



## HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH PARTICIPANTS AND OTHER RELEVANT AUDIENCES AFTER A SHERPA MAP EVENT?

Once a SHERPA MAP event is over, the most important part is follow-up. Without an effective follow-up strategy, the time invested into getting to know the target audience risks ultimately being wasted – and this is where a bespoke approach is essential.

Throughout follow-up actions, it is indeed possible to see which stakeholders are the most engaged, how the engagement level of each of them has changed, and whom MAP Facilitators and Monitors should prioritize time for that next steps – whether it is to book a meeting or to invite them to a future MAP event.

The basic elements of a successful post-event communication are the following five.

### 1. Thank you email.

Send a simple follow-up email right after the event to all participants who attended the MAP event.

### 2. Send an email to no-shows

If a target stakeholder registered but did not show up at the MAP event, it might be for several reasons: conflict with other events or commitments on the same date, travel issues, diminished interest, etc. It is therefore smart to contact them and share some content about what has happened even to that part of the target audience. This increases the chances that they will keep following the next activities carried out at the MAP event in the future.

### 3. Share relevant content

Send the proceedings of the event, speakers' presentations, list of participants, photos, videos, but also information on the next steps (new MAP event dates, discussions, topics to address, etc.). It is also important to share the link to register to the SHERPA Newsletter 'Rural Interfaces', as well as the link to the SHERPA Blog.

### 4. Send a post-event assessment form

Following MAP events, it is recommended that SHERPA MAP Facilitators and Monitors directly at the MAP event distribute and collect post-event assessment forms or after each event send post event surveys via email asking attendees to complete an online event feedback survey.



For more information and tips about how to gather participants feedback, please see the specific **Error! Reference source not found.**

### 5. Follow up in person

Contacting directly those participants who seemed more engaged at the MAP event is also important to increase the chances that they understand that their commitment is appreciated and thus stay engaged also in the future activities of the MAP. It is recommended for SHERPA MAP Facilitators and Monitors to plan for follow up activities early on (already) before the event.

## Press release

A press release is a tool that SHERPA MAP Facilitators and Monitors can consider for communicating after a SHERPA MAP event. It is about 400 words long and can be used to get media coverage (from a journalist, influencer, blogger or podcaster) of a brilliant news story related to a SHERPA MAP.

It must be remembered that most press releases about events fail because they simply say 'an event is happening'. An event on its own is not news that draws attention.

The ideal structure of a press release includes the following nine sections.

### Press release structure

1. Send date, SHERPA project logo and EU logo
2. Headline with the news hook
3. Introductory paragraph to grab the attention of the reader
4. Paragraph 2 and 3 to develop the story with factual pieces of information
5. Quotes of a front person (with full name and position) involved in the story, delivering the 'why' behind the story
6. Key messages related to the mission of the SHERPA MAP
7. Closing quote, for instance of another person having attended the event whose endorsement gives your story/achievements more credit
8. Closing paragraph, for instance showing what are the next steps for that MAP activity
9. ENDS. Always finish your press release with the word 'ENDS'.



For further references and general tips on how to write a good press release look [here](#).

## Website

The SHERPA project website can be used for communicating about SHERPA MAP events' news-worthy outcomes (e.g. latest publications, outcomes). As a good practice, a piece of news can be provided to the project's central communications team, and which could take the following form:

- As an article (e.g. about main achievements and lessons learnt) to be published on the bi-monthly SHERPA newsletter 'Rural Interfaces' to expand the debate about an interesting topic beyond the usual 'rural development policy' communities.
- As a post in the SHERPA Blog. The blog (animated twice a month with new content) will take the form of short articles about rural stakeholders' stories, reporting their views, experience, knowledge,

science around a specific topic relevant for the project. The aim is to stimulate debates amongst rural and coastal stakeholders on 'hot topics' developed in the MAPs.

## Social Media

SHERPA MAP Facilitators' and Monitors' communication and outreach related tasks include publishing at least 1 social media post per MAP meeting (before, during or immediately after). They are also expected to have as many MAP members as possible register as followers of the SHERPA social media accounts and relay social media posts published by the central communication team to increase outreach.

Following up with participants using social media is another useful way to keep the conversation going, reconnect with past attendees, and make your attendees repeat attendees for your future MAP events.

Content-wise, a post could mention some interesting discussion that took place, what is Sherpa aiming to do and who was there and link to the official SHERPA website. Use the SHERPA project logo, hashtags (#SHERPA2020, #EUrural) and project handle (@rural\_interfaces) to establish an identity that makes it easy for your messages to be immediately recognised as associated to the MAP's work.

After an event, posting photos is a great way to connect and engage with attendees. Tagging them in photos and giving shout outs to them on social media can also be effective. Prior to posting, it is important to ask participants' permission to publish photos or video material collected at the event if it is about specific people with faces and intros.

Social media can also be useful for hosting conversations with attendees. Twitter chats using a common hashtag and an agreed upon time to have a live chat are a solution to consider for SHERPA MAP Facilitators and Monitors. This helps create buzz about the MAP event and continues the conversation after the event while also encouraging attendees to stay involved, active and connected with other attendees.

Another social media that can be used to connect with stakeholders after a MAP event is Facebook groups. Each event can have its own group where target stakeholders can join and continue discussing, networking, connecting, etc and it is a great way for continued networking but also to give more enriching opportunities for exchange and engagement to attendees.

For more information and tips about how to use social media, please see the specific guidance sheet 7 on 'How to use social media to communicate about SHERPA MAP activities'.