



## Working Paper on Communication and Publicity

Communication and publicity activities are often regarded as something 'in addition' to programme, financial and project management, but they are really fundamental parts of all these activities. The whole life cycle of programme publicity is outlined below followed by some of the special features of external and internal communication.

### I Life cycle of programme publicity

#### 1. Programme start-up phase: Publicity to spread information about the programme

- The objective is to inform about the existence of the programme and give general first information on what type of projects it supports to potential project developers (links up to project generation).
- A key thing here is what message a programme wants to communicate to project developers. It is just as important to identify a message that will attract key target groups to the programme as it is to give a clear message about what type of projects can be funded. Projects should be encouraged in the right direction from the start to avoid duplication, disappointment and wasting everybody's time. EU terminology and jargon should be avoided to make the message relevant to wider target groups.
  - *What information activities did you do to promote the programme during its start-up phase? How can this communication be improved in the next programme period?*
  - *Do you give a clear message about what types of cross-border projects you are looking for? Do you guide people if they are developing ideas in the wrong direction?*

#### 2. Programme allocation phase: Communicating and giving guidance on programme requirements

- The objective is to provide more detailed guidance to people with more developed project ideas on project selection criteria, how to establish a cross-border partnership etc (links up to project development). It is a pro-active approach to avoid project applicants making basic mistakes when applying for programme funds and to improve the overall quality of project applications.
- Programmes need to recognise that there is a clear link between good communication about programme requirements and the quality of applications submitted.
- Both of the above phases may also be supported by direct information activities 'on the ground' from contact persons in the participating regions.
- There also needs to be a strategy for how to effectively communicate programme requirements for project implementation after project approval (the reporting responsibilities of the Lead Partner for example).



- *Do you take a reactive approach to communicating programme requirements (ie letting project developers approach you if they have questions) or a pro-active approach (ie you carry out activities and establish good communication channels to ensure as far as possible that project developers know the requirements they should fulfil)?*

### **3. Post-approval phase: Disseminating project and programme outcomes**

- Disseminating information on the successes of the programme and its projects is key to every cross-border programme. It is an activity that is likely to have a lasting impact in terms of the positive influence it could have on decisions about the role of the cross-border strand in the next structural funds period.
- The objective is to increase general awareness on the activities and outcomes of the programme and its projects.
- At this stage of communication and publicity it is fundamental to have a good project monitoring (including project indicators) and evaluation system in place. There are two dimensions to this. On the one hand the monitoring system should give relevant information on activities on project level and on the other it should be possible to aggregate this information to the programme level.
- The message about project and programme success should be adapted to different target groups. For example the general public, decision-makers and professionals that are planning for the coming funding period, people working in a specific field (transport, urban and rural planning, protection of the environment etc). Successful communication on project and programme outcomes increases the interest in the next round of cross-border programmes. Some of this work is a project responsibility but programmes also play a role.
- Projects need to communicate clearly that the activities are EU funded. As this is not always done it needs to be stressed to projects already from the start that this is a requirement that must be followed, otherwise the activities will be deemed ineligible.
- It is also important that project partnerships are advised to decide on a clear message that they will communicate whenever they are in touch with media, producing promotion material etc.
  - *What is your most effective way of communicating programme and project results?*
  - *To what extent do you make use of information and findings of the project monitoring in programme publicity and information activities?*
  - *Do you adapt the message to the target groups approached?*
  - *Do you brief project developers on how they most effectively can communicate about their activities and findings?*



## II External publicity and communication

### 1. The need to identify target groups and to adapt communication to them:

- Target groups change over the publicity life cycle from potential project developers at the beginning of the programme while later on the political level becomes more important.
- Particularly relevant for cross-border programmes are regional organisations, NGOs and other interest organisations with a regional/cross-border character or working on themes covered by the programme.
- Another important target group is those experts (at universities, research institutes, consultancies, NGOs etc) that programmes make use of in relation to an event to do a presentation, write a scoping study, be a workshop facilitator etc. These experts should be included in the programme's dissemination network to stay regularly informed on programme achievements also after the event.
- It is also a challenge, but at the same time a development opportunity, to try and expand the group targeted to include new people, organisations and sectors (particularly the private sector).
- Projects could play a valuable role here with their inside knowledge on the themes they work with and connections to key actors in their own regions and could for example be asked to identify 15 persons/ organisations to be targeted.
- It is essential that information on the target groups (contact details etc) is kept up-to-date.
- Another aspect of external publicity is in what language the communication will take place. Some programmes produce material that give information in both/ all languages of the programme at the same time, whereas others have different language versions of the same document.
  - *How can the range of stakeholders involved in INTERREG be extended?*
  - *What are your programme's key target groups? How do you reach them? How do you target politicians and other decision-makers? Do you also target organisations outside the eligible area? Even across Europe?*
  - *To what extent has the private sector become involved? Do private partners need to be approached in a different way to become interested in participating in a project?*
  - *What role do projects play in identifying target groups?*
  - *Do you communicate in several languages at the same time (in materials, at events etc) or do you split communication and publicity up per language? Advantages/ disadvantages?*

### 2. Examples of events, activities and material:

- Partner search events where project developers meet and exchange ideas to consider the possibility of working together in a partnership.

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- Project guidance meetings where project developers meet with programme staff to get feedback on strengths and weaknesses of their idea, get guidance on particularly challenging topics and advice on what steps to take next.
- After approval: Lead Partner seminars. These seminars should follow as soon as possible after the Steering Committee decisions to encourage a quick start in project implementation. They are also an excellent opportunity to give guidance on how to avoid common mistakes in relation to project start-up, joint cross-border implementation, making the first claim for payment etc.
- Media coverage in the form of newspaper articles, radio shows, newscasts on regional television channels, articles in specialist magazines etc. It should be recognised that information about projects and cross-border programmes by the media is one of the absolutely most efficient ways of reaching out to a wider audience.
  - *What communication and publicity activities have you found particularly useful and effective? Are there any that have been ineffective in relation to time and money invested?*
  - *If you do not arrange Lead Partner seminars what other support activities do you carry out for Lead Partners/ project partners?*

### **3. Cooperation with other INTERREG programmes:**

- By cooperating and exchanging knowledge with other INTERREG programmes (both within the A strand and with the other strands covering the same area) a programme will get a lot of information, ideas and knowledge in addition to those developed by the programme itself.
- Programmes that cooperate on publicity and communication activities will be able to reach a much larger target group and are more likely to have a lasting impact by drawing on each others' resources. This is also relevant on project level.
  - *Do you have any type of cooperation with other INTERREG programmes on programme or project level? What advantages/ disadvantages have you experienced?*

### **4. Developing a programme communication plan:**

- A communication plan could be a particularly useful tool to support programme as well as project publicity and communication.
  - *Have you developed a communication plan for your programme? If yes: how do you use it for your communication and publicity work?*
  - *What support do you offer projects in the development of their communication plans?*

### **5. Cross-border publicity:**

- Some programmes produce different publicity materials for each side of the border, some use the same material for the whole eligible region and other programmes make joint publicity documents for two or more IIIA programmes.

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- *Do you use different or the same publicity material on each side of the border? Advantages/disadvantages?*

### III Internal communication

- Within INTERREG the different programme management bodies are often located in different countries and within different administrations. Due to this character of INTERREG programmes good internal communication between the different programme bodies becomes particularly important.
- Internal communication refers both to the coordination of what information is provided and when to external people and to the internal exchange of information between different programme bodies. These communication flows become easier to manage if everyone involved has the same understanding of what the different roles and responsibilities of each programme body are.
- Also, it is essential to be aware of some of the particular needs of cross-border, cross-culture and cross-language communication: the information needs to be as clear as possible and sufficient time and resources need to be allocated to communication activities.
- There are special periods within the programme life cycle where different aspects of internal communication become particularly important:
  - During project generation and development – to ensure that the same message is communicated to project people
  - Before a Steering Committee meeting – giving SC members the right information they need before taking decisions
  - After project approval – to inform Lead Partners of the next steps and particular pitfalls to be avoided  
After project rejection – to inform about reasons for rejection and particularly if the SC recommended the project to re-apply or not
- If several different bodies are involved in programme management activities, such as assessing applications, issuing subsidy contracts, monitoring and controlling project implementation and project closure, effective internal communication becomes essential to avoid misunderstandings and delays.
  - *What has been your 'key to success' to achieve good communication between programme bodies? Are there any particular challenges and how can they be avoided?*

### Creating an expert network

- INTERREG staff involved in taking strategic decisions on what is the right communication strategy and its daily implementation have gained valuable expertise. Different activities and

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methods have been developed around Europe on how to promote IIIA programmes. The INTERACT Qualification and Transfer IIIA programme management seminars allow programme communication experts to come together to share their strategies and methods.

- When a similar event was organised for the INTERREG IIIB and C programmes in 2004 the initiative was taken to set up a network of communications officers from different programmes. Through this network can those involved easily exchange information with their colleagues in other programmes.
  - *Do you think it would be relevant to have a similar network set up between INTERREG IIIA programmes?*