

**Concept note: COST Action for Climate Change Communication
Monash European Research Foundation ETS**

Summary: This concept note outlines a proposed COST Action network on climate change communication, led by Dr Ami Seivwright (Monash University European Research Foundation ETS/Monash Climate Communication Hub). The network would bring together universities and their researchers, public sector bodies, and civil society organisations across Europe to investigate how communication shapes — and can improve — collective responses to climate change. MUERF is seeking partner institutions to co-develop and co-propose this application. Expressions of interest and inquiries are warmly welcomed.

COST Action - What and why

- Deadline for submission: 28 October 2026
- Interdisciplinary research networks connecting universities, public sector bodies, NGOs, and private sector organisations across Europe
- Four-year funded networks (approximately €690,000 total) to investigate a self-proposed topic — no thematic restrictions
- Funding covers travel, events, working group meetings, training schools, short-term scientific missions, and communications — not research itself, but the collaboration infrastructure that makes large-scale research possible
- A lean, fair application process: The substantive proposal — the Technical Annex — is capped at 15 pages and submitted directly through the e-COST platform, with no letter of intent, no pre-registration, and no budget plan required. Evaluation is double-blind, meaning proposals are assessed on scientific merit alone, regardless of the size or reputation of the proposing institution.
- Open and transparent by design: new partners can join at any point during the four years, allowing networks to grow organically
- A proven pre-portal to Horizon Europe: follow-up proposals from COST Action participants achieve a 39% success rate — more than three times the Horizon Europe average of 12% — generating an average of €4.5 million in spin-off funding per Action

Why climate change communication

Significant action is required to prevent the worst impacts of climate change and to adapt to the impacts and solutions (such as the energy transition) that are now inevitable. Ensuring that this action happens at all, at the pace and scale required, and in ways that are fair and achieve optimal benefits, requires effective communication. Between and among all levels and types of scientists, decision makers, and publics. While there have been many communication successes on the journey to combat climate change, the current state of affairs demonstrates that climate communication has to date failed to facilitate these dialogues. It is critical here to underline that by communication we do not mean one-way communication *to* people. We mean communication as the incredibly complex processes that ultimately create the social - the society in which we live.

Any research on climate, including climate communication, must recognise that climate impacts and solutions will vary across places, cultures, and between cohorts (e.g., age, gender, disability status). Accordingly, in addition to working across disciplines, all research and activities undertaken by this proposed network will analyse and compare across sites to

ensure simultaneously generalisable and nuanced understandings of what effective climate communication looks like.

Potential working groups

The network's working groups will be shaped through dialogue with partners. The themes below reflect current thinking and are open to refinement. Each group signals the kind of institutional expertise and disciplinary profile that would strengthen it.

Climate and human wellbeing. The impacts of climate change will ultimately be felt by people. Somewhat counterintuitively, as the financial and other costs of climate change add up, it has been found that people are turning their concern inwards to their own personal situations. In line with this, recent research has shown that climate messages that focus on personal costs are more effective at increasing support for climate action than abstract or globally-focused messages. Therefore, understanding what people need, what they value, and what they want for their futures is fundamental to any dialogue and decisions vis a vis climate change.

Bridging physical and social sciences. The changing climate and our learning as people as societies how to live under it are not problems that science and technology can solve. Science diagnoses the problems and technology provides solutions, but preventing the problems, responding to the diagnoses, and implementing the solutions are fundamentally social problems. And, as noted above, communication is the foundation of the social. Therefore, there's a clear need for transdisciplinary research that bridges physical and social sciences not just at the end of projects. Within this work program, in addition to the research itself, is how to position this necessarily transdisciplinary work within institutional and research funding structures.

Understanding climate mis- and disinformation. There are currently many efforts by researchers, governments, non-government, and private sector organisations to counter mis- and disinformation, through means such as regulations, technological solutions, and communications efforts. This research is critical. However, more research is required to understand how and why mis- and disinformation exists and thrives - the inherently political contests of power, resources and networks and the historical and present context of mis- and disinformation forming discourse in and of itself (i.e., not just in relation to "truth" or facts). With this understanding, we can better prevent and pre-empt mis- and disinformation rather than taking purely reactive approaches to narratives that are already established and widely circulating.

The climate information ecosystem. The last two decades have seen a significant reduction in the amount of journalism and journalistic outlets worldwide, the growing influence of social media and in particular its algorithms, and the advent of generative AI. Alongside these 'ecosystem' changes, we have seen a decline in belief in democracy among both the general public and leaders and a sense of disregard towards knowledge and facts. This research program investigates how we build a quality (climate) information ecosystem in this complex and challenging context.

Social licence and climate action in the energy transition. The energy transition is an enormous economic and infrastructure project, involving significant public and private sector investment, challenges relating to land use and rights, changes to communities, and significant questions around the distribution of costs, risks and benefits. How the organisations, both public and private, involved in the energy transition seek and manage their social licence - the ongoing public acceptance of them and their projects - is a critical area for communications research.

Who to contact?

Dr Ami Seivwright is the lead proposer for this COST Action and would serve as Action Chair. Institutions interested in joining the network as co-proposers or early partners are encouraged to reach out directly.



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