



Territorial Cooperation projects 2007-2013:

Communication Plan Factsheets





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INTERACT hopes this tool will contribute to "Sharing INTERREG experiences" and encourage other Community Initiative programmes to share their skills and knowledge with INTERREG stakeholders through INTERACT.

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HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This working paper, Communication Plans Factsheets, aims to introduce the main new requisites for the elaboration of Communication Plans for new programming period 2007-2013. Its main objectives are:

1. To present the main findings in information and publicity activities in the different territorial cooperation programmes during 2000-2006 programming period.
2. To identify and compile observed good practices
3. To define guidelines to be used in the 2007-2013 programming period for the elaboration of successful and efficient Communication Plans.

This working paper proposes a systemic way to develop a strategy and content of Communication Plans based in good practice examples.

The document is intended to be a general guide to be followed by these persons in charge of the preparation, management and execution of communication activities in the different territorial cooperation programmes for the 2007-2013 programming period.

The contents of this working paper have been produced using data obtained from the following sources:

- Inputs from the INTERACT Programme
- The official INTERREG III programmes' documentation
- The questionnaires sent to a sample of INTERREG III programmes
- Experience and knowledge about EU Programmes in general, and specifically about INTERREG III programmes

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION PLANS APPROACHES IN THE PROGRAMMING PERIODS 200-2006 AND 2007-2013

1. ANALYSIS OF THE INTERREG III COMMUNICATION PLANS (2000 – 2006 PROGRAMMING PERIOD)

The implementation of the Communication Plan is linked to the objectives pursued with the actions, the target group they are addressed to, and the available resources to achieve their objectives in terms of communication.

The main findings from the 2000-2006 programming period are the following:

- ⇒ Throughout the programming period 2000-2006, more and better information and publicity activities have been carried out in all INTERREG III programmes as compared to previous programming periods.
- ⇒ Although the main target group of communication activities were the final beneficiaries, an increased focus in the general public has been detected.
- ⇒ Some opinions expressed that the existing European Commission's Regulations and practical guides have not always been enough to provide answers to all issues. This should be marked specially during the project contracting phase, although also, to a lesser extent, when elaborating publications or other sort of promotional material.
- ⇒ As a consequence of this, programme managers usually develop additional measures such as information and publicity activities not required in the regulations, aiming to ensure the fulfilment of the proposed objectives in this field. For example, the design of stickers with the programme logo and the EU logo, etc.
- ⇒ In broad terms, there is enough coordination in the management of communication activities within the programme' projects, although it would be convenient to intensify cooperation in order to increase their impact.
- ⇒ It has been observed that programme managers with experience in other programmes financed with Structural Funds besides territorial cooperation programmes have a more specialised knowledge on this field.

According to these findings, and focussing on the new Territorial Cooperation Objective programmes, there is a special need to:

- ✓ Support programme managers to overcome difficulties to access the media, due to the lower fulfilment, in relative terms, of the objective of informing the general public about territorial cooperation programmes
- ✓ Although the existence of communication networks and the Structural Funds Information Team (formerly known as SFIT, in the future INFORM), it is necessary to encourage the exchange of experiences and good practice of programmes at any management level, especially for those less familiar with territorial cooperation programmes, such as civil servants working for regional administrations. Conferences, seminars and similar events on a regular basis with formative purposes will be very convenient.
- ✓ Each programme should design their own logo, which should contribute to spread the image of the programme. This task should be undertaken by the Managing Authority of each programme.
- ✓ Territorial cooperation programmes must be especially careful with printed material, specifying the contribution of EU Funds to the programmes.
- ✓ Programmes shall have at their disposal some sort of tool or monitoring mechanism which contributes to the improvement of the activities considered in the Communication Plans given that, although the Managing Authority (MA) is in charge of compliance with the requirements set in the existing Regulations, it becomes complex for the MA to verify its execution on a stand alone basis and with the available resources.
- ✓ Improve the coordination and sharing experiences among programmes through the access to networks or exchanging ideas forums.
- ✓ Raise awareness, especially towards projects and final beneficiaries, on the importance of the information and publicity activities and the benefits stemming from it.

Estimated reach of the information and publicity activities

Considering that neither all the activities pursue the same goal nor all the programmes have the same resources, neither the design of the information and publicity activities nor their expected impact have to coincide. However, certain common guidelines have been identified during the 2000-2006 programming period and are worth mentioning:

- ✎ Information and publicity activities have originated as main consequence, an increased demand in participation in territorial cooperation programmes and operations financed with Structural Funds.
- ✎ The impact of publicity activities upon the final beneficiaries is as expected. However, a large majority of the general public living in regions where territorial cooperation projects are implemented is not aware of the operations co-financed with Structural Funds of the European Union in collaboration with other regions/countries.
- ✎ The most effective information and publicity instruments, according to the opinion of programmes' and projects' managers, are websites and activities such as workshops and conferences, followed by newsletters and other products (i.e. programmes' logos). These are considered to be more effective than billboards and plaques.
- ✎ There is generally a lack of evaluation indicators system to confirm these results. The large majority of Communication Plans for the previous programming period 2000-2006 were drafted in compliance with the basic contents established in the previous Regulation (EC) 1260/1999 although presented without bigger development. The main consequence was the lack of guidelines for the stakeholders concerning the information and publicity measures. In line with this, there was a lack of established indicators or tools which would allow an evaluation of these Communication Action Plans.

Therefore, while planning Information and Publicity activities and drafting Communication Plans, the following aspects have to be considered:

- ✓ Make projects managers aware that the best way to inform the general public on programmes and operations financed with Structural Funds is by carrying out communication activities.
- ✓ The scope of possible information and publicity activities is quite large. Therefore, the tools to be used will be chosen upon the available resources in each stage.
- ✓ Make use of new information and communication technologies as publicity tool in order to have a large impact over the final beneficiaries and the general public, with the lowest economic cost.
- ✓ It is convenient to reinforce the European Territorial Cooperation Objective among regions through publicity campaigns. This would contribute to solve common problems and to obtain an own identity within the European Union on the basis of sharing similar interests or difficulties, according to the cross-border cooperation.
- ✓ Prepare a set of indicators that allows the assessment and evaluation of the information and publicity activities foreseen in the Communication Plan.

The Regulations for the upcoming programming period 2007-2013 (Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006) make again special reference to the obligation of guaranteeing the transparency of the European Funds and

addressing to beneficiaries and **European citizens**, the important role played by the European Union through the co-financed programmes and projects. In order to contribute to the aim of transparency, the Structural Funds assistance must be accompanied by publicity measures, to inform about of the possibilities offered by the Funds and about the role played by the European Union in cooperation with the Member States in this area.

2. COMMUNICATION PLANS APPROACH IN THE 2007-2013 PROGRAMMING PERIOD

Aiming to achieve a greater homogeneity and a greater degree of coordination among the participating institutions in charge of managing territorial cooperation programmes, the Regulation (EC) No.18283/2006 in articles from 2 to 10 establishes different guidelines in the field of information and publicity as an additional requirement in the EU Funds management

For the programming period 2007-2013, it is established that:

1. Each managing authority will have to draw up a single Communication Plan for each Operational Programme. (*art. 2.1 Regulation 1828/2006*)
2. The managing authorities of the different Territorial Cooperation programmes will be responsible that each programmes' Communication Plan reaches, in general, the target group (final beneficiaries) and the general public (European Union citizens) as is established in article 69 of the Regulation (EC) 1183/2006.
3. The Communication Plan containing Information and Publicity activities will not be part of the Operational Programme, but a separate document to be submitted after it has been approved.
4. The Communication Plan must be submitted to the European Commission during the four first months after the adoption of the respective Operational Programme. (*art. 3 Regulation 1828/2006*)
5. The European Commission has a two-months deadline to make observations regarding the Communication Plan submitted. In case that the European Commission makes no observations before the deadline, the compatibility of the Plan is assumed, otherwise other two months are set in order to send the corrected new version. (*art. 3 Regulation 1828/2006*)
6. The contents for the Information and Publicity Plans will remain practically unchanged in comparison with those from the previous period 2000-2006 (*art. 2.2 Regulation 1828/2006*):
 - Aims and target groups
 - Strategy and content of the information and publicity measures
 - Indicative budget for the implementation
 - Administrative departments / agents responsible for its implementation
 - Indication of how the information and publicity measures are going to be evaluated

7. The Communication Plan shall be implemented within the first two months after its approval by the European Commission. However, each Managing Authority may start carrying out information and publicity activities, even before the definitive version is approved. (*art. 3 Regulation 1828/2006*).
8. Also, assessment activities of Communication Plans are stipulated (*art. 4 Regulation 1828/2006*):
 - Presentation of the main information and publicity stages carried out, with specific examples to the Monitoring Committee of each programme.
 - The Managing Authority must watch over the inclusion within the annual reports, and further reports for the European Commission of the information and publicity measures, alongside with the evaluation of such activities (delivery foreseen by 2010).
 - The budget from Technical Assistance will be used, always in a convenient and proportionate way, as the regulation proposes.
9. Also, according to *article 9 of Regulation (EC) 1828/2006*, the emblem of the European Union must be used followed by the ERDF slogan in order to spread the ERDF's objective among the citizenship. The suggested slogan which shall be used for Territorial Cooperation Programmes is 'investing in your future'.
10. Finally, in relation to the creation of a Community network with the purpose of sharing experiences and Good Practices in the field of Communication of the different Funds, each Managing Authority will appoint one or several contact persons who will inform to the European Commission on these issues. (*art. 10 Regulation 1828/2006*):

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS OF COMMUNICATION PLANS

The objective of this section is to ease the development of future Communication Plans in territorial cooperation programmes for the 2007-2013 programming period. With this aim, some orientations and tools needed for the accurate fulfillment of the corresponding regulation are suggested.

Aims and target groups

The main goal pursued with the development of the Communication Plan is to inform with the greatest possible homogeneity to the beneficiaries (Lead Partners and project partners) of territorial cooperation programmes and the European citizens (general public) from the geographical areas in which programmes are based, about the benefits of territorial cooperation programmes co-financed by the European Union.

Consequently, the Communication Plans will have to start with a list of global objectives around which the information and publicity activities are to be implemented. Such a list must include at least the following objectives:

- ✓ **To raise awareness of the programme among the general public**
- ✓ **To guarantee the transparency during the Programme implementation**
- ✓ **To make the citizenship aware of the benefits upon their regions' social and economic development stemmed from the territorial cooperation programmes**
- ✓ **To achieve the generalised knowledge, among the population, of the activities and the joint cooperation strategy**

The target groups of these actions are, as mentioned above, the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries, and the general public (in particular, from the programme area). However, in order to favour the fulfilment of objectives, the following groups must be also considered:

- Professional organizations and economic agents
- Project promoters
- Local organisations
- Non-profit organizations (that promote gender equality), involved in social, economic and cross-border development integration.

Strategy and content of the Communication Plan

Once that the objectives of the Communication Plan have been established and the target group is defined, in order to develop the communication strategy and the actions to carry out, the following guidelines are suggested:

- Use a limited number of languages, but enough to guarantee a complete coverage of the population in all sort of actions (websites, publications, etc.).
- Efficient coordination and cooperation between managers from different regions.
- Adequacy between information and publicity actions and target groups.
- Adequacy between information and publicity actions and objectives pursued.
- Update of the Communication Plan in view of possible modifications or suggestions made by the European Commission.
- Quality and simplification of the information and publicity activities.
- Maximum simplification of the language used (jargon) in order to reach the population easily.
- Search of interactivity with the public opinion: actions must not be a one-way monologue with the target audience.
- Inclusion of a list with reference documents, and contact addresses where managers can seek advice from.

It is advisable that such strategy establishes a clear differentiation between ***permanent actions***, which must be carried out all along the duration of the Communication Plan's lifecycle and the ***specific actions*** that will be carried out in order to reinforce the fulfilment of the objectives of the Plan.

Among the **permanent actions**, the following measures must be considered:

- Set-up and update a programme's **Website**, just as the direct links located in other Websites of the corresponding Regional Authorities in the programme area. These Websites shall include the EU logo –with references to the European Union and the ERDF Fund- and, in case there is one, the specific programme's logo to its side. The EU logo itself must have a link to the official European Commission website. It is recommended to display statistics in the Website, and icons allowing the download of documents. (Both of them –visit counter and icon– can be used to ease future evaluation tasks of the Communication Plans).
- To include contact details of the managing structures (telephone contact numbers, contact names, etc.).
- Distribution of the Communication Plan in printed copy to all structures implied in the management of the programme.
- Create a project database with information and images of implemented projects, which shall be available to the general public in each programme's Website.
- It is advisable to request the collaboration of final beneficiaries and also intermediate bodies in charge of the management of the programme and, whenever possible, involve press offices of Regional Administrations (in order to collect graphic material).

- Incorporation of assessment, monitoring, control and evaluation indicators regarding the information and publicity measures to the Programme's assessment computer database, alongside with the remaining output, result and impact indicators.

Among the *specific actions*

- Whenever possible, carry out a publicity campaign in the media, using one or two own slogans informing, in a clear, direct and attractive way, about the main objectives pursued by the Programme, catching the public's maximum attention.
- Publication of articles on Territorial Cooperation projects in the regional and local media. The most interesting topics are those that as result of their nature have a more human and close dimension to the citizen.

INDICATIVE BUDGET FOR THE COMMUNICATION PLAN

For the elaboration of the Communication Plan's budget and the economic distribution among the priority axes of the programmes, each managing authority will have to determine roughly the amount assignable within the Technical Assistance budget (6% of the total budget of each programme according to art 46.b of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006) to the implementation of information and publicity activities.

In order to produce a budget for the Communication Plan, the Managing Authority must consider:

- 1) A quantitative approximation to the costs of the activities foreseen to be carried out within the Communication Plan.
- 2) All information and publicity activities foreseen by Intermediate Bodies (Regional Contact Points, etc).

EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNICATION PLAN

The evaluation of Information and Publicity activities should be adapted to the general objectives pursued by the Communication Plans of Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

Until now, a generalised lack of indicators or evaluation criteria which would allow an assessment of the degree of success of the information and publicity activities developed, has highly conditioned the possible evaluation of previous communication activities. This situation is opposite to what happens in other programmes co-financed with ERDF, in which other indicators are established (such as amount of road kilometres built, etc.).

A set of indicators is presented, which can serve as **initial guidelines**. Not all of them are equally applicable to all programmes, due to the diverse nature of the different territorial cooperation programmes. Therefore, it is necessary to study them carefully and select for each case. These indicators must also be complemented with new ones that incorporate the specific characteristics of each Communication Plan. These indicators will allow in a later stage, to effectively evaluate the Information and Publicity activities.

Some of these indicators must be completed by the Managing Authority and given the case, by the Regional Contact Points of the programme, whereas others, on the other hand, will only be filled out by final beneficiaries (Lead Partners and project partners), depending on what is finally established in the strategy of each Communication Plan.

Effectiveness	Impact indicators	Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ % of projects advertised in mass media ✓ % of projects that spread information regarding co-financing among the target public ✓ % of projects that publish all the award criteria of the tender processes.
		Public awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ % of projects advertisements that make reference to the co-financing ✓ % of projects that fulfil with the publicity's presentation requirements ✓ % of projects that incorporate the logos corresponding to each programme
	Result indicators	Visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Publicity campaigns of Territorial Cooperation programmes in the region ✓ Number of billboards/plaques placed

		Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Number of leaflets published ✓ Number of mass media used ✓ Number of press/radio adverts ✓ Publication of descriptive documents of the Programme
	Improvement indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase of the number of activities developed by the Managing Authority. ✓ % of managers with an increased information and publicity activities ✓ % of managers that affirm having noticed an increased level of applications due to publicity action carried out. 	
	Budget indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Executed publicity budget in comparison with the proposed budget 	
Quality		Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Availability of the own Programme logo ✓ Number of visitors to the website
		Visual Attractiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Balance between text and images
		Interactive means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Creation of a programme Website ✓ Information availability on the Website provided by the different stakeholders

Generalitat Valenciana
Conselleria de Economía,
Hacienda y Empleo
Dirección General de Economía
c/ Cronista Carreres, 11 – 4A,
ES - 46003 Valencia

t: (+34) 96 315 35 93
f: (+34) 96 391 19 23

Stichting Euregio Maas-Rijn
Postbus 5700
NL - 6202 MA Maastricht

t: (+31) 43 389 73 02,
f: (+31) 43 389 72 87



ip.tb@interact-eu.net
www.interact-eu.net/tb

