

## EPN 2024 RI

### EUROPLANET 2024 Research Infrastructure

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## **Executive Summary / Abstract:**

Europlanet is a distributed research infrastructure and membership organisation that supports the planetary science community. It offers a set of services, developed and optimised over nearly 20 years, including research visits to facilities and field sites, remote access to laboratories and telescopes, expert exchanges, training, mentoring, small project funding, bursaries and prizes. Developed through a series of projects funded by the European Commission (EC), Europlanet was established in 2023 as an independent legal structure (an Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif (AISBL) not-for-profit enterprise) based in Brussels, Belgium.

Europlanet implements a comprehensive programme of internal and external communications, with the main aims of:

- Growing the membership of Europlanet.
- Effectively communicating with the planetary science community about the activities and benefits of Europlanet.
- Engaging European citizens with planetary science and related fields.
- Promoting the scientific, technical, socioeconomic impacts of planetary science and the Europlanet research infrastructure.
- Contributing to evidence-based policymaking relating to planetary science and its wider impacts.
- Building communication skills within the planetary science community.

This Communications Sustainability Roadmap reviews recent communications, media, social media and other dissemination initiatives organised through Europlanet and provides recommendations for core activities to be carried out through Europlanet AISBL, within the framework and resources of the newly established not-for-profit enterprise.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Overview of Europlanet

Planetary science covers the study of objects in our Solar System and those orbiting other stars. It is an interdisciplinary field that encompasses astronomy and geophysics, robotic and human exploration of other planets, as well as the search for extra-terrestrial life. The objective of Europlanet is to provide infrastructure and networks to support the planetary science community in Europe and around the world.

Europlanet dates back to a Coordination Action funded by the European Commission (EC) in 2005-2008. Through a series of further EC grants awarded between 2009 and 2024, Europlanet has subsequently developed into a distributed research infrastructure that offers coordinated access to services and facilities spread over 5 continents, supporting a community of thousands of users in academia, industry and in the wider community.

Europlanet was initially conceived to overcome fragmentation within the European planetary science community – an issue highlighted by NASA’s Cassini mission to Saturn, which had significant European academic and industrial involvement in nearly all 16 instruments, and the ESA-led Huygens probe, which explored the atmosphere and surface of Titan. In establishing a well-networked community that has access to state-of-the-art infrastructure – regardless of where individuals are based – Europlanet has helped to ensure that Europe is well placed to extend that leading role through ambitious upcoming missions such as ExoMars Rosalind Franklin, JUICE, Comet Interceptor and EnVision.

Today, Europlanet provides the planetary science community with a platform to:

- Exchange ideas and personnel.
- Share research tools, data and facilities.
- Define key science goals for the future.
- Engage stakeholders, policymakers and European Citizens with planetary science.

The ‘Europlanet family’ currently includes:

- The [Europlanet Association](#), a not-for-profit Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif (AISBL) established under Belgian law in 2023 to give an overarching, independent legal structure for Europlanet’s activities.
- The [Europlanet Society](#), an organisation established in 2018 for the advancement of planetary science that is open to individual and organisational members and is structured around 10 Regional Hubs.
- The [Europlanet 2024 Research Infrastructure \(RI\)](#), which provides access to virtual services, state-of-the-art laboratories and field sites across four continents. Between February 2020 and July 2024, the RI has been supported through a €10 million grant from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 871149.
- The [Europlanet Science Congress \(EPSC\)](#), an annual meeting of over 1000 participants from the academic and industrial sectors in planetary science around the world.
- The [Europlanet Early Career \(EPEC\) network](#) that supports young planetary scientists from undergraduate level to up to seven years into an independent career in academia or industry.
- [FTP-Europlanet gUG](#), a not-for-profit enterprise company established in Weinheim, Germany, with a focus on astronomy education.

On 31 July 2024, Europlanet transitions into a new phase of sustainable operations funded through subscriptions and revenue from EPSC. Core activities will be run through a paid Executive Office, with most community programmes implemented by voluntary committees and working groups.

Historically, the ecosystem of multiple Europlanet organisations has caused some confusion and been quite challenging to explain to the community. Following the conclusion of the Europlanet 2024 RI project on 31 July 2024, the need to differentiate between EC-funded and non-EC funded activities will only apply in a historical context. Thus, strategically, it is planned to phase out the public use of the terminologies 'Europlanet AISBL', 'Europlanet Society' and 'Europlanet RI', except where there are legal or constitutional reasons for specifying the entity.

Reverting to the generic use of 'Europlanet' for most communications will help simplify and clarify messaging and reinforce the brand, which will be important in developing the new funding model.

## 1.2. Overview of Europlanet Communications, Media and Social Media Activities

### 1.2.1. Internal Communications

Europlanet is a distributed research infrastructure and network to support the planetary science community. Membership of Europlanet includes individuals, facilities and organisations spread over five continents, and from a cross-cutting range of scientific disciplines, languages and cultures. For Europlanet to function on any level, it relies on the efficient and coordinated flow of information and feedback. With minimal centralised resources, this is a challenge. Thus, communication and dissemination activities rely on:

- a proactive community that is primed and willing to share information
- regular evaluation and adaptation of the most suitable tools and platforms
- a dedicated team that draws on both paid effort and dedicated volunteers.

The workhorse of all Europlanet communications and dissemination is its main website, [www.europlanet-society.org](http://www.europlanet-society.org). This is a central portal for providing basic information, sharing news, uploading and disseminating reports, and linking to related activities. The website is very large in terms of both content (~500 pages and 1,200 posts) and storage space (10GB+ in size). Historically, this has made it difficult to organise and to navigate. In 2020, aggregator tools were installed to make it easier to tag and display relevant information in different parts of the site and to make static pages look more dynamic and current. Following the end of the Europlanet 2024 RI project, a restructuring will be needed to reflect ongoing activities and priorities, and to ensure that the EU-funded programmes are properly archived.

A membership website, [membership.europlanet-society.org](http://membership.europlanet-society.org), hosts information on how to join Europlanet and resources for members that are behind the membership paywall. Whilst much smaller than the main website, the membership website is also complex in that it hosts the Europlanet Constituent Relations Management (CRM) system. This uses an open-source CRM package called CiviCRM.

The Europlanet Newsletter, which reaches around 2,200 recipients through CiviCRM (with a back-up option through MailChimp), serves to disseminate information to members and the wider community about Europlanet's mission and activities e.g.:

- Introducing key people, programmes and developments in Europlanet
- Highlighting the events that Europlanet is organising and attending

- Reporting on the activities of the various services, committees and working groups that are active within Europlanet
- Informing members of any funding opportunities or collaborative partnerships that might be available to them
- Alerting members to possible job and professional opportunities
- Sharing news and information provided to Europlanet by its members
- Informing members of opportunities to engage with policymakers, provide content for strategy papers and consultation
- Disseminating general planetary science information e.g. papers of interest.

The annual Europlanet Science Congress (EPSC), which attracts around 1200 participants each year, is an important dissemination platform for Europlanet, both within the planetary community and more widely to society. Community events at EPSC, including the Opening Ceremony, Europlanet General Assembly and EPEC General Assembly, as well as the scientific programme, splinter meetings and the exhibition associated with the meeting, all offer opportunities to inform the community about Europlanet's activities and to engage it in discussion about future developments.

The Europlanet Discord server, established in 2023, is also an increasingly important communications platform for the Society and EPSC. As of July 2024, ~260 of the 495 current Europlanet individual members are active on Discord. For the first time in 2024, Discord will be used as the online discussion platform for EPSC (in a channel embedded within the main Europlanet Discord server). It is hoped that this will further encourage uptake of Discord by the community.

Finally, Europlanet hosts (at a minimum) monthly webinars for its members, covering scientific topics and mission updates (e.g. the Juice series, in collaboration with the ESA Juice mission team), as well as career and personal development topics, such as mental health, training schools, recruitment, writing proposals and applying for fellowships. Although termed 'webinars', the sessions can also be set up as Zoom meetings to facilitate contributions by all attendees. The webinars are, therefore, not just an opportunity to share information and resources, but can also lead to direct engagement with the community through Q&A, polls, discussions and debates.

### 1.2.2. External Communications

Planetary science is a topic with enormous possibilities for engaging the public with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Since its foundation, Europlanet has placed special emphasis on dissemination, outreach and impact to foster a culture of co-operation between Europlanet and its stakeholders.

Europlanet's overarching objectives for external communications are to:

- Engage European citizens with planetary science
- Highlight Europe's contribution to planetary research
- Promote the socioeconomic impact of planetary science and Europlanet activities
- Contribute to evidence-based policymaking relating to planetary science and its wider impacts
- Support diversity and inclusion within planetary science and related fields

The Europlanet Media Centre was established in 2006 to promote the scientific, societal and socioeconomic impact of Europlanet and planetary science through the international media and social media.

Over the past 20 years, the Europlanet Media Centre has issued over 250 press releases through distribution channels that reach over 5000 journalists worldwide. This has resulted in regular media coverage in over 60 countries, including in many of the world's leading and most trusted media outlets, with a potential audience of hundreds of millions worldwide. Media interest in field sites has been particularly strong and several JRA and TA field expeditions have included journalists and film crews embedded with the research teams. As a result, Europlanet researchers were featured in National Geographic's 'One Strange Rock' series, a Netflix Documentary produced by Wall to Wall, and magazine articles (e.g. 22-EPN3-070 'Field Notes from A Planetary Expedition' by Niamh Shaw, Europlanet Magazine, Issue 7, August 2024).

All EPSCs, dating back to the first meeting in 2006, have included a press office that has issued press releases on key scientific presentations and organised press briefings for media registered as onsite and (in more recent years) virtual participants. In particular, the briefings have been an opportunity to showcase European involvement in missions, including the first results of Cheops and the first planetary results from the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST).

Europlanet's social media team posts regular content on social media on Europlanet activities, results, professional opportunities, planetary science hot topics.

Current Europlanet social media channels include:

- X/Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Discord
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Telegram
- Mastadon

In addition, Europlanet's Early Career (EPEC) network has its own X/Twitter and Facebook accounts, which are run by volunteers.

However, social media is a constantly changing sector. In particular the changes at X/Twitter have impacted on the effectiveness of the way resources have been allocated. X/Twitter remains the channel where Europlanet has its largest following, but the number of new followers has stagnated from summer 2023-2024, whereas the number of LinkedIn followers has increased by an order of magnitude over the same time period. This means that a strategic rethink of Europlanet's social media usage is required, which will be kicked off with a discussion between stakeholders (the communications team, Executive Office, EPEC, the Executive Board, social media experts) during a splinter meeting at EPSC2024.

Since June 2021, Europlanet has published a magazine that aims to highlight the range of activities by the Europlanet 2024 Research Infrastructure (RI), the Europlanet Society, the Europlanet Early Careers Network, academic and industrial partners, and the wider planetary community. The Magazine is published roughly twice per year and provides an opportunity to present a more in-depth overview of activities, highlighting the outcomes and, in some cases, tracking the longer-term

impact of Europlanet activities over time. The readership of the Europlanet Magazine is estimated at around 2000, including online and print copies.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, events and conferences provide Europlanet with opportunities to engage in a targeted way with academia, industry, business and the general public. These events not only help to raise awareness of Europlanet but also provide active opportunities for membership recruitment.

### 1.2.3. Training, Internships and Skills Development

A central role of Europlanet communications is to provide training and professional development in communication skills to the community. Training sessions online, at EPSC, at early-career schools and at other conferences and meetings (Europlanet Summer School, EPEC Annual Week) have provided participants with practical experience and detailed feedback on writing press releases and discussing their results with the media.

Associated with EPSC 2020-2022, a paid internship programme was held for early career researchers wishing to develop their media and social media skills. Thirteen interns participated in the programme, five of whom have gone on to become part of the Europlanet communications and outreach teams.

Expert Exchange programmes, whereby funding is provided for short visits of up to one week, has also proved to have impactful outcomes for participating media and science communication professionals (e.g. between Armagh Observatory (Northern Ireland) and The Travelling Telescope (Kenya) in 2022).

## 1.3. Sustainable structures

### 1.3.1. Europlanet AISBL

An independent legal structure was established for Europlanet in 2023 with the foundation of a not-for-profit Association International Sans But Lucratif (AISBL) based in Brussels, Belgium. The AISBL is funded through subscriptions (organisational memberships from September 2024, individual memberships and institutional packages of individual memberships), as well as revenue from EPSC.

The purpose of the AISBL is to promote planetary sciences, planetary exploration and any other related field, for the benefit of the community, by encouraging the creation of new knowledge, by promoting education, by stimulating innovation and by enhancing accessibility and transparency. Its objectives are:

- To allow the community of Europlanet stakeholders to speak with one voice to defend and represent its interests;
- To promote coherence between policy and the research priorities of the European Union and the activities coordinated by the association.

The association achieves its goal by pursuing a series of activities, including:

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Not every issue of the Europlanet Magazine has been printed. 250 copies of issues 3 & 7 have been printed and 500 copies of Issues 1 & 2 and a compilation edition have been printed and distributed at EPSC and other meetings e.g. the European Astronomical Society Meeting (EAS), EPEC Annual Week, the British Planetary Science Congress.



- 1) Supporting the planetary science community through the activities of the Europlanet Society and its structures, including the EPSC conference;
- 2) Establishing strategic collaborations to support planetary science;
- 3) By developing and maintaining infrastructures to support planetary sciences.

Through the AISBL, Europlanet will be able to bid for funding as a partner in consortia.

### 1.3.2. Executive Office

The Europlanet Executive Office is funded by the AISBL to manage the day-to-day running of Europlanet. Formerly hosted by the European Science Foundation (ESF) in Strasbourg, an interim Executive Office will be hosted by the University of Kent from 1 August 2024, with technical support provided by Arkadia, an Italian IT start-up. A call for a long-term host for the Executive Office will be issued in the first part of 2025.

The Executive Office is responsible for internal communications for Europlanet, including management of contacts and mailing lists, the production and issuing of newsletters and other informational mailings, administration of Discord, oversight of the two websites, organisation of webinars and production of marketing materials.

### 1.3.3. FTP Europlanet-gUG

To support the sustainability of Europlanet's outreach, education and media services, a not-for-profit company, FTP-Europlanet gUG, was incorporated in Germany in January 2021. The relationship between Europlanet and the company is currently set out in an MoU, but it is anticipated that the Europlanet AISBL will become a shareholder in the gUG.

The form of company chosen has been a gemeinnützige Unternehmersgesellschaft (haftungsbeschränkt), or gUG, a non-profit enterprise company with limited liability and charitable aims as recognised by the German tax office. 75% of the profit must be spent for charitable projects, and profits or income must be directly related to the non-profit business's charitable purpose. German law stipulates that a gUG must form reserves from 25% of the profit.

The charitable aims of the company are:

- Promotion of astronomy, planetary science and space exploration across Europe
- Promote the educational and outreach activities of the Faulkes Telescope Project and Europlanet
- Teacher training and continuous professional development for STEM educators
- Innovative delivery of STEM subjects in schools through astronomy and planetary sciences
- Public engagement and outreach in astronomy and planetary sciences
- Development of research and education projects using robotic astronomy.
- Promote diverse, inclusive education in a sustainable way
- Provide media services to the astronomy and space community and press office support
- Support engagement with amateur astronomers.

The initial shareholders of the organisation FTP-Europlanet gUG are the Dill Faulkes Educational Trust (DFET) Ltd and Dr Lothar Kurtze (as an individual).

FTP-Europlanet gUG offers a further opportunity to participate in EU and other projects to provide specialist services related to education, outreach and media.

### 1.3.4. Voluntary Bodies

A number of Europlanet's voluntary bodies contribute to internal and external communications by providing strategic oversight and content for dissemination. These bodies include:

- **The Europlanet Society Executive Board** – the governing body of the Europlanet Society, with defined remits for the 11 members that include policy and industry fields.
- **The Europlanet AISBL Board** – the elected Officers of the Europlanet Society, who are directors of Europlanet's legal entity, the Europlanet Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif (AISBL), hosted by the Planetary Atmospheres Group of the Royal Belgian Institute for Space Aeronomy (BIRA-IASB) located at the Space Pole in Brussels.
- **The Europlanet Early Career (EPEC) Network** – the early career community within the Europlanet Society, covering undergraduate students through PhD candidates to professionals up to 7 years after their last degree.
- **The Regional Hubs Committees** – 10 committees that support the development of planetary science at a national and regional level, particularly in countries and areas that are currently under-represented within the community. The Regional Hubs are:
  - [Benelux](#)
  - [Central Europe](#): Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia
  - [France](#)
  - [Germany](#)
  - [Ireland and UK](#)
  - [Italy](#)
  - [Northern Europe](#): Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden
  - [Southeast Europe](#): Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Serbia
  - [Spain and Portugal](#)
  - [Switzerland](#)

### 1.4. Audiences

Europlanet communications activities have a number of core audiences for internal and external communications.

#### Internal Communications Audiences

- Existing members of Europlanet
  - Organisational members (from September 2024)
  - Individual members and institutions with membership packages (bulk individual memberships)
- Potential members of Europlanet
  - Researchers in planetary science
  - Space professionals
  - Early career researchers

- Research institutions, including laboratory facilities, field sites and observatories
- Science consortia, including (European) research projects
- Higher-Education
- Industry related to planetary science
- Amateur astronomers and their societies

#### **External Communications Audiences**

- The astronomy community
  - Astronomical societies
  - Amateur astronomers
  - Observatories
- Policymakers
  - The EU (EC, Parliament, and related agencies)
  - Space Agencies (ESA, NASA, JAXA, ISRO etc)
  - National policymakers and funding bodies
  - Strategic organisations (e.g. ESFRI)
  - Data consortia (IDPA, IVOA etc)
- The international media
- European Citizens
  - STEM-inclined members of the public (with an established interest in planetary science and related topics)
  - Children (particularly those that may consider a career in STEM)
  - Teachers
  - Informal educators
  - Museums, planetaria and science centres
  - STEM education providers

## 1.5.Objectives for Europlanet Communications, Media and Social Media

This section summarises the main objectives of the communications, media and social media activities currently carried out by Europlanet.

Table 1: Main Objectives of Europlanet Communications Activities

Main Objectives	Lead (e.g. FTP-Europlanet gUG, Outreach WG, Board, EPSC Executive Committee, EPEC)	Main Tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grow the membership of Europlanet</li> </ul>	Executive Office, Executive Board, Media Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disseminate activities and benefits of joining Europlanet</li> <li>Use and develop Europlanet’s communication tools (website, Discord, Newsletter, social media channels, media dissemination) for effectively collecting and disseminating information on Europlanet activities.</li> <li>Use internal and external events to spread the word about Europlanet and generate new memberships.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight the scientific value and wider impacts of planetary science</li> </ul>	Executive Office, Media Centre, Executive Board, EPEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track and share key results from Europlanet and the planetary science community through Europlanet’s dissemination channels.</li> <li>Monitor opportunities to showcase planetary science and allocate resources accordingly.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop skills within the Europlanet community for engaging effectively with a range of audiences</li> </ul>	Executive Office, Media Centre, EPEC, Outreach, Policy and Industry Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide comprehensive communications skills training at levels from basic to expert for members of the planetary community, tailored for different audiences, at events e.g. webinars, EPEC AW, Summer/Winter Schools</li> <li>Provide resources (slide decks, talking points, cork-board pack etc) for reinforcement of key messages.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximise the potential of EPSC as a showcase for planetary science and Europlanet (internally for the planetary community and externally to other audiences)</li> </ul>	Media Centre, Executive Office, Executive Board, EPSC Committee, EPEC, Outreach, Policy and Industry Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Showcase the activities and benefits of Europlanet throughout EPSC</li> <li>Issue stories and organise press briefings for the international media</li> <li>Strengthen stakeholder opportunities (exhibition, stakeholder events, public engagement programme) for engaging with Europlanet and EPSC.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial/project-specific provision of communications services</li> </ul>	Executive Office, FTP-Europlanet gUG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare packages of communications services and training that can be offered to the community on a commercial (paid) basis.</li> <li>Implement sales programme for training packages.</li> </ul>

## 2. Funding

### 2.1. Sources of Income

#### 2.1.1. Europlanet AISBL

Europlanet AISBL is a not-for-profit enterprise that offers key research infrastructure services developed and optimised over nearly 20 years. It is financed through:

- Community subscriptions
- Organisational memberships (September 2024 onwards)
- Individual memberships
- Institutional membership packages (multiple individual memberships)

EPSC settlement

- Fees
- Exhibition and sponsorship

Commercial services

- Industry access to facilities at commercial rates
- Consultancy

Members of the planetary science community must subscribe through individual or organisational membership to Europlanet to participate in its activities.

The day-to-day management of Europlanet is coordinated by an Executive Office with approximately 1FTE paid staff, about 20% of which relates to communications. The Europlanet Media Centre is funded by the AISBL and EPSC. Activities of the community are carried out by voluntary committees and working groups. The budget of Europlanet is set by the elected Executive Board. All requests for financial support (e.g. to attend meetings, organise events or produce resources) must be made to the Treasurer.

#### 2.1.2. Grants

##### 2.1.2.1. Horizon Europe

Europlanet's established internal and external communications channels make it an attractive partner for planetary and astronomy-related consortia bidding in Horizon Europe calls. Depending on requirements (internal/external, topical expertise, location, duration etc), participation or support could be offered through the AISBL or the gUG.

Europlanet submitted feedback on the Horizon Europe work programme 2025 in the spring of 2024. The Europlanet Executive Board and Sustainability Committee will monitor the Horizon Europe 2025 and 2026-2027 Work Programmes for calls of interest to the Europlanet Community.

#### 2.1.3. Sponsorship and Advertising

The reach of Europlanet's communications and dissemination programmes means that they are of interest to potential sponsors and advertisers wishing to engage with the planetary community. There is already precedent in a journal requesting a series of social media posts to be issued by Europlanet as part of an EPSC sponsorship package. A [rate card](#) for advertising in the Europlanet Magazine was drawn up in 2023.

Sponsorship brings reputational risks of association with third-party organisations. A clear policy for due diligence in pursuing, reviewing and accepting potential sponsorship opportunities should be drawn up by the Europlanet Executive Board.

#### 2.1.4. Consultancy

The Europlanet Executive Office and Media Centre team have a number of ready-prepared training workshops on communications skills that could be offered to the community for a fee.

### 2.2. Expenditure

Activity	Description	Resources needed	Potential Funding Source	Priority
Europlanet newsletter	Monthly newsletter with round-up of updates and opportunities for the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~1.5 days per month.</li> </ul>	Europlanet AISBL income	High
Discord	Moderation of Discord, engagement with new members and hosting weekly discussions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 days per month (0.5 days per week)</li> </ul>	Europlanet AISBL income	High
Webinar series	Organisation of monthly webinars. Hosting sessions where needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0.5-1 days per month.</li> </ul>	Europlanet AISBL income	High
Europlanet Media Centre	Press Office for EPSC and for Europlanet throughout the year. Subscriptions to media services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24 days person effort (6 days staffing EPSC press office x 2 pax), 2 days reviewing abstracts, 2 days contacting authors, 8 days drafting releases.</li> <li>Subscriptions: \$1,667 in 2024 (renewable 1 August 2025) for EurekAlert; £1195 for AlphaGalileo (renewable 31 January 2025)</li> <li>Travel: 2 pax attending EPSC for 6 full days (~1000 per person).</li> </ul>	EPSC	High
Social Media	Daily posting on social media for all channels	0.5 days per week	AISBL/EPSC	High

Communications Training	Communications training at summer/winter schools, EPEC AW etc	TBD	AISLB, Horizon projects, EPEC Annual Week	Medium-High
Internships	Training and practical experience of working with media and social media in a conference environment	Paid internships (€750 (as well as travel, accommodation and sustenance costs)	EPSC Budget	Medium - High
Commercial provision of training services	Training in communication skills	Fee per workshop (€750?)	Projects and clients with the planetary and wider community	Medium (long-term aspiration)

### 3. Roadmap for 2024-2027

#### 3.1. Recommendations

##### 3.1.1. Internal Communications

- **Objective:** Provide the infrastructure needed for sustainable communications activities within Europlanet and the planetary science community.
- **Scope:** Organise and implement structures and tools to underpin Europlanet internal communications activities.
- **Activity Leads:** Executive Office, Executive Board, Committees and Working Groups.
- **Resources Needed:** 0.2 FTE + technical support through Executive Office (TBD by interim Executive Office)
- **Details:** Coordinate regular internal meetings; facilitate communication to foster relationships between teams; field and redirect queries from a central position within the organisation to enable productive collaborations within the network.

##### 3.1.1.1. → Websites

- **Objective:** Maintain a current, comprehensive and user-friendly portal to Europlanet's activities.
- **Format:** Main website and membership website (both WordPress).
- **Frequency:** As required
- **Participants:** Executive Office, Committees and Working Groups.
- **Outcome:** An attractive and effective 'one-stop-shop' for Europlanet's user community.
- **Logistics:**
  - Posts: Add news posts, tagged to appear in relevant sections of the main and membership websites (and on the front page where appropriate).
  - Pages: Add pages for new activities and programmes on the main and membership websites.
  - Events: Add events to the calendar on main website
  - Follow-Up: Track metrics of website usage for both sites.
  - Technical support: Ensure that templates and plug-ins are updated and secure for both sites. Make structural changes as required.
  - Review: Periodically review procedures, structures and guidelines for main website and membership website.

##### 3.1.1.2. → Newsletter and Mailing Tools

- **Objective:** Issue targeted information on Europlanet to members, the wider community and relevant stakeholders.
- **Format:** Newsletter and other mailings.
- **Frequency:** Monthly or as required.
- **Participants:** Planetary community, Europlanet Members, Europlanet Regional Hubs, EPEC, Committees and EPSC participants.



- **Outcome:** A community that is well-informed about Europlanet and engaged with its activities. A growing membership of organisations and individuals.
- **Logistics:**
  - Information Collation: Issue reminders of call for information (2 weeks prior to issue of newsletter) to Hubs, Committees, WGs and Discord Community.
  - Preparation: Collate information (title, image, paragraph of text and link) into a document.
  - Technical Setup: Transfer to mailing tool (CiviCRM or AssoConnect). Send test mailings to check content. Issue release and add link to website archive.
  - Follow-Up: Track metrics of opens, bounces etc. Ensure lists is regularly cleaned of redundant addresses and is GDPR compliant.

### 3.1.1.3. → Discord

- **Objectives:** Build an active, engaged community for Europlanet.
- **Format:** A structured Discord Channel where members of Europlanet can find and share a range of topical information and engage in discussions with other members.
- **Participants:** Executive Office, Europlanet Executive Board, Europlanet Committees and Working Groups, EPEC Network.
- **Outcome:** A motivated community that is engaged with Europlanet, is aware of opportunities offered, experiences benefits of being a member, and is willing to promote Europlanet to peers and organisations in the planetary community.
- **Logistics:**
  - Daily moderation of activity on Discord (welcoming new members, contributing to discussions, troubleshooting issues etc)
  - Hosting weekly get-togethers
  - Ad-hoc events
  - Development and moderation of annual EPSC Discord
  - Periodic review of procedures, structures and guidelines for Discord.

### 3.1.1.4. → Webinars

- **Objectives:** Provide tangible benefits (scientific content of interest, professional skills etc) for Europlanet's membership. Build strategic links with mission teams and key actors in the planetary science and related community through invited guests.
- **Format:** Webinars or Zoom meetings (monthly, at minimum).
- **Participants:** Executive Office (organisation), Europlanet Membership (proposing topics and attending).
- **Outcome:** A motivated community that is engaged with Europlanet, is aware of opportunities offered, experiences benefits of being a member, and is willing to promote Europlanet to peers and organisations in the planetary community.
- **Logistics:**
  - Define topics for future webinars (preferably at least two months in advance).
  - Invite guests and send out invitations to panellists

- Add to membership webpage
- Mail membership about event and issue reminders
- Hold webinar
- Edit recording, add to YouTube and embed on webpage.

### 3.1.2. External Communications

- **Objective:** Communicate and disseminate information on Europlanet to key stakeholders beyond the planetary community.
- **Scope:** Distribute information through websites, mailing lists, media services, events and other services (as appropriate).
- **Activity Leads:** Executive Office, Media Centre, Executive Board, Industry, Policy and Outreach Working Groups, Regional Hubs.
- **Resources Needed:** Staff effort, volunteer effort, subscriptions to media services.
- **Details:** Define key messages for communications with external audiences; identify results, events and activities for communication and most appropriate channels for dissemination and/or engagement; monitor and evaluate effectiveness of channels for communication.

#### 3.1.2.1. → Europlanet Media Centre

- **Objectives:** Disseminate newsworthy results on Europlanet to the international media.
- **Format:** Media releases distributed through media mailing lists and distribution services.
- **Frequency:** Annually at EPSC, as required throughout the year.
- **Participants:** Media Centre, Executive Office.
- **Outcome:** Activities and results from Europlanet are visible and shared through the media with key stakeholder groups around the world, including the public and policymakers.
- **Logistics:**
  - Identify newsworthy results emanating from Europlanet or presented at EPSC
  - Produce releases in collaboration with authors of newsworthy results. Where needed, create visual resources to illustrate the release.
  - Issue releases through mailing lists and media subscription services.
  - Maintain an up-to-date, GDPR-compliant list of relevant journalists
  - Track uptake and coverage by media worldwide.

#### 3.1.2.2. → Social Media

- **Objective:** Disseminate targeted information on activities of Europlanet and the planetary science community to key audiences.
- **Format:** Professional, tailored content for adopted social media channels.
- **Frequency:** Daily (for main channel), or as required.
- **Participants:** Social Media Team, EPEC.
- **Outcome:** Engaged social media communities that share and amplify information on Europlanet.
- **Logistics:**

- Post content on active channels.
- Develop coordinated strategy for Europlanet corporate and EPEC social media communications. Hold splinter workshop at EPSC2024 on social media, inviting leaders in the field to advise, and providing time for in-depth discussion of priority audiences and most effective platforms for reaching them, both now and in the future.
- Close defunct channels.

### 3.1.3. Communications Training and Internships

**Objective:** Develop communications skills with the planetary community for engaging effectively with a range of audiences. Identify new potential members for the communications team.

**Scope:** Organise training programmes, particularly around EPSC, EPEC Annual Week, webinars and other Europlanet events.

**Activity Leads:** Europlanet Media Centre, Executive Office

**Resources Needed:** Staff effort. Online platform for training resources. Travel costs for in-person events. Payment for interns.

**Details:** Consolidate existing training materials within the network into an accessible database, organise communications training workshops around existing events and expand communications team.

#### 3.1.3.1. → Communications Training

- **Objective:** Embed communications training (including general communications, oral and written presentation skills, media engagement and policy engagement) into Europlanet events and programmes, including the webinar series, Winter/Summer Schools and EPEC Annual Week. Develop commercial training programme as a potential revenue stream.
- **Format:** In-person and online workshops, accessible training materials (e.g. recordings).
- **Frequency:** Annually at EPEC AW and EPSC, as required at other events.
- **Participants:** Europlanet Media Centre, Executive Office
- **Outcome:** A wider pool of informed and effective communicators within the planetary and related communities.
- **Logistics:**
  - Work with organising committees to identify opportunities for inclusion of communications training in Europlanet activities.
  - Review, update and develop training materials and workshops.
  - Evaluate the outcomes of training sessions and include learning in future events.
  - Develop and promote package of communications skills on commercial bases.

#### 3.1.3.2. → Internships

- **Objective:** Give early career researchers experience of working in a professional communications team. Expand the media and social media team available to cover large-scale events e.g. EPSC.
- **Format:** Paid internship programme at EPSC.

- **Frequency:** Annually at EPSC.
- **Participants:** Europlanet Media Centre, Executive Office
- **Outcome:** Effective communications at EPSC. A wider pool of communicators with professional experience within the planetary and related communities.
- **Logistics:**
  - Define internship programme.
  - Launch call for applications. Review submissions and publish outcomes.
  - Provide pre-event training and information for interns.
  - Implement internship programme at EPSC. Pay interns and reimburse costs
  - Evaluate the outcomes internships and include learning in future events.

### 3.2. Risks

#### → Regarding section above under “Internal Communications”

- **Lack of Functional Communications Infrastructure:** Effective communications is the engine that drives Europlanet. After a few turbulent years (Covid, personnel changes, bringing new platforms online, transition to sustainability), ensuring that there are functional tools and staff effort in place to provide stable and efficient communications is essential for retaining existing membership and growing the new organisational membership programmes.
- **Low Engagement by Community:** With minimal central resources, proactive input by the community, particularly through Discord, is important. Efforts must be prioritised to ensure a regular flow of information. Contact points and structures must be clear and promoted properly to the community.
- **Technical Issues:** Technology may fail, causing disruptions, and back-ups should be identified. The open source nature of CiviCRM remains an ongoing challenge. Changing to AssoConnect may solve issues, but there needs to be a managed transition. Ensuring that good technical support is available for the Europlanet Executive Office a very high priority.
- **Resource Constraints:** Limited resources (particularly in terms of staffing) may restrict the comprehensiveness and timeliness of communications

#### → Regarding section above under “External Communications”

- **Targeting and Dissemination of Resources and Activities:** Resources need to be managed to ensure that external communications reach key stakeholders in a timely and targeted manner.
- **Quality Control:** A rigorous review and editing process should be implemented.
- **Distribution Inefficiency:** Maintain an up-to-date contact list of key stakeholders. Review distribution channels (especially social media platforms) to ensure the most effective tools and services are used to reach audiences.
- **Feedback Incorporation:** Track metrics and outcomes (e.g. followers and media coverage). Collect and integrate stakeholder feedback.

#### → Regarding section above under “Training and Internships”

- **Lack of Engagement by Community:** Highlight communication as a key professional skill that should be developed and honed.
- **Sub-optimal experience by trainees and interns:** Clearly define goals for training and internship programmes, and manage expectations.
- **Technical Issues:** Technology may fail, causing disruptions. Ensure that back-ups are in place.
- **Resource Constraints:** Limited resources may mean some opportunities are lost. Ensure that resources are targeted to where they will have the highest impact.

## 4. Appendices

Europlanet 2024 RI NA1 Community Support, Dissemination and Engagement with Stakeholders reports: <https://www.europlanet-society.org/europlanet-2024-ri/europlanet-2024-ri-deliverables/#WP11>

EPSC Reports: <https://www.europlanet-society.org/european-planetary-science-congress/epsc-reports/>