



# **COMMUNICATING WITH PURPOSE**

## European Board of Veterinary Specialisation Marketing Audit Report 2025

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# INTRODUCTION

## I. Executive summary

The **European Board of Veterinary Specialisation** (EBVS) consulted Dr. Karen Bolten, MBA, in collaboration with EBVS CEO Dr. Julie Rosser, to evaluate current communication practices as part of the Strategy 2025–2030 development process. The objective was to identify strengths, gaps, and barriers, and to provide evidence-based recommendations for improvement.

Guided by EBVS's vision to be a trusted leader in international veterinary medicine, the review assessed the 2023–2024 communications strategy and its execution. Methods included stakeholder interviews and surveys, document review, and analysis of communication channels. EBVS IT Support Officer Tania Susmelj and EBVS Communications Officer Federica Bozza contributed expertise on website, newsletter, branding and social media metrics.

The findings are presented objectively in this report and supplementary document, representing our best assessment and recommendations for strengthening EBVS's communication effectiveness.

## II. About EBVS

EBVS is the umbrella organisation for veterinary specialties in Europe. **The mission of EBVS is to advance animal health, welfare, and public health in Europe by ensuring excellence in veterinary specialisation, within the profession and for the general public.**

As such, EBVS is the organization that establishes standards, oversees training programs, and certifies veterinarians as board-certified specialists in advanced areas of veterinary medicine. Based in Europe, EBVS has over 5000 specialists in 27 specialty Colleges, working in 39 veterinary disciplines in 59 countries globally.

The scope of EBVS' work has expanded in recent years to meet the evolving needs of our members, as the veterinary profession navigates complex challenges such as workforce retention, wellbeing, shifting economies, and the growing intersection of animal and human health. Thus, a developing mainstay of EBVS is to further both internal and public facing communications: strengthening how we communicate is central to being recognized — not only for what we do, but for the impact we have on society, policy, and the future of veterinary medicine.

## Conflict of interest declaration

We affirm that neither EBVS staff nor external contractors held any interests that could create, or appear to create, a conflict during this project. The work was carried out independently, with no financial considerations affecting the findings or recommendations.

## Confidentiality

In order to safeguard privacy and comply with GDPR requirements, the identities of all survey participants have been anonymized.

# III. Rationale for a communication audit

## Why conduct a Communications Audit?

Even the most rigorous, high-impact work can fall short of its potential if it doesn't reach the intended audience in a way that is accessible and actionable. In complex, highly advanced fields like veterinary specialisation, communication is inherently challenging — translating expertise for diverse stakeholders is a skill as critical as the medicine or science itself.

A communications audit provides a **structured, evidence-based evaluation** of how our work is perceived, understood, and engaged with by key audiences. It helps us answer questions such as:

- Which aspects of our messaging are most effective, and why?
- Where might audiences encounter confusion or barriers to understanding?
- How do our communication practices compare to leading organizations in our field?
- **Ensures Alignment with Mission and Evolving Priorities:** As our work evolves in response to scientific, social, or regulatory developments, communication must evolve in parallel.
- **Identifies Strengths and Opportunities for Refinement:** Like any empirical assessment, an audit highlights patterns, trends, and actionable insights objectively.
- **Supports Trust and Engagement:** Transparency, clarity, and consistency in communication strengthen the credibility of our work and its societal impact.

For non-profits - especially those operating in highly regulated sectors such as health and education - clear, compliant, and ethical communication is critical. A thorough audit can uncover gaps in transparency, data privacy, or public accountability before they become risks to our integrity or partnerships.<sup>1</sup>

→ *In short, a communications audit is both a strategic and operational exercise: one that bridges scientific precision with societal impact, enabling us to communicate our professional value more clearly and effectively.*

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<sup>1</sup> From: Communications Audit: Why When and How to Conduct One. Forbes Communications Council, May 2024

## Objectives of the Audit:

- Systematically assess communication practices and materials.
- Identify patterns, gaps, or inefficiencies in how information is conveyed.
- Map and understand the perspectives of key stakeholders, including broader society.
- Evaluate clarity, consistency, and effectiveness of messaging across channels.
- Benchmark practices against other organizations recognized for high-quality engagement.
- Gather feedback and insights to inform iterative improvement.
- Establish metrics for ongoing assessment and refinement.

## IV. Audit methodology

### General Communication Audit Tools & Methods:

In order to improve policy outreach, stakeholder engagement, and internal clarity we have chosen economical and comprehensive tools including surveys, stakeholder interviews, social media and newsletter metrics, and basic social listening. Each method yields different insights, which is why we've adopted a mixed-methods approach.

Simultaneously, we've done our best to ensure accessibility and relevance to veterinary stakeholders across Europe.

### Step 1: Gather Data & Engage Stakeholders

With our methods chosen, we began data collection. This included distributing surveys to recently involved members, interviewing college representatives or policymakers, and reviewing quantitative existing materials (e.g., engagement metrics, newsletter open rates, website performance numbers) to assess reach, and qualitative methods (e.g., message framing, tone) to explore perception and alignment with values.

**Discovery phase:** We held preliminary discussions with EBVS staff and leadership to gain insight into the organization's objectives, communication requirements, and key challenges.

**Document review:** We assembled an extensive set of EBVS communication materials, including newsletters, strategic reports, communication plans, website content, and related resources.

**Initial analysis:** We examined preliminary data and existing communication materials to build an understanding of the tools, channels, and approaches currently used by EBVS.

**Survey & Feedback:** We surveyed key internal stakeholders who had recently been engaged with EBVS leadership (within the previous 18 months) for both quantitative and qualitative impressions of EBVS performance, strategy, value and communications. Response rate was an impressive 79% of 90 recipients across diverse geographies, professional sectors and career stages. Initial survey results were shared with EBVS leadership prior to focus meetings and stakeholder mapping. Survey results were then formally reported to the EBVS Board for feedback, which was received from 2 Colleges.

**Stakeholder mapping:** In order to better understand key internal and external stakeholders, we performed a stakeholder mapping exercise with EBVS Executive Committee and Staff, to comprehensively evaluate the efficacy of our communications with these target audiences.

**Focus meetings:** We held in-person meetings with EBVS leadership to capture their detailed perspectives and deepen our understanding of both the strategic and communication strengths and challenges the organization is facing.

Additionally, we also joined strategic focus meetings of external stakeholders, virtually and in person (when financially appropriate) for context and scope of professional challenges and communications.

**General Assembly presentation:** We presented stakeholder survey results and strategic recommendations to EBVS' Board members in person and College feedback was discussed. Strategic recommendations for 2025-2030 were unanimously approved by vote in April 2025.

## Step 2: Interpret & Understand Findings

Data alone is not enough—our analysis must reveal patterns, gaps, and strengths. Where are we succeeding in building trust or demonstrating thought leadership? Where do stakeholders feel uninformed or disengaged? Does the public engage with us directly? Do our members engage with us directly?

**Detailed stakeholder feedback evaluation:** We examined feedback from the survey, focus and in-person meetings to highlight recurring patterns, recognize effective practices, and pinpoint opportunities for improvement.

**Platforms assessed:** We studied the effectiveness of EBVS' primary communication platforms outlining areas for improvement or enhancement.

**Message & content review:** We assessed the clarity, tone, and terminology of EBVS communications, along with the application of its visual identity, to identify inconsistencies and areas needing refinement.

## Step 3: Develop a Strategic Communications Plan

Recommendations translate insights into action by addressing the fundamental disconnect between specialist expertise and stakeholder value perception. The strategic plan must move beyond traditional "improve messaging" approaches to tackle the core challenge: helping veterinary specialists articulate their societal value in terms their audiences actually care about - whether that's pet owners seeking better outcomes, policymakers allocating resources, or employers determining compensation.

Our recommendations aim to address blind spots around market positioning, amplify technical strengths through accessible communication, and ensure that each adjustment supports both our mission and diverse stakeholder needs. This includes developing value propositions that translate specialist expertise into stakeholder benefits, improving clarity across all external communications, and providing targeted communication training for board members and specialists. In order to accomplish this, we must also assess and report the findings from this audit.

- **Reporting**
- **Draft Audit Report:** for internal organizational review and feedback
- **Finalize Audit Report & Communications Strategy:** Based on preliminary draft feedback, the communication audit report & Communications Strategy will be finalised in 2026 for execution.

With particular focus on moving beyond regulatory recognition toward genuine market value creation through strategic communication, select Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are:

- **Mission-aligned**
- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Achievable**
- **Relevant**
- **Time-bound**
- **Ideally, Benchmarked**

## Step 4: Implement, Monitor, and Re-assess

Execution matters as much as planning. Goals will include rolling out improvements intentionally, monitoring reactions and metrics, and being prepared to adjust. The final Strategic Communications Plan will also suggest a follow-up audit cycle to evaluate changes over time and to treat communication audits as ongoing organizational practice: part of how we remain transparent, responsive, and connected across our European networks.

## Considerations for Evaluation of Existing Communication Practices

Understanding how communication functions across an organization is essential for strengthening its influence, visibility, and trust with both professional and public audiences. For EBVS, evaluating communication in a structured way can support our 2025-2030 Strategic **PROMOTE** priority to increase awareness of the role and value of EBVS specialists across Europe; and our 2025-2030 Strategic **VOICE** priority to ensure the profession's expertise informs policy, regulation, and stakeholder decision-making. Such an assessment offers insight into where communication is effective, where gaps exist, and how approaches might be adapted to meet the evolving needs of the profession.

COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE	PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT	COMMUNICATION CHANNELS	ALIGNMENT WITH COMMUNICATIONS TRENDS & BEST PRACTICES
Website Essentials & Social Media Presence:	Stakeholder Mapping, Identification, Prioritization	Identification of Communications Channels	Legal & Ethical Considerations
Updated & Modern	Knowledge of the Public Specialists Serve	Channel Appropriateness	Public Inclusion & Belonging Context
User-Friendly	Identification of Overlooked Stakeholders	Channel Effectiveness	Engagement
Compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines	Communications Plans & Strategies	Capability of Channel to Promote	Structure
Mobile & Desktop friendly	Informed by Stakeholders' Needs	Openness & Transparency	Planning & Analysis
Active use of Social Media		Budget Appropriateness	Brand Protection
Policy Essentials:			Crisis Communications
External Communications Policy			Press & Media
Internal Social Media Policy			Inclusion & Accessibility
Privacy Policy			

Adapted from the MDR Regulatory Communication Scorecard, this table provides KPIs of communication practices.

An effective communications audit examines:

- **Communication Infrastructure:** Metrics focus on the consistency, accessibility, and efficiency of policies, processes, and digital tools.
- **Stakeholder Relationships:** Metrics track audience identification, engagement levels, and the quality of ongoing interactions.
- **Communication Channels:** Metrics measure reach, effectiveness, and clarity across different channels.
- **Alignment with Trends and Best Practices:** Metrics evaluate inclusivity, accessibility, and relevance of content relative to emerging professional trends.

Together, these areas provide a clear view of where communication succeeds and where it can be improved to meet evolving organizational and professional needs.

# DISCOVERY

## I. The Science & Practice of Veterinary Communications

### Overview

The European veterinary landscape is more complex than often expected, including specialists as well as beyond. For example, compared to human medicine, where post graduate specialisation is generally required and often subsidized, veterinary medicine receives no such subsidy for advanced training in most countries and specialisation remains optional. Thus, many variable levels of post graduate certification have emerged without harmonization or clarity in consumer choice. However, this alone still does not reflect the full complexity of our noble profession.

At the time of this draft, 39 veterinary specialty disciplines are accredited through EBVS with member specialists in 59 countries globally. Many of these specialties are clinically focused, where specialists often interact with two main audiences in practice; namely the public as clients and primary care veterinarians who refer patients for specialized care. Specialists of all 39 disciplines interface with veterinary students and post graduate trainees, respectively. Yet, several veterinary specialties have little or no direct client or farm interaction but provide essential services in diagnostic fields such as imaging or pathology. In other specialties primary clients are pharmaceutical firms developing new medicines and vaccines, or government or research institutes working to prevent zoonotic pandemics.

Furthermore, as mandated by law, European veterinarians are responsible for both the safety of animal derived food and the health of those animals - as well as the health and welfare of all animals. This link to society is commonly overlooked in terms of public health, not only by society itself but also on occasion at the policy level, and certainly at the economic level. With the growing awareness of the One Health concept, where animal health, human health, and planetary health are acknowledged as inextricably intertwined, the complexity of our profession becomes more apparent: including policy makers, industry, universities, plus relevant veterinary organisations and regulators.



*Key Stakeholders in the European Veterinary Profession (copyright EBVS)*

## Why Does This Matter in Communications?

Effective communication is limited to the level of understanding of the ‘non-expert’ in the conversation. This is true in every situation and is not specific to any audience. For example, when an iPhone customer goes to the Apple Store for technical support, the technician most often cannot use software-specific or proprietary jargon to impart understanding of how the customer’s phone needs to be fixed, regardless of the intelligence or education of the customer.

To take this one step further: communication is most effective when it addresses a need or core value of the audience. Consider how this plays out in human medicine. Patients are often urgently attentive to hear their prognosis, much more than say the detailed pathophysiology of a medical condition; caregivers on the other hand likely prefer communication around dosing frequency and probable length of treatment. The same can be applied to policy makers: their needs are often centred around the available resources they have and the needs of their voters; e.g. safe food, secure trade economies, budgetary limitations, etc. This examples specifically highlights the **combined importance of considering the needs of the audience** as well as the level of understanding of the audience: **what terminology will be most effective for your target?**

## The Importance of Identifying our Audiences

Consider a few of the highlights from this overview describing our profession’s complexity and some of the communication challenges we face:

- 39 different specialty disciplines
- Multiple professional sectors: industry, clinical practice, pharmaceutical, academia, policy, food safety, diagnostics, and more
- considerable degree of confusion for consumers about veterinary post graduate qualification

- Lack of public awareness around One Health and veterinary public health: pandemic prevention, zoonosis monitoring, epidemiology, translational medicine, sustainable farming, etc.
- Lack of clarity for students around career paths and development

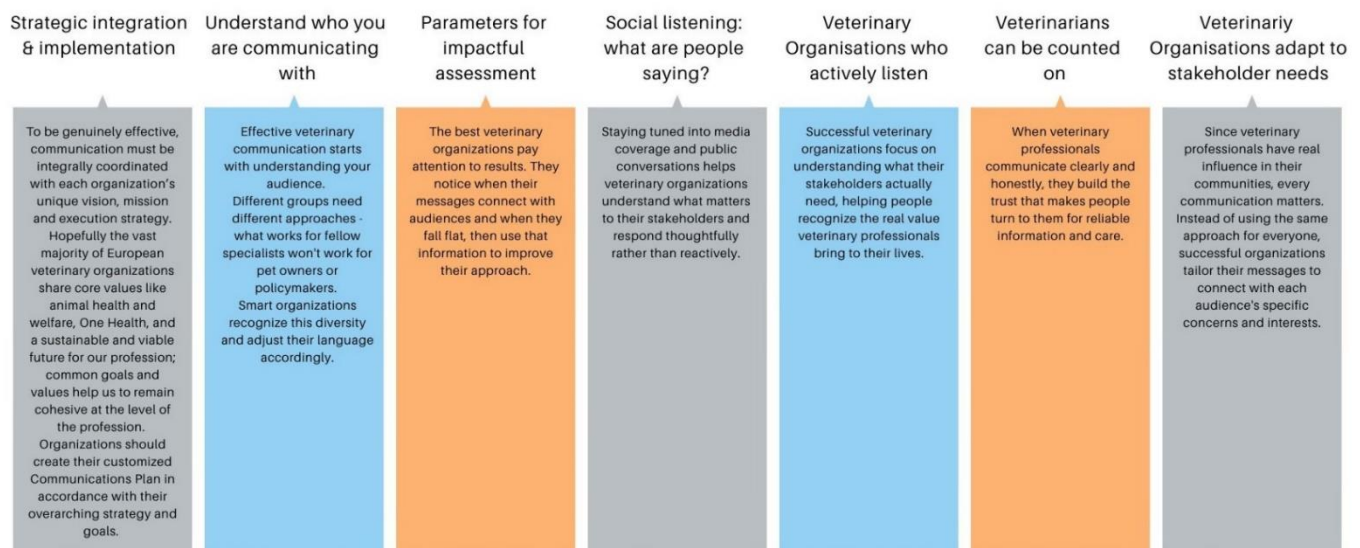
Complexity is not solely an aspect of the veterinary profession in Europe; given the scope of our work and the global reach of our specialists, even our audiences are complex. For example, understanding the needs and core values of a resident in rural large animal surgery may be entirely different from knowledge of what is essential for a resident in animal welfare of ethics and law. Both of these training positions might be very stressful with urgent situations that require very different communications styles and vocabularies.

The same could be said of veterinary clients as well. Consider how the communications style might differ between a pet owner facing oncological intervention for a family dog as compared to a dairy farmer faced with chronic mastitis problems in their heritage herd.

For these large differences within a Communications Strategy, it is useful to think in terms of target audiences. EBVS has used this terminology somewhat interchangeably with 'stakeholder' in order to map in detail the complex environment of our profession.

## Best Practice in Effective Veterinary Communication

Effective communication in and from the European veterinary profession requires:



## II. The Current Landscape of EBVS Communications

### Demonstrating Value

The EBVS 2025–2030 Strategy reflects the organization's ambition to strengthen its role as the central authority for veterinary specialization in Europe. Developed in response to member feedback and the profession's evolving challenges, the strategy sets out five priorities: **VOICE** (expanding

recognition and policy influence), **FUTURE** (ensuring training quality and accessibility), **GROW** (building financial sustainability), **PROMOTE** (increasing visibility and awareness), and **ADAPT** (responding proactively to technological and societal change).

This communications audit aligns with those priorities by assessing how EBVS communicates its role, value, and impact, both within the profession and to society at large. The findings will help identify areas where communication can be clarified or strengthened, and provide actionable recommendations to support EBVS's credibility, leadership, and recognition across Europe. In doing so, the audit complements the strategy's broader aim of ensuring that veterinary specialists are not only highly qualified, but also widely understood and valued for their contribution to animal health, human health, and society as a whole.

## EBVS' Latest Evolution

As an organization, we have undergone considerable transformation in recent years, from a primarily inward-facing specialist organization to a visible European thought leader in veterinary medicine. What was once modest presence limited to specialist networks has evolved into growing network awareness through active social media engagement and participation in large-scale EU consortia.

More significantly, EBVS has shifted from more technical or internal communications to strategic, collaborative messaging that positions the organization as a key voice in cross-sector initiatives, workforce development, and pan-European veterinary leadership—demonstrating the kind of outward-facing communication strategy that builds real professional influence and market recognition.

## Policy & Advocacy Expansion

Established as a credentialing and standards organization, EBVS has strategically expanded its role to include policy engagement and professional advocacy. This development reflects the reality that specialist veterinary medicine cannot advance through certification alone - market position, professional recognition, and societal impact require active engagement with policymakers, funding bodies, and cross-sector initiatives.

Both member and external stakeholder feedback consistently indicated that policy engagement and professional advocacy represent essential areas requiring more sustained and strategic attention from EBVS moving forward.

# I. Communication tools, methods, & plans

## Organizational Infrastructure

Two main checkpoints within the organization's governance oversee EBVS' communications; our Communications Strategy is ultimately approved by the EBVS Board, respectively. The first is our "communications department" currently made up of our Communications Support Officer, Federica Bozza with support from EBVS staff members Tania Susmelj (IT Support) and Areti Kesisoglou (Secretariat), overseen by CEO Julie Rosser. The second checkpoint for EBVS Communications is the Executive Committee, overseen by the EBVS President who, together with the CEO, maintains relationships with key stakeholders to inform policy and communications.

## Communication Strategy & Practices

EBVS adopted its **Digital Communication and Marketing Strategy** in November 2023, establishing comprehensive guidelines for positioning the organization as the recognized authority for veterinary specialist standards across Europe. The strategy identifies eight distinct stakeholder groups: from EBVS-recognized colleges and European Veterinary Specialists to policymakers and animal owners, requiring targeted communication approaches across multiple digital platforms.

The organization maintains detailed brand standards through its **Style Guide**, including strict protocols for the trademarked EBVS® European Veterinary Specialist title usage, standardized visual identity elements, and typography requirements. Supporting documentation includes press release guidance emphasizing journalistic standards, newsworthiness, and objective tone for media engagement.

### Strategic Communications Framework

EBVS communications operate under defined objectives that extend beyond traditional credentialing activities: gathering community, enhancing organizational visibility, increasing awareness of specialist value, facilitating message delivery, and driving stronger influence with policymakers. The strategy acknowledges a critical gap - current communications reach primarily specialists and applicants (80% of content) while public communication remains limited, undermining broader professional recognition and market positioning.

The framework identifies specific content pillars including EBVS activities, topics of interest (One Health, animal welfare), college-generated content, and collaborative messaging. Social media presence across Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube targets different audience segments, though current engagement levels remain below comparable veterinary organizations, indicating substantial growth potential.

## Digital Communications Strategy to Date

### EBVS Website

**[www.ebvs.eu](http://www.ebvs.eu)**

The EBVS website serves as a central hub for information and resources related to veterinary specialization in Europe. Its functionalities include defining guidelines for specialist recognition, maintaining a register of specialists, and promoting communication and education within the veterinary community. The site also provides access to information about individual veterinary specialist colleges and their specific areas of expertise.

#### Key Functionalities:

##### 1. *Providing Information about Veterinary Specialization:*

- **EBVS Structure and Role:**

The website explains the structure and purpose of the EBVS, including its role in recognizing and monitoring specialist colleges, awarding specialist titles, and maintaining a register of specialists.

- **Specialist Recognition and Certification:**

It details the process for veterinarians to become EBVS European Veterinary Specialists®, including training, examination, and continuing professional development requirements.

- **Access to Specialist Colleges:**

The site provides information about the different specialist colleges recognized by the EBVS, their specific areas of expertise (e.g., surgery, internal medicine, parasitology), and their individual websites.

- **Country-Specific Information:**

It offers resources and information about veterinary specialization within different European countries, including relevant national organizations and training establishments.

- **Public Awareness:**

The site aims to educate the public and other stakeholders about the role and value of EBVS-recognized specialists.

## *2. Facilitating Communication and Collaboration:*

- **Resource Sharing:**

The website offers resources like the "EMA Communications" section for members and provides access to the EBVS toolbox for members.

- **Promoting Collaboration:**

It highlights the importance of collaborative care models in veterinary medicine and the role of specialists in interdisciplinary teams.

- **Disseminating Knowledge:**

The EBVS website fosters communication and knowledge sharing among veterinary professionals and the wider public.

## *3. Supporting Continuous Professional Development:*

- **Maintaining Specialist Status:**

The site explains the requirements for specialists to maintain their EBVS status, including demonstrating continued proficiency.

- **Access to Educational Resources:**

The website provides information and access to resources that support continuous professional development for specialists.

In essence, the EBVS website is a comprehensive platform for information, communication, and collaboration within the field of veterinary specialization in Europe, supporting both specialists and the wider veterinary community. The current website was last redeveloped in 2023 and is linked to Google Translate for multilingual functionality.

## **Specialist Directory**

EBVS maintains a public register of recognized veterinary specialists, a searchable tool to verify the credentials and status of EBVS members across all European specialty Colleges, accredited disciplines and countries.

## Member College Websites

All EBVS Specialty Colleges have individual landing pages within ebvs.eu as well as their own designated websites. College landing pages are consistent throughout the umbrella EBVS website; however designated websites differ by design and structure.

## Emails

EBVS delivers mass emails via our website backend database, to communicate important updates and news quarterly as well as once to welcome new diplomates, respectively. Newsletter emails are distributed to all registered EBVS members. Our Communications Officer, with support from our IT Officer develops the quarterly email newsletters, with input from the CEO and approval of the EBVS Executive Committee prior to distribution.

### *LinkedIn Subscriber Newsletter & Blog*

EBVS also publishes a LinkedIn newsletter for subscribers, which is not limited to EBVS members and is therefore available to a public audience. Officially, this LinkedIn newsletter is published monthly and is promoted under the name EBVS Exchange. However, articles including our blogposts are also published to EBVS' LinkedIn page and default to populating EBVS Exchange. All publications under EBVS Exchange are automatically emailed to subscribers via LinkedIn.

The EBVS blogpost is a digital publication, published monthly. Past and current issues are accessible on EBVS' website (and LinkedIn). Blog content is developed with external experts specifically for optimized SEO keyword enhancement, with goals to increase website traffic and Google search rankings. Blog articles are targeted at the general public and policymakers, designed primarily to increase awareness of the societal value veterinary specialists contribute across varied topics, within approximately 500 words per issue.

## Social media

EBVS posts social media content via:

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- YouTube



EBVS' social accounts are populated by the Communications Support Officer (CSO) and overseen primarily by the CEO. The CSO tracks social media metrics including following, impressions, clicks, engagement rate and shares through their biannual digital analytics tracking report.

EBVS maintains an active presence on social media with posts focused on important topics in veterinary medicine (including OneHealth, economic impact, wellbeing, education, etc), and important announcements relevant to residents and specialist members (e.g., College news and upcoming Continuing Professional Development (CPD) events/stakeholder events). We also share relevant organizational news (e.g., office closures, job/volunteer opportunities), information regarding

opportunities to contribute expertise (European Medicines Agency, European Commission, Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, etc) and more. EBVS' Digital Communication Strategy 2023 [III.3] invites College and national representatives to share content through EBVS-branded and external social media channels in order to reach and support interested audiences. This is executed via cooperation with the CSO and CEO, respectively.

## Digital Toolkit for Members

EBVS has created presentation templates as well as virtual meeting backgrounds and email signature templates for all EBVS veterinary specialists to utilize, in accordance with our trademark guidelines. This toolkit is available behind the [www.ebvs.eu](http://www.ebvs.eu) login and is accompanied by an infographic clearly outlining the importance of utilizing specialist titles. Additionally, press release guidelines are available on EBVS Microsoft Teams in the Communication Toolkit folders.

## EBVS Branding

### Brand messaging

EBVS brand messaging highlights our mission to advance animal health, welfare, and public health in Europe by ensuring excellence in veterinary specialization, within the profession and for the general public.

It also exemplifies our vision and societal value: **EBVS is a specialist community advancing animal and public health for ALL society. We protect and improve the wellbeing of all animals, humans, and ultimately the planet - advancing the human-animal bond, safe food, ensuring trade and quality of life.**

### Visual identity

The EBVS logo, developed nearly 30 years ago, remains a central element of the organization's visual identity and is applied across communication channels to support brand recognition. The established colour scheme is primarily light blue and white, with secondary use of black and orange. Typography is predominantly Univers Light Condensed.

### Brand guidelines

In 2023, EBVS updated its graphic standards PowerPoint, which sets out the components of its visual identity. This includes specifications for logo use, official colours and typography, application of the organization's name, stationery formats, and related standards.

# ENGAGEMENT

## I. Stakeholder engagement

We gathered input from a range of EBVS stakeholders to ensure their perspectives were incorporated into this audit. Feedback was collected through individual meetings, surveys, and focus groups, enabling us to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in EBVS's external communications.

### Stakeholder Mapping

Initial stakeholder mapping was comprehensively undertaken via independent expert consultant. Extremely high complexity was identified when defining stakeholder and target audience personas. This process gave us a clear picture of EBVS's stakeholder groups and the significance of their roles to EBVS' communication needs and efforts. The sheer number of stakeholder personas was overwhelming; thus, managing this level of stakeholder complexity must be accomplished by cooperation of multiple organizations, namely by collaboration with EBVS member Colleges as well as sister organizations such as EAEVE & FVE, etc. [Stakeholder personas are tabulated in the Annex.](#)

We then met with EBVS Staff and Executive Committee in a strategic exercise to deeply understand different stakeholder personas organizations. This step was designed to prioritise and inform our strategic target audiences in alignment with EBVS Strategy 2025-2030. *(Anonymised versions of the Stakeholder Personas are available upon request)*

### Stakeholder engagement methods

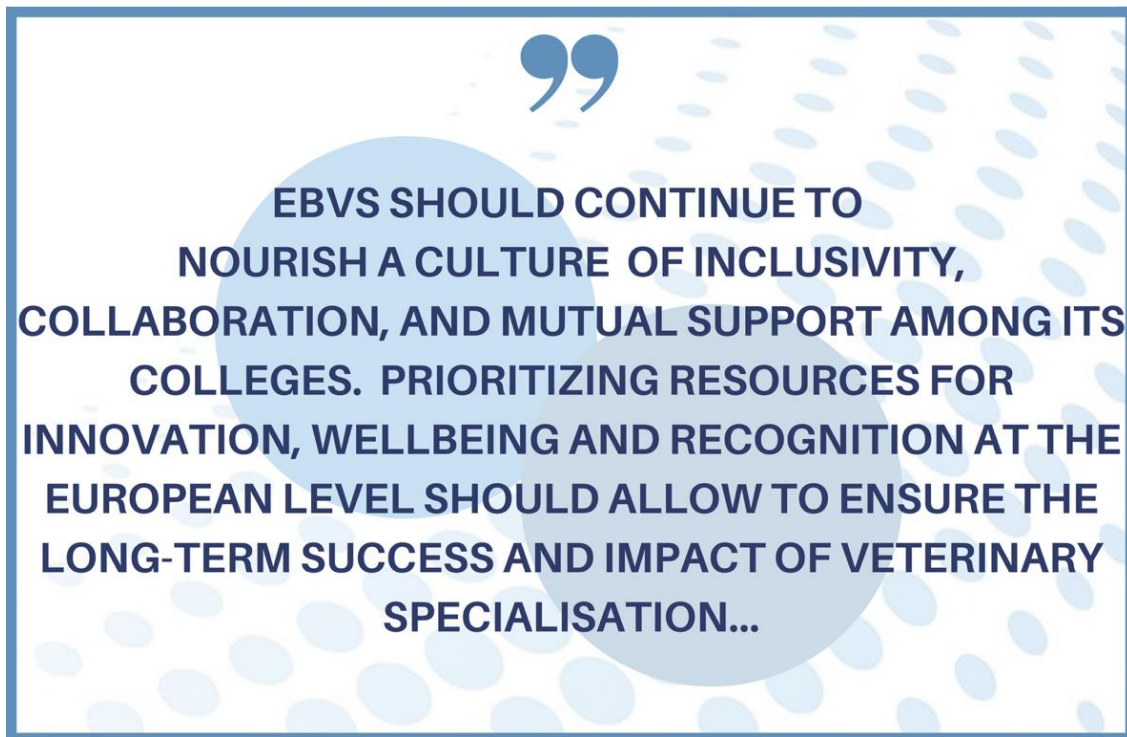
Parallel to the independent, comprehensive stakeholder mapping, internal stakeholder feedback was sought via survey. Internal stakeholders with recent interaction (within the previous 18 months, approximately) at the level of the EBVS Board, Committees and Staff were surveyed. This approach was selected to minimize the time required to clean response data; however, some responses still included qualitative answers such as "I don't know how EBVS functions" or "EBVS should have social media / newsletter" etc. These responses reflected the ever-present lack of awareness even from our own members but simultaneously limited the constructive contribution of more precise feedback.

Survey responses were compiled into quantitative and qualitative analysis matrices, achieving an overall response rate of 79%. Survey responses were utilized to draft the EBVS Strategy 2025-2030, subsequently approved by vote of the EBVS Board in April 2025; as well as to guide the Executive Committee's focus group on stakeholder personas and target audience prioritisation in January 2025.

## II. Stakeholder feedback (internal)

### College Representatives, Committee Volunteers & Specialist Members

The following are key messages and takeaways extrapolated from internal stakeholders:



#### 1. EBVS Quarterly Member Newsletter (email)

The EBVS Executive Committee and Staff discussed the suggestion to eliminate the quarterly member newsletter via email, as the impact of social media continues to increase and could be more efficient than more traditional email newsletters. However, when presented to Committee and Board Members, we decided that the email newsletter remains an important source of internal communication, even if sometimes overlooked.

#### 2. Need for greater awareness of EBVS and our communications

Despite survey respondents' recent activity with EBVS' Board, Staff and/or Executive Committee, multiple individuals remained unaware of EBVS' newsletter and social media presence as well as our mission and vision. Many respondents were unable to clearly elucidate a straightforward vision statement suitable for the general public as a target audience.

#### 3. Lack of understanding about EBVS

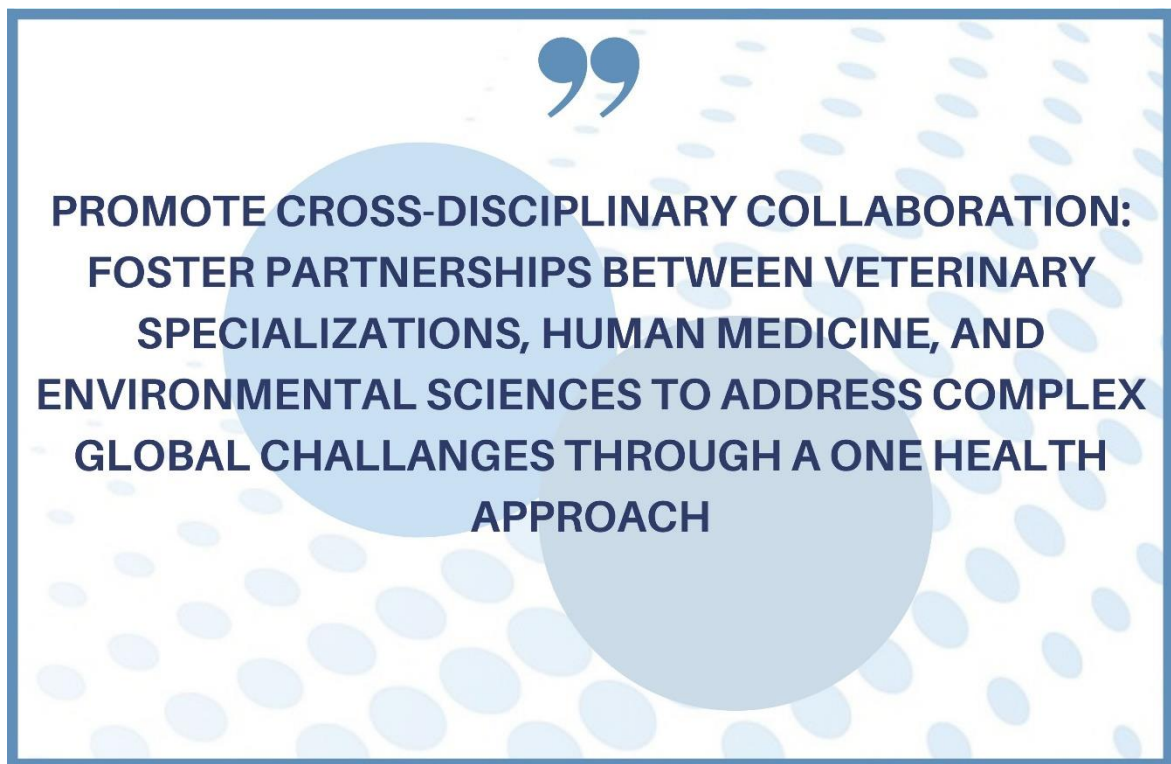
A clear disconnect between internal and external communications is creating stakeholder confusion about EBVS's activities, mission, vision, and values.

#### 4. Room to improve and enhance communication channels

Email: EBVS should consider exploring segmenting email communication to ensure emails and newsletters remain relevant to specific target audiences. EBVS also needs to increase direct access to diplomates in order to reduce bottlenecks and lack of awareness.

Social media: many members advocate for chat / forum functions. For EBVS Committee & Working Group members this is available via EBVS Microsoft Teams, coordinated by EBVS secretariat. Chat functions are available via the EBVS website but email alerts are not possible. Thus, EBVS is now trialling a LinkedIn Community page with 3 volunteer Community Managers.

EBVS would also like to segment social media postings to attract more engagement from the general public and policy makers. This however requires substantially more resources than currently available within EBVS' budget / personnel hours.



### Communications Staff & External EBVS Consultants

#### 1. Need for increased engagement with the public

Based on the survey feedback of the importance of recognition, as well as the perception that societal value of veterinary specialists is vastly underappreciated, both Communications Staff and External Consultants strongly emphasized the need for improved public engagement. Particularly, public engagement must be targeted personally to the intended audience with messaging that is understandable, approachable and ideally, resonant to the needs of the identified target audience.

## 2. Need to prioritize strategic communications

EBVS communication needs to be more strategic and integrated with the organization's policy goals, including updates to educational frameworks, animal welfare, sustainable farming, OneHealth, and the contribution specialists can offer to effective public health and trade legislation. Striving for a more aligned, impactful communications style will improve EBVS' communication efficacy.

## 3. Time to be Thought Leaders

The EBVS Staff is motivated to demonstrate leadership in communications by taking risks, embracing bold approaches, and experimenting with new strategies, positioning EBVS as a thought leader in the European veterinary and OneHealth spaces, respectively.

## 4. From Inside Out: Strengthening Communication Consistency

Organisational challenges are impacting EBVS communication, both externally and with members. Consultants and Staff highlighted limited resources and lack of clear infrastructure as well as occasional inconsistent external communication.

## 5. Stakeholder expectations and miscommunications

There's notable stakeholder frustration as cited by staff due to volunteer turnover and the need for clear explanations in the face of common communication bottlenecks beyond EBVS. Stakeholder unrealistic expectations and confusion in some instances perpetuate negative perceptions of EBVS. Stakeholders should develop realistic understanding of resource limitations and adjust their expectations accordingly to improve their experience and compliance outcomes, while maintaining respectful communication relationships with the EBVS staff.

# III. Stakeholder feedback (external)

External Stakeholders providing feedback (most commonly via in-person or online meetings) included:

- Board members of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE)
- Board members of the Union of European Veterinary Hygienists (UEVH)
- Board members of the Union of European Veterinary Practitioners (UEVP)
- Executive members of the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE)
- Members of the European Coordinating Committee on Veterinary Training (ECCVT)
- Executive, regional representatives & members of the International Student Veterinary Association (IVSA) *also by survey (see graphic pg 19)*
- Policy officers of European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs (DG GROW)
- Director of European Commission's Directorate-General for Health Emergency Preparedness & Response Authority (DG HERA)
- Regional Director of World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) *formerly OIE*
- Various stakeholders at national levels: the Veterinary Council of Ireland, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, Veterinary Chambers of Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Slovenian Small Animal Veterinary Association, Association of Certified Veterinarian

- Specialists from Spain, Federation of National Orders of Veterinarians of Italy, and many more including regulators, faculties, etc.

### 1. Need for improved website communication & clarity

The EBVS website pages are sometimes text heavy with vocabulary designed for specialists and not students, policy makers or the general public as highlighted by an AI automated website audit (*available upon request*). Revisions are recommended so the content is concise and straightforward, while increasing “white space”. Societal impact of EBVS specialists is not clearly stated; nor are simple or straight forward steps to specialising for students or early career veterinarians.

### 2. Enhance international and inter-organisational collaboration

Closer collaboration with sister organisations like EAEVE and FVE helps secure stronger recognition of specialist qualifications in education and policy, which directly influences how specialists are valued, employed, and compensated. It also reduces duplication of effort, freeing resources to focus on issues that matter most to members, like training quality, career opportunities, and professional visibility.

### 3. Misunderstanding of EBVS’ contribution

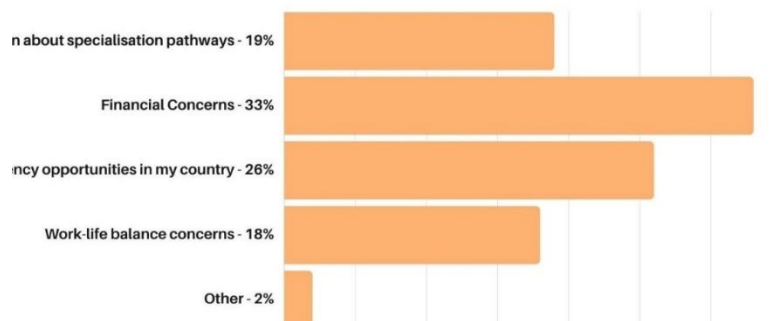
Sister organizations sometimes perceive EBVS specialists as overly academic or inaccessible, creating the impression that they do not engage colleagues “at eye level.” At the same time, concerns that referrals become permanent transfers reinforce mistrust, which in turn exacerbates workforce maldistribution by discouraging effective collaboration and appropriate case sharing across the profession.

### 4. Strategically communicate impact

The real impact of EBVS specialists is often overlooked because it is not communicated in terms relevant to the decisions of policymakers. This weakens alignment with EBVS’s mission and vision, and results in lost recognition, resources, and influence that directly affect members and more critically, our patients themselves. [Website](#): The website’s backend workflows have been reiterated for multiple customizations relevant to individual Colleges, costing much time and onboarding complexities. Further, onboarding Colleges remains challenging due to bottlenecks within individual College communications. EBVS needs to be able to communicate more directly with Colleges’ administrators, officers and diplomates to reduce miscommunication and facilitate more efficient onboarding and processes.

Below are survey responses we received from students:

What barriers do you see in pursuing veterinary specialisation? 50 responses submitted



# ANALYSIS

## I. Channel analysis

We further evaluated EBVS' primary communication channels by examining a combination of quantitative metrics and qualitative feedback. EBVS provided 2024 digital analytics, including a compilation of website, newsletter and social media analytics. We analysed data provided by EBVS, including website analytics, email open and click-through rates and other platform-specific analytics.

### EBVS website

Our analysis examines the EBVS website as a channel inclusive of the portal and directory noting that the portal and directory are used as communication tools integrated with the website:

#### Communications content

Comprehensive information on EBVS, how to become a specialist, and professional standards. The site is regularly updated with news and events. Additional to an email contact, a contact form is available. FAQs are provided to answer common questions. The landing page features a link for animal owners, highlighting how EBVS serves and contributes to the public interest. The 'Publications' section includes direct links to the Policies & Procedures, Constitution, and Importance of Using EBVS Titles infographic. Link on homepage to EBVS Specialists, Colleges, and countries with translation function available (Google translation plugin).

#### Performance metrics: Jan-Sept 2024

High engagement on key pages like the homepage, specialist directory, and Colleges landing page, are shown in Table below. The site recorded 300,000 visits across 9 months, averaging 33,333 monthly visits - strong numbers for a specialized nonprofit. This traffic substantially exceeds the typical nonprofit average of about 12,708 monthly visitors and surpasses usual benchmarks for newer websites<sup>2</sup>. These visitor levels show effective reach within the organization's niche field and reflect solid engagement with the nonprofit's mission and audience (see also [Website Metrics Annex](#)). However, only 1/3 of all diplomates logged in to their EBVS account!

PAGE	VIEWS	ACTIVE USERS
Website total	303,846	38,474
Specialists	118,710	13,379
Colleges	21,410	7,094
Countries	5,642	3,001
Specialist Education	5,625	3,883
User Login	3,214	1,656

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nptechforgood.com/101-best-practices/website-statistics-for-nonprofits/>

## Website user experience

The website is text-heavy and sometimes difficult to locate concise information easily. The website is linked with social media channels. The website is responsive.

ACHIEVEMENTS	CHALLENGES
High overall website traffic	Users report inaccurate translations of relevant information.
Notable visits to the specialist directory.	Described as text heavy
Central information hub	Limited insights into website accessibility compliance
Includes comprehensive, extensive information	Advances in technology and user experience expectations advance quickly
High engagement on Colleges page.	
Integration of Specialist directory & user login	
Responsive on desktop and mobile	
Clearly outlined website policies and terms of use.	
Links to EBVS' social platform	

## EBVS Member Newsletter

We assessed EBVS' digital analytics including performance indicators, and evaluated newsletter text for precision, brand messaging alignment, synergy with EBVS' mission, vision, strategic goals and best practices (as well as calls to action):

### Alignment with EBVS' remit

The email newsletters generally provide news on current EBVS events, projects and opportunities for specialist members to contribute to policy actions, sister organisation initiatives, upcoming events, etc.

### Clarity, structure, and design

Newsletters were generally well received, with key updates in concise fashion including links.

All emails included EBVS' logo and followed a coordinated image, using the same colours and fonts to ensure visual consistency.

### Voice and tone

The tone was generally collegial and informative, with a professional yet warm voice.

## Member preferences

Some members still want to receive communications from EBVS via email. Very few described any dissatisfaction with the newsletter intervals. The consultant mentioned the opportunity to segment newsletters to guarantee relevance.

## Performance metrics

Open rates and click-through rates demonstrate strong newsletter engagement. The open rate was 38.5%, which is well above the Mailchimp recommended goal of 34.2% open rate. Exceptionally, our click through rate (CTR) was 10.1% which far exceeds even the highest average CTR of 4.58% for government sector<sup>3</sup>.

ACHIEVEMENTS	CHALLENGES
Emails align with EBVS' remit & communicate relevant updates.	Digital communication changes & expectations.
Engagement rates including open rates	Stakeholder resistance to change.
Consistent voice and tone.	
Frequency newsletters.	
Used as a key channel aligning with stakeholder preferences	
Links to EBVS' social platforms.	

## Social media

EBVS employs LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook to post content and news with our target audiences, such as continuing education, job and volunteer vacancies, conferences, links to podcast episodes and blog articles, etc. EBVS hosts a YouTube channel for video content distribution. In addition to the EBVS Communications Strategy 2023, we studied the social media analytics, followers and associated stakeholder feedback.

## Frequency & Multimedia content

EBVS consistently posts throughout our preferred social media channels. EBVS publishes content on all weekdays except some holidays. EBVS uses graphics and reels on all our social channels, including original and stock photos and videos with subtitles. EBVS maintains digital image consent forms signed by each participant according to EU & GDPR requirements, respectively.

<sup>3</sup> <https://mailchimp.com/resources/email-marketing-benchmarks/>

## LinkedIn as a primary platform

LinkedIn is EBVS' best performing social channel to date, with a continued rise in followers since the 2023 EBVS Communication Strategy launch. In comparison to similar organisations and controlled for number of existing followers, EBVS exhibits a very strong growth rate:

LinkedIn Page	Total Followers	New Followers	Growth Rate
EBVS - European Board of Veterinary Specialisation	9218	258	2.80%
AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association)	184128	2812	1.50%
World Organisation for Animal Health	152039	2674	1.80%
FVE - Federation of Veterinarians of Europe	8586	171	2.00%
European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA)	22814	585	2.60%
VetCEE Veterinary Continuing Education in Europe	236	2	0.85%
The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies	14117	310	2.20%
International Cat Care Veterinary Society	13597	371	2.70%
FECAVA	3960	43	1.10%
British Veterinary Association (BVA)	85450	1039	1.20%

## Facebook & Instagram

EBVS has a stable footprint on Facebook with 4.5K followers. Instagram has shown more growth than Facebook, with 2.8K followers to date. Engagement demographics for these platforms indicate that continued posting is relevant to our goal of reaching multiple target audiences, particularly as an efficient re-purpose of our LinkedIn content.

ACHIEVEMENTS	CHALLENGES
LinkedIn as a primary platform	Lack of a formal social media policy.
LinkedIn aligns with a professional audience and is appropriate for EBVS to share key updates and information.	Lower engagement on Facebook.
Regular posts.	Outdated communications strategy clearly aligned with organizational strategic goals.
Appropriate timing of posts.	Changes in social media platforms and stakeholder preferences
Use of multimedia content.	Algorithm changes impacting visibility

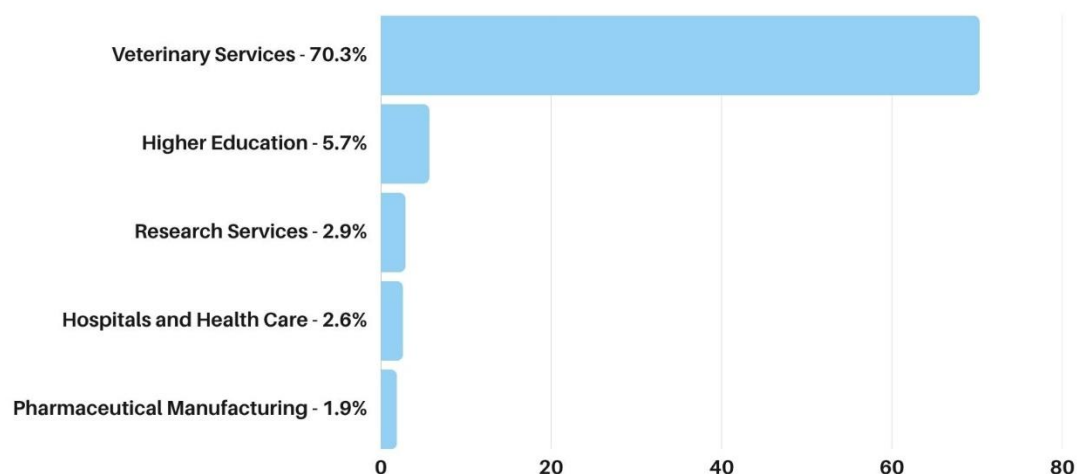
## EBVS Exchange [LinkedIn newsletter \(public\)](#)

EBVS Exchange was launched on LinkedIn in mid-2025, and within 3 months has already surpassed 5000 subscribers. Due to the newness of this channel, comprehensive analysis was postponed until more data is available.

### Readership and engagement

At the time of compiling this report, EBVS Exchange had 23,569 views in 97 days across 12 editions. Most readers were based within the European Economic Area (including UK).

#### Subscriber demographics



## Media relations

Essential to protecting our established brand, strategic media relations, and systematic monitoring create the foundation for anticipatory engagement, audience insights, and media partnership development and oversight. We assessed EBVS in terms of:

### Media Monitoring services

EBVS has no formal social listening subscription-based monitoring solutions for brand and reputation tracking. Cost effective, paid services are not currently budgeted.

### Crisis communications plan

EBVS currently has no crisis communication plan. Media training is digitally available from the EBVS Congress 2025 as hosted on demand by EBVS Advance.

**Communications Strategy**

EBVS’s Communications Strategy was last updated in November 2023.

**Standard template clarifying EBVS’ role**

No established template exists outlining EBVS’s mandate and function for organizational and member communication purposes.

**Direct engagement with the press**

Evidence indicates EBVS lacks proactive media relationship development.

ACHIEVEMENTS	CHALLENGES
Strongly expressed desire by the communications department to build a strong media relations plan.	Establish media monitoring services. Crisis communications plan
	Wide ranging communications policies to protect the brand
	EBVS has no relationship with the press.

College Communication

Colleges under the EBVS have dedicated websites with varying levels of information, providing information and resources for potential trainees as well as diplomates within the respective subspecialties. Most Colleges also manage social media accounts to share information with their members.

**College communications occasionally misrepresent EBVS’ role**

In previous years, EBVS’ culture was sometimes referred to as “policing.” Fortunately, feedback from Colleges more recently reflects a strong and positively seen change to “supportive.” However, on occasion some Colleges have implied blame on EBVS when responsibilities in fact lie within the purview of the College (e.g., regularly updating diplomate data on the EBVS database, uploading new signatures for diplomas, etc).

**Video Project with Colleges**

Throughout late 2023 and early 2024, EBVS leadership offered virtual meetings with the Colleges to understand their challenges and needs. Many Colleges attended these proffered individual meetings, and the most common challenge feedback was that

specialists did not feel valued for their contribution to society.

In response to this overwhelming sentiment, EBVS undertook an extremely ambitious video project to highlight the skills, service and contribution of each College to the general public. The project works with specialists in depth, highlighting how integral their skills are to our very way of lives and sustainable futures.

Some footage of almost all Colleges has been filmed across 4 on-sites with a small, expert production team, working with local specialists to optimize logistics and budget. Notably, EBVS strives to represent the diversity of our membership and to amplify the voice of specialists and the value of the veterinary profession across Europe. All participants are given approval rights prior to release of any content and each feature video is presented to its respective College leadership for approval prior to release on EBVS' YouTube channel.

## II. Content and message analysis

We reviewed EBVS' communications comprehensively and provided a high-level overview of message consistency, clarity, language and terminology, visual identity, and voice and tone below:

### Message Consistency & Clarity

Consistency is noted in communications messaging. Organization-wide branding guideline exists. There is no template (agreed upon language to describe) messaging about EBVS, its mandate, and role.

### Language and terminology

EBVS website communications and brand guidelines demonstrate a tension between technical precision required for specialist audiences and the “eye-level” language better suit to reach broader stakeholder groups including animal owners and policymakers. **Our research demonstrates language is a contributing factor to widespread lack of clarity about the societal value of the veterinary profession, especially specialists.**

### Voice and tone

Our engagement with both internal and external stakeholders suggests EBVS' voice in recent years is generally perceived as engaging, collaborative, and strategic.

### III. Comparative Benchmarking

We reviewed veterinary organizations to identify communication best practices; however, variation in mandate, scope, and resources across boards and specialty organizations meant no single veterinary body provides a clear benchmark. Thus, we examined analogous European and global health sector organizations that demonstrate best practice in public-facing communications.

#### Key Insights from Benchmarking:

- **Digital engagement:** WHO Europe and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control maintain consistent posting and coordinated campaigns that engage broad audiences. WOAHP performs exceptionally on LinkedIn, showing the potential for veterinary-focused content to engage well on professional social platforms.
- **Accessible messaging:** The European Food Safety Authority and European Medicines Agency translate complex technical expertise into public-friendly language while maintaining credibility and regulatory authority.
- **Inclusive outreach:** WHO Europe provides multilingual, culturally tailored content to reach historically overlooked or vulnerable populations.
- **Impact measurement and strategic planning:** EMA consistently evaluates communication feedback. EBVS demonstrates commitment to strategic planning and measurement, showing alignment with these leading practices.

These examples highlight practical approaches EBVS can adopt to strengthen digital engagement, improve clarity and accessibility, expand inclusivity, & enhance measurement of communication impact. [Benchmarking & key performance indicators \(KPIs\) can be found in the Annexes.](#)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. Recommendations and execution tactics

Based on our analyses of the organization's communications, we make the following recommendations:

#### Strategic Recommendations

- **Unify messaging** across veterinary institutions with shared values & goals
- **Professionalize digital presence** with high-quality, evergreen, & multilevel content
- **Embed value and societal impact** visibly into communications strategies & messaging
- **Target audience segments** by focusing on stakeholder personas & audience needs
- **Use content formats** beyond posts: webinars, expert Q&As, short animations, infographics
- **Collaborate inter-professionally** to align veterinary, welfare, & policy messaging when possible

## Next Steps

- Align internal communications teams and stakeholder liaisons
- Establish shared editorial themes or campaigns for digital channels
- Schedule a cross-organizational communications review and KPI benchmarking session
- Monitor evolving trends in EU digital policy, public health engagement, & stakeholder feedback

# CONCLUSION

## Closing Remarks

This communications audit has provided EBVS with a clearer view of where its messaging, tools, and practices are effective and where gaps remain. The findings confirm that while EBVS is increasingly visible and outward-facing, its impact is still constrained by fragmented approaches, technical language, and a lack of alignment between internal and external messaging.

Moving forward, EBVS has the opportunity to strengthen its influence and recognition by embedding communication more strategically into the delivery of its 2025–2030 Strategy. This means articulating the societal value of veterinary specialists in language that resonates with policymakers, peers, and the public; building more cohesive campaigns across Colleges; and adopting proven practices from the wider health sector.

By doing so, EBVS will not only address current communication barriers but also reinforce its mission to advance veterinary specialization as a public good. In this way, communications become not just a tool for visibility, but a driver of credibility, leadership, and lasting impact across Europe and beyond.

Finally, EBVS extends its sincere thanks to the audit team for their thorough work, professionalism, and constructive recommendations, which form the basis of this report and its forward-looking proposals.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Abbreviations & Definitions

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DEAR	Discover, Engage, Analyse, Report evaluation model
CTA	Call to Action
CTR	Click Through Rate
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

### Definitions *(for the purposes of this document)*

A **veterinary specialty** is a specific area of advanced veterinary medicine (like cardiology, oncology, or surgery) that requires additional training and board certification beyond general veterinary practice.

A **veterinary specialty college** is the professional organization that establishes standards, oversees training, and certifies veterinarians as specialists in a particular area of veterinary medicine.

A **veterinary specialist** is someone who has completed years of additional training in a specific area of veterinary medicine. Primary-care veterinarians consult or refer to specialists when a patient or herd needs deeper expertise or more detailed investigation. Specialists may work directly with patients, or they may focus on areas such as public health, pathology, or pharmacology. Across all fields, specialists also contribute to research and help develop improved methods, policies, and treatments in their area of specialisation.

A **primary care veterinarian** provides first-line care for a wide range of animal health concerns. They diagnose and treat common conditions, manage ongoing health needs, and coordinate preventive care. When a problem requires deeper expertise or specialised investigation, they consult with or refer patients to the appropriate specialist while continuing to support the patient's overall care.

## Appendix B: Audit team



**Karen Bolten, DVM, MBA**

Karen is a freelance consultant for veterinary business and marketing strategy, market analytics, and custom AI solutions, e.g. brand & website audit automations.

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**Federica Bozza, EBVS Communications Officer**

Social media management, design, analytics and newsletter compilation



**Tanja Susmelj, EBVS IT Support Officer**

Website project manager and admin, website & newsletter analytics



**Julie Rosser, DVM, PhD, EBVS Chief Executive Officer**

Executive oversight, Communications Strategy & stakeholder management

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