

Guidance on IEA Bioenergy communication actions

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This document provides guidelines on communication actions on behalf of IEA Bioenergy. It is based on a survey performed in 2016 towards ExCo members on how to bring IEA Bioenergy messages to stakeholders (main conclusions in Annex).

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1. Publishing reports

Reports can be published on the Task website, but will also get a dedicated subsite at <http://www.ieabioenergy.com/iea-publications/>

Task leaders should inform the Secretary and Technical Coordinator when a report is about to be published.

We need the following information to put on the dedicated subsite:

1. an appealing **title**,
2. a short **news release** in plain language, containing the research question & **key highlights** of the study (up to 140 characters), and preferably a photo/infographics. This can be distributed through mailings and social media. Key highlights can be (re)tweeted separately.
3. a short (2p) **summary** of the report, preferably also with info graphics
4. the **full report** (and subreports if applicable).
5. related **presentations** at events or webinars.
6. Other material, e.g. videos, blogs, ...

2. Preparing and organizing webinars

All Task reports can be disseminated through the central webinars organized by IEA Bioenergy, on a bimonthly basis. Task leaders should keep the Secretary and Technical Coordinator informed about potential reports/topics that could be interesting for a webinar. Different steps to be taken:

1. ~6 weeks before: agree on the topic and date for the webinar
2. By 4 weeks before: collect material for the webinar announcement
3. 3 weeks before: send out announcement via mailing list & Twitter
4. 1.5 to 1 week before: distribute reminder via mailing list & Twitter
5. 1.5 to 1 week before: test run of the lecture
6. 2 days before: final reminder via mailing list & Twitter
7. 1 hour before: Twitter message that webinar will start in 1 hour
8. Webinar (incl. recording & discussion), mention link where the presentation and recordings will be published at the end
9. 1 day after: upload the presentation & recordings
10. 1 day after: send out main messages and link to webinar recordings via mailing list.

3. Launching important IEA Bioenergy reports

When a report can bring new insights into the public debate on bioenergy a 'launch' can be considered. This is to be agreed with the Communications Team. Different steps to be taken:

1. ~6 weeks before: agree on a launching date => webinar to present the main messages of the report + date that the report will be published on-line
2. By 4 weeks before: collect material for the webinar announcement (announcement also indicates that the report will be launched right after the webinar), prepare main messages (up to five)
3. 3 weeks before: send out announcement via mailing list & Twitter; send announcement to newsfeeds
4. 1.5 to 1 week before: distribute reminder via mailing list & Twitter
5. 1.5 to 1 week before: test run of the lecture
6. 2 days before: final reminder via mailing list & Twitter
7. 1 hour before: Twitter message that webinar will start in 1 hour
8. Webinar (incl. recording & discussion), mention link where report will be published at the end
9. Right after webinar: upload the report on a dedicated webpage (with main messages as intro)
10. 1 day after: upload the presentation & recordings on the same webpage
11. 1 day after: send out main messages and link to report & webinar recordings via mailing list; also send to newsfeeds; separate tweet for each main message (with link to report)
12. Retweet 1 week after (retweet could be repeated a few times in 2 week intervals)

4. Involvement in media debates

IEA Bioenergy should not be considered as a lobby group and we have to avoid political statements. The task of IEA Bioenergy would be to contribute to the debate with fact based, scientifically sound information.

Coordination of reactions to certain debates should be done centrally (TC/Chair/Secretary), relying on experts from the Tasks.

Some lessons from the response to the ChathamHouse report in March 2017:

- When Tasks members/leaders feel it is important to engage in a media debate, they should involve the IEA Bioenergy Core team (Chair, TC, Secretary) from the beginning
- If existing material is available then a response to an issue can be given immediately.
- When a new document has to be prepared, a Task Leader takes the lead in preparing the response/press release
 - Focus the official response on scientific backing, avoid being seen as lobby organism.
 - The Press Release needs to have max 3 key messages, simply stated and easy to understand (not too scientific)
- The text will be circulated to ExCo for comments, but within a short timeframe (two working days).
- Timing of the press release is important. Mondays are better to have impact than Fridays.
- It helps to involve multiplier organisations like AEBIOM
- We need to have readily available contact lists, split up in (1) general contact list, (2) multiplier organisations, (3) press contacts.
- Send out the press release from an IEA Bioenergy e-mail address. Send in bcc mode.
- Identify one central press contact (available by telephone on the next days), who can respond to questions and redirect to the authors.
- Start tweeting around 1 hour after the press release + include a bioenergy related picture in the tweet and with one or several hashtags, such as #EUbioenergy
- Send an official response to the authors of the report, leave communication open and have constructive attitude.

Annex: ExCo survey

October 2016

At the ExCo77 meeting in Rome it was suggested that ExCo members would discuss with in-house communication experts how to bring IEA Bioenergy messages to national stakeholders. Below is a **synthesis overview** of the main outcomes.

Survey to ExCo members & Task Leaders: summary of the results

11 responses

1. How to achieve a better outreach of Task reports and their main conclusions?

Most people support an official **launch** of Task reports, at least for key ones. The approach depends on the type of report and the communication objective and audience (e.g. make distinction between reports that contribute facts into an on-going debate versus more technical reports for a specialized audience). Question is if we can announce beforehand as there is often uncertainty in the exact delivery date.

Webinars can help to dive deeper into the material and get some dialogue with stakeholders. The general public will be difficult to reach.

To maximize outreach, we should try to spread the word through as many different vehicles and organizations as possible.

Starting point is placing material on the **website**. What is needed are:

1. an appealing **title**,
2. a **short press/news release** in plain language and attractive, containing the research question & key highlights of the study (up to 140 characters), and preferably a photo/infographics. This can be distributed through mailings and social media. Take into account readability for handheld devices (smartphones, ipads, ...).
3. a **short summary** (max 2pages) of the report, preferably also with info graphics (*2p dry text is too long*),
4. the **full report** (and subreports if applicable).
5. slide share / recording of related presentations at events or webinars.
6. possibly short video, blog article on the topic (if relevant for public debate), TED talks (?).

We have to make more use of the **central website** <http://www.ieabioenergy.com/>, and bring together all task outputs (publications) on a central location (**searchable library**), also to increase IEA Bioenergy branding.

Distribution: approach depends on content, audience and communication objective.

- Certainly use social media for dissemination of news items, reports, workshop announcements: Twitter (continuous efforts to increase followers), LinkedIn, Facebook.
- Direct mailings also to be considered, but don't overflow people. For decision makers, use targeted, personal mailings (preferably through ExCo members) indicating why this is relevant info for them.
- Feelings on impact of own newsletter are mixed, but it is good to make regular overviews (monthly or quarterly) of new material that appeared in the past months.
- Make use of popular newsfeeds (e.g. Biofuel Digest) and other organizations to spread material (IRENA, WBA, EUBIA, ...). Retweeting material of those 3rd parties will make it more likely that they also pick up our material.
- To keep reports on the agenda (also later) the following avenues are suggested:
 - Seek speaking engagements (also towards less specialist audiences).
 - Repeat social media posts (including blogs and op-eds) on schedule and as debates re-emerge in other media.
 - If there is a cross-over, link to past reports in news releases for upcoming reports.
 - Point to key messages in workshops and conferences.

Role of ExCo members:

- Link national outlets (websites, newsletters, ...) to events, presentations and summary reports on the IEA Bioenergy website.
- Some of the supporting material from reports (press release etc) should be flexible enough to allow member countries to include as part of material in their own national context, so they can post these on their own social media.
- ExCo members to consider if messages from 2-page summaries are relevant for their own country context.

Role of Tasks: Tasks have their own contacts and should use their own channels (website, newsletters, mailings) to distribute their work. For a broad awareness we need an exclusive "IEA Bioenergy" brand - all announcements must show our brand.

Keep track of number of downloads! Can be used as success factor to distribute a report again.

2. How to distribute announcements of workshops/webinars, ... ?

Workshop dissemination should follow a similar approach to reports. There may be scope for recording and sharing of presentations and scope to produce short videos with soundbites from speakers and attendees.

There is a parallel role of Tasks and IEA Bioenergy centrally to distribute announcements. Tasks usually have long mailing lists. A uniform line/format of communication over Tasks could be beneficial regarding recognizability.

Presentations and summary reports to be made available on the IEA Bioenergy website (in case of a Task workshop, the central website can link to a subsite of the Tasks). When presentations/workshop summary are available on-line this should be announced through different media.

3. Debates on bioenergy in the media

Posting pdf **1-2 page fliers** on certain debated topics on-line (in FAQ section or similar, e.g. Resources/Quick Facts) is a good way to ensure people have access to this information; share them through social media during a media debate.

Write blogs or op-eds on a certain topic/potential debate, spreading see above.

Repeat social media posts as debates re-emerge in other media. Re-charge blogs and op-eds.

Some people suggested to hire a media spokes(wo)man (who had mediatraining) to get the message across (may be outside of scope and budget).

The task of IEA Bioenergy would be to **contribute to the debate with fact based, scientifically sound information**. A clear list of the key arguments and debates to be refuted is required (based on existing resources from IEA Bioenergy). We should not consider ourselves as a lobby group and we have to avoid political statements. Debates are often emotionally and politically charged, and influenced by lobbies. We shouldn't enter in a direct confrontation mode. Maybe it is better to feed our fact-based information to IEA HQ, as they are considered more bioenergy independent to give an unbiased opinion.

Coordination of reactions to certain debates should be done centrally (TC/Chair/Secretary), relying on experts from the Tasks.