



INTERACT III 2014-2020 Communication Strategy

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1 Introduction

The INTERACT III 2014-2020 programme is financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the national contributions from Member States. It is the successor programme to INTERACT II 2007-2013. It is a cooperation programme designed to support and improve the capacity of mainly Interreg, Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) and European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) programme managers in their everyday work.

The INTERACT III communication strategy defines specific communication objectives, target audiences, key messages and evaluation measures to support the achievement of wider programme goals. It follows the information and communication measures laid down in Articles 115, 116, 117 and Annex XII of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 (CPR).

The communication strategy covers both the communication and dissemination activities to INTERACT target groups on INTERACT products as well as the services provided on communication to Interreg programmes.

The communication strategy is based on the INTERACT III programme objectives, a carefully made analysis on communication needs as well as the experience and evaluation of communication activities of the programme in the 2007-2013 programming period. The following documents and surveys served to the elaboration of the communication strategy:

- The INTERACT III cooperation programme 2014-2020
- The mid-term evaluation of INTERACT II information and publicity measures in 2011
- A stakeholder mapping analysis among all INTERACT offices and Member States in 2015
- Reflections made by the INTERACT II Communication Group in 2015 on the state of play of INTERACT and Interreg communication

2 Analysis of the current situation

Communication increasingly became a key element in the INTERACT programme during the 2007-2013 programming period and an integral part of working procedures throughout the programme cycle.

Against this background, a comprehensive study has been made to understand the different factors playing a role in the INTERACT task of communicating both the programme itself and Interreg. This includes the following exercises:

- PEST Analysis: analysis of external policy, economic, social and technological factors impacting both the INTERACT and Interreg communication, based on the new regulatory framework and internal analyses with INTERACT groups.
- SWOT Analysis for the promotion of INTERACT and Interreg: internal factors and trends impacting communication, based on the new regulatory framework, mid-term evaluation 2011 and internal analyses with INTERACT groups.

2.1 PEST Analysis

Policy	Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift towards simplified and standardised programme management • Shift towards result-orientation • More focus on the strategic coordination of the structural funds objectives • Increased responsibility of projects and programmes regarding communication • Requirement by the Commission for programmes to provide a communication contact and a communication strategy • Extended target groups due to new forms of cooperation involve far more than the Interreg target groups e.g. macro-regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw attention to the involvement of programmes in communication activities proposed by INTERACT while programmes sometimes do not have full-time communication officers or no communication officers at all • More focus on the engagement of programmes in INTERACT activities in general (no time and/or no resources, travel constraints and restrictions) • Need to complement programme communication efforts which are limited because of the limited TA budgets in order to increase their communication capacity
Social	Technological
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for a more thematic and strategic involvement of INTERACT, which requests addressing new target groups • One of INTERACT's main expected results is to establish the leadership of an integrated Interreg communication strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General shift towards digitalisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-platforms for knowledge exchange provides an opportunity for online interaction • Complementarities need to be searched between social media and usual multimedia tools (websites, videos...) • Increased use of mobile devices (tablets, apps...) requesting adaptation to these new tools to keep in the loop

2.2 SWOT Analysis

2.2.1 Promoting INTERACT

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INTERACT offers a platform for programmes to share their experiences • INTERACT helps programmes be open to new ideas • Programmes and the European Commission are on the same level at INTERACT events • INTERACT has personal contacts with many programmes • INTERACT is geographically close to programmes (cultural understanding of what they need) • INTERACT works closely with the EU Commission • INTERACT has a multidisciplinary and multicultural team • Programmes feel well informed about the opportunities offered by INTERACT and are generally satisfied with its tools and services • INTERACT is a non-profit organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INTERACT's contact database is not used to its full potential • Lack of graphic consistency in publications and visual identity • Bad timing in some communication activities (promoting a tool before the tool has been set up) • Content too technical, abstract, heavy with jargon and acronyms and few real-life and concrete examples • Evaluation of activities is not done promptly so it is difficult to adapt for next year's planning • Lack of coherence in approach towards media, opinion formers, EU officials • Proofreading exists but there is lack of consistent editing by a professional writer
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve relationships with programme communication officers, especially CBC • Improve the visibility of the INTERACT programme through the new INTERACT logo based on Interreg branding • Communicate INTERACT to new audiences through the media or by supporting Interreg communication through national, regional or local authorities • Better coordination within INTERACT concerning communication (both internal and external) with strong leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New and much wider target audiences: how can we reach them? • INTERACT's continued decentralised structure, making alignment of messages more complex • INTERACT offices or personal networking approach rather than INTERACT approach • High competition among the Pan-European programmes, not always with a clear definition of which one does what. Synergies need to be established for a good alignment of the programmes

2.2.2 Supporting Interreg

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative approaches to disseminate Interreg results (European Cooperation Day, Interreg branding, trainings on storytelling and web trends, contests) • Cooperation with the EU Commission • Learning about cooperation initiatives outside Interreg and collaborate with them (Council of Baltic Sea States, Swedish Institute) • Increased cooperation among transnational programmes • Involvement of programmes in social media to disseminate information about calls, events and news • Building of trust among programmes and changes of behaviour within public administrations • Interreg is a trailblazer for cooperation: ministries, authorities, mainstream programmes and other stakeholders use it as an example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of direct contact with projects • Speaking for Interreg while INTERACT not mandated to do so • INTERACT is on the same level as programmes but is expected to carry more weight vis-à-vis the EU Commission • Lack of cooperation among cross-border programmes • Promotion of results is still weak and results are often not described in a very clear way • Evaluation impact is low • Projects are sometimes not result-oriented enough
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More willingness from programmes to work together • Better relationship with the Commission allows INTERACT to voice Interreg's opinions/views/complaints • Online fora (social media) can make people more receptive to Interreg information • Barriers created by the programme areas are starting to break up • Willingness of programmes to devote time and resources to harmonisation projects (eMS, HIT, joint branding, etc.) • Better connection of communication and capitalisation activities can lead to a better promotion of project results and end-user stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INTERACT decentralised structure, making joint communication activities more complex • Too much focus on differences of each region instead of common points/cooperation • Some programmes still don't want to share information - some don't even cooperate with their partners • New types of territorial cooperation (like e.g. macro-regions) belong to INTERACT target groups, but cannot be precisely targeted and limited, unlike Interreg programmes • Competition between programmes to be under the spotlight • Big focus on sponsors (regions, project partners) rather than results • Great diversity of programmes complicates the development of joint messages

3 Programme objectives

Thematic Objective 11

- Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders
- Enhancing efficient public administration

Overall objective

- Address the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of Europe 2020 Strategy by supporting Interreg Cooperation Programmes in implementing their activities in the most effective way by giving guidance and area-specific expert input in solving implementation bottlenecks.
- Use networking methods that support cooperation as a means to contribute to the innovative integrated approach.

Specific objectives

- Improve management and control capacity of Interreg programmes
- Improve the Interreg capacity in capturing and communicating the programmes' results
- Improve the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches (EGTC, Revolving Funds, macro-regional strategies, article 96 of the CPR, ITI, etc.)

4 Communication objectives

The communication objectives set the framework for the communication activities to be successful. Detailed actions will be part of each year's work plan. The communication objectives for 2014-2020 include:

- 1: Promote the existence and use of harmonised tools and services
- 2: Ensure an adequate knowledge sharing in effective communication approaches
- 3: Streamline the dissemination of thematic content and key messages
- 4: Raise awareness about other cooperation instruments to maximise synergies

5 Target Audiences

INTERACT's target audiences have been split into the following groups:

- users: organisations members who use and benefit from INTERACT
- partners and supporters: organisations members who work with or promote INTERACT
- influencers: external stakeholders and organisations who have an impact on INTERACT/Interreg work
- internal stakeholders: members of INTERACT bodies.

The above target audiences were part of an analysis made by the INTERACT Offices where stakeholders were mapped according to their level of influence and involvement on INTERACT. Additionally, members of the INTERACT Monitoring Committee also reflected on the target groups at a country level for 2014-2020. Lastly, potential synergies with other organisations are examined in this chapter.

5.1 Users

INTERACT can count on those who are already quite involved (Managing Authorities, Joint Secretariats) to help other target groups get more involved. A special focus should be put on relatively new target groups for INTERACT like key cooperation project partners on specific themes and coordinators of macro-regional and sea-basin strategies. Reaching these groups may have a positive impact on the use of INTERACT tools and services or when it comes to promote Interreg.

5.2 Partners and supporters

In the programming period 2014-2020, INTERACT should continue working in close cooperation and improving the level of exchanges with DG Regio, European Commission. A potential increase in support to INTERACT from some bodies like INTERACT National Contact Persons and thematic networks would be found extremely relevant for future benefits. Links and synergies shall be found between INTERACT and the before mentioned bodies in order to strengthen cooperation and avoid overlaps. At the same time, INTERACT would like to be better known among other units and DGs in the European Commission, COESIF/EGESIG and other relevant networks in order to establish appropriate synergies.

5.3 Influencers

INTERACT has traditionally found difficulties in reaching certain target groups that would impact considerably the efforts made towards a successful INTERACT communication. More particularly, key players in meeting the objectives of the cooperation programme such as the media and other structural funds programme have not been consistently approached. Wider target groups outside Interreg will therefore be considered during the programming period 2014-2020 in order to raise awareness about the significance of cooperation and promotion of programme and project results. The evidence on the results of cooperation will be highlighted through examples in various themes.

Moreover, wider audiences will be reached through services provided by INTERACT to Interreg programmes. The communication activities are considered as part of Interreg communication support e.g. KEEP, European Cooperation Day during 2007-2013.

5.4 Internal stakeholders

The main internal stakeholders, target of internal communication, are:

1. The INTERACT Monitoring Committee
2. The INTERACT Managing Authority / Secretariat
3. The INTERACT Certifying and Audit Authority
4. The INTERACT beneficiaries hosting the 4 INTERACT Offices
5. The INTERACT Offices

In the programming period 2014-2020, INTERACT would like work more closely in cooperation with Monitoring Committee members in order to ensure an improved communication in decision processes. At the same time, INTERACT aims to significantly improve internal communication flows among all internal stakeholders.

5.5 Synergies with other organisations

There are several organisations providing training or networking opportunities on EU funds and programmes, but none of them seem to be as specialised on Interreg and cooperation, as INTERACT. General main strengths of INTERACT in comparison to these are features like the closeness to target groups (Interreg Programmes), the ability to provide tailor-made services according to needs, the focus on Interreg, the experienced staff, the geographical closeness to programmes (i.e. cultural understanding of what they need), the access to EU Commission (active participation in our events - tools development), the multidisciplinary and multicultural teams, the fact that INTERACT is not profit-driven, thus it is able to take more risks and try more innovative approaches. At the same time, INTERACT has a more cooperative and social learning approach.

INTERACT should search for complementarities and synergies with them, to avoid competing and developing duplicate services, but rather complement those with specific cooperation issues, as well as learning from the ways in which these organisations are successful. For instance, these organisations have a structured and streamlined way to present their events to their target groups (same way, long in advance, fixed content/speakers from the very beginning, etc.

6 Key messages

1) Promoting INTERACT

- We support you.
- We help you reach your objectives because working alone is not enough.
- Harmonisation and new approaches will help make cooperation work better.

2) Supporting Interreg

- We help you increase the visibility of your work by raising public awareness of Interreg and added value of cooperation.
- Promote your programme and Interreg as well as cooperation and the EU by telling good result stories and putting project achievements in the centre of communication.
- We ensure that thematic communication reaches new target groups.

7 Mission statement, description and slogan

Mission statement

We are an experienced international team who are passionate about cooperation. Cooperation can be complex; our job is to make it easier.

Description

The European Union is a mix of cultures and economies that will reach its full potential through mutual understanding and close cooperation. That is why the European Union supports cooperation in many ways. One of them is Interreg, an initiative specifically dedicated to helping European regions work together to find solutions to common economic, environmental, social and cultural challenges. There are more than 100 Interreg programmes managing thousands of cooperation projects throughout Europe who are dealing with these issues.

The INTERACT programme's specific mission is to support these programmes in their daily work. So to help them successfully navigate the Interreg world, we provide advice, organise learning events and develop a wide range of tools on:

- *How to manage a European cooperation programme or project and comply with EU rules on finance and controls.*
- *How to communicate funding opportunities, as well as programme and project results.*
- *How to use new cooperation tools.*

We also harmonise processes to help programmes work more efficiently and to make the life of project applicants easier. We act as a hub to allow programmes to exchange experiences and network. Finally, we constantly explore and encourage innovative ways of cooperating in Europe by supporting macro-regional and sea basin strategies as well as legal structures and initiatives to facilitate cooperation activities.

We provide services free of charge to all Interreg stakeholders: managing authorities, joint secretariats, monitoring committees, national contact points, first level controllers, certifying authorities, and audit authorities. We also collaborate closely with EU-wide, national and regional cooperation organisations, institutions and networks.

We are financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and by the 28 EU member states, Norway and Switzerland, and we have a total budget of 46 million EUR for the 2014-2020 period. We are part of the Interreg programmes - which are financed under the European Territorial Cooperation objective of the European Structural Funds - but we also support cooperation at the external borders of the EU (IPA/ENI CBC), as well as new forms of territorial cooperation.

Slogan

INTERACT - Cooperation works

8 Communication activities

INTERACT will focus on supporting Interreg programmes capacity to capture programmes' and project results. Eventually, INTERACT will also support the promotion of these results to the relevant (wider) audiences.

These actions will bear in mind both Interreg cooperation and the link with cooperation outside Interreg. The INTERREG Communication medium term strategies are defined in INTERACT's Multi-annual Work Programme under the following Expected Results: 1.1.2. Good practices, 1.2.1. Thematic expertise, 1.2.2. KEEP, 1.2.3. Interreg visibility.

The following activities introduce the necessary arrangements for the information and communication measures to be implemented in line with the communication objectives, using various forms and methods of communication at the appropriate level.

In line with Article 7 of the CPR, the utmost care will be taken to ensure that information and communication activities are accessible to persons with disabilities. The most recent web accessibility standards will be implemented, and due care will be taken with regard to accessibility of event venues. Sustainable development will also be taken into account and environmentally-friendly principles will apply in all events/tools.

Internal communication

Information within INTERACT will be distributed and clearly communicated to all INTERACT Offices (which will be the direct contact to redirect the information to their respective hosting institutions), INTERACT Managing Au-

thority / Secretariat, INTERACT Certifying and Audit Authorities, INTERACT Monitoring Committee. This information can be accordingly disseminated by the above bodies to relevant target groups.

Visual identity

The INTERACT III visual identity manual will set out the design guidelines and requirements for INTERACT products and documents. It is imperative that INTERACT communication activities are recognisable by all target audiences and the visual identity perceptible in external actions.

Digital platforms

The INTERACT website will be updated with information about the operational programme's implementation, including its main achievements. Building community engagement on relevant online platforms such as social media and e-tools for collaboration will help spread good practices and Interreg accomplishments as well as promote INTERACT events, tools and publications.

Tools, events and publications

In order to effectively communicate INTERACT tools, events and publications, careful planning will be done when drafting each year's Joint Annual Work Plan.

Media

In order to aim for the widest possible media coverage, the necessary means and methods will be implemented to promote INTERACT and Interreg achievements e.g. sending of press releases, development of lists of media contacts etc.

9 Evaluation

A robust and ongoing evaluation of the communication strategy is required to ensure that the communication objectives¹ are met. The indicators below are designed directly in accordance with the communication objectives and the programme objectives. The list is not comprehensive and may be enlarged depending on the needs of the evaluation at the time.

¹ No. 1: Promote the existence and use of harmonised tools and services
 No. 2: Ensure an adequate knowledge sharing in effective communication approaches
 No. 3: Streamline the dissemination of thematic content and key messages
 No. 4: Raise awareness about other cooperation instruments to maximise synergies

Indicator	Impact on Cooperation Objectives
Awareness, knowledge and application of harmonised approaches and identified good practices <i>Rationale: Programmes and, if applies, other organisations are enabled to use harmonised tools and learn about effective communication initiatives</i>	No. 1 No. 2
Implementation of joint thematic communication activities and identification and promotion of flagship stories and or joint messages <i>Rationale: Programmes are enabled to carry out (joint) thematic communication activities aiming at promoting results and key messages</i>	No. 3
Awareness of other tools for cooperation and or EU funding schemes and their complementarities <i>Rationale: Increasing knowledge of existing instruments and exemplifying effective synergies</i>	No. 4

10 Budget

The following indicative budgets are based on the average spending levels of Interreg programmes in communication. Detailed annual budgets will be provided with each Joint Annual Work Plan. IT tools are included in this budget because they are closely linked with INTERACT promotion. Like for any other activity of INTERACT, the budget for all activities of the INTERACT offices for supporting Interreg Communication is included in Joint Annual Work Plans. The below budget is included in the allocation to INTERACT Office Vienna and INTERACT Secretariat.

Type of activity	Budget 2016-2023 (EUR, without VAT)
INTERACT promotion	
Website (development and maintenance)	70,000
Graphic design	200,000
Printing	80,000
Dissemination costs	20,000
Promotional materials	50,000
Promotion of INTERACT at networking events	50,000
Professional pictures at INTERACT events	30,000
Mid-term evaluation of the communication strategy	40,000
Sub-total	540,000
INTERACT IT Tools	
Server (including INTERACT website)	800,000
Event registration tool	
Contact database	
Discussion forum (e-platform)	
Other tools	
Sub-total	800,000
Total budget	1,340,000

11 Timeline

In compliance with Article 116(2) of the CPR, the INTERACT III's monitoring committee will examine and approve the communication strategy no later than 6 months after the adoption of the cooperation programme by the European Commission.

The INTERACT III corporate identity, the new slogan, description and mission statement will officially launch in 2016 together with the new INTERACT website. Detailed actions and their timing will be provided in communication work packages developed as part of the Joint Annual Work Plans. In this respect, INTERACT will prepare a Joint Annual Work Plan every year. This work plan will include a work package entirely dedicated to promoting INTERACT as well as work packages dedicated to supporting Interreg, together with their related budget and reporting. A more precise targeting of specific groups of stakeholders shall be included in all Joint Annual Work Plans.

Ongoing evaluation of the communication strategy will be included as part of the overall programme's ongoing evaluation measures. A mid-term evaluation of INTERACT promotion and communication activities will also be carried out halfway through the programming period.

The Monitoring Committee will examine the implementation of the communication strategy. To this end, the Managing Authority shall inform the Monitoring Committee at least once a year on the progress of the communication strategy and its results in compliance with Article 116(3) of the CPR.

If necessary, the strategy will be amended during the programming period to add new priorities, activities or target groups. In this case, the Managing Authority will submit it to the Monitoring Committee for approval in line with Article 110(2)(d) of the CPR.

12 Contact

As described under point 5.3.f) of the INTERACT III cooperation programme, the Managing Authority is the overall body responsible for the communication strategy. It will ensure that all programme implementers are complying with the communication strategy and will take corrective measures if necessary.

INTERACT Office Vienna will receive delegation from the INTERACT Monitoring Committee and Managing Authority to prepare and implement this communication strategy through the subsidy contract to be signed between the City of Vienna (beneficiary of the project "INTERACT Office Vienna") and the Bratislava Self-Governing Region (Managing Authority of the INTERACT III programme).

The person in charge of developing and implementing the part of the strategy dedicated to promote INTERACT is the INTERACT Communication Manager based at INTERACT Office Vienna. Currently, Mr. Gabriel Alvarez: gabriel.alvarez@interact-eu.net

The part of the strategy dedicated to supporting Interreg will be implemented by the communication officers in each INTERACT Office. They can be contacted in the following address: comg@interact-eu.net.

Acronyms

CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
COESIF	Coordination Committee for European Structural and Investment Funds
CPR	Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013
DG REGIO	European Commission Directorate-General Regional and Urban Policy
EGESIF	Group of experts in Structural and Investment Funds
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
eMS	electronic Monitoring System
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
HIT	Harmonised Implementation Tools
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IT	Information Technology
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
MC	Monitoring Committee
PEST	Political, Economic, Social and Technological (analysis)
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (analysis)
VAT	Value Added Tax

Annexes

Documents

1. The INTERACT III Cooperation Programme 2014-2020
2. The mid-term evaluation of INTERACT II information and publicity measures in 2011

Graphs

1. Decision makers
2. Influence involvement mapping
3. Influencers
4. Partners and supporters
5. Users