

Interreg North-West Europe DGE-ROLLOUT

DGE communication strategy

Focus: North-West Europe

Deliverable LT.4.2

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Disclaimer

This report is provided as a guideline for a tailored communication strategy to accelerate DGE in future projects in North-West Europe. It is based on experiences from planning, testing and implementing communication tools activities in the DGE-ROLLOUT project from 2018 to 2022.

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Introduction

Communication towards stakeholders, investors and the public is an important tool in transfer of technical and methodological innovation in deep geothermal energy (DGE) and its successful support, ramp-up and roll-out. Systems for the development, testing and integration of new technologies like DGE strongly depend on a broadening awareness, acceptance and reception. This is best achieved when relevant target groups are tailor-made informed at an early stage and in a specific but transparent and comprehensive manner about cutting edge research and development. It is important that scientists are hereby engaged in a continuous and well-prepared dialogue with the target groups.

In the context of the DGE-ROLLOUT project, several innovative operations were developed and tested. Communication towards the public as well as DGE users and investors at early stages were an essential step to the success of these measures. Communication efforts covered meetings and workshops, attendance at professional congresses and public presentations. Also, presentations of individual measures on a regional scale as well as presentation of the basic concept DGE and a presentation of the overall project. Used media covered classic presentations, publications, posters/roll-ups, flyers and a webpage as well as social media representations, but also unconventional formats like public exhibitions and an image movie that summarized the objectives of the project as well as the opportunities and potentials of DGE as a renewable energy source in North-West Europe (NWE).

In this report, learnings from the communication activities and the experiences from the implementation work packages WPT1 and WPT2 of the project are used as a long-term strategic guideline for future DGE project activities in NWE. Since the project partners agreed for a long-term cooperation in form of a network in the context of the further roll-out of DGE (Deliverable LT.1.1), communication measures have to be implemented and monitored in the long-term so that further increases in the efficiency of the knowledge transfer, impact and range can be achieved. The aim of the network is to foster the exchange of knowledge, experience, and expertise in DGE between geological surveys, research institutions and market players in NWE.

Raise awareness, increase knowledge, change behaviour

The DGE-ROLLOUT project strongly focused on the concept of raising awareness and increasing knowledge on DGE for a variety of target groups via communication in terms of personal meetings, public webpages, social media content, stakeholder webinars and presence at conferences. In some cases, this leads to changes in target group behaviour by means of implementing concepts and technologies in long-term strategies and to create follow-up projects (see list “Regional and

transnational networks” (Deliverable T1.2.4)). The implementation of an effective communication strategy will enhance awareness and public knowledge, and affects attitudes with positive actions of target groups for the future roll-out of DGE in NWE.

Since DGE is increasingly being investigated as an attractive renewable energy source, numerous geothermal energy projects on very different scales have been developed reflecting growing governmental, industrial, scientific and public interest. Overall social acceptance has been recognized as crucial to the achievement of project goals. The geothermal community, here represented by the project partners, has become aware of the need to take social awareness of its activities serious. With the expected substantial rise in geothermal projects, the associated increase in the visibility of geothermal facilities, the awareness of their presence and their specific set of opportunities and perceived challenges requires for all DGE players a well-prepared communication strategy, which is aimed at achieving first dialog, then acceptance and awareness, and considers the specific characteristics. For the future DGE-ROLLOUT network this concludes in the aim to raise awareness for communication issues and foster know-how and knowledge about best practises.

Strategic planning and implementation of project communication

With respect to the planned project objectives and activities, a first step is to identify key audiences and their individual needs. Establishing of network connections and stakeholder contacts allows for most efficient and concentrated communication activities and the development and implementation of communication channels to suit the stakeholder needs. Therefore, stakeholders like politicians and public authorities, contractors and drilling companies, energy consumers in industry or agriculture, energy suppliers and scientists should be addressed individually with a tailored campaign and key message. A campaign is a time-limited action with a defined goal (usually the transmission of a message or the call to action) that is attempted to be achieved through planned and coordinated interaction of several people and/or channels. The motivation and to-be-considered challenges and risks for each type of “investor” was compiled in the report “Investors Profiling” (Deliverable T1.2.2), which can be used to customize communication concepts.

An important target group is the **general public**. Especially neighboring residents of activities like seismic surveys, drillings or the setup of demonstration plants, bear the risk of being perceived emotionally if their concerns are not resolved before and during the activities. Therefore, an early, regular and transparent communication campaign should be developed, best in cooperation with a professional agency that is familiar with the topic. It is recommended to use as many basic

communication tools as possible (see next chapter). The planned activities must be accompanied by dialogue-oriented communication at eye level. A continuous distilling of key messaging and the depicting of project developments and results into suitable language and info graphics is important and allows to create appropriate communication outputs for key audiences. A focal point to undertake communication via channels and activities is to monitor and evaluate progress, and also to refine the strategy if necessary. This is essential for a successful long-term communication strategy of a project as well as all follow-up activities. Sparse and insufficient communication work may prevent acceptance for future activities.

In joint projects with local industry partners, their regional influence and standing often enables a positive influence on communication measures towards the public, authorities and other stakeholders. A positive standing of a public or research institution as well as municipal energy providers can also bring advantages in collaborations, both publicly and on the part of the authorities, political motivation and funding, which enables a high-impact and range of communication activities.

Basic communication media, resources and tools

A key learning from the DGE-ROLLOUT project was that the different target groups require different and specific communication tools. At the beginning of a project and considering the available resources, it is therefore necessary to identify and prioritize the target groups and outline the possible communication measures. In the following, a list of successful basic communication tools for an initial addressing of target groups is given. In general, the tools and media-to-be-used may vary with the project goals and objectives and the target groups:

The **basic communication tools** targeting all audiences with a main focus on overall awareness:

- A unifying brand (corporate design) including logo, color palette and communication rulebook should be developed to be used on all project materials.
- A public webpage will provide general information and updates on project activities and results, all partners, links to the public deliverables, and all publications and datasets generated in the project. Especially for regional projects with activities that require social awareness and acceptance, (sub-)webpages should be set-up in regional languages und utilize easy-to-understand imaging and wording. A contact form, e-mail-address and, if necessary, a hotline should be easy to find and enable low-threshold approachability.
- Electronic newsletters can inform stakeholders on a regular basis about the project progress.
- Social media to promote activities, news and presentations, can be used to establish a low-threshold dialog and to reach a larger audience.

- Image or milestone movies, which can be distributed via project and partner webpages as well as social media. For international releases, press releases and short movies can be prepared in different languages for distribution to regional media as well as specific stakeholders.
- A range of communication materials (toolkit) should be produced including the project's visual identity and logo, factsheets, posters, roll-up templates, and brochures, which should also summarize the most important project outcomes for broad distribution:
 - Flyers and brochures in the regional language and, for international representations, in English: brief description of the project, its goals and objectives and the partners. Digital flyers should be made available on the webpage for download.
 - Roll-ups and posters are informative boards made at the occasion of meetings and public events. Posters depicting the project and local activities, including permits if required, should also be prominently displayed at all operational sites (e.g., drilling and building sites).
- Press releases on milestones can trigger newspaper articles and use regional media or specialized media as multiplier.
- Workshops and webinars can be organized on different levels of participation and interest (from local to regional level as well as focused on overall topics).
- Public events can be useful to inform the local public about forthcoming activities and results allowing discussions that strongly increase social acceptance.
- If feasible, a public exhibition on the general and the project specific context help addressing a broader public with a high continuance; company partners with inner city business locations can be very helpful in setting up public exhibitions, while a cooperation with topic-related exhibition or museums (like done in DGE-ROLLOUT project) is also reasonable.
- If necessary, a "crisis communication concept" should be prepared for unintended incidents (e.g. accidents on site, seismicities). The sooner an appropriate statement is provided, the better the situation is perceived.

Communication towards the **scientific community** with a focus on bidirectional knowledge transfer (only feasible in projects that allow for public presentation and publication) and networking:

- Presentations and participations at scientific meetings and conferences with posters and talks outlining the project objectives and research goals, which also focus on the transfer of outcomes for the specific as well as the broader scientific community.
- Scientific publications, at best published open access, help raising awareness, transferring knowledge towards a scientific audience and intensifying the scientific dialog.
- Open access of datasets through different repositories.
- If feasible, software codes resulting from the project will be released on online repositories.
- Collaboration with scientific partners and other project initiatives could complement project activities and provide synergies. This can also enhance dissemination of the project to a professional audience and allow for follow-up projects on different levels. In the case of a future DGE-ROLLOUT network the added value of membership has to be pointed out in the ramp-up phase in order to increase the number of members and trigger more synergies.

Communication towards **potential DGE users** and other stakeholders with a focus on initiation of follow-up projects:

- Most important communication tools to attract new potential users and partners are a frequent public attendance and a well-designed project webpage that clearly highlight the benefits and the potential of the participation on network objectives.
- (Future) geothermal users (e.g. municipal energy providers) can be invited to workshops and events also in cooperation with other geothermal operators in order to transfer experience and the knowledge created in the project. Workshops and webinars should be dedicated to specific topics along regional- and/or technology-based project goals, and to clearly present economic benefits for industry partners and investors.
- Larger energy consumers and providers should be picked up at places and events they regularly attend: Trade shows and conferences for greenhouse operators, public utilities, city planners, industry, business park and district heating operators etc. should be identified and covered. Likewise, guest articles should be offered in association journals relevant to the industry.
- Since political decision-making (and so public funding) is organized in parties, party congresses or party-specific parliamentary evenings can be relevant means of communication. Particularly in time for elections, when party programs are renewed, specialized political committees are open to new topics. Cooperation with relevant interest groups can generate synergies here.

- Site visits for demonstration of technologies and their application.
- Distribution of (specialized) brochures and/or fact/data sheets for outlining the technology, case study examples, legislative frameworks and a timeline of its uptake help addressing further target groups.
- Policy papers: presenting the results in a format tailored towards relevant policy makers, open access practitioners, scholarly and professional associations. The policy papers should be published in electronic form on the project webpage.
- Regular news/newsletter releases (see above). These allow to inform target groups also about other projects and technologies, and may raise interest in further projects.
- Participation with a booth at congresses relevant for the geothermal industry in order to increase the network and disseminate latest findings (e.g. GeoTHERM, EGC, WGC).
- A "layman report", final posters and presentations should be prepared at the end of the project with the most essential results of the innovative solutions demonstrated in the project. If necessary, variations could be developed considering targeted stakeholders and their interests to ensure their involvement after the project.

Action plan for the implementation of basic communication tools

The implementation and continuation of communication tools and activities listed above strongly vary throughout the lifetime of a DGE project. A generalized concept of representative milestones of a project, considering project start, first results in data production, first demonstrations/operative activities and project end with final results is shown in Figure 1. The action plan distinguishes individual communication tools according to their main target groups (green: all; blue: scientific community; red: stakeholders) that can be assigned throughout the project's lifetime. Once the corporate design is generated, which should be done as early as possible, it can be applied to all communication media (toolkit, webpage, social media, etc). A frequent feed with news and background information should be provided for the general public via social media and the webpage. Once first results are produced, they should be presented to a broader scientific audience and can be reviewed and discussed in this context. In parallel, first presentations towards (potential) stakeholders in form of booths at fairs, brochures and workshops allow to prepare and design efficiently operative activities as well as this may already attract new partners and follow-up projects. A second important set of communication activities should be planned and carried out when operations are carried out/finished and allow for site visits and live demonstrations for stakeholders. They can be informed upfront by brochures and workshops (which can also be combined with site visits).

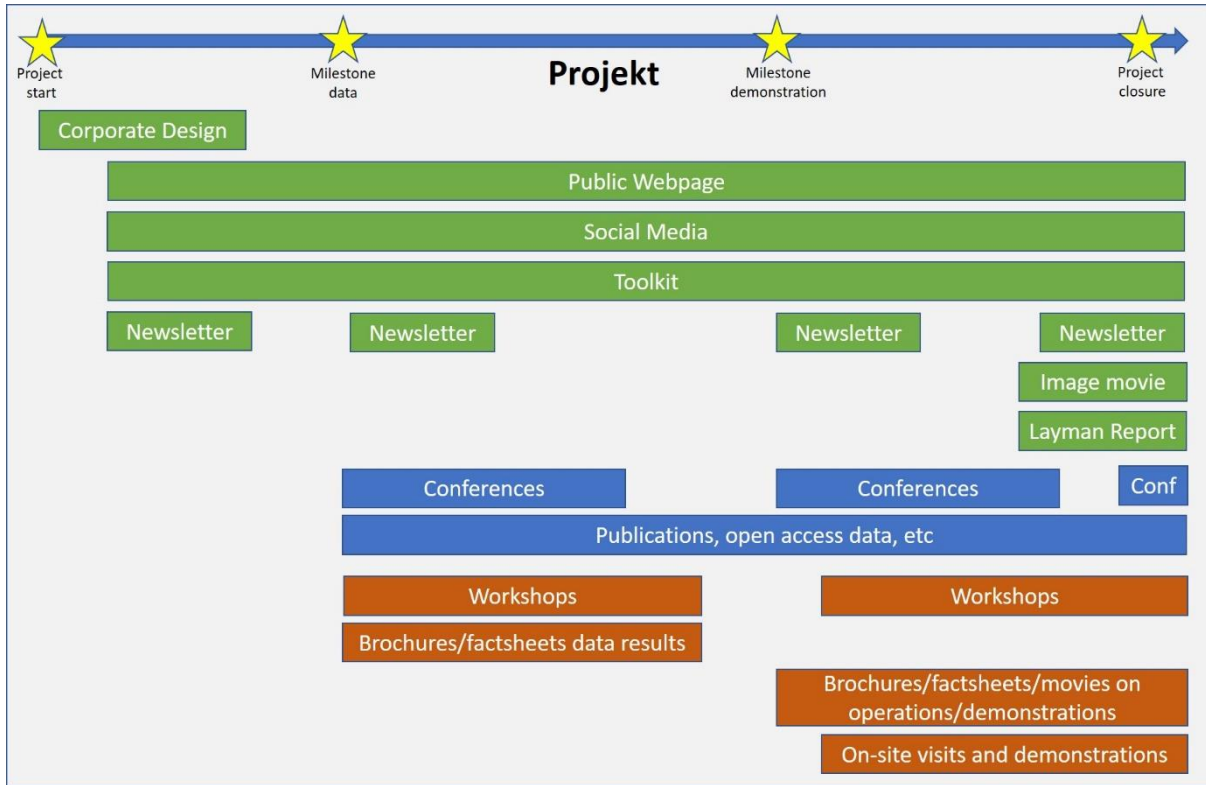


Figure 1) General action plan for the implementation of communication methods and tools in the course of a DGE project with respect to the main target groups (green: all; blue: scientific community; red: stakeholders).

Communication activities along operations/demonstration sites

In the DGE-ROLLOUT project it was shown that target groups can be primary informed and attracted via webpages, videos, social media activities and digital conference attendances. Still on-site meetings and live demonstrations with stakeholders to exchange knowledge in the context of the various project work packages was important for a sustainable promotion of technologies as well as raising awareness towards the public and increasing acceptance (e.g., inviting the public to demonstrations of seismic and drilling operations). Especially the involvement of stakeholders, energy companies, public/private end-users, and public authorities in the early stages as well as during the active built and at the final setup of the demonstrations is an important step in raising awareness of the potentials of the various opportunities in utilizing DGE. On-site visits with authorities are extremely helpful in reducing risks and delays in approval processes, and ensuring feasibility and timely implementation. Also, site visits with potential clients, representatives from industries, students, researchers etc. are important for continuous knowledge transfer and to initiate follow-up activities. A combination of active on-site demonstrations with visualizing media like posters and movies to explain details and “black box” processes are strongly recommended.

References

Deliverable LT.1.1 – Network concept report

Deliverable T1.2.2 – Investors profiling

Deliverable T1.2.4 – Regional and transnational networks

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