

NCP Experience report on Communication Strategy

based on a Meet & Exchange workshop "Communication Strategy",
organized in the frame of the NCP-Academy, 29th March 2017,
Paris

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1. Introduction: Why this workshop?

"NCPs should be good communicators, and be able to adapt methods as necessary, taking into account the diversity of actors that make up their constituency (eg. academia, industry, including SMEs, public authorities etc)."

This statement from the Minimum standards and Guiding principles for setting up systems of National Contact Points implies that the National Contact Points are in charge of promoting HORIZON 2020 in their countries and must be good at communicating.

By doing so, they target Research centers (publics and private), but also SMES, NGO, etc, but beyond these targets, some of their communication activities may be directed towards policy makers, administrations, stakeholders, associations etc.

HORIZON 2020 is part of the European Union building process and promoting H2020 is a way of promoting the EU as a means to drive economic growth and create jobs. Horizon 2020 has the political backing of Europe's leaders and the Members of the European Parliament. They agreed on research as a key priority, an investment for our future, and so put it at the heart of the EU's blueprint for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs.

2. Experiences and lessons learnt, based on the experiences & reflections of all participants

Meeting starts with testimony about worst & best experiences of communication (see figure below and Table 1).

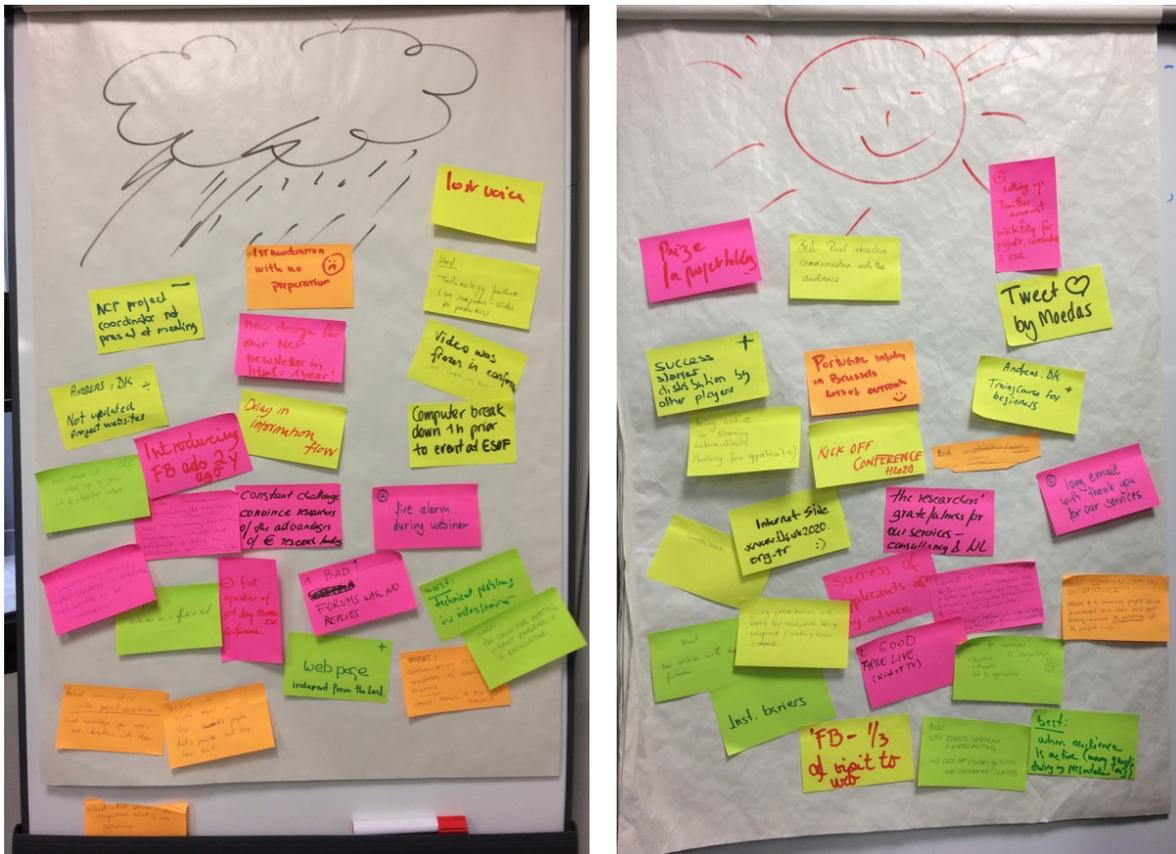


Table 1. Best/worst experience in communication

	Best experience	Worst experience
Be a good communicator!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Be able to speak <i>for</i> people -Be able to present without ppt -Target audience -Enjoying speaking for a large audience -Getting H2020 to be known by private companies and new actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Loss of voice -Improvising for somebody else -Wrong tool for the wrong audience (ex: twitter for old audience in some countries)
Joys of technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Internet and possibility to link together -Nice/new websites -reTweet from Moedas -Working with LinkedIn, facebook accounts -Expending visibility on internet -Use of webinars because they are low cost and very efficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Technological failure: no computer, no slides, no microphone... -Not updated websites -Forum without responses -Massive update during a webinar (computer stuck) -Shutting down a videoconference by accident
NCP's experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training beginners getting high scores afterwards -Analysing calls and finding breaches for new topics -Having an infoday in Bruxelles is a very good idea -When applicants are successful taking into account some advice NCP gave them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -NCP meeting were project coordinator did not show up... -Delay in communication strategies due to validation process at high level management
Big events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Kick-off conferences -Creation of the <i>Etoiles de l'Europe</i> award (France) -National and international infodays in Brussel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Validation delays for communication strategies or changing designs in newsletters in ministries Press: "not interesting enough" Monitoring one's first infoday...
Human contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gratefulness; real interaction -Shared victories and success' -Nice feedbacks from applicants -Good and active audience -Nice consortium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empty conferences rooms A not convinced community Fire alarm during a webinar or an international conference

In a nutshell:

Despite the large diversity of the NCP consortium represented in this meeting, some trends can be evidenced after this M&E workshop:

- 1) Social media are very useful & efficient to communicate provided that the public target & message have been identified beforehand. They should be run by specialists.
- 2) All NCP are running web sites although with strong differences: some are very simple while others are exhaustive, in national languages and sometimes translated / or in English only (like in Poland). Website is a tool, not communication in itself.
- 3) Other kind of communication tools are infoletters, paper newsletters, but to be efficient they must be focused. It is necessary to identify multipliers for the messages (inside/outside community).
- 4) Support to applicants, in particular for the communication part of the 3rd section of applications, can be done either directly by NCP (it usually takes half a day to review a single proposal) or by private consultants (Austria created a list of "good" ones). Work package for communication in H2020 applications has to be credible.
- 5) Training for NCP is necessary to reach high professional level.
- 6) New communications tools like webinar are very efficient but users must be trained to use it. Webinar can save time & money (recorded/free replay).
- 7) Some major events at national level have been organised in several countries ("Stars of Europe" awards in France, Irish Champions of EU research, Crystal Brussels Prize, etc)
- 8) Regional meetings are necessary, involving research clusters.
- 9) In the view of the newcoming FP9, it has been proposed to promote it through kick-off events (which could be a gala/award with the 5 best H2020 projects); to prepare sectors by the use of eLearning.

3. Alexandra Ruete, DGRI, EC - "Communication matters from day one - trends in H2020"

Some trends exist: focus on outputs and impacts on EC funded projects. Dissemination is crucial. Communication: really bringing attention to the society (public money).

Commission's actions: strong focus on innovation aspect in EC policy, dissemination activities for EC funded projects

The EC selects "news-worthy-projects" with the same message

- Success stories on the website (top criteria: sound management of the project, promising results or impact on the society, and media appeal). Stories are written by professional journalists. Stories used by commissioner linked by actual topics in the press, and in social Medias. Must coincide with EC priorities.
- [Horizon online magazine](#)
- Audiovisuals about projects, professionally produced
- Social medias, which can be used by projects
 - o Twitter: @EUScienceInnov or @EU_H2020 => related to H2020. Can be retweeted by the DG. #ResearchImpactEU for alerting on impact; 120 000 followers
 - o FB: EUScienceInnov to show big events
 - o You tube channel: EU Science & Innovation with guide for good communication

Best ambassadors: the project coordinators themselves. EC really depends on the beneficiaries; they are the ones who can really communicate. Since H2020 dissemination & communication activities is an obligation, because it really pays off at the end, even to get more money later. Talk to the tax payers, show it really has an impact on daily life. The more the society knows about these things the more open it becomes.

In the end it is all about money: you have to sell what you are doing, it will help to find licences, draw attention of national government, show politicians which areas we need to put money in. Good communication & dissemination increases success rates to H2020.

Stresses importance of communication in research

- Convince
- Explain to be useful

- Gain support from society - bring research closer to people
- Get money (convince politicians and sponsors, get funding...)

Contractual aspects:

- 38.1 Article from grant agreement: "the beneficiaries must promote the action and its results by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (..) in a strategic and effective way"
- §29
- **communication: since project starts; vs dissemination: afterwards or to peers (results)**
- strategic = targeted, with specific message. For example a single video is not good; really address specific audience with specific messages. 1 or 2 items.
- §52: "before engaging in a communication activity expected to have a major media impact, the beneficiaries must inform the Commission Agency" => to be coordinated and have greater media impact
- §38.1.2: acknowledgement of EU funding => society has to be aware of EU funded projects. So use EU emblem and use standard sentence as indicated in grand agreement

Advices:

- Work package for communication (will be evaluated as "impact") but has to be credible. Website is a tool, not communication in itself.
 - Comprehensive communication plan
 - Address the "public policy perspective" = working together has made a difference, impact...
 - Events for targeted audiences (done by a project)
 - There is a free choice of communication activities, it really depends on the project: press release, brochure, interview at local radio, special meeting dedicated to the stakeholders
- ⇒ check the "Communicating EU R&I - Guidance for project participants" and H2020 Online Manual
- ⇒ for infodays: Alexandra Ruete can support

One can rely on the official EC "[Communicating EU research and innovation guidance for project participants](#)"

The EC [Guide to Science Communication - videos](#).

See EC official webpage [communicating your project](#).

4. Katarzyna Walczyk-Matuszyk, Poland – “Communication strategy and social media”

Communication and NCP case study: Poland

NCP is context based.

Types of communication:

- webpages
- infoletter
- twitter, fb, linkedin as social media. Responsible: NCPs and specialists
- paper newsletter

But a polish pool shows that NCP do not believe in social media impact! => strategy

- ⇒ Be attractive for clients
- ⇒ Developing goals
- ⇒ Developing new tools
- ⇒ Planning and monitoring
- ⇒ Developing resources: NCPs (everybody has to be involved in communication and have tools), communication unit, external experts to teach how to talk about H2020 and science, “multipliers” (partners: involve them at high level, inform them so they can spread the info), H2020 beneficiaries

Target groups



EU level: EC, EP, liason offices, regional offices, associations, NCP Networks....

NCPs

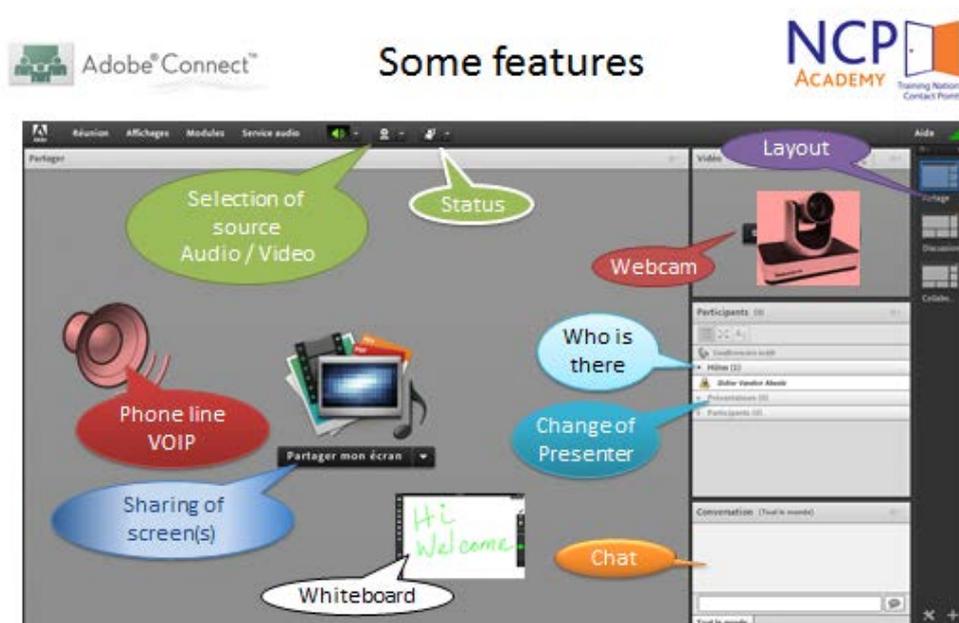
National/ Regional dimension: applicants, beneficiaries, partnering organisations, lultiplicators, NCP network, regional and national authorities, media etc../nIndustry, academia, individual researchers, NGOs, newcomers, etc..

- ⇒ Process: clear message and rules, expert support, capacity building (trainings...), upgrade of tools, development of new tools and channels, quality assessment and management
- ⇒ Social media needs strategy: identify challenges and goals, need for specialists to manage and analyse, define targets (Twitter: industry, Fb: young researchers, with links to the webpage, LinkedIn for English). Social media give easier access to target groups, including industry which is a good follower.
- ⇒ Strategy for media: experts support, building links and networks, presentation of H2020 through success stories => snow ball effect
- ⇒ Best beneficiary prize - Crystal Brussels Prize
- ⇒ In Poland info is published on Wednesday morning (more efficient)
- ⇒ Internationalisation: Poland created an English portal which is not a translation of polish web site, but focused of int. contents, for examples success stories, why SME should come to Poland

5. Didier Vabden Abeele, France - "Webinars"

Webinars: with this tool participation to the meeting increases by 50%. Replays of the videos are in progress. In France, use of Mos@ic by adobe connect, costs supported by the Ministry

Tests are important: as for other social media, it needs special people trained to it. Easier if an extra support takes care during the webinar.



6. Olivier Marco, France – “Stars of Europe – the French award to project coordinators”.

An event in two parts: an international Forum with guest stars (C. Moedas, ministers of science and research...) and large audience, and an award ceremony for best French European project coordinators.

400 people every December.

12 awards per year like the 12 European stars.

Aims & objectives:

Focus on successful projects

Honour research teams applying to Europe

Make Horizon 2020 attractive to French stakeholders and policy makers



7. Catriona Ward, Enterprise Ireland - "Communicating to different target groups"

Who do we communicate with? NCP is in contact with colleagues, experienced applicants, government EU and target: newcomers.

IDIRUS: communication platform in Ireland for H2020

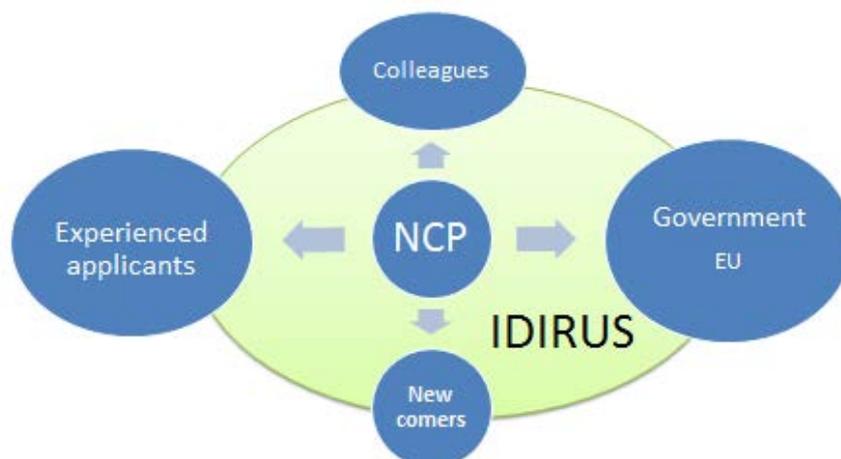
- Monthly meeting projects and research officers
- annual event for newcomers
- workshops for participants
- launch-event for work programmes
- celebrate success: Irish Champions of EU Research
- reporting to government
- office in Brussels with event calendar
- continuous updates: to maintain relationships
- train the trainer

Important:

- knowing the audience and their level of knowledge
- understand their need
- be aware of a change in your audience

Good practice: eLearning before infoday, so new comers got the basics (Danemark).

Who do we communicate with?



Enterprise Ireland 6 March 2017

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8. Astrid Hoebertz, FFG - "Advising the client ranging from the check of the project idea to the proposal check. Experiences and helpful tools"

In Vienna all NCP at the same location, most are professional experts for their topics (35 full time). Individual consulting during all phases of the project.

No information overload

- proposal checks per thematic (needs half day)
- trainings for free, including consultants (once a year) to make them aware of H2020 topics and rules
- consultants: are put on a list if they worked good
- training webinars, recorded: can be watched
- client database
- no social media

Organisation:

1st level through regional office, universities

2nd level NCP: thematic questions, check of project ideas



9. Martine Roussel, France – “Evaluating the impact of NCPs communication activities”.

In France, a Public Policy Evaluation has been commissioned by the Prime Minister (2016).

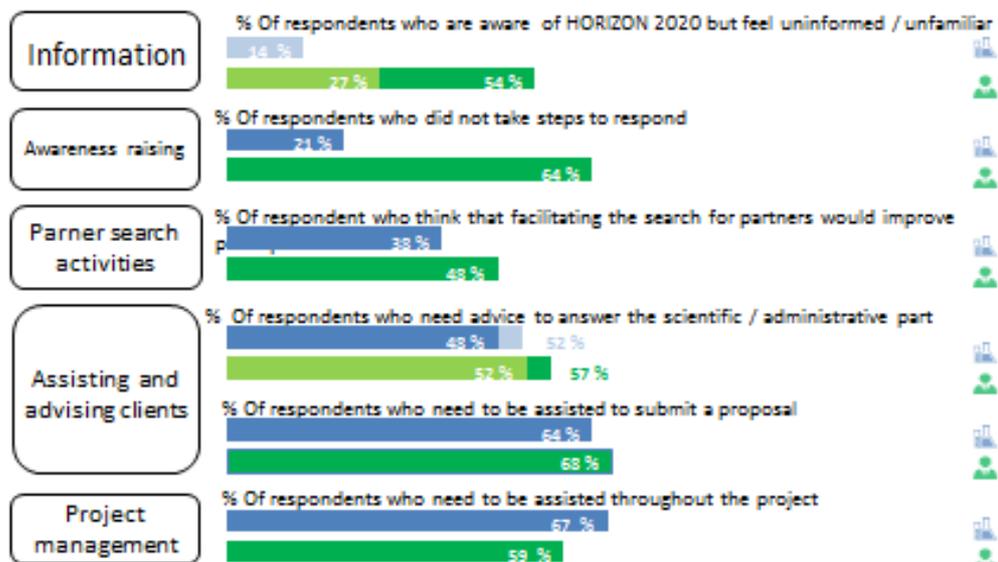
Methodology:

- Survey of enterprises (300) and laboratories (200) (IFOP)
- Benchmark
- Stakeholder participation
- Classical auditions and documentary analysis
- Four visits in Regions
- A trip to Brussels
- Testing stakeholder proposals

Auditors were asked to:

- Make the appropriate diagnosis
- Formulate proposals to increase French participation

Information and support needs vary according to the actors



09.03.2017

Martine Roussel - March 6, 2017

5

Discussion, exchange of experience

Every NCP has been reviewed / survey, how this introduces changes? To settle with question, participate into next NCP Academy ME in May 2017 at Helsinki.

In Germany, online based survey, interesting to understand why a coordinator didn't want to put a proposal again when failed the 1st time.

There are statistics for the web sites. If there is no thematic content then people will look for information elsewhere. IE has a very simple website.

Newsletters: make it short and focus or people don't read it (if too many pages). It is hard to know if people actually read it (maybe with web links).

10. Group activities:

Brain walk with 2 themes, suggestions by all participants.

1) Good practise H2020 2018-2020

Important to maintain 1 national event

3 or 4 thematises

Elevator presentations every year

Regional meeting, involve research clusters

Increase application processes, encourage coordinators to apply for funding to prepare for the application through an application process

2) Promote FP9

Kickoff event

Social media effort

ELearning for sectors so that everybody has the same level of knowledge

Webinars created by the EC that we could publish on our websites, for each sectors

A gala/award with the 5 best H2020 projects

Logo back

Annex 1 - Agenda

10 - 10.15	Welcome
10.15 - 11.15	<p>Communication matters from day 1 - Trends for HORIZON 2020 projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why communication is important? ○ Article 38.1, the contractual aspects and what is expected from the beneficiaries ○ What the EC does in terms of communication ○ What can be done to help H2020 projects <p><i>Alexandra RUETE, Communication Officer DG Research & Innovation; A1: External and Internal Communication Unit</i></p> <p>exchange of experience</p>
11.15 - 12.15	<p>Practical experiences with new tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media and communication strategy, <i>Katarzyna Walczyk-Matuszyk, IPPT Tan</i> • Webinars, <i>Didier Vanden Abeele, MENESR</i> • exchange of experience
12.15 - 13.00	<p>Communicating to different target groups: Important lessons learnt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Catriona Ward, Enterprise Ireland</i> • exchange of experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lunch Break</i> 	
14.00 - 14.45	<p>Advising the client ranging from the check of the project idea to the proposal check Experiences and helpful tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exchange of experience • <i>Astrid Hoebertz FFG</i>
14.45 - 15.30	<p>Evaluating the impact of NCPs communication activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Martine Roussel, MENESR</i> • exchange of experience
15.30 - 16.30	Group work for the identification and presentation of further good practices

Annex 2 – List of Participants

Name	Firstname	Country	Email
AYDIN	Sonay	Turkey	sonay.aydin@tubitak.gov.tr
BADDACK-WERNCKE	Uta	Germany	uta.baddack-werncke@dlr.de
BOSIACKA-KNIAT	Joanna	Poland	jk@ppnt.poznan.pl
BRUUN	Andreas	Denmark	anbr@ufm.dk
BUONOCORE	Caterina	Italy	buonocore@apre.it
CHATEL	Laurent	France	laurent.chatel@cnsr-dir.fr
DUBARRY	Christian	France	christian.dubarry@bpifrance.fr
ERPEN	Denise	Switzerland	denise.erpens@euresearch.ch
FEDERLEY	Sari	Finland	sari.federley@tekes.fi
GÜNTHER	Heini	Finland	heini.gunther@tekes.fi
HAGARDT	Maria	Sweden	maria.hagardt@vinnova.se
HARIDT	Anne	Denmark	amma@ufm.dk
HARKET	Hilde	Norway	htha@rcn.no
HOEBERTZ	Astrid	Austria	Astrid.Hoebertz@ffg.at
HORNIECKA	Marie	Czech Republic	horniecka@tc.cz
IHNATOWICZ	Aleksandra	Poland	aleksandra.ihnadowicz@kpk.gov.pl
MARCO	Olivier	France	olivier.marco@recherche.gouv.fr
MOHEDANO	Laura	Spain	Lmohedano@eu-isciii.es
OZCAN	Sonnur	Turkey	sonnur.ozcan@tubitak.gov.tr
PINCEMIN	Jean-Marie	France	jean.marie.pincemin@univ-poitiers.fr
ROUSSEL	Martine	France	martine.rousseau@recherche.gouv.fr
RUETE	Alexandra	European Commission	alexandra.ruete@ec.europa.eu
SCHRIEFERS	Miriam	Germany	miriam.schriefers@dlr.de
SOGNEFEST	Benedicte	Norway	beso@rcn.no
SUTCLIFFE	Ana	Portugal	ana.sutcliffe@fct.pt
THIEMANN	Doris	Germany	d.thiemann@fz-juelich.de
VAN DEN ABEELE	Didier	France	didier.vanden-abeele@recherche.gouv.fr
WALCZYK	Katarzyna	Poland	Katarzyna.Walczyk-Matuszyk@kpk.gov.pl
WARD	Catriona	Ireland	catriona.ward@enterprise-ireland.com