

**EPOS
ERIC**

**EPOS
OPERATIONAL
COMMUNICATION
PLAN 2024-2028**

EPoS
EUROPEAN PLATE OBSERVING SYSTEM



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EPOS OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATION PLAN 2024-2028

Operational objectives and
communication actions
multi-year rolling plan

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Introduction and rationale

Strategic goals

The Operational plan for communications 2024-2028 is based on the overarching **objective of increasing EPOS' visibility (SG0 - Visibility)** and **four strategic goals**:

1. Position EPOS as authoritative and impactful on a global level (*SG1 - Positioning*)
2. Reinforce internal communication in the broader EPOS community, including TCS, National Research Infrastructures, etc. (*SG2 - Internal Communication*)
3. Foster the usage of the infrastructure and reuse of the data in it (*SG3 - Foster Usage*)
4. Widen and engage a multi-stakeholder community (*SG4 - Community Engagement*) by addressing different audiences with the appropriate messages:
 - Users;
 - data providers;
 - Non-academic stakeholders (e.g. industry, national authorities, policy makers...);
 - potential partners (e.g. other RIs worldwide).

These goals are deeply intertwined with those of the EPOS Science program, as shown in the following table.

EPOS Communication Goals	EPOS Science Programme Strategic Objectives
SG1 - Position EPOS as authoritative and impactful on a global level	<u>Direct impact</u> SO5 Amplifying and spreading the societal value of EPOS SO6 Boosting global cooperation <u>Indirect impact</u> SO1 Ensuring smooth and seamless access to solid Earth science data and services
SG2 - Reinforce internal communication	<u>Direct impact</u> SO3 Enlarging, widening and empowering the user community SO2 Enhancing and advancing services for solid Earth science
SG3 - Foster usage of the infrastructure and reuse of the data in it	<u>Direct impact</u> SO1 Ensuring smooth and seamless access to solid Earth science data and services SO3 Enlarging, widening and empowering the user community SO4 Implementing principles of Open Science and FAIR data management, and contributing to e-science innovation <u>Indirect impact</u> SO5 Amplifying and spreading the societal value of EPOS
SG4 - Widen and engage a multi-stakeholder community:	<u>Direct impact</u> SO3 Enlarging, widening and empowering the user community SO5 Amplifying and spreading the societal value of EPOS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> users 	<u>Direct impact</u> SO1 Ensuring smooth and seamless access to solid Earth science data and services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> data providers 	<u>Direct impact</u> SO2 Enhancing and advancing services for solid Earth science
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> non-academic stakeholders 	<u>Direct impact</u> SO5 Amplifying and spreading the societal value of EPOS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> potential partners 	<u>Direct impact</u> SO6 Boosting global cooperation <u>Indirect impact</u> SO1 Ensuring smooth and seamless access to solid Earth science data and services SO2 Enhancing and advancing services for solid Earth science SO5 Amplifying and spreading the societal value of EPOS

It is important to notice that the communication goals also interconnect with, and can have a significant impact on, the longer-term sustainability of EPOS ERIC and its infrastructure: by successfully positioning EPOS in the global landscape of Research Infrastructures, creating a wide and active community around it, and establishing well-honed relationships with decision makers, the communication action can, in the long term, support the continued usage and relevance of the infrastructure as well as the access to multiple funding streams.

The Operational plan

Starting from the Strategic Goals presented above, this document presents the operational communication objectives for the period 2024-2028. It is intended as a 5-year rolling plan, to be revised each year by the Communication unit in concert with the EPOS ERIC Executive Director and the ECO office, and provides an operational guidance to all communication activities carried out by EPOS. Because of the networked and distributed nature of EPOS, the engagement and participation of the EPOS community, and in particular of people in charge of communication and training in the TCS and NRI are paramount for the success of the plan: for this reason, the Communication unit will take care of carrying out periodic consultations to improve and update the plan.

In the following sections, we present the Communication objectives for the period, broken down into specific objectives, the actions to be carried out to achieve them, the detailed activities foreseen to implement the actions, and their main outcomes. We also include ancillary activities which, while not an objective per se, are instrumental in achieving the objectives.

Operational objectives: an overview

For the period 2024-2028, ten Operational Objectives (OO) were identified for communication:

Objective n° and name	Short description	Related Goal(s)
OO1- Branding	Reinforce EPOS branding and implement it consistently across TCS and NRIs	SG0 -Visibility - SG1 - Positioning - SG2 - Internal Communication
OO2 - Website review	Evolve the EPOS website and increase its visibility	SG0 -Visibility - SG1 - Positioning - SG2 - Internal Communication SG4 - Community Engagement
OO3 - Information materials	Provide a variety of informative materials on EPOS and its activities	SG0 -Visibility - SG1 - Positioning - SG4 - Community Engagement
OO4 - EPOS videos	Provide informative and engaging videos about EPOS, its activities and its users	SG0 -Visibility - SG1 - Positioning - SG4 - Community Engagement
OO5 - Social media	Consolidate the EPOS presence on social media and grow its audience	SG0 -Visibility - SG1 - Positioning - SG4 - Community Engagement
OO6 - Event planning	Create moments for the EPOS community to meet together and engage with stakeholders	SG0 -Visibility - SG1 - Positioning - SG2 - Internal Communication - SG3 - Foster Usage - SG4 - Community Engagement
OO7 - Training and user engagement	Train and engage users to make the most of the EPOS Data Portal	SG1 - Positioning - SG2 - Internal Communication - SG3 - Foster Usage - SG4 - Community Engagement
OO8 - Community & employer branding	Encourage young talents to join EPOS	SG1 - Positioning - SG4 - Community Engagement
OO9 - EPOS Open Source positioning	Position and disseminate the EPOS Data Portal Open Source code	SG1 - Positioning - SG3 - Foster Usage - SG4 - Community Engagement
OO10 - Internal and external communication tools	Enhance the communication flow with different target audiences	SG2 - Internal Communication - SG4 - Community Engagement

Two main ancillary activities, instrumental to the smooth implementation of the plan were also identified:

Ancillary activity n° and name	Short description
AA1 - Monitoring and reporting	Monitoring communication activities within the ECO, TCS, and national NRIs, reporting accomplishments to the governance and community, and conducting analyses to enhance processes and outcomes
AA2 - Scouting	Seeking additional resources for expanding communication efforts, including identifying potential projects and funding opportunities, and forming partnerships and collaborations to benefit EPOS ERIC and its communications, while ensuring EPOS's visibility in pertinent communications

In the following section, each of the ten Operational Objectives is described in terms of its specific objectives, the key actions to achieve them and their main outputs.

Specific objectives, actions and key outputs

OO1 - Branding: reinforce EPOS branding and implement it consistently across TCS and NRIs

The **specific objectives** for OO1 are refining the TCS and NRI family branding strategy, offering clear guidance on EPOS brand use to all stakeholders, and providing resources for consistent EPOS branding implementation.

The **key actions** for OO1 are, on one hand, the update of EPOS templates and creation of new ones, offering complete and easy-to-use brand kits for TCS and NRI and a process to streamline template and brand management for improved branding and accessibility; and, on the other hand, the provision of detailed branding guidelines through an enhanced version of the Visual Identity Manual and targeted webinars for branding education towards the community. The **main outputs** for this activity will be a complete set of templates for TCS and NRIs and the Visual Identity manual 2.0.

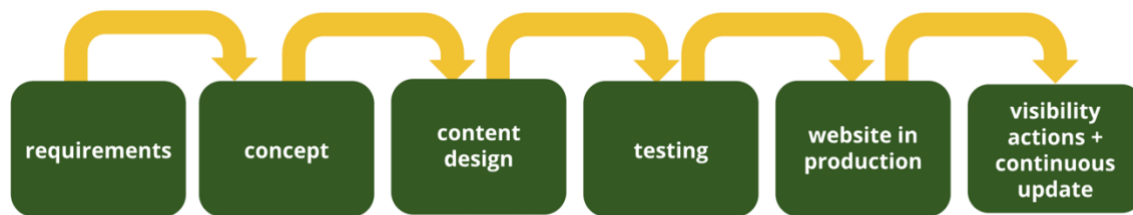
OO2 - Website review: evolve the EPOS website and increase its visibility

The **specific objectives** are enhancing communication effectiveness, creating a modern and appealing image for the website, and offering a one-stop-shop to showcase EPOS' activities, addressing common questions about EPOS (e.g., is my country/ community organisation/ part of EPOS? Which data/services will I find on EPOS? what can I do to...) and provide resources for stakeholders, while fostering two-way communication with website visitors.

The **key actions** to achieve this objectives include: collection and analysis of requirements from the ECO and the EPOS community, focusing on communication objectives, content emphasis, desired image, and target audiences; design the content architecture and website layout based on these specifications; review and rewrite existing content, identify additions, and address outdated or ineffective elements, and migrate the content into new content structures and templates, devising a process for ensuring continuous editorial and technical update.

Additionally, actions will be implemented to ensure the optimal visibility of the website, in collaboration with the TCS and NRI communication colleagues. These include link campaigns, cross-media posting, mass mailing and SEO audits.

The **main output** of these actions is the release of the new EPOS institutional website.



Review process for the EPOS Website

OO3 - Information materials: provide a variety of informative materials on EPOS and its activities

The **specific objectives** for OO3 are to provide ready-to-use or customizable information and promotion materials for different EPOS actors, maintain up-to-date communication materials, and offer standardised text resources for various predetermined situations, such as articles, calls for applications, or press releases.

The **main actions** to achieve this objective include the collection and update of existing information and promotion materials, and the production of new ones; this will be done in close collaboration with communications contacts in the TCS and NRIs. Besides the creation of ready-to-use materials such as leaflets or posters, the actions also include the creation of “intermediate” products such as reusable texts that can be adapted to different media and communication opportunities. As a part of this activity, a process will be put in place for periodically checking the available materials for updates, notifying the EPOS community the release of major updates, and preventing unintentional use of outdated elements. TCS should be involved in the periodic check of TCS-specific materials.

Key outputs for this OO include a complete set of the information materials available to all EPOS participants, and an agreed process dedicated to updates and versioning.

OO4 - EPOS videos: provide informative and engaging videos about EPOS, its activities and its users

Specific objectives of OO4 include the production of reusable short video presentations about EPOS, the EPOS data portal and specific services, including short tutorials/walkthroughs, and of engaging video content focusing on testimonials that can be promoted through cross-media campaigns. These videos are intended for partner reuse in a wide range of situations, including local/national events, campaigns, social media etc.

Main **actions** include the design, storyboarding, production and post-production of the video materials; their distribution on the institutional web page, YouTube channel and social media; and the design of dedicated cross-media campaigns to push the video stories and boost engagement on platforms like YouTube and other social media. Subcontractors can be selected to carry out some of the tasks.

The main **output** for this OO will be the produced information and promotional videos.

OO5 - Social media: consolidate the EPOS presence on social media and grow its audience

The **specific objectives** for this OO are Increasing and differentiating social media content, growing EPOS' social media organic followers across different social platforms and engaging the follower base creating meaningful interactions.

The main **actions** to achieve this objective include the creation of a social media calendar for regular (ideally daily) posts for LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook; engagement of colleagues from the ECO and TCS, following relevant hashtags and accounts to identify compelling topics for content, and wider campaigns to which EPOS can participate; tailoring content to exploit the features of different social media channels; and implement a social media policy to involve all EPOS stakeholders in the creation of meaningful and appealing contents, while increasing the number of EPOS social media followers across various platforms.

The **key output** for this OO is the social media calendar, alongside the newly generated and diffused contents, and social media campaigns.

OO6 - Event planning: create moments for the EPOS community to meet together and engage with stakeholders

The **specific objectives** for OO6 are on one hand organising EPOS community events to enhance belonging and participation, and on the other orchestrating EPOS presence at key events, and offering professional communication support to national /local/ specialised events where EPOS is represented by NRI and/or TCS personnel to engage with relevant stakeholders.

The **main actions** for this OO include the design, organisation and delivery of the EPOS events (in particular the EPOS Days and, starting from 2025, the EPOS summer schools), the coordination with the EPOS stakeholders to ensure appropriate communication support to the EPOS' presence at key events at the international, national and regional events, their coverage in terms of promotion, visibility on social media etc, and accurate

documentation of their outcomes. In particular, this includes the presence at EGU yearly events through an appropriate mix of sessions, materials, and dissemination and engagement activities in the exhibition. With reference to the support of the EPOS presence to additional events, a specific action is envisaged for the establishment and maintenance of a shared event planning calendar and an agreed workflow through which the TCS, NRIs and other EPOS stakeholders will inform about planned events and get communication support.

Key **outputs** for this OO are the organisation of EPOS events and of the presence at EGU, as well as the joint calendar and event reporting workflow and relevant event support packages.

OO7 - Training and user engagement: train and engage users in making the most of the EPOS Data Portal

Specific objectives for OO7 focus on engaging potential users in exploiting the EPOS data portal through the offer of tailored learning paths; establishing a network of trainers capable of educating others in their communities, and providing reusable training resources.

Key actions involve the collection of training needs through questionnaires and interviews, that will be the basis of the creation and implementation of an engagement strategy targeting potential users, and especially students and young research careers, in using the EPOS data portal, and the co-design of learning paths tailored to the specific needs of different audiences (i.e. researchers, civil servants, industry/SMEs, decision makers, citizen scientists...) with the active involvement of TCS. A train-the-trainer programme will be rolled out to create a pool of trainers spanning the EPOS countries and TCS, who can in turn train more people within their communities; the co-creation of FAIR-by-design training materials, complete with appropriate metadata to facilitate their actual reuse from the point of view of trainers and trainees, the design and maintenance of a training hub for the EPOS training community. Last, but not least, activities to keep trained users engaged in a two-way communication will be carried out, including providing push information, offering guidance on citing EPOS and disseminating works connected to its infrastructure, and the creation of one or more communities of practice to facilitate ongoing engagement, offering guidance, and answering questions.

Key outputs for these actions will be a set of reusable training resources, the EPOS Learning platform, and one or more Train-the-Trainers courses and courses for users and other audiences (e.g., civil servants).

OO8 - Community & employer branding: encouraging young talents to join EPOS

The **objectives** specific to this OO are reaching out to young talents and creating avenues for their involvement in EPOS through initiatives like internships, mentoring programs, summer schools, travel grants, and exchange programs; positioning EPOS ERIC and the broader network as an appealing employer.

Relevant **key actions** include on one hand the engagement of students, young researchers and professionals by providing skill-building opportunities such as seminars on EPOS and the data portal's use in research, internships, mentoring programs, fellowships, and summer schools, provide resources to organisations within EPOS who are offering similar opportunities, and collect testimonials from participants for communication purposes. On the other hand, the action will focus on employer branding and advertising activities, proposing EPOS as an attractive work environment and emphasising key values like international collaboration, inclusiveness, and societal impact.

The **key outputs** for this action will be a list of key messages for talents, a live list and prioritisation of skill-building opportunities, guidelines/kits for EPOS partners, and a pilot internship programme.

OO9 - EPOS Open Source positioning: position and disseminate the EPOS Data Portal Open Source code

Specific objectives for OO9 include developing a strategy to position the EPOS Open Source code to promote its reuse, tracking and showcasing relevant use cases, and facilitating the establishment of an extended community of developers capable of providing support and evolving the software.

Envisaged actions to achieve these goals focus on product positioning (i.e., product definition, outline the key features, benefits, and value proposition of the EPOS software), visual identity and online presence, and the definition and implementation of a communication campaign aimed at involving and engaging developers in a dedicated community on GIT.

Key **outputs** for this activity include the visual and online presence of the EPOS open code, a social media campaign and a (virtual) launch event, and the creation of an online community.

OO10 - Internal and external communication tools: enhance the communication flow with different target audiences

The specific objectives for this OO are optimising internal communication within the ECO to boost operational efficiency, streamlining and improving communications within the extensive EPOS community, developing a contact database for engagement, communication, community building, and expanding the network of regular contacts beyond the immediate EPOS circle.

The **key action** include the selection, configuration and adoption of a suitable task management tool, ideally extensible not only to the ECO but to the wider community, at least for those people in it who play an active role in EPOS; optimising and revamping the existing EPOS intranet by removing usability barriers and training and motivating the community to use it in their daily work; and building and populating an EPOS contact database. The latter, which is seen as paramount to facilitate the communication with various stakeholders and keep track of the interactions with them, will entail gathering information and requirements from various units, including data treatment details and additional data needs; design and build a database and create a workflow for its maintenance by the ECO personnel.

Key **outputs** will be the newly adopted task management tool, a revised intranet with improved usability and a user guide, and the EPOS contact database.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Progresses in the plan implementation will be checked against the delivery of the key outputs for each activity. However various quantitative indicators will be collected and used with the double aim of improving the activities and reporting its results to the relevant EPOS ERIC bodies, and in occasion of external reviews etc. The quantitative information collected and analysed to assess the performance in communication is rather wide, and mostly useful for insiders to improve effectiveness. It includes web and social media statistics, statistics on participation in events, exhibits, training etc, number and variety of materials produced and reused by TCS and NRIs, as well as qualitative indicators such as the results of satisfaction surveys. Specific analyses such as SEO audits or sentiment analysis can also be performed to gain insights on specific aspects of the communication and improve them. While an extensive list of such statistics will be compiled and collected as a part of AA1, here we provide a table with a selection of them, which can be used as key performance indicators related to each of the Operational Objectives identified in this plan.

Objective n° and name	Proposed KPI(s)	Description
OO1- Branding	Brand Kits and Templates Adoption Rate	% of TCS and NRI using Brand Kits and Templates
OO2 - Website review	Website Traffic Growth	% increase in (1) unique visitors (2) page views
OO3 - Information materials	Volume of materials used by EPOS actors	N° of materials printed and distributed/ downloaded
OO4 - EPOS videos	EPOS Video views, sharing and Engagement Rate	Number of views, average percentage of video viewed by users, number of shares and reactions on social media
OO5 - Social media	Social Media Follower Growth	% increase in the number of followers
	Engagement rate	% of social media posts that receive interactions (comments, reactions or shares)
	N° of impressions	N° of impressions

OO6 - Event planning	Event attendance	N° of participants at organised events
	Event feedback score	Average score received in feedback form
OO7 - Training and user engagement	Training attendance	N° of participants at organised trainings
	Training feedback score	Average score received in feedback form
OO8 - Community & employer branding	Candidates attraction rate	N° of candidates participating in EPOS initiatives (e.g. applying to job positions, internships etc)
OO9 - EPOS Open Source positioning	Community growth	N° of developers entering the open-source project community
OO10 - Internal and external communication tools	Contact Database Growth	N° of contacts within the database for engagement and communication purposes

