



COMMUNICATION PLAN 2007-2013

Guidance for Projects

Version October 2009

The purpose of this paper is to provide a background to key aspects of communications in relation to projects and what to include in the Communication Plan.

The paper also highlights important issues referring to Work Package 2 on Communications in the Application Form for projects under the North Sea Region Programme 2007-2013.

BACKGROUND

Communications is a business tool and the Communication Plan should be regarded as the business plan of communications. It is the strategic document that will provide the project with a clear aim and direction in communicating and publicising the work of the project.

The purpose of communications is to increase the overall output of the project it refers to. Communications needs to be an integral part of the planning, set-up and implementation of any project.

Work Package 2 and the Communication Plan

Communications is a Work Package of its own for all projects under the North Sea Region Programme 2007-2013. This highlights that the Programme expects all projects to consider communications an integral part of the project set-up and implementation.

Drafting and adopting a Communication Plan is a requirement for all projects under the North Sea Region Programme 2007-2013.

It is important to understand that the Communication Plan will form the basis for the measures proposed in Work Package 2. Without the plan measures in the work package are at risk to become ad hoc and stand alone, i.e. they will lack a fundamental connection to the overall aim and strategic objectives in communicating the project.

Recommendation: Draft Communication Plan before drafting Work Package 2

The Communication Plan should be drafted at early stages in the planning of the project. This will secure a clear connection between strategic and long term aspects of communications. It will also clarify the connection between Work Package 2 and the Communication Plan.

More information on what to include in the Communication Plan can be found below.

The added value of a Communication Plan

A relevant Communication Plan, including a tagline and message and a professional logo and graphical profile (a basic corporate identity), will help you to communicate your project through the project life cycle and beyond!

The plan including the identity will simplify and speed up the daily issues referring to communications and publicity and generate better response at all levels of media, stakeholders and decision makers.

Communications adds value

Communications adds value to organisations. Well communicated organisations attract more funding and attract talented people. Making management understand the importance of communications is the first step – once this is done, the platform to write the actual plan and budget the measures is in place.

The awareness of the importance to communicate the results and outcomes of the programme and its projects is increasing. This shows in the regulations which are becoming more stringent with every programming period. The many initiatives on communications presented by the European Commission in recent years, e.g. The White Paper on Communication, Communicating Europe in Partnership, further emphasises this.

Projects must follow the requirements of EC Regulation No 1828/2006, but are also encouraged by the Programme on a more general level to inform about and communicate the results and outcomes of projects as well as the Programme to the general public, stakeholders and decision-makers.

The importance of an integrated approach

Communicating the work, results and outcomes of the projects should be an integrated part of the work carried out within the project. Achieving effective communication and publicity is a long term commitment and requires a well thought through approach and consistent and uniform messaging.

Planning communications should be part of the planning process of the project as a whole.

Information is not Communication

A Communication Plan must go beyond information and look at how to communicate. It needs to address why specific measures are included in order to reach out to the identified target groups and why they are important. It needs to look at making the relevant issues attractive enough to engage the audience.

Information is about making things available, communication is about making the audience understand the importance of it and the value it contains.

The added value of communication in relation to information is the way communication encourages participation through feed-back and influence over the end product. In the process, the participating parties gain a deeper a more genuine understanding of the topics discussed.

CHECK THE REGULATIONS

Make sure you have read and incorporated the relevant articles in Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006. Following the steps under the headline Check List in this paper will essentially cover the measures needed.

Depending on the project budget you will also need to put up a billboard and a permanent plaque in line with the specifications in article 8 and 9 of the above regulation.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

A Communication Plan should at least contain the following sections:

- **Background** – What is the background to the plan, what are the key issues to address
- **Aim and Objectives** – What is the overall goal and what other issues will you focus on
- **Target Audience** – Who do you want to reach and why, what are their characteristics
- **Strategy** – Principles: What are the guiding principles behind the plan (e.g. transparency, consistency, innovation), Time frame (when will you do what), Key actors and Message
- **Methods** – What methods do you intend to use and why are they relevant (e.g. web, print on demand)
- **Measures** – Which media do you intend on using (online media, print materials, events)
- **Budget** – How much will the different measures cost
- **Responsibilities** – Who will do what (and when); connects to the strategy
- **Evaluation** – How will you monitor the implementation and make the necessary updates

COMMUNICATION PLAN CHECK LIST

Make sure the Communication Plan contains the following:

Aim and Objectives

- The aim and the objectives are clearly defined
- The Community role is mentioned
- The general public and other stakeholders are mentioned

Strategy including Target Audience

- The measures and the rationale behind them are put into context
- The principles to work from are mentioned
- The expected results and outcomes of the Communication Plan are defined

Measures

- The measures are defined for the different target groups
- The different channels are mentioned and if relevant prioritised
- The measures cover the whole project time period
- There is provision for flying the EU flag at least one week every year, starting May 9

Budget

- An indicative budget is included

Evaluation

- The evaluation measures are clearly defined