COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020

(24.3.2015)

Contents

1. Introduction

This communication strategy acts as a framework and a basis for the communication of the Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020 (hereinafter referred to as "the programme"). The strategy fulfils the requirements set out by the European Commission[1]. The strategy is approved by the Monitoring Committee of the programme and supports the implementation of the Cooperation Programme approved by the European Commission.

The Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020 is a cross-border cooperation programme under the European Territorial Cooperation Objective with a strong base in the preceding Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme 2007-2013. The programme has four priorities under which it finances cross-border cooperation:

- Competitive economy of the Central Baltic Region
- Sustainable use of common resources
- Well-connected region
- Skilled and socially inclusive region

The overall objective of the European Territorial Cooperation (hereinafter referred to as "Interreg") has remained the same from the previous programme periods: to encourage organizations from different EU Member States to work together and learn from each other. The Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020 is set out to contribute to this overall aim by financing cooperation under the above-mentioned themes in the Central Baltic Region.

Communication is an important strategic tool for programme implementation. It reaches horizontally through every activity of the programme. Real communication is a dialogue that engages the stakeholders. The programme communication aims at an interactive dialogue with stakeholders, and that is where the success of the implementation of this strategy is measured. All involved programme bodies are to contribute to this aim.

Experiences from the period of 2007-2013 have shown that the field of communication is going through a fast-paced change. Different electronic and social media have become more widely used and the messages are often dispersed to different audiences in smaller and more frequent fragments instead of big entities in printed. Although this change will be taken into account and addressed in the new Central Baltic Programme, the communication is still there first and foremost to support reaching the main aims of the programme and to serve all the various stakeholders. The past experiences help in focusing on the communication activities and methods that benefit the programme implementation most. The lessons learned are taken into account in this communication strategy.

This Communication strategy is a framework for the programme communication during the whole programme period 2014-2020. The programme implementation will include different phases meaning that also programme communication will have different needs and emphasis during different phases of the programme period. The communication activities will move from strong promotion of the funding opportunity and the results and experiences from the previous period in the beginning (2014-2016), to more prominently engaging the audiences and raising awareness of the results and benefits of the current programme towards the end of it

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[1] Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

(2017-2021). In order to be able to take the programme developments into account in all communication in the best possible way this strategy will be implemented through annual work plans describing more detailed communication activities for the programme bodies year by year.

This strategy provides the framework in which the Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020 can aim at effective and good-quality implementation through well-coordinated communication. An overview of the intervention logic of this strategy is presented in Table 2 on page 9.

2. Programme objectives and communication objectives

The operational objective of the Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020 is to create cross-border cooperation by allocating funding to high-quality projects delivering the expected results in a sustainable way. All communication is to support this objective of and to make the programme well known. This is ensured by setting communication objectives (CO) that lead to the best possible outcome of programme implementation. The two communication objectives are defined further by the specific communication objectives.

Communication objective 1:
To ensure the generation and quality of the cross-border cooperation projects

CO 1.1   To ensure well-functioning internal communication in between the programme bodies to make the programme function effectively

CO 1.2   To strongly promote the funding opportunity to activate the potential beneficiaries

CO 1.3   To support beneficiaries in all phases of project implementation to guarantee the best possible outcome of the projects

CO 1.4   To actively cooperate with other Interreg programmes to share information and best practices and learn from one another

Communication objective 2:
To attract wide interest towards the benefits of cross-border cooperation

CO 2.1   To support and encourage beneficiaries in communication activities

CO 2.2   To underline the benefits of cross-border cooperation for stakeholder groups widely in the programme area

3. Target groups and their needs

The target groups for programme communication derive from the communication objectives. Different target groups are addressed by different specific communication objectives.

The target groups can be divided into two main groups according to their nature within the programme implementation. The **internal** groups consist of people working with the implementation of the actual programme. The **external** target groups consist of all other stakeholders that are of interest to the programme in reaching its main goals, mainly organizations that could or do implement projects. The implementation of the Communication strategy by the internal groups aims at engaging the external target groups in becoming aware of and implementing the programme.

Internal target groups
− to make the programme function effectively in order to generate good cross-border cooperation projects

- Managing Authority (MA), Joint Secretariat (JS), Audit Authority (AA)
- National Contact Points in the Member States
- Monitoring Committee (MC), Steering Committee (SC)
- National bodies responsible for coordinating the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes
- European Commission / DG Regio Desk Officer of the programme

External target groups
− to generate good cross-border cooperation projects

- Potential beneficiaries
- Project partners
- Other Interreg programmes
- The Priority Area Coordinators (PAs) and Horizontal Action Leaders (HALs) of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

− to communicate the benefits of the cross-border cooperation

- All the above groups
- Stakeholder organizations
- Groups related to programme themes (general public)
- European Commission

Different target groups need different communication approaches from the programme and the programme bodies receive these needs from a variety of sources. In the following table (Table 1) the needs of the target groups and their sources are generally described. The approaches to address the needs are described in Table 2 on page 9.

Table 1. Target group communication needs

Target group	What do they need to know?	Where/how do we identify the needs?
Internal target groups	• Their role and responsibility in programme implementation • Ongoing information and issues relevant to the employees' tasks • How the programme implementation is going	• Programme aims and requirements • Day-to-day communication • Annual feedback and evaluation on internal communication • MC and SC meetings • Experiences from the previous programme period
European Commission	• How the programme implementation is going • The success stories and challenges of the projects	• Annual reporting replies • INFORM Network cooperation
Potential beneficiaries	• What the programme has to offer • Success stories as examples of cooperation • How to prepare a good project application • Where and how to find partners • When and how to apply	• Questions and inquiries to the JS and Contact Points • Events, meetings • Social media • Experiences from the previous programme period
Project partners	• How to implement the project well • How to succeed in project communication • Experiences of other projects in different project implementation and thematic issues	• Questions to the JS • Project reporting • Day-to-day contact with the projects • Annual feedback and evaluation process • Experiences from the previous programme period
Other Interreg programmes	• Experiences and lessons learnt in the CB Programme	• Seminars, meetings, day-to-day contacts
Stakeholder organizations	• How the funded cooperation benefits the relevant themes/organizations/issues	• Media, social media • Different networks
General public	• The benefits of European cooperation close to them and thematically relevant to their interests	• Media, social media • Europol surveys

4. Communication approaches for the target groups

The communication to the different target groups derives from the needs to engage the group in question. Therefore the activities and approaches vary between the target groups. All programme communication will be done in English apart from person to person communication where other languages are applicable. When communication is directed towards the media or general public groups, also national languages can be used. A graphical corporate identity will be in place for a coherent image of the programme to be used in all communication. The Commission requirements for displaying the emblem and other references to the European Union will be followed in all communication activities.

Internal communication

The internal communication within and between the programme bodies is to consist of a clear organizational structure supporting clear division of tasks and a well-structured process of handling information. In a clear structure all employees recognize their tasks, responsibilities and contribution to the programme work as a whole. This includes the shared responsibility of taking initiative in discussing and developing processes when and where needed.

Engaging external groups by communication

Especially in the first years of programme implementation the engagement of the **potential beneficiary organizations** is to be in focus in the programme communication. Raising interest towards the programme as a funding source is to be done through a multi-channel approach where all the needed information will be made clearly understandable, widely available and known. At the same time it will also be actively delivered to the target organizations and the key people in the way that encourages them to take action to get project developers to prepare applications to the programme. The potential beneficiaries will be actively supported and guided in using the materials, aiming at high number and high quality of applications.

Communication activities supporting the engagement of the potential beneficiaries are e.g.:

- producing clear and good-quality information and support materials
- informing about the programme and the possibilities it offers through networks and social media
- organizing events promoting the programme as a funding source
- providing support in partner search in networking events
- paying visits to the regions and key organizations
- doing project consultations with project developers

Once the projects are being implemented the support from the programme bodies will ensure the best possible project implementation in order for them to reach the planned outcomes. Each **financed project** has a contact person in the JS. While the JS will provide joint guidance to all implemented projects the contact person is responsible for the support offered to an individual project. Additionally, the JS Communication Manager and Communication Officer will be involved in monitoring the projects' communication activities in order to be able to provide extra support in the implementation of the project communication to ensure a wide

dissemination of project results and benefits to the regions. Also project-to-project experience exchange will be organized by the JS in order to support effective project implementation.

Communication activities supporting the project implementation and communication are e.g.:

- producing support materials
- providing day-to-day implementation support by the contact person
- supporting and encouraging projects to work efficiently with project communication and especially media
- sharing project success stories via programme social media and other channels
- organizing seminars for beneficiaries
- providing possibilities for experience exchange of the beneficiaries
- collecting feedback on the activities supporting project implementation

While it is important for the projects to share experiences it is equally important for the programme to share experiences with **other similar programmes**. Therefore, active communication with other programmes is seen as an important tool for successful programme implementation.

Communication activities supporting the experience exchange with other programmes are e.g.:

- participating in training seminars or network meetings organized by Interact in various themes (financial, project support, communication, programme implementation etc.)
- participating in thematic events organized by the European Commission (e.g. INFORM network meetings)
- creating and keeping up one-to-one collegial relationships with colleagues in other programmes
- being active in different inter-programme networks
- sharing the learnt lessons within the programme

The different **stakeholder groups not directly involved in project implementation** but still thematically of interest to the programme are approached according to needs and possibilities. They are regarded not only as a target group to be informed about the benefits of the cooperation but also as potential multipliers of the disseminated information. This is especially taken into account in the context of the EUSBSR. Based on experiences from the previous programme period, the largest audience, the **general public**, is targeted by the programme activities strongly through encouraging and supporting the funded projects in their communication activities. The cooperation with the projects in engaging the general public has proven to lead to the best results. The projects usually have the most concrete and often also local news and benefits that attract the attention of the general public in their everyday life. Additionally, the programme will use a thematic approach towards different interest groups by displaying the benefits of cross-border cooperation according to a variety of themes.

Communication activities supporting the dissemination of information to wider audiences are e.g.:

- supporting and encouraging the projects in their communication activities towards media and different general public groups
- participating in or organizing thematic events
- thematic media releases
- participating in or organizing events for the general public (e.g. European Cooperation Day)

5. Communication tools

The programme communication will be done using the following tools. The division of information between the website and social media will be carefully defined in order to make it clear what type of information is delivered through which channel.

- E-mail, Skype, telephone, calendars
- Meetings
- Website, intranet, eMonitoring System
- Electronic and printed materials
- Social media: Facebook and Twitter
- Events: organizing and participating
- Media visibility

In order to support programme implementation in the best possible way, all tools are used in a coherent, coordinated and need-based way. The experiences and success stories from the previous programme period are widely used as examples of cooperation for different target groups and through various channels, especially in the beginning. Later, the success stories of the current programme will gain ground in the programme communication. Materials are planned and created according to needs, with the utmost aim of being informative, clear and attractive to the addressed target group(s). People with disabilities will be addressed by the information on the website in a format supporting the technical aids for the impaired.

The website is seen as a source for information and materials, not a communication platform in itself, whereas the social media channels are used for more two-way communication as well as an information source for the programme about the project and other stakeholder group activities. Social media is used also for event and information marketing. The printing of materials is done according to need and ecological approach is applied in providing as much material in good and usable electronic format as seen applicable. Events are used for communication when they provide added value for the participant (in relation to the costs, effort, travel time etc.). Also teleconferencing can be considered an option to better serve people in different parts of the programme area, for instance in project implementation support seminars. Media visibility is seen as a tool for raising awareness and also interest towards the benefits of cross-border cooperation and the European funds. All tools are to be used sensibly, in a well-planned way, and according to the best possible engagement of the target group in question.

Table 2. Intervention logic of the Communication strategy

OVERALL OBJECTIVE:

> To create cross-border cooperation by allocating funding to high-quality projects delivering the expected results in a sustainable way

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES:

CO 1: To ensure the generation and quality of the cross-border cooperation projects				**CO 2:** To attract wide interest towards the benefits of cross-border cooperation	
CO 1.1 To ensure well-functioning internal communication in between the programme bodies to make the programme function effectively	**CO 1.2** To strongly promote the funding opportunity to activate the potential beneficiaries in the programme area	**CO 1.3** To support beneficiaries in all phases of project implementation to guarantee the best possible outcome of the projects	**CO 1.4** To actively cooperate with other Interreg programmes to share information and best practices and learn from one another	**CO 2.1** To support and encourage beneficiaries in project communication activities	**CO 2.2** To underline the benefits of cross-border cooperation for different stakeholder groups widely in the programme area

TARGET GROUPS:

Managing Authority Joint Secretariat Contact Points Audit Authority Monitoring Committee Steering Committee DG Regio / COM National Interreg coordination organizations	Potential beneficiary organizations National and regional authorities EUSBSR PACs/HALs	Project partners of the approved projects	Other Interreg programmes Interact	Project partners of the approved projects	Stakeholder organizations and groups related to programme themes Politicians EUSBSR PACs/HALs General public

COMMUNICATION APPROACH:

Clear division of tasks and structured processes of information handling	Pro-active attitude towards providing information about the programme in materials and in person Strong encouragement to engage the project developers in cooperation during project preparation phase Support in finding the relevant partners for cooperation	Providing clear guidance materials for project implementation Organizing support seminars for projects Being available for day-to-day guidance Providing possibilities for project partners to share experiences Collecting feedback on programme support	Actively participating in organized trainings where other programmes are present and sharing experiences from the CB programme Keeping day-to-day contacts alive with other programmes	Organizing training seminars about communication issues Sharing projects' information via social media channels Keeping projects aware of media & other possibilities for promoting their results Providing possibilities for project partners to share experiences	Making information available and monitoring how it is being used by different thematic interest groups Striving for media visibility with thematic focus on project achievements

COMMUNICATION TOOLS:

Meetings Intranet Mailing lists Feedback collection	Regional info activities organized by the national Contact Points Website Mailing lists Social media Meetings Events	Seminars Website Mailing lists Social media Meetings Day-to-day support by own JS contact person / support through monitoring Feedback collection	Seminars Meetings Keeping active day-to-day working contacts	Seminars Website Mailing lists Social media Meetings Day-to-day support by own JS contact person / support through monitoring	Traditional and social media Thematic events Using multiplier channels like Europe Direct, regional EU offices etc.

6. Technical framework, division of responsibility and budget

The implementation of the Communication strategy is a horizontal responsibility of all programme staff members. This is ensured by planning and monitoring of the activities within the programme by the Communication Manager. The Communication Manager is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the strategy.

The Communication strategy is the framework for the programme communication for the whole programme period. It is approved by the Monitoring Committee. The strategy is streamlined to implementation through the annual work plan drawing detailed plans for how the strategy objectives are strived for during the year in question. The annual planning allows for the implementation of the strategy through coordinated milestones where evaluation of the communication offers possibilities for adjustment and improving where needed. The implementation of the strategy is evaluated as part of the annual reporting of the programme. The annual cycle of strategy implementation is described in Table 3 below.

Table 3. The annual cycle of preparing and evaluating the communication activities

Annual activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Annual planning of communication activities as part of JS work plan								■	■	■		
Annual work plan approved by the MC											■	
Annual satisfaction questionnaire for internal communication												■
Annual satisfaction questionnaire for beneficiaries												■
Preparation of annual report of the programme, including the evaluation of communication activities	■	■										
Annual report approved by the MC			■									
Annual report sent to the European Commission					■							

The Communication Manager coordinates the programme communication work in close cooperation with the Info team of the JS. The Info team consists of the Communication Manager, Communication Officer (until the end of year 2017) and the six Information Officers working at the national Contact Points of the programme.

Whilst the Communication Manager and Communication Officer are located at the JS in Turku, the national Contact Points form a network working on communication in the respective Member States, under the day-to-day coordination of the Communication Manager. Each Member State except for Sweden has one national Contact Point in the capital city staffed by one full-time Information Officer. In Sweden there are two Contact Points (one in Stockholm and one in

Norrköping) each staffed with a half-time Information Officer. The Contact Points contribute mainly to the fulfilment of the specific communication objectives 1.2 and 2.2. The national Contact Points are the key players in communicating the programme to the regions and, at the same time, the regions' needs towards the programme.

The communication activities are budgeted annually as a part of the programme budget for technical assistance. The communication costs are divided between Turku and the national Contact Points with the largest share of communication costs allocated to Turku. An indicative plan for the annual division of communication costs in the Technical Assistance budget is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. An indicative plan for the annual division of the communication costs in the technical assistant budget

Communication costs *(indicative)*	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	TOTAL
Information materials and publications	18 000	18 900	30 000	31 500	33 100	34 800	36 500	15 000	15 000	232 800
Events (information and training, seminars, annual events etc.)	20 000	31 000	32 600	36 100	37 900	89 800	40 400	10 000	5 000	302 800

7. Evaluation

The evaluation of the implementation of this Communication strategy is done annually in the process of compiling the Annual implementation report of the programme. The evaluation is based on result indicators set for each specific communication objective and the target values are set in the annual work plans.

Table 5. Indicators for the specific communication objectives

Specific communication objective	Result indicator	Source of data
CO 1.1 **To ensure well-functioning internal communication in between the programme bodies to make the programme function effectively**	Satisfaction of the internal bodies (scoring system 1-5)	Feedback collected from the internal bodies annually at the end of the year
CO 1.2 **To strongly promote the funding opportunity to activate the potential beneficiaries in the programme area**	No. of events where promoting the programme with presentation or stand	Data collected by JS
	No. of consultations done with project developers	Consultation listing by JS
	No. of received applications (first step)	eMS
	Percentage of the approved applications out of all applications received	eMS
CO 1.3 **To support beneficiaries in all phases of project implementation to guarantee the best possible outcome of the projects**	Satisfaction of the beneficiaries towards the programme bodies and processes (scoring system 1-5)	Feedback collected from the beneficiaries annually at the end of the year
CO 1.4 **To actively cooperate with other Interreg programmes to share information and best practices and learn from one another**	No. of participations of the staff to Interact and other Interreg programme activities or other activities where inter-programme experience exchange is in focus	Participation listing by JS
CO 2.1 **To support and encourage beneficiaries in project communication activities**	Satisfaction of the beneficiaries towards the programme bodies and processes (scoring system 1-5)	Feedback collected from the beneficiaries annually at the end of the year
	No. of media visibility occasions by the projects	Project reporting
	No. of projects active in one or more social media platforms	Data collected by JS
CO 2.2 **To underline the benefits of cross-border cooperation for different stakeholder groups widely in the programme area**	No. of media visibility gained by direct effort by the programme	Data collected by JS