

Science Communication Plan of the COST Action CA22167

Each Action MC shall adopt a Science Communication Plan including a communication, dissemination, and valorisation strategy, as well as a plan to implement this strategy. The Science Communication Plan shall reflect the MoU in particular connecting to the aims and objectives of the Action. It is recommended that the Science Communication Plan is approved by the Management Committee not later than 6 months after the start date of the Action. It is recommended that the Science Communication Plan, including progress on implementation, is discussed on a yearly basis by the Action MC and reviewed or amended where necessary. (*Annotated Rules for COST Actions*, article 5)

This template is provided to COST Actions as a support for developing the Action Science Communication plan. Actions can adapt the plan structure and content according to their needs.

VERSIONS AND HISTORY OF CHANGES

Version	Date of adoption by MC	Notes (e.g. changes from previous versions)	Lead author(s)*
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** The Science Communication plan is developed, updated and its implementation monitored under the overall supervision of the Science Communication Coordinator, and in close collaboration with other relevant contributors.*

This document is based upon work from COST Action CA22167 Participatory Approaches with Older Adults, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.

1. SUMMARY

This Science Communication Plan outlines the overarching strategy, objectives, and implementation framework for communicating, disseminating, and valorising the results of the COST Action CA22167: Participatory Approaches with Older Adults (PAAR-Net). It aims to ensure that the knowledge and outputs generated by the Action are effectively shared, widely accessible, and sustainably embedded within scientific, policy, and practice domains.

The plan builds upon the Action's core vision — to promote participatory approaches with older adults as a catalyst for inclusive social innovation and as a standard in ageing research. Communication, dissemination, and valorisation are treated as interlinked and complementary pillars supporting the visibility, transfer, and long-term impact of the Action. Each contributes to building bridges between research, policy, and practices, while ensuring that older adults are positioned not only as subjects but as co-creators of knowledge.

The communication and dissemination framework follows the principles of transparency, inclusivity, and collaboration, aligning with COST's commitment to open science and the FAIR data management standards (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable). It integrates internal and external communication processes to strengthen coordination among Working Groups, the Management Committee, and external stakeholders, ensuring coherence between scientific outputs and their societal uptake.

The specific objectives of the plan are to:

- Enhance the visibility of the Action and its outcomes across scientific, policy, and public spheres.
- Facilitate cross-sectoral exchange between researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and older adults.
- Promote accessibility of Action results through open-access dissemination and multilingual materials.
- Encourage the practical use and institutionalisation of participatory approaches in research and policymaking.
- Ensure sustainability and long-term impact of the Action's results beyond its official lifetime.

The Dissemination Board (DB) is responsible for coordinating and implementing this plan. The DB consists of the Science Communication Coordinators, Research and Policy Dissemination Members, and one representative from each Working Group. It oversees the planning and delivery of communication activities, ensures consistency in visual identity, and monitors progress through measurable milestones. The Board also collaborates closely with COST Action structures to align communication tasks with deliverables uploaded on e-COST.

In summary, the Science Communication Plan establishes a coherent, structured, and participatory framework that will guide PAAR-Net's efforts to inform, engage, and empower stakeholders. Through a combination of open science practices, targeted communication, and collaborative dissemination, the Action will create both scientific and societal value, ensuring that participatory ageing research becomes an enduring and integral part of European ageing policy and practice.

2. GENERAL AIM AND TARGET AUDIENCES

The general aim of the communication, dissemination, and valorisation plan is to ensure that the outcomes of PAAR-Net are visible, understandable, and usable by all relevant audiences — from researchers and policymakers to practitioners, civil society, and older adults themselves. The plan contributes to the broader mission of the Action: to strengthen participatory ageing research across Europe and promote inclusive, evidence-based approaches to later life and wellbeing.

This strategy seeks not only to share knowledge but to create a continuous dialogue between scientific research, public policy, and societal practice. By encouraging older adults' active participation in research and decision-making, PAAR-Net promotes an inclusive research culture that values lived experience as a source of expertise.

PAAR-Net's communication and dissemination efforts are guided by three strategic principles:

Visibility: increasing awareness and recognition of participatory approaches with older adults among multiple audiences.

Accessibility: ensuring that outputs are presented in clear, inclusive, and multilingual formats to reach diverse groups.

Engagement: promoting active participation and two-way exchange between researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and older adults.

These principles are operationalised through the three pillars of the Action's strategy — communication, dissemination, and valorisation:

Communication builds awareness and facilitates mutual understanding both within the Action and beyond. Internal communication supports coordination between Working Groups, while external communication reaches stakeholders and the public through various online and offline platforms.

Dissemination ensures that the knowledge, data, and tools generated are shared through open-access publications, conferences, policy briefs, and community events.

Valorisation focuses on the practical use and long-term sustainability of results, turning knowledge into concrete actions and institutional standards.

Target audiences

PAAR-Net addresses a wide range of audiences reflecting its interdisciplinary and intersectoral nature. Communication and dissemination activities will be tailored to the specific needs, expectations, and capacities of each group.

- **Researchers and academics** – Scholars and professionals in various disciplines relevant to ageing and participatory research. The plan aims to strengthen their research capacity, foster collaboration, and promote methodological innovation in participatory research.
- **Older adults** – Individuals aged 65 and above, representing different cultural, social, and health backgrounds. Their involvement is central to the Action's mission, ensuring that research outcomes are grounded in real-life experience and diverse perspectives.

- **Civil society and mediators** – NGOs, community organisations, and facilitators connecting researchers and older adults. They play a critical role in outreach, trust-building, and inclusion of underrepresented groups.
- **Policymakers** – Decision-makers and institutions at local, national, and EU levels involved in health, ageing, and social policy. The plan aims to provide them with evidence-based recommendations and models to improve age-friendly and participatory policies.
- **Practitioners and professionals** – Individuals working in healthcare, social work, and ageing-related services who can apply Action outputs in practice.
- **General public and media** – Families, caregivers, and citizens interested in ageing, inclusion, and participation. This group will be engaged through accessible language, social media campaigns, and storytelling formats that highlight real experiences and good practices.

Implementation approach

To reach these audiences effectively, PAAR-Net will combine digital tools (Action website, social media, webinars) and face-to-face engagement (Knowledge-Exchange events, conferences, workshops).

Special attention will be paid to overcoming barriers faced by older adults and vulnerable populations, such as digital exclusion, linguistic diversity, and accessibility needs. Whenever possible, materials will be produced in multiple languages, and in-person events will be organised in diverse geographical areas to ensure representation.

By promoting visibility, inclusivity, and collaboration, this plan positions PAAR-Net as a catalyst for sustainable and meaningful change in participatory research and policy across Europe. It ensures that the voices of older adults are not only heard but actively shape the future of participatory research, innovation and practice.

3. PLAN FOR THE COMMUNICATION OF ACTION RESULTS

The PAAR-Net communication plan outlines a comprehensive and structured approach to ensure that the Action's results are shared effectively with both internal and external audiences. The plan focuses on creating clear, inclusive, and impactful communication flows that enhance visibility, strengthen engagement, and support the long-term valorisation of the Action's outcomes.

Communication is viewed not merely as dissemination but as a process of continuous interaction — facilitating exchange, learning, and reflection between researchers, older adults, policymakers, practitioners, and the public. This approach will ensure that the Action's achievements resonate across disciplines, sectors, and countries, creating a solid foundation for sustainable participatory ageing research.

The communication of Action results aims to ensure broad visibility of PAAR-Net's mission, activities, and outcomes across scientific, policy, and social domains. It seeks to promote awareness of participatory research with older adults as a catalyst for inclusive social innovation and to strengthen collaboration and dialogue among the diverse stakeholders involved in ageing research and practice. Moreover, the communication efforts are intended to support the effective use of Action results in shaping research agendas, informing policy frameworks, and inspiring community practices. Through these actions, PAAR-Net aims to

establish a recognizable and trustworthy identity as a leading reference network in participatory ageing research.

Key messages

Throughout the Action's implementation, communication messages will evolve in accordance with the progress of the network and its outputs. However, two main themes will guide all communication activities:

1. Visibility and inclusivity:

PAAR-Net promotes an inclusive environment by ensuring that older adults — across diverse socio-economic, cultural, and health backgrounds — participate as co-creators alongside researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

2. The value of participatory approaches:

Participatory approaches with older adults drive innovation in ageing research, improve service design, and enhance the relevance and fairness of ageing-related policies and practices.

These key messages will be reinforced by highlighting concrete examples, success stories, and evidence of the Action's impact across participating countries. Each year, messages will be reviewed and updated by the Dissemination Board (DB) to align with current milestones and outputs.

Communication channels and tools

A combination of online, face-to-face, and traditional communication tools will be employed to ensure that the Action's results reach their intended audiences effectively and equitably.

- **Website (www.paar-net.eu):** The Action website will serve as the main communication and dissemination hub. It will publicize ongoing activities, provide access to deliverables (e.g., conference proceedings, briefing papers, knowledge syntheses), and host multimedia materials such as interviews and short videos featuring older adults and researchers.
- **Social media platforms:**
PAAR-Net will maintain active profiles on Facebook, LinkedIn, and X to reach different audiences.
 - Facebook will primarily target older adults and community-based stakeholders.
 - LinkedIn will serve professionals, researchers, and policymakers.
 - X (Twitter) will support real-time updates, visibility, and engagement with the broader scientific and policy communities.These platforms will feature accessible visuals, short videos, infographics, and links to upcoming events or publications.
- **Face-to-face communication:**
Conferences and Knowledge-Exchange events (both international and local) will serve as the main opportunities for presenting results, sharing experiences, and strengthening partnerships. Local events will be particularly important for reaching older adults and stakeholders who may face barriers to digital access. These gatherings will include interactive workshops, roundtable discussions, and exhibitions of participatory tools and good practices.
- **Traditional and multimedia materials:**
Printed brochures, leaflets, infographics, and newsletters will be used to communicate key findings in an accessible way. In parallel, podcasts, webinars, and short educational videos will enhance engagement with both professional and non-professional audiences. Whenever possible, materials will be produced in multiple languages to improve accessibility and inclusion.

- **Academic and policy-oriented dissemination:**

Research results will be shared through open-access journal publications, policy briefs, and briefing papers tailored to decision-makers. These outputs will be complemented by synthesis documents and guidelines on participatory research standards and the PAAR Seal of Quality, ensuring that the Action's scientific and societal contributions are sustained beyond its duration.

Visual identity and recognition

Maintaining a coherent and recognisable visual identity is central to PAAR-Net's external communication. All materials, digital and printed, will consistently feature:

- The PAAR-Net logo, representing inclusivity and participation;
- The COST logo and European Union emblem, acknowledging the funding sources; and
- A clear reference to the Action number and funding statement, as required by COST guidelines.

A dedicated repository of visual materials (logos, templates, and style guides) will be stored in the Action's cloud space and made available to all members. The Science Communication Coordinator and Dissemination Board will ensure adherence to these branding rules across all deliverables and partner communications.

Internal communication

Internal communication will rely on multiple tools to ensure transparency, coordination, and timely information flow among members:

- The COST system's "Send All" function will be used for official announcements and Action-wide updates.
- Regular video conferences will facilitate interaction across Working Groups and the Management Committee.
- Shared cloud space will support collaborative document editing and version control, ensuring secure and structured information management.
- Annual face-to-face meetings will complement virtual communication, providing opportunities for reflection, planning, and knowledge exchange.

By maintaining a balance between digital and in-person interaction, PAAR-Net ensures that collaboration remains active and inclusive, even across geographical and disciplinary boundaries.

Evaluation and sustainability

The effectiveness of communication activities will be monitored by the Dissemination Board, which will review progress against predefined milestones and deliverables. Regular feedback will be collected from Action members and stakeholders to identify areas for improvement.

Long-term sustainability will be achieved by embedding communication and dissemination practices into the ongoing activities of Working Groups and national networks. After the Action's completion, the PAAR-Net website, social media channels, and repository will remain active as reference points for researchers and practitioners, supporting continuous visibility and engagement.

4. PLAN FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF ACTION RESULTS

The dissemination strategy of PAAR-Net ensures that the knowledge and results generated by the Action are made publicly available to target audiences who can benefit from and further apply them. Dissemination will focus on making the outputs accessible, understandable, and reusable by different groups — including researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and civil society actors — while upholding principles of openness, ethics, and inclusivity.

The Action fully adheres to the principles of Open Science and Open Access, following the FAIR data management framework (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable). All scientific outputs will be made available on open-access platforms or journals, ensuring that evidence, tools, and insights developed through PAAR-Net are easily accessible to both the academic community and society at large. Intellectual property rights (IPR) and data protection issues will be respected according to COST and EU regulations.

Planned dissemination products and activities include:

- Academic publications in peer-reviewed journals to ensure methodological transparency and scholarly recognition.
- Policy briefs and briefing papers summarising research findings and recommendations for decision-makers.
- Conference proceedings and Knowledge-Exchange reports highlighting best practices, case studies, and cross-national experiences.
- Synthesis and position papers summarising lessons learned from each Working Group and presenting future research-policy directions.
- Multilingual dissemination materials (infographics, brochures, newsletters, podcasts, and short videos) aimed at practitioners and the general public to enhance accessibility.

Each Working Group will contribute to dissemination according to its focus area. For example, some WGs may coordinate a special journal issue or develop thematic briefs on ethical, methodological, or policy dimensions of participatory ageing. All dissemination products will be linked to the deliverables listed on e-COST and aligned with the Action's communication calendar.

This structured dissemination plan ensures that PAAR-Net results reach the right audiences at the right time, fostering the integration of participatory approaches with older adults into future research and policy frameworks.

5. PLAN FOR THE VALORISATION OF ACTION RESULTS

The valorisation plan of PAAR-Net focuses on the exploitation and long-term use of the Action's results by relevant stakeholders to generate scientific, societal, and policy impact beyond the lifetime of the Action. Valorisation activities will ensure that the knowledge and tools developed within PAAR-Net are effectively applied in practice, contributing to innovation in participatory research and inclusive social development.

Key objectives of the valorisation strategy include:

- Promoting the adoption and adaptation of participatory research methods among researchers and institutions.
- Facilitating policy integration through the development of the Policy and Practice Repository, which gathers exemplary participatory practices and models from COST and non-COST countries.
- Establishing the PAAR Seal of Quality, a recognisable framework that certifies meaningful involvement of older adults in research, policymaking, and practice.
- Enhancing capacity building through the use of training materials, short-term scientific missions, and the PAAR-Net website as a continuing learning platform.

During and after the Action, valorisation will be achieved by strengthening cooperation among universities, NGOs, public authorities, innovation actors, and older adults as key partners in participatory research. PAAR-Net will engage these stakeholders in joint initiatives and funding applications to ensure sustainability and continuity of results.

Potential end users and beneficiaries include:

- Research institutions and networks applying participatory ageing methodologies;
- Policymakers and agencies integrating participatory standards into national or EU programmes;
- Civil society organisations, care providers, and SMEs implementing age-friendly and inclusive innovations;
- Older adults and advocacy groups adopting participatory models to enhance social inclusion.

All valorisation activities will be coordinated by the Dissemination Board, in collaboration with the Science Communication Coordinators and WG representatives, ensuring that Action outcomes are not only visible but also practically useful, transferable, and sustainable.

Through these efforts, PAAR-Net aims to transform participatory ageing research from a theoretical framework into a tangible, operational approach that continues to benefit society well beyond the Action's lifetime.

ANNEX 1

The tables below are meant to provide an overview to the Action of relevant dimensions to be considered while structuring the Science Communication Plan. Table 1 highlights the different scope of Dissemination and Communication activities, while Table 2 underlines key questions to be addressed in each plan.

TABLE 1. COMMUNICATION – DISSEMINATION – VALORISATION

	COMMUNICATION	DISSEMINATION	VALORIZATION
Objectives	Promote the visibility and identity of PAAR-Net by raising awareness about participatory research with older adults. Strengthen mutual understanding and engagement within and beyond the Action.	Ensure that Action results and scientific outputs are made publicly available and accessible to researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and society. Promote open science and multilingual knowledge exchange.	Facilitate the practical use of Action outcomes in research, policymaking, and practice. Promote the adoption of participatory methods and the <i>PAAR Seal of Quality</i> as sustainable standards of excellence.
Expected Impact	Increased awareness of the importance of participatory approaches and improved collaboration among researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and older adults.	Wider accessibility and reuse of Action results through open access, ensuring methodological transparency and greater policy relevance.	Tangible, long-term impacts on policy and practice through integration of participatory approaches and institutional recognition of inclusive research principles.
Audiences	Internal Action members, researchers, policymakers, practitioners, older adults, civil society organisations, and the general public.	Research institutions, policymakers, NGOs, professional associations, and practitioners who can apply findings to their own contexts.	Policymakers, EU and national authorities, public institutions, SMEs, NGOs, and innovation ecosystems using or supporting participatory ageing research.
Languages	Clear, inclusive, and non-specialist language; accessible to both experts and non-experts to promote visibility and understanding.	Combination of scientific and professional language adapted to each target audience; multilingual dissemination whenever possible.	Mix of academic, policy, and operational language to support the transfer, implementation, and scaling of Action outcomes.
Channels & Tools	Website, newsletters, internal updates, social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, X), press releases, videos, podcasts, and Knowledge-Exchange events.	Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, policy briefs, briefing papers, synthesis reports, and open repositories.	Policy & Practice Repository, PAAR Seal of Quality, training schools, short-term scientific missions (STSMs), stakeholder workshops, cross-sector projects, and long-term partnerships.

TABLE 2. THE 5 W TO STRUCTURE YOUR PLAN

WHY It is relevant to communicate about the Action?	There is an urgent need to strengthen participatory research with older adults across Europe and reduce inequalities in ageing research and policy. PAAR-Net creates a multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral platform linking researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and older adults to co-produce knowledge and promote social innovation. Communication is essential to raise awareness, build engagement, and sustain collaboration across COST and non-COST countries.
WHAT is the key message?	PAAR-Net promotes inclusive and participatory approaches with older adults as a pathway to social innovation, evidence-based policy, and equitable ageing. Its key message is: “Older adults are co-creators of knowledge — not only participants.” The Action demonstrates how participatory research can improve service design, empower communities, and influence policy agendas for ageing well.
WHO is the target audience?	Researchers and academics involved in ageing, participation, and social innovation; older adults and their representative groups; policymakers at local, national, and European levels; practitioners in health, care, and community services; NGOs and civil society organisations working with older adults; mediators facilitating collaboration between researchers and communities; and the general public interested in ageing, inclusion, and participation.
WHERE and how to communicate & disseminate?	Through a combination of online and offline channels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website: central platform for Action results and resources. • Social media: Facebook (older adults & communities), LinkedIn (professionals), X (policy and research news). • Knowledge-Exchange events & conferences: local and international, fostering inclusion and dialogue. • Traditional media: press releases, newsletters, and podcasts to reach non-specialist audiences.
WHEN it is appropriate to start communicating & disseminating?	<p>Communication and dissemination activities will be integrated from the very beginning of the Action and will continue throughout its implementation and beyond. These efforts aim to maintain visibility, engagement, and impact at every stage.</p> <p>The main communication and dissemination moments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the launch of the Action, introducing its vision, partners, and goals; • When digital platforms (website, social media, repository) are launched or updated; • During Knowledge-Exchange events, Training Schools, and cross-network workshops; • When new deliverables, policy briefs, or scientific publications are produced; • Upon the release of the PAAR Seal of Quality and related outputs; • During and following the final conference to ensure long-term visibility and outreach. <p>To coordinate these actions effectively, the Dissemination Board (DB) will maintain an up-to-date dissemination calendar aligned with the Action’s milestones, outputs, and communication priorities.</p>