Groups to prepare communication plans. The Arctic Council Secretariat will, at the direction of the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) and the Chairmanship and in collaboration with the Working Groups, play the central role of coordinating and integrating the overarching Arctic Council communication strategy and the communication plans.

1.2 The basis for the Arctic Council's communication

Long term/short term

A combination of long-term and short-term communication measures is needed if the Arctic Council is to be perceived as *active*, *relevant* and *credible*. The communication strategy's objectives, messages, target groups and channels should be used in both long-term and short-term communication work. There should be continuity in targeted communication work across and between Chairmanship periods.

Proactive/reactive

The Arctic Council is a prominent forum whose activities necessitate public communication. A basic prerequisite for proactive and reactive communication is that information on the Arctic Council is easily accessible and adapted to the target groups. The communication work should demonstrate that the Arctic Council is *active*, how its work is *relevant* and how its debate and decision-making processes make it a *credible* source of information for the media and other target groups.

2. Communication objective

The overarching communication objective for the Arctic Council for the period 2012–2016 is:

- For the Arctic Council to be perceived as the pre-eminent forum for international cooperation in the Arctic.

This means that the Council is perceived as *active, relevant* and *credible* in its contact with the selected target groups.

Indicators for realisation of the objective:

- *Referral* to the Arctic Council, or its material, in discussions and in connection with decisions affecting the Arctic region, so that this is seen in the *media and/or in material informing decisions*.
- *Instant recognition* of the Arctic Council among the target groups.

The overarching communication objective is long-term and should be carried across the entire communication strategy period. To be effective in ongoing operative communication work, this objective should be broken down into short-term objectives for the Arctic Council's various actors and activities. The short-term objectives and how they contribute to the overarching objective must be clear in the individual communication plans.

The indicators should be made measurable, when possible, so as to enable regular checks on how well the objective is being realised. This must be done taking into consideration the available resources.

3. Target groups

Six overall external target groups have been identified for the Arctic Council's external communication work. These target groups are relatively broad and there is a need to more clearly define and develop the target groups over time. Initially, actors within each target group should be identified. The communication strategy also covers internal target groups.

External target groups

POLICY MAKERS

Political decision-makers who may take decisions that affect developments in the Arctic region are an important target group. They should be aware of the Arctic Council and the processes taking place in the Arctic region. Decision-makers can be found on three different levels:

Regional/local: regional and local governments and decision-making bodies in regions directly affected by Arctic issues.

National: decision-makers in the Member States, such as relevant ministers and officials in the parliament, ministries, committees and government agencies. Indigenous political organisations.

International: in relevant international organisations and processes.

INHABITANTS OF THE ARCTIC REGION

Member State publics, including indigenous peoples, and people who live in, or in close proximity to the Arctic geographical area, are important target groups and they should know about the Arctic Council's work so as to better inform policies and strategies they develop for their communities.

NGOS WITH AN INTEREST IN THE ARCTIC REGION

Both nationally and internationally leading and relevant NGOs, such as the major environment associations, are important target groups as they play a significant role in the debate on developments in the Arctic environment.

THE SCIENTIFIC AND RESEARCH COMMUNITY ACTIVE ON ARCTIC ISSUES

The part of the scientific and research community that addresses issues with a bearing on the Arctic is an important target group. Researchers within the areas of environment, climate, energy, transport and indigenous peoples, etc. are important target groups as they contribute to local, regional and global awareness and understanding of the changing Arctic region.

THE BUSINESS SECTOR WITH AN INTEREST IN THE ARCTIC REGION

The part of the business sector that has an interest in the Arctic region is an important target group. This applies primarily to the resource development, energy, environment, transport and tourism sectors. They should be made aware of the responsibilities that come from being active in the Arctic.

JOURNALISTS/MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

Journalists are important both as a channel and as a target group. It is important that the separate communication plans specify which journalists are relevant for each issue, project or event. Read more about the media under the heading 'Channels and activities' below.

Internal target groups – Arctic Council actors

The Arctic Council Member States (Senior Arctic Officials, SAOs), the Permanent Participants (PPs), the Working Groups (WGs) and Observers are internal target groups. Read more about the internal communication under the heading ‘Channels and activities’ below.

4. Messages

The Arctic Council’s overall message is formulated in a few key messages.

- **The Arctic Council is the most prominent, credible and relevant international forum for Arctic issues.**
 - The Arctic Council is the intergovernmental forum addressing long-term and short-term interests and challenges in the Arctic region.
 - The Arctic Council combines cutting-edge research with effective policy work through its unique cooperation between the Arctic states and inhabitants of the region.
 - The Arctic Council ensures that issues associated with the Arctic region are highlighted and given priority on relevant international agendas.

- **The Arctic Council is a forum for indigenous peoples to actively participate in decision-making and development in the Arctic region.**

- **The Arctic Council works to ensure that the unique Arctic environment is preserved and that natural resources are utilised in a sustainable way.**

- **The Arctic Council addresses the need for adaptation to climate change and works to create resilient communities in the Arctic.**

- **The Arctic Council promotes sustainable development for the benefit of Arctic inhabitants and communities.**

5. Channels and activities

Strategic and resource-efficient communication work builds on a combination of communication measures. Priority channels and activities for the Arctic Council are:

WEBSITE

The website arctic-council.org should function as a hub and umbrella for communication within the Arctic Council. The website should be continuously updated so that its design, technology, language and content are up to date. The website should be designed according to the target groups' needs and not just according to the organisation of the Arctic Council. The web address arctic-council.org should be publicised to increase activity on the website.

To profile the Arctic Council as *active*, *relevant* and *credible*, the website should contain up-to-date information about the Arctic Council and its activities, provide contact details for the press, offer users guidance on the various Arctic Council actors and regularly present news, topical issues and events within the work of the Arctic Council. Live images/video material can be used. The Arctic Council Secretariat is responsible for ensuring that the website is up to date, but all Arctic Council actors are responsible for providing material regularly.

Other websites

All websites within the Arctic Council and its subsidiary bodies should clearly display the Arctic Council logo. This was decided in the Communications and Outreach Guidelines. It should be clear, both visually and in terms of content, that these websites represent activities within the Arctic Council.

OTHER WEB-BASED PLATFORMS/MEDIA

The Arctic Council should regularly review whether there are digital forums and channels on which it should be visible. Presence on digital/social channels, such as Youtube, Facebook and Twitter, will complement other media work and the website, when considered useful. Arctic Council actors should inform and consult the Secretariat in order to coordinate the presence of the Arctic Council in social media.

MEDIA

The Arctic Council should develop its media relations and establish ongoing contact with journalists. The communication plans that are drawn up should identify relevant media and journalists. Examples of the media categories that should be included are:

- Regional media that reach people living in the Arctic region.
- Relevant media in each Member State.
- National and international news agencies.
- International media with an influence on global debates.
- Specialist media in the area of environment and science.

The journalist categories that should be included in media work are: foreign correspondents, political journalists, science journalists, editorial writers and writers specialising in subjects that are relevant to the Arctic region (environment, tourism, biology, etc.).

- Information on arctic-council.org targeting journalists with news stories, current issues and projects, messages, contact details, information about the Arctic Council and FAQs should be prioritised.
- The Chair is responsible for information to the media, e.g. press releases, press conferences, interviews, speeches, articles, etc.

INTERNATIONAL MEETING PLACES

The Arctic Council should be present at meetings where issues concerning the Arctic region are discussed. The Chair is responsible for disseminating information and appearing publicly at relevant conferences, seminars and meetings of international organisations in order to increase the profile of the Arctic Council., These meeting places should be identified and prioritised in order to support the long-term communication objectives.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The Arctic Council is a forum made up of several actors who should work together for effective communication within the Council and vis-à-vis selected target groups. Effective internal communication is a prerequisite for proactive communication planning and effective communication measures. Improved internal communication is necessary in order to facilitate cooperation, create synergies and avoid overlap in communication work.

The Chairmanship and the Secretariat have key roles in coordinating the Arctic Council's communication work and in creating and developing effective routines for internal communication. Member States, Permanent Participants and Working Groups are also responsible for creating routines for providing relevant information in an effective and timely manner.

Measures to improve internal communication:

- A permanent contact group for communication.
- Newsletter – an internal newsletter can improve information exchange and create an overview of Arctic Council activities. The newsletter also provides an opportunity for the Chair to report on current activities, processes and progress during the Chairmanship. The Chairmanship and the Secretariat are responsible for the newsletter, with contributions from other actors within the Arctic Council.
- Regular dialogue between individual Arctic Council actors, the Secretariat and the Chair.

- Two-page system – all meetings of the Arctic Council subsidiary bodies should, within 2 days, submit a two-page summary of highlights to relevant parties, including the Secretariat and the Chair.
- The password area on the website can be used for uploading and sharing communication plans and other relevant documents, eg. the Communication and Outreach Guidelines and newsletters.

6. Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities established in the Arctic Council Communications and Outreach Guidelines provide the basis for the Arctic Council's communication work. All Arctic Council actors are responsible in different ways for implementing the communication strategy and helping to achieve the overarching communication objective.

The **Chairmanship** has overall responsibility for the implementation of the communication strategy and takes its guidance from the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs). The Chairmanship provides the Secretariat with guidelines and cooperates closely with the Secretariat in long-term and short-term communication work. In accordance with the Arctic Council Communications and Outreach Guidelines, the Chairmanship should communicate on behalf of the Arctic Council. Without express consent from the SAOs, the Chair should make clear that he/she is speaking on behalf of the Chairmanship, rather than the Arctic Council.

The **Arctic Council Secretariat** has, under the supervision of the Chairmanship, a key role in implementing the communication strategy. An important part of this work is to plan, implement and coordinate external communication measures carried out within the Arctic Council. The role of the Secretariat is also to work with the Chairmanship on developing internal communication; the contact group on communication is important in this respect. The work of the Secretariat ensures long-term continuity and short-term efficiency.

The **Working Groups** should provide up-to-date information on their projects and activities to the Chairmanship and the Secretariat. They are responsible for preparing individual communication plans consistent with the Arctic Council communication strategy. When implementing communication measures, the Working Groups should communicate facts within their respective areas and policies that have been approved by the Arctic Council or SAOs.

In consultation with the Chairmanship and the Secretariat, the Member States, **Senior Arctic Officials and Permanent Participants** should strengthen and develop communication vis-à-vis the target groups in each country/region in the Arctic. They should assist the Secretariat with information exchange to and from the Arctic Council vis-à-vis their countries/regions

and continuously provide up-to-date information on their activities. The Permanent Participants play an important role in developing and implementing the communication strategy.

Permanent contact group for communication

The Arctic Council's communication work is dependent on efficient and regular information exchange between the Council's various actors. A permanent contact group for communication should be established to meet the need for coordination, consultation and information exchange with regard to communication plans, the newsletter, information for the Arctic Council's website, short-term and long-term planning and development work, etc. The group is also responsible for approving policy-related or substantive communication material. The principle of consensus remains. This contact group replaces any previous communication group. The contact group is made up of contact people from the Member States, the Permanent Participants and the Working Groups and is led by communication officers at the Secretariat and the Chairmanship. The contact group would be virtual, however, there could be utility in the contact group meeting in person on the margins of a SAO meeting at least once a year.

8. Language

The working language of the Arctic Council is English. However, a large proportion of people within the target groups do not have English as their first language – among these, the largest group is Russian speakers. This has already been taken into account on the Arctic Council's new website. From a communication point of view, it is desirable to have more information in other languages, but the issue of funds for translation is dealt with separately from the communication strategy.

9. Resources

Resources are needed to realise the ambitions in the communication strategy. The level of resources has a direct effect on the communication strategy's chances of making a forceful impact. At the Arctic Council Secretariat there is currently a full-time Information Officer and one person who works part-time for the Chairmanship on communication. This has been taken into consideration when drawing up this communication strategy.

10. Timetable

Making the work of the Arctic Council more widely known among priority target groups and strengthening the Arctic Council as an international actor is a long-term project. This communication strategy should apply for the period 2012–2016.

11. Evaluation

A review could be carried out halfway through, i.e. in 2014. At the end of the period, the work on the communication strategy should be evaluated.