



Ministry of Public
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Administrative Reform

Twinning Light Project BG/2005/IB/SPP/02/UE/TWL
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Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform
for managing the Operational Programme”



Phare
Twinning Programme

Guidelines for the drawing up Communication Plans for 2007-2013 programming period of Structural Funds

According to Article 69 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11th July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999, *the Member States and the Managing Authority for the operational programme shall provide information on and publicise operations and co-financed programmes. The information shall be addressed to European Union citizens and beneficiaries with the aim of highlighting the role of the Community and ensure that assistance from the Funds is transparent.*

Managing Authorities of the programmes co-financed by Structural Funds have to draw up a Communication Plan for the execution of Article 69 of the Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006,.

These guidelines aim to propose a methodological approach in order to draw up and implement a communication plan for the Structural Funds programming period (2007-2013). It contains practical advice and references to already existing on-line documentation.

These guidelines are based also on the documents previously drawn out and on the experiences developed in the past programming period (2000-2006) of the Structural Funds and have been written in the light of the needs of new programming requirements.

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Introduction

The Communication plan should be prepared keeping in mind the Commission communication strategy which aims at:

- **improving communication** through the implementation of community actions which are more visible and closer to citizens in order to increase general consent on future EU policies;
- **guaranteeing more transparency** through more efficient, transparent and accessible European institutions, open to public control;
- **“closing the gap”** between EU institutions and the citizens through the improvement of dialogue and listening.



The key documents are the following:

▶ **the European Transparency Initiative (ETI)**

http://europa.eu.int/comm/commission_barroso/kallas/transparency_en.htm

▶ **the documents of the new European Commission communication strategy**

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/communication/index_en.htm

▶ **the new structural funds regulations for the period 2007-2013**

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/newregl0713_en.htm

▶ **The European Commission's implementing regulation (EC) n. 1828/2006 laying down general provisions on The European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and of Regulation (EC) n. 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund**

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/fsfc/ce_1828\(2006\)_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/fsfc/ce_1828(2006)_en.pdf)

and the related

▶ **Corrigendum to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund**

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2007/l_045/l_04520070215en00030115.pdf

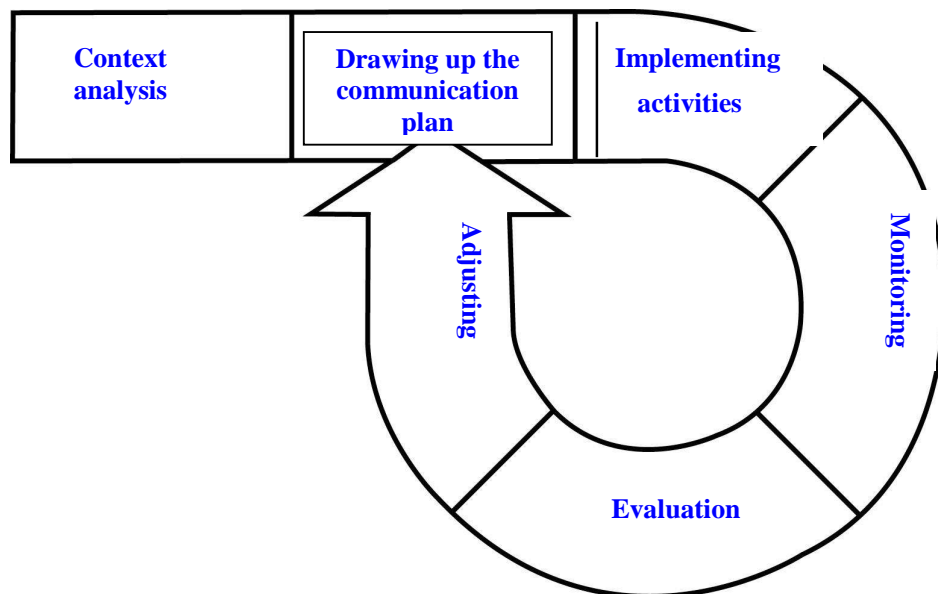
Planning

Communication activities should never be improvised. According to the new rules¹ on information and publicity about Structural Funds:

- *A communication plan, as well as major amendments to it, shall be drawn up by the managing authority for the operational programme for which it is responsible or by the Member State to cover several or all operational programmes co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), or the Cohesion Fund.*
- *The communication plan shall include at least the following:*
 - a. *the aims and target groups;*
 - b. *the strategy and content of the information and publicity measures to be taken by the Member State or the managing authority, aimed at potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries and the public, having regard to the value added of Community assistance at national, regional and local level;*
 - c. *the indicative budget for implementation of the plan;*
 - d. *the administrative departments or bodies responsible for implementation information and publicity measures;*
 - e. *an indication of how the information and publicity measures are to be evaluated in terms of visibility and awareness of operational programmes and of the role played by the Community.*

(based on the Article 2, § 1-2 Regulation (CE) n. 1828/2006)

The above mentioned are requirements for the communication plan in accordance with Commission regulation. The drawing up of the document must be considered as a cycle composed of six major steps, as shown in the figure below:



The Communication plan should be flexible and dynamic. Feedback from the evaluation of the activities carried out is useful in order to make changes to the initial planning. Moreover

¹ In the programming period (2007-2013) information and communication rules are part of a Commission Regulation setting out detailed rules for the application of the Council Regulation laying down general provision on the European Structural Funds.

unexpected events can always occur and in such cases the planned communication activities should always be able to be revised and re-programmed.

Context analysis

The first step in drafting a communication plan consists in an overview of the current situation in terms of general information and data on:

- the institution managing the programme (who is communicating and its mission);
- the territory and the population (whom are we communicating with);
- the programme itself (what kind of regional policy, what are we communicating).

The context analysis should also consider past experiences in communicating Europe and the Structural Funds.

In this section it is useful section to introduce a *SWOT* analysis examining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This will help to identify potential areas where the communication plan should concentrate.

SWOT is an acronym of 4 English words

- ▶ **Strength**
- ▶ **Weakness**
- ▶ **Opportunities**
- ▶ **Threats**

A Swot analysis can be useful to identify potential areas where the Communication Plan should concentrate with more strength.

Strengths and *weaknesses* are internal factors as they depend on features of the internal organisation. Among those, it is highly advisable to take in account what people think about the institution/s involved in the programme. Good or bad reputations must respectively be dismantled or reinforced.

Opportunities and *threats* are external factors and which depend on the environment outside the organization.

A *SWOT* analysis provides information that is helpful to match institution's resources and capabilities to the environment in which it operates.

An organizational analysis can also be introduced here as it provides useful hints on the institution/s participating in the management of the plan and in the various roles of the different participant.

Strengths	Opportunities
Good links with local authorities Good technical experts Good reputation for creating a favourable business environment	NGOs keen to push project uptake and encourage interest from final beneficiaries
Weaknesses	Threats
Relatively untested staff Not a strong network of communication officers especially at regional level	Concern about lack of transparency may reduce willingness to participate Lack of understanding about what they need



Practical advice:

Keep in mind

- ▶ Is current research on public opinion on Europe, on Structural Funds and your institution available?
- ▶ Can you get useful information from current quantitative and/or qualitative research on social trends in Bulgaria?: individual attitudes, values, trends, and social behaviour, as well as socio-demographic, occupational, educational, and economic differentiation? Possible solutions: this research could be retrieved from statistical and demographical offices, from the Representation of the European Commission in your country, from economic and social partners, from the Internet or you could cooperate with universities and study institutes in your country in order to compile such surveys.
- ▶ Can you take advantage from past experience in terms of people, know-how and the tools realized in the previous programming period?

Useful links

- ▶ **National Statistical Institute**
http://www.nsi.bg/Index_e.htm
- ▶ **Delegation of the European Commission to Bulgaria**
<http://www.evropa.bg/en/del/about-the-delegation/presentation.html>
- ▶ **Eurobarometer**
http://europa.eu.int/futurum/public_opinion_en.htm
- ▶ **UN Statistics by country:**
http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/infonation/e_infonation.htm
- ▶ **Eurostat: European statistics**
<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/>

Aims

According to the new rules on information and publicity about Structural Funds

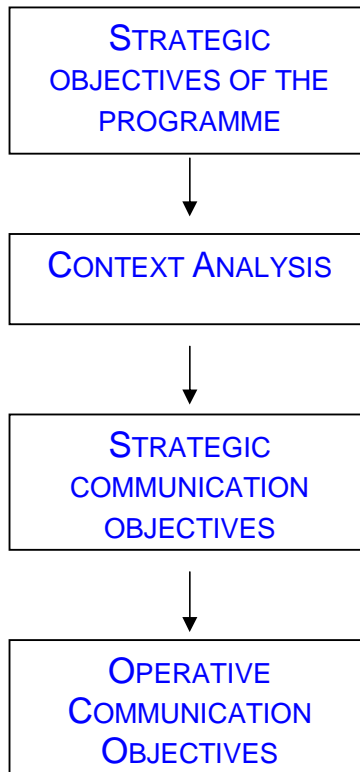
The Member State and the managing authority for the operational programme shall provide information on and publicise operations and co-financed programmes. The information shall be addressed to European Union citizens and beneficiaries with the aim of highlighting the role of the Community and ensure that assistance from the Funds is transparent.

(Article 69, Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006)

In general, the communication plan must cope with:

- **increasing visibility** of the programmes to the general public, raising awareness of Structural Funds and particularly of the role of the European Union together with the Member States;
- **ensuring transparency** of programmes for actual and potential beneficiaries, also facilitating the effective participation of applicants in the programme.

Starting from those general objectives, the communication plan should give details on specific objective, related to the strategic aims of the programme as well as taking into account the results of the context analysis.



The objectives should be **SMART**

- ▶ **S**pecific
- ▶ **M**easurable
- ▶ **A**ction-oriented
- ▶ **R**ealistic
- ▶ **T**ime-bound

in order to be monitored and evaluated. In short, through a correct definition of communication objectives, public administrations must clearly point out what will be achieved through communication and then cope with the monitoring and evaluation activities.



Practical advice:

***Don't confuse objectives with strategies and tools.
The chart below shows incorrect objectives, comments and clear and measurable objectives***

Incorrect objectives	Comments	Clear and measurable objectives
A key objective is to build a strong relationship with the media through the organization of a press office	This isn't an objective but a strategy and a tactic.	Communicate our project to the business community through a good coverage in the opinion press.
The agency shall use innovative media	Once again this isn't an objective but a method	Communicate our website to the target audiences using internet, through on line and off line communication

Target groups

According to the new rules on information and publicity about Structural Funds the Communication plan should identify the following key target groups:

- potential beneficiaries
- final beneficiaries
- general public

The *potential beneficiaries* are identified in the programme, as they are the beneficiaries of the different measures in other words the ones who can apply for “call for tenders”. It is necessary also to use information from the context analysis for further segmentation.

The *final beneficiaries* are the grant holders and cannot be identified in the initial phase of the drawing up of the communication plan.

The segmentation of the *public* needs a detailed analysis. Part of this segmentation can be obtained from the strategic objectives of the programme (i.e. equal opportunities for women) and from demographic and socio-economic analysis (see context analysis). Most of the time, the public segmentation leads to the identification of a wide number of target groups. This is the reason why it is recommended to prioritise the target audiences, also in order to overcome budget constraints. Furthermore, profiling target groups will later help us to understand how best to shape relevant messages for different target groups and what channels should be used to reach them.

There are different ways to effect the public target segmentation. The choice of which one to adopt is influenced by the kind of communication strategy we choose both at strategic and operational level. The most traditional segmentation ways which can also be used in an integrated manner are the following:

geographic segmentation: the target group is divided according to area of geographic origin (countries, regions, headquarters, areas), population number, city centre dimension, climate environment);

socio-demographic segmentation: the target group is divided on the basis of demographic variables like age, sex, family dimension, income level, occupation, educational level, religion etc.;

psycho-graphic segmentation: the target group is divided according to their lifestyles, user status and on the characteristics of the main character;

segmentation based upon the use of a service: the target group is divided on the frequency in the use of a specific service offered, and to the level of trust towards the body providing that specific service, to the awareness of the value of the service used and to the behaviour towards that specific service;

segmentation based upon the required benefits: the target group is divided according to advantages for the users in the use of a specific service.

Geographic and socio-demographic segmentation are usually the methods most used because they are easier and more simple to be adopted.



Practical advice:

Key points

- ▶ Target audiences must be selected and prioritised. Be sure that you have co-shared your decision with your internal and external partners
- ▶ Be clear about your target audiences and user groups and prioritise them according to importance and influence related to your objectives.
- ▶ List all targets, being as specific as possible
- ▶ Prioritise them
- ▶ Describe them
- ▶ What do they currently think about you and the opportunities you offer (research if necessary)?
- ▶ What do you want them to think?
- ▶ What do you want them to do?

Decide who needs to be particularly targeted and why:

- ▶ Who will be most affected by the policies and activities of your campaign?
- ▶ Who are the audiences whose opinions and behaviour will significantly impact on the activities of the programme.

Strategy

Choosing the strategy means defining how to reach aims and targets. The strategy adopted may be formal, informal, educational or funny, detailed or broad, depending on the needs of the programme and of the target to be reached. The choice could be, for example, the adoption of integrated multimedia communication, network with institutions and partners (defining different roles and information flows).

A strategy is not given once for ever, but it should be updated according to experiences, results, mistakes, new events.

In defining the strategy it must be indicated how to reach the aims previously identified.

The overall strategy should be drawn out keeping in mind:

- What is the message
- Where it is going
- Who needs it
- How aims and target are going to be reached

It is always a good practice to operate in network involving, for example:

- *internal staff* and *socio-economic-partners* to inform potential and final beneficiaries about the opportunities and the rules for participating to call for tenders and about related eligibility criteria;
- the *journalists* in order to reach both potential/final beneficiaries and the general public.

Communication with the public should include some activities to be implemented at central level to give a uniform image of all the information activities with some differences at local level which underline the peculiarities of the territory. This helps to create a unique identity for the programme. A coordinated image means that when organising many initiatives people can immediately recognise that they refer to that specific programme.

In deciding which strategy to adopt towards the identified target groups we can choose among: *non-differentiated strategy*: after which we will use a single message for all the target groups identified without any differences. It is less expensive from an economic point of view but also the least efficacious in terms message impact on the target group because it is less flexible and too general;

differentiated strategy: foresees a different kind of message depending on the target group we want to reach. It is more expensive but also more efficacious from a communication point of view.

concentrated strategy: this is an evolution compared to the differentiated strategy. Once the target groups we want to reach are identified, we choose one in particular on which to concentrate our message. This offers a well-targeted message but it penalizes the other target groups identified.

As regards the choice of strategy compared to the communication style we wish to adopt: we can choose from:

- *educational style*: the communicator plays an educational role and so he is able to train the end-user about the message content;
- *informative style*: the communicator is neutral in disseminating the message. He just provides useful information, data and news;
- *entertainment style*: the communicator provides the information while trying to amuse the end-user;
- *a mix of the previous categories*: derives from a mix of the above mentioned styles. It uses some combinations of the above categories entertainment/informative style or educational/informative/entertainment style.



Practical advice:

Some useful questions

- ▶ Do you think that there is the will to build a network with institutional, economic and social partners for a better communication?
- ▶ Do you think that networking will improve your strategy?

Some useful considerations

- ▶ Which kind of activity is the most appropriate after a specific aim and target?
- ▶ Better a regular newsletter or occasional briefing? A significant national event or rather small local conferences? You could also find out that the alternatives do not exclude each other. Possibilities are not always really alternatives, they could be both complementary.
- ▶ Think about both the actual and preferred channels your target audiences might use and challenge yourself about whether you are planning to use the right ones for maximum impact.

Content and messages

Once the aims, the strategy and the target group are identified, it is necessary to make a choice about the communication content. In brief it is important to decide which are the values and the information which we intend to communicate when drawing out the messages in a way that it is coherent. Content must be clear, explicit and true.

Successful communication ensures that the message is clear and relevant to the target audience, with complex messages broken down into a number of simple messages. It is helpful to stress the benefits of what it is proposed, and the call to action should be easy to remember and to do. With reference to the accessibility principle, the message must reach all the targets to which it is aimed, in order to be understood without any difficulty.

The message must be visible, clear and easily identifiable. Its validity depends on the possibility to be adapted to the different form and communications tools. The use of originality helps to capture the audience – humour, metaphors all help increase noticeability.

The message must not be formed of only words. It is important to associate the text to the creation of efficacious symbols which allow us to transmit complex contents in a simple way, but also to elaborate messages which are not boring, too serious or alarming.

Messages might vary depending on:

- previous experience of working with Structural funds;
- type of project, e.g. if we are dealing with a ERDF or ESF programme and any type or another type of project;
- challenges when working indirectly through third parties;

- environment and phase of the programme (weak interest in one project might require more intensified efforts)

The information and communication initiatives should illustrate:

- the basic aims of the Union's structural policy as a co-shared policy with the member States
- which tasks the Structural Funds are trying to achieve
- programme aims and content
- opportunities for the territory and for citizens
- how to access those opportunities
- responsibilities and different roles of the institutions involved
- results
- how to get further information

Activities and tools can be defined on the basis of the previously identified objectives, targets and contents. In choosing an activity and a tool it is advisable to compare it in terms of efficacy and effectiveness with other alternatives.

In communicating the above mentioned concepts it is advisable to respect the following criteria for an effective communication:

- *Simplicity* - Remove messages from all secondary and less important information that you can afford to live without
- *Consistency* - Communication approaches key audiences in many different ways. If the different activities say different things the overall effect is weakened. If the message spread is always the same, a multiply effect is guaranteed.



Practical advice:

Keep in mind

- ▶ An effective message should be
 - Few in numbers
 - Positive
 - Clear
 - Brief: not more than 25 words
 - Focused: one idea per message
 - Free from jargon
 - Capable of being adapted to different target audiences
 - Believable
 - Simple to be understood by everybody
 - Backed up by evidence or supporting statements

- ▶ All messages should support the project's main goals
 - Messages must have strong content. Do not create them only to make them sound nice
 - Messages must be brief and clear, but not generic
 - Information is the added value of messages. Slogans, on the contrary, impact on emotions
 - Do not change messages frequently. To make them more effective they must be repeated over and over again
 - Messages can be customised for specific audiences, while still remaining constant
 - Messages must be simple. They must be explained in a sentence or two, not more than a paragraph
 - Messages take time to be created. Do not rush the process

Useful links

- ▶ **Be brief and clear! Suggestions from Inforegio web site**
http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/country/commu/dessin_en.htm

Communication method - Message Suitability Grid

Method	Purpose: Raise Awareness	Purpose: Respond to interest	Purpose: Encourage involvement	Info capacity	Notes
Posters	▲			Low	To raise awareness, to remind or build an image. Can have powerful images
On site e.g. signs		▲		Low	To raise awareness or to remind. For simple messages particularly about behaviour or news
Leaflets		▲	▲	Low	Best used for responding to an existing demand or interest rather than for creating the interest in the first place. Can contain complex messages
Publications	▲	▲		High	Own publications and those for professional audiences can carry complicated messages
Magazines	▲	▲	▲	Medium	For news or more complicated messages for specific audiences
Local newspapers	▲	▲		Medium	For news or general messages. Can develop a story over a long period of time. Charismatic individuals or attractive locations/subjects get covered
National newspapers	▲			Medium	For stories of national relevance, or local/regional stories with major impact
Local radio	▲	▲		Low	For news items. Chat shows for more complicated messages
National radio	▲			Low	To deliver specific messages to targeted audiences
Television	▲			Low	For awareness. Need attractive locations and/or charismatic individuals. Danger of losing the message in the presentation.
Films/video	▲	▲		High	To explain, educate or create awareness of a complicated subject
Internet/World Wide Web		▲	▲	High	Content unlimited. Allow users to use at superficial and in depth way for maximum effect
Online info systems	▲			Medium	To deliver information on places to visit, events etc.
Events and exhibitions	▲	▲	▲	High	Platform to distribute messages and literature, also speak to people. To support other communication activities
Training courses and conferences	▲	▲	▲	High	To deliver detailed information to an interested audience
Direct mail	▲		▲	Medium	To create awareness, encourage participation. Opportunity to trigger a response and to develop and manage a database of professional or consumer contacts
Personal contact	▲	▲	▲	High	Most effective form of communication, also expensive. Use selectively

Source: The Countryside agency, Communicating With The Public - Monitoring report
http://www.countryside.gov.uk/Publications/articles/Publication_tcm2-4574.asp

Communication method - Audience Reached

Method	Area: Local/Regional	Area: National	Potential Audience	Notes
Posters	▲		Small	Commercial sites e.g. bus shelters, shopping centres; free sites e.g. libraries, schools, workplaces, hotels, village halls. Can target audience through site selection; high frequency of exposure to small or medium-sized audience
On site e.g. signs	▲		Small	Locate on notice boards, trees, etc. Can reach small audience to deliver message at a relevant time e.g. at start of visit
Leaflets	▲		Medium	High wastage. Success depends on distribution. Can reach people when they are responsive to messages e.g. providing information on access at tourist information centres or holiday accommodation
Publications	▲	▲	Medium	Message can be 'lost' amongst many others. Difficult to control tone of message in others' publications.
Magazines		▲		Consumer and professional titles. Limited but regular readership. Readership usually well targeted e.g. particular interest groups
Local newspapers	▲		Medium	Readers tend to be loyal, reading every day/week. Each copy read by several people (consider circulation and readership). Readership well targeted geographically.
National newspapers		▲	High	As local newspaper, readership targeted by lifestyle or socio-economic group.
Local radio	▲		Medium	Listeners change throughout the day e.g. mornings/evenings: people at home, commuters in cars; afternoon housewives, retired people. Listeners well targeted geographically
National radio		▲	High	As local radio. Listeners targeted by lifestyle group or by interest (e.g. preferring news and sport or different types of music)
Television		▲	High	National and regional news programmes and advertising. Limited targeting possible on geographical basis and through advertising timed with particular programmes
Films/video	▲	▲	Medium	Effective distribution governs success. Education and affinity groups are likely to respond to this medium
Internet/World Wide Web	▲	▲	Medium/High	Some targeting possible through website links and pro-active use of e-mail
Online info systems	▲	▲	Medium	Access points include libraries and tourist information centres. Possible to 'share' existing delivery systems
Events and exhibitions	▲		Low	For face-to-face contact with limited audience infrequently. Audience likely to be targeted by geography and interest; also likely to be receptive to information or messages.
Training courses and conferences	▲		Low	Opportunity for in depth communication with small, normally professional audience on infrequent basis
Direct mail		▲	High	Purchase addresses by lifestyle, age, geographical distribution, postcode area, profession, membership, interest, purchases made, etc. Very effective targeting. Total control over reach and frequency
Personal contact	▲		Low	Can be regular on site. High quality, but very small audience.

Source: The Countryside agency, Communicating With The Public - Monitoring report
http://www.countryside.gov.uk/Publications/articles/Publication_tcm2-4574.asp

In selecting the more appropriate media we must keep in mind who are the audiences reached by the media:

- *Regional Media*: local politicians, local authorities and communities, general public;
- *National Media*: politicians, policy makers and opinion shapers, regulators, other media, partners and employees, general public;
- *Financial Media*: business people, financial analysts, EU and individual government officials, national and regional regulators, scholars and researchers;
- *News agencies*: all substantial media subscribe to newswires so a newswire story has very broad impact across media and on a global level;
- *Trade Press*: specialist analysts;
- *International media*: analysts, policy makers, regulators, international colleagues, EU and individual governments;
- *Magazine*: internal magazines of institutions and local, regional or national authority specialist magazines or newsletters are useful to reach target audiences in terms of influencing regional policy;
- *Radio*: bigger stations produce their own news, smaller stations share news gathering or syndicate from a central news source;
- *TV*: Public Relation opportunities among TV programmes: documentaries, interviews, product demonstrations (the audience depends on the type and time of show);
- *News wires*: deliver raw news to all major media to adapt for their own output (they are similar to newspapers and news agencies);
- *Internet news*: offers unlimited Public Relation opportunities.

Tasks and Timing

This part of the communications plan involves mapping out the tasks to be done, their timelines, and who will be responsible for each. The most successful communications are those which talk to the targets at the exact moment they are likely to need the services you are suggesting to them.

Choosing activities means that for each initiative it is necessary to specify:

- Who will be responsible for implementing each activity
- When the activity must be implemented
- What are the costs associated with each activity

To keep the implementing phases of our communication campaign under control we could use the GANTT chart. A GANTT chart is a popular type of bar chart that illustrates a project schedule. GANTT charts illustrate the start and finish dates of the terminal elements and summary elements of a project. Terminal elements and summary elements comprise the work breakdown structure of the project. Some Gantt charts also show the dependency (i.e., precedence network) relationships between activities.

According to the new rules on information and publicity about Structural Funds the communication plan must indicate:

- *the administrative departments or bodies responsible for implementation of the information and publicity measures;*

(Article 2, §2 (d), Regulation (CE) No1828/2006)

With regard to the sharing of roles and responsibilities it is advisable to have central coordination in order to create a common identity of the programme at national/regional level, with local adaptations.



Practical advice:

Key points

- ▶ Setting up a schedule of tasks and timelines enables complex programs to be implemented with maximum effectiveness and minimal risk of omission, confusion and disagreement
- ▶ An effective task/timelines schedule is accurate, comprehensive and agreed to in advance by all participants
- ▶ Include a full list of all the relevant communications activities, developed into a working project plan with deadlines and responsibilities. Keep it flexible but avoid being vague
- ▶ Keep it manageable and don't underestimate the time involved in communication. Include key deadlines, milestones and review points

Budget

Similar to what happens with any type of activity, the budget is a critical factor in communication plans.

It is essential to ensure that the budget is adequate in order to achieve the desired objectives. Sometimes, however, the budget assigned to the Communication Plan is decided in advance and the staff in charge of information and communication activities must tailor the plan to fit within it.

It is important that all parties of the plan are clear on what can realistically be delivered with the available budget. If the budget is inadequate and cannot be increased, the planned objectives should be reviewed and restructured to an achievable level.



Practical advice:

Key points

- ▶ Does your budget match with your plan's objectives?
- ▶ Ensure value for money by targeting communication effectively: prioritising the audiences and channels and focusing on high impact/low cost activities.

Implementation

The purpose of the implementation phase is to:

- deliver the results, achieve the purpose(s) and contribute effectively to the overall objective of the project;
- manage the available resources efficiently;
- monitor and report on progress.

This phase can be managed effectively through the drawing up of an annual action plan.

An action plan is a detailed month-by-month plan of the activities and the sequence they should follow. The action plan offers an opportunity to identify the main activities and develop the level of detail you need to manage your communication plan at a practical level, and monitor its implementation.

The implementation phase foresees the carrying out of the different activities which will all contribute to the success of the information and communication campaign. Some suggestions are listed below which should be followed in implementing the most common activities.

The most common tools of information and publicity

The implementation phase foresees the choice of the tools to be used to communicate with the previously identified target groups which will all contribute to the success of the information and communication campaign. Some suggestions are listed which should be followed in implementing some of the most common activities.

Tools are not mutually exclusive. They give the best results when used in combination. The exclusive use of just one tool e.g. a website rather than media is never enough.

News

Communication among experts is different from that with the public. Communication among experts requires the readers' complete attention, since they are already interested in the information because they need it. On the contrary, non expert-readers (or listeners, viewers, visitors, etc.) usually do not have any particular reason to pay attention to what is being said. They do not have to listen. Their attention must be won, otherwise any effort becomes useless.

In writing news, for example, some rules should be kept in mind:

- It is news? (it must be new: not known before)
- Fascination or surprise (can your topic make the imagination fly?)
- The size of the natural public (how many people are potentially interested in the subject?)
- Directly important to the audience (how pertinent is it to every day life?)
- Importance (why do people need it?)
- Expectations (and what happens now?)
- Comprehensibility (can it be easily understood?)
- Service (which service can be offered to the public?)

Newsletters

A newsletter is a very efficacious communication tool. It can be monthly, quarterly or annually. The strength of a regular newsletter is that it can develop a new theme for every issue and focus a number of articles on this theme.

The newsletter also allows the Communication manager to write about projects, update the readers about new calls for proposals, recent Operational Programme changes, new initiatives, events and highlighting interesting case studies. It is also a way to record all the initiatives which are being implemented during the programming period.

To be successful, the newsletter should be the result of joint work between the communication manager, the Managing Authority staff with the involvement of external bodies like local politicians, NGOs or other social partners who can contribute with articles or editorials. If the budget is limited instead of being printed the newsletter can be published in electronic format and made available through the website or an e-mail version.

Publications

Posters and leaflets: publicity from the use of posters and leaflets is the cheapest and most immediate communication tool. It allows a simple message elaboration and the possibility to use images, colours and texts at the same time. It is located on the spot for a long time and thus allows people to read it more than once. The leaflet allows for the dispersion of the message in more locations in a single day with the possibility of making the message available to more citizens.

Leaflets and posters contain general information and are meant for the general public by attracting their attention to a specific message.

These communication tools have been much appreciated in recent times especially when they are placed on public transportation. It allows for the message to be displayed in more locations in a single day to making the message available to a wide range of citizens. Great importance should be given to images.

Brochures: have to be succinct in language and eye-catching in design. Compared to a flyer or handbill, a brochure usually uses higher-quality paper, more colour, and is folded. Brochures contain more information than leaflets, and are designed for potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, and all other stakeholders involved in the Communication programme.

Web sites

Web sites allow us to improve contents easily. Its efficaciousness depends on:

- usability
- update frequency
- accuracy in content updating

Websites should also be targeted. The information contained should be structured while keeping in mind the different audiences who might use it, notably local authorities, intermediary organisations, consultants and entrepreneurs, programme beneficiaries, stakeholders and the general public.

The following sections should be included:

- *The Operational Programme (OP)*, where a brief presentation to explain the OP in a language accessible to all
- *OP News*, which includes calls for tenders and deadlines as well as other news
- *OP Management*, with information on the Monitoring Committee (composition and internal regulations), the calendar and the minutes of Monitoring Committee meetings, as well as official documents and a list of beneficiaries;
- *OP Service*: with information organised by target groups who participate in the programme or are interested in its progress (local authorities, intermediary organisations, associations and consultants);
- *OP Media*: with press releases, newsletters, links, a glossary and information on the programme's information service.
- *OP questions and answers* – feedback section where potential beneficiaries and all stakeholders can post questions, make comments and receive answers
- links – useful links to other relevant websites, both national and European websites (ex. www.eufunds.bg, etc.)

The web site should also contain RSS. RSS is the abbreviation of Really Simple Syndication a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated digital content, such as blogs, news feeds or podcasts. Users of RSS content use software programs called "feed readers" or "feed aggregators". The user subscribes to a feed by entering a link of the feed into the reader program. The reader can then check the user's subscribed feeds to see if any of those feeds have new content since the last time it was checked, and, if so, retrieve that content and present it to the user. Based on a programming language (XML, or eXtensible Markup Language) already used to create many Web sites, R.S.S. enables Internet developers to post short site summaries describing recently added or updated items and links. Those postings are then scanned automatically by programs called R.S.S. readers to deliver specialized news-wire-style "feeds" to interested readers. These feeds, or news channels, are like personally tailored executive summaries containing dozens or even hundreds of headlines on a specific topic. In this case it can be used to update readers about new calls for proposals and for updating the reader continuously on any news related to the Operational Programme.

On the 30th of JUNE 2005, during the Structural Funds Information Team (SFIT) meeting organised by DG Regional Policy, the results of a study on the evaluation of web sites about Structural Funds made by SOGES were presented.

It emerged that in programming period 2000-2006 the best web sites were:

- Italy, Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia
<http://www.regione.fvg.it/progcom/progcom.htm>
- UK , Government Office for the East of England
http://www.goeast.gov.uk/goeast/european_funding/?a=42496
- Netherlands, Province of Flevoland
<http://www.flevoland.nl/smartsite.dws?id=7>
- Germany, Berlin Region
<http://www.berlin.de/strukturfonds/index.html>

Audiovisual tools

The most common audiovisual tools which can be used are:

TV spot: which can be used for publicising the OP. It offers lot of PR opportunities among the different TV programmes. The audience depends on the type and time of the show.

Radio spot: the radio allows us to spread the message more frequently compared to TV spot, and the cost is less.

In the broadcasting of the spots, particular attention should be devoted to regional media, which are much cheaper, and have a wider local dissemination. This of course depends also on the character of the OP target groups, if they are located at regional level or at national level.

Promotional items

Small items like pens, USBs, cups, office calendars, mouse pads, T-shirts can be produced to be distributed during events. All the items shall bear the logo and slogan of OP.

Direct Communication

Direct Communication can be made through:

customer service: of the involved socio-economic partners;

toll-free numbers: special telephone numbers, where the calling party is not charged for the call. Instead the called party pays all of the charges for the call.

In both cases it is necessary to have well trained operators and an accurate monitoring system.

Press office activities

The tools used by the press office are very useful, especially when managing risks and unforeseen situations. The activities undertaken by the press office in the management of the media relations will be implemented through:

press releases: A news release, press release or press statement is a written or recorded communication directed at members of the news media for the purpose of announcing something claimed as having news value. Typically, it is mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to assignment editors at newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television stations, and/or television networks. Sometimes, news releases are sent for the purpose of announcing press conferences;

news article: A news article is a compilation of facts developed by journalists published in the news media, whereas a news release is designed to be sent to journalists in order to encourage them to develop articles on the subject. A news release is generally biased towards the objectives of the author;

media list: it's the management of fixed contacts with communication tools which are external to the organisation. A database of contact persons with the different media will be created and constantly updated. It would be used to distribute information to the media in the quickest and most efficient possible way;

press survey: a constant check of facts and events which are relevant to our Programme;

press conference: is a media event where newsmakers invite journalists to hear them speak and, more often, ask questions. There are two major reasons for holding a press conference. One is that a newsmaker who receives many questions from reporters can answer them all at once rather than answering dozens of phone calls. The second is so someone can try to attract news coverage for something that was not of interest to journalists before.

interviews: is a conversation between two or more people (the interviewer and the interviewee) where questions are asked by the interviewer to obtain information from the interviewee.

Information events

The events can be divided into:

info-days: info-days are organised to publicise individual calls for proposals, in order to explain to the potential applicants everything they need to know about the application process – purpose of the particular call, deadlines, eligibility criteria, necessary documentation, selection and evaluation criteria, public procurement procedures, and other relevant information. They are also a good means for generating interest among the stakeholders, and stimulating them to apply with their project ideas.;

conferences: a conference can be described any meeting of people that “confer” about a certain topic and is organised for the purpose of networking education or discussing a topic with a selection of speakers;

seminars: are generally a form of academic instruction, either at a university, or offered by a commercial or professional organization. These have the function of bringing together small groups for recurring meetings, focusing each time on some particular subject, where everyone present is requested to actively participate. It is essentially a place where assigned readings are discussed, questions can be raised and debates conducted. The Communication manager

might plan to divide the seminars according to the specific target groups identified (like regional and local administrations, NGOs, etc.). In such cases the information delivered differs according to the target group involved.;

workshops – these are also training sessions, which may be several days in length. They emphasize problem solving, hands-on training and require the involvement of the participants. Workshops can be organised for OP beneficiaries on different topics related to the Programme and for the successful implementation of the operations.

The organisers of information events such as conferences, seminars, fairs and exhibitions in connection with the implementation of operations part-financed by the Structural Funds shall make the Community contribution to these assistance packages explicit by displaying the European flag in meeting rooms and using the Community emblem on documents.

The Commission's offices in the Member States assist, where necessary, in the preparation and implementation of such events.

Whatever is the communication tool we intend to use, it is advisable to use the AIDA model:

- **Attention:** initial stimulus which leads to the message identification and structure
- **Interest:** a further reflection on the message and on its references
- **Desire:** which arises when you find out that you can't live without it or when you realise how useful the message really is
- **Action:** the phase during which the message becomes practical and operational.

Which tool for which target group

Communication tool	Relevant Target groups
Website	All target groups, depending on the section (general public, potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, actors involved in Programme management)
Conferences	All target groups, (general public, potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, actors involved in Programme management)
Info-days	Potential beneficiaries
Seminars	Potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, actors involved in Programme management
Workshops	Potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, actors involved in Programme management
Posters and leaflets	General public
Brochures	General public, potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries
Newsletters	All target groups (general public, potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, actors involved in Programme management)
Audiovisual tools	General public
Press office activities	All target groups (general public, potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, actors involved in Programme management)
Promotional items	All target groups (general public, potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, actors involved in Programme management)
Direct communication	All target groups (general public, potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries) with a special focus on the potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries



Practical advice:

If we want the event to be successful some suggestions should be followed

- ▶ Have clear aims and target the audience carefully. Decide what is being sought from the event and be guided by this
- ▶ Organise for maximise participation and impact. Have meetings in accessible locations, and advertise them widely and well in advance. Also circulate accessible materials before the event to stimulate active engagement. Make the event vivid by choosing a venue which is relevant to the subject being addressed to give it life and impact. Give events a lively title, and secure well-known, influential and engaging speakers
- ▶ Involve the audience. Allow plenty of time for questions. This provides an opportunity to clarify issues “en masse” and to benefit from the reservoir of collected knowledge to generate new insights. If workshop sessions are built into the programme, use creative techniques such as role playing and brain storming to maximise active engagement
- ▶ Build in the next steps. Prepare good quality conference materials which will provide a longer-term resource, and establish clear channels for follow-up. Record the conclusions of an event so that they benefit the wider economic development community – e.g. on a web site or in a newsletter
- ▶ Remember to prepare a check-list so that you do not forget any organisational step
- ▶ Evaluate. Seek feedback from participants, and build the lessons into any subsequent event.

Monitoring and evaluation

According to the new rules on information and publicity about Structural Funds the communication plan must include:

an indication of how the information and publicity measures are to be evaluated in terms of visibility and awareness of operational programmes and of the role played by the Community

(based on article 2, § 2, Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006)

and states that

the managing authority shall inform the monitoring committee for each operational programme of the following:

(a) the communication plan and progress in its implementation;

(b) information and publicity measures carried out;

(c) the means of communication used.

The managing authority shall provide the monitoring committee with examples of such measures.

(Article 4, § 1, Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006)

Information and communication activities therefore need to be evaluated before, during and after to check for effectiveness, cost-efficiency and relevance.

Together with the communication action plan, the evaluation of information measures is one of the innovations brought by the Regulation. Evaluation establishes the quality and effectiveness of the measures. This is why it is first of all important to define the quality and effectiveness criteria.

To fulfil the Regulation it is important to remember that monitoring and evaluation even if correlated are different activities implemented by different bodies in different phases of the plan's implementation.

Monitoring is a systematic and continuous collecting, analysis and using of information for the purpose of management and decision-making.

Evaluation is a periodic assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and relevance of a project in the context of stated objectives. It is usually undertaken as an independent examination with a view to drawing lessons that may guide future decision – making.

Monitoring and Evaluation

	Monitoring	Evaluation
Who	Internal management	Usually involve external/independent personnel to provide objectivity
When	On going	Periodic
Why	Check progress, take remedial actions, update plans	Verify whether or not the aims and strategies chosen are appropriate

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To monitor and evaluate information and communication activities it is necessary to have:

- *a description of the baseline position*, a baseline information on the level of knowledge of different aspects of the Structural funds to date;

- a *monitoring system* for data collection;
- a commitment to carry out *formal evaluations* (annual and final).



Practical advice:

To develop a good monitoring it is advisable to take in account the following key steps

- Summarise your *aim* and *objectives*
- Choose your *indicators* to fit your objectives
- Set *targets* against which you will assess and report on progress
- Decide on your data collection methods and data recording systems

Key points in monitoring

- ▶ It is an internal management responsibility
- ▶ It measures progress in relation to the planned budget, activities, assumptions and output
- ▶ It finds problems and identifies solutions and puts them in place.
- ▶ It takes place at all levels of the Communication Plan implementation
- ▶ It uses both formal and informal data gathering methods
- ▶ It focuses on resource allocation, expenditure and activities, planned outputs, people involvement and organisational capacity
- ▶ It is a key source of data for evaluation

The general questions you need to consider about the evaluation are

- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- What are the questions that you want to be answered by an evaluation?
- How comprehensive will the evaluation be and what is the general approach?
- What will be measured?
- Who has authority and responsibility for the evaluation?
- What will be the role of evaluators?
- What will be the main sources of the data and how will the data be collected and compiled?
- How will the data be analysed and presented?
- How much will it cost and have you enough resources?

To evaluate means to measure. For this purpose, specific *indicators* must be identified and used:

- *output indicators* measure the direct outcome of information and communication activities, such as newsletters or number of meetings taking place;
- *result indicators* measure the immediate effects of outputs on those receiving or benefiting from them (e.g. number of people receiving newsletters or attending meetings);
- *impact indicators* measure the eventual direct or indirect consequences of information and communication activities, such as the awareness of, and attitude to, the programme by different audiences and their response in terms of high-quality project applications.

Evaluating transparency

Transparency implies that information is available in the public domain and is accessible both in terms of its location and presentation – in a format and language that can be widely understood.

According to the new rules on information and publicity, the managing authority shall provide potential beneficiaries with detailed information including:

- (a) *the conditions of eligibility to be met, in order to qualify for financing under an operational programme;*
- (b) *a description of the procedures for examining applications for funding and of the time periods involved;*
- (c) *the criteria for selecting the operations to be financed;*
- (d) *the contacts at national, regional or local level who can provide information on the operational programmes.*

(Article 5, § 2, Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006)

Example of transparency measurement

Target group	Output indicators	Result indicators	Impact indicators
Potential and final beneficiaries	Data related to: Web site N° of pages published N° of databases N° of records in databases Seminar N° of seminar Call center N° of back/front office work day	N° of users/visitors N° of documents and application forms downloaded N° of participants N° of phone enquires	For all tools: Overall application levels Share of good-quality applications Share of well-run projects

Evaluating awareness

Central to public awareness is the level of recognition and appreciation of the role and significance of EU funding in the region. Evaluation can be used to measure changing public attitudes.

Example of awareness measurement

Target group	Output indicators	Result indicators	Impact indicators
General Public	N° of Media Campaigns	TV/radio coverage Number of media reports/articles	Changes in public awareness of programme Changes in public attitude to programme



Practical advice:

Monitoring the media

Feedback about your media activity is crucial, so be sure when using media to monitor this on a daily basis. In order to do this you must:

- Scan daily papers
- Search news sites and news aggregators e.g. Yahoo or Google
- Pay monitoring service



Practical advice:

Checklist

1. Is the process of monitoring and evaluating defined in the Communication Action Plan?
2. Have you got indicators? What kind of indicators are they?
3. Do you collect quantitative data for communication actions?
4. Do you have a data collection system?
5. Do you collect qualitative data for communication actions?
6. Do you cooperate with external experts?
7. Do you use the results to improve your programme?
8. Do you use the results to communicate your programme?
9. Do you simultaneously plan your communication actions and your evaluation actions?
10. Is the Monitoring Committee involved?
11. Have you planned a budget to evaluation actions?

Example of indicators to monitor and evaluate activities and tools

Method	Output/Implementation	Result indicators	Impact indicators
Web site	N° of published pages N° Data bases N° of DB records	N° of users/visitors N° of registered users N° of pages views	Change in public awareness of programme; Change in public attitudes to programme.
Call Center	N° of front office work days N° of back office work days	N° of questions and documents requests (Total/Daily)	Change in public awareness of programme; Change in public attitudes to programme.
Poster and leaflets promotional campaign	N° of posters printed N° of leaflets printed N° of poster and leaflets distributed	Increase in the questions and requests to the call centre	Change in public awareness of programme; Change in public attitudes to programme.
Co-operation with mass media/media partnership	N° of press conferences N° of information days/educational	N° of press interviews N° of TV interviews N° of radio interviews N° of Press releases issued	Change in public awareness of programme; Change in public attitudes to programme.
Newsletter	N° of newsletter published	N° of subscribers	Change in public awareness of programme; Change in public attitudes to programme.
Publications	N° of copies printed	N° of copies distributed N° of copies downloaded from the website	Change in public awareness of programme; Change in public attitudes to programme.
Digital Media	N° of CD	N° of copies distributed N° of copies requested	Change in public awareness of programme; Change in public attitudes to programme.
Seminars	N° of events	N° of responses to invitations N° of attendees: anticipated number – actual number N° of requests for further information	Change in public awareness of programme; Change in public attitudes to programme.

Evaluation methods

There are two different evaluation methods which can be adopted

- *quantitative method* mainly based on statistics
- *qualitative method* based on group interviews, individual interviews, questionnaire, public surveys, focus groups and brainstorming.

The Evaluator role

Evaluation tools can use different modalities:

The evaluator creates the tool for the operators and then trains them to use it

The evaluator creates the tool which is then used by companies which are specialised in market research

The evaluator creates and uses the evaluation tools himself

The Logical framework

The information collected and elaborated in data can be managed through the use of the Logical Framework, a planning technique which can also be used for evaluation purposes. It is a useful tool to show the essential elements of a programme or project in a clear manner such as:

- Main aims
- Project objectives
- Results
- Activities

The basic principles of the logical framework are:

- It should be concise. It should not normally take up more than two sides of a page;
- It should be treated as a free-standing document and should be comprehensible for those seeing to it for the first time. Acronyms should therefore be avoided;
- If beneficiaries are included in the project, they should also take part in the design of the Logical Framework
- It provides a basis for subsequent monitoring and evaluation. It must therefore be regularly reviewed and amended whenever the project changes course.

The advantages of using the Logical framework are:

- It brings together in one place, a statement of all the key components of a project (this is particularly helpful when there is a change of staff)
- It presents these in a systematic concise and coherent way, thus clarifying and exposing the logic of how the project is expected to work
- It separates out the various levels in the hierarchy of objectives, helping to ensure that input and output are not confused with each other or with objectives, and that wider ranging objectives are not overlooked
- It clarifies the relationships which underlie judgments about likely efficiency and effectiveness of projects
- It identifies the main factors related to the success of the project
- It provides a basis for monitoring and evaluation by identifying indicators of success, and means of quantification or assessment
- It encourages a multidisciplinary approach to project preparation and supervision

Reporting

Information and Publicity Annual and Final reports

The annual reports and the final report on implementation of an operational programme, referred to in Article 67 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, shall include:

(a) examples of information and publicity measures for the operational programme carried out when implementing the communication plan;

(b) the arrangements for the information and publicity measures referred to in Article 7(2)(d) including, where applicable, the electronic address at which such data may be retrieved

(c) the content of any major amendments to the communication plan.

The annual implementation report for the year 2010 and the final implementation report shall contain a chapter assessing the results of the information and publicity measures in terms of visibility and awareness of operational programmes and of the role played by the Community, as provided for in Article 2(2)(e).

(Article 4, § 2, Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006)

Detailing Commission's rules it is a good practice to draw up the **annual** monitoring report on the basis of the following suggestions:

- focus on progress towards achieving results and not simply listing the activities undertaken;
- compare progress against the plan;
- briefly explain the deviation from the plan and highlight any remedial actions taken or required;
- give practical examples and proof of what you have been doing;
- attach any printed or electronic publications which have been produced;
- be clear.

Plans should be regularly reviewed and updated according to the output of the annual monitoring reports.

The **final** report should contain:

- comments on overall achievements against the original plan;
- prospects for sustainability of benefits;
- a list of the lessons learnt;
- recommendations on any follow-up actions required.

Lessons and recommendations for the final evaluation report should be used as ex ante evaluation for planning the next programming period.

The level of detail and length of the reports will depend on the scope and complexity of the plan, the capacity to provide the required information and the information requirements/needs of the managing authority and the European Commission.

Annual Monitoring Report	
Table of contents	
1. Introduction	1. Basic communication plan data, aims and key results, the status of the plan at the time of reporting, who has prepared the report, why and when.
2. Executive summary and recommendations	2. Main issues and recommendations for the attention of key decision makers
3. Review of Progress and Performance to date (comparing against plan – efficiency and effectiveness)	3. Progress towards achieving objectives (overall objective, purpose, results), activities undertaken, resources and budget used, management and coordination arrangements, financing arrangements
4. Work plan for the next period	4. Results to be delivered – quantity, quality and time, activity schedule and responsibilities, resource schedule and budget.
5. Annexes	5. Examples of products/activities carried out

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http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/qsm/documents/pcm_manual_2004_en.pdf

Final Evaluation Report

Table of contents

Introduction	Basic communication plan data, aims and key results, the status of the plan at the time of reporting, who has prepared the report, why and when.
Executive summary and recommendations	Main issues and recommendations for the attention of key decision makers
Review of Progress and Performance at completion (comparing against plan – efficiency, effectiveness and impact)	Objectives achieved (overall Objective, purpose, results), activities undertaken, resources and budget used, assumptions and risks – status/update, management and coordination arrangements, financing arrangements.
Lessons learnt	Both positive (what worked well and why) and negative (what went wrong and why)
Annexes	Examples of products/activities carried out

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http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/qsm/documents/pcm_manual_2004_en.pdf

References and further reading

Practical Guide to Communication on the Structural Funds 2000-2006

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/country/commu/guide_en.htm

Getting the Message: Structural Funds Publicity and Communication

<http://www.eprc.strath.ac.uk/iqnet/reports2.cfm>

An overview of communication planning and implementation

http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/docrep/t7974e/t7974e02.htm

Communicating With The Public - Monitoring report

http://www.countryside.gov.uk/Publications/articles/Publication_tcm2-4574.asp

Project Cycle Management Manual 2004

http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/qsm/project_en.htm#3.%20Guidelines%20and%20Tools

Inforegio Information and Communication Platform

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/country/commu/index_en.htm

Il Piano di Comunicazione nelle pubbliche amministrazioni (available in Italian)

<http://db.formez.it/fontinor.nsf/0/8ff9793ef2e2968dc1256f8c003e4609?OpenDocument>