



## How to use “Community Web” to communicate on the environment?

Environmental activism has been available online for a long time. With the “MySpace” and “Facebook” boom, online networking became a new communication phenomenon called “**Community Web**”.

“Community Web” is the term given to describe a second generation of the World Wide Web that is focused on the ability of people to collaborate and share information online, opposed to the previous forms of “static websites” where interaction was not possible. To find your way through the second generation web a few terms should be explained and a few examples will be given:

**Social networks:** A social network connects people around the world that share a specific interest. One example of such a social network online is “Facebook”, where you can communicate with your personal and professional “contacts”. You can use an existing contact to reach out to other people. Web communities and blogs will also help you to create a social network. On “Facebook”, it is possible to join or create a “Cause” or a “Belief” and to share your ideals with your network. It gathers several hundred groups related to environmental organisations.

For instance, “Greenopolis” is an environmentally-focused social networking site that facilitates an open dialogue on green issues between everyday people, communities, organisations, schools and businesses. “Greenopolis” combines a social networking interface with green job listings, sustainability resource guides, education and funding information on a single platform.

**Web communities:** A web community is a website (or group of websites) that facilitates communication through social networks, emails, blogs and other online services. Visitors can subscribe, create a profile, participate in groups, read news and share information with members, sometimes creating a personal blog.

“Care 2” is an example of an online community of more than 10 million members taking action to make the world a better place. Organisations can advertise jobs and volunteering opportunities. People can take action by signing petitions. For example, nearly 288,000 members from all over the world have signed to support the protection of Arctic refuge.

**Blogs:** A blog is a personal webpage hosted in general by an organisation, an individual or a community.

Quick tips to get started with “Community Web”:

1. Chose an online community that suits your interests (cf. box with links).
2. Create an online profile for your organisation or as an individual, by entering the contact details and fields of interest (i.e.: climate change, biodiversity)
3. Find the persons who share the same interests: their profiles are available online.
4. Invite them to join your network and join other networks.
5. Publish information, directly on your page and update it regularly.
6. Interact with your network!





## Links:

*Many environment oriented communities, social networks and blogs have been created in the past years. They target mostly the general public, but more and more environmental stakeholders are joining these new social media.*

## Some general audience social networks:

[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

[www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)

[www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

## Some green communities:

[www.care2.com](http://www.care2.com)

[www.celsias.com](http://www.celsias.com)

[www.wiserearth.org](http://www.wiserearth.org)

[www.greenopolis.com](http://www.greenopolis.com)

[www.makemesustainable.com](http://www.makemesustainable.com)

[www.treehugger.com](http://www.treehugger.com)

[www.2people.org](http://www.2people.org)

[www.riverwired.com](http://www.riverwired.com)

[www.tree-nation.com](http://www.tree-nation.com)

## Some environmental blogs:

<http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/dimas>

[www.climateethics.org](http://www.climateethics.org)

[www.climatepolicy.org](http://www.climatepolicy.org)

[www.grist.org](http://www.grist.org)

A blog allows the user to publish information very easily online and share it with his or her contacts. Blogs are interactive, allowing for reader comments. Even the EU Commissioner for the Environment Stavros Dimas writes a blog!

## What are the benefits of “Community Web” for environmental communication and awareness raising?

Websites specialised in environmental issues already exist, but often they are only consulted by environmentalists. Joining a web community enables an organisation to get in contact with different groups of the population, who would not have visited an official website. Web communities thus allow dynamic exchange and interaction between experts and everyday online surfers. This kind of communication is easy, inexpensive and requires less up-front investment.

Online social networks, communities and blogs can present a very good opportunity to promote activities and events that an organisation is planning. For example, in an online community an event can be announced and volunteers for its organisation searched for. The user can also receive feedback from other users that have organised similar events and that want to share their positive experiences or challenges. Visibility can be generated to support the actions and work of the organisation, and contacts can be invited to join a particular cause and sign a petition online for example.

## Some guidelines for “Community Web”

The Full Circle Associates, a network of professionals, has created an online community toolkit that is available to anyone who is interested in “community web”. It offers resources on how to build an online community and case studies on community initiatives through the following link: [www.fullcirc.com/community/communitymanual.htm](http://www.fullcirc.com/community/communitymanual.htm).

The ability to stimulate online participation and contribution is one of the most important indicators of success for online communities. Ways to encourage activity on the web include “anticipated reciprocity”, where users will get involved in your causes, actions and discussions, under the expectation that you will get involved in theirs. Another incentive for involvement is increased recognition and a sense of efficacy and community.

This newsflash is issued by the EECN which is DG Environment's support structure for European Environmental Communication Networks.

Visit the website of the EECN on: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/networks> to learn more about the activities of the networks and read newsflashes previously released.

