

Bulgaria – the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross – border Programme

COMMUNICATION (INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY) PLAN



1. Introduction

Bulgaria - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA cross-border programme has been elaborated in accordance with the following regulations:

- Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 of 17 July 2006 establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA);
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 718/2007 of 12 June 2007 implementing Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 establishing an instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA).

and where relevant with the following regulations and documents:

- Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Regional Development Fund (EC) No 1080/2006 of 5 July 2006;
- Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC);
- Council Regulation laying down general provisions in the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006;

Bulgaria - the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA cross-border programme was adopted by IPA Management Committee. The programme Reference is C(2007)6298.

The communication plan is elaborated in accordance with Article 62 and Article 63 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 718/2007 of 12 June 2007 and Articles 2-10 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006.

In case of **shared management**, the Member State, the beneficiary country and the managing authority as referred to in Article 103 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 718/2007, shall provide information on and publicise programme and operations. The information shall be addressed to the citizens and beneficiaries, with the aim of highlighting the role of the Community and ensuring transparency.

The information and publicity measures for the interventions of the IPA Funds are aimed at publicising the actions of the European Union, increasing transparency and creating a uniform image of the interventions throughout participating countries.

The information and publicity measures are presented in the form of a communication plan. Their implementation shall be the responsibility of the respective administrative body responsible for the interventions (MA/JTS in coordination with NA).

The communication plan contains information on

- the aims and target groups;
- the strategy and content of the information and publicity measures;
- an indicative budget for the implementation;
- the administrative departments / agents responsible for its implementation;
- indication of how the information and publicity measures are going to be evaluated.

As far as the Programme evaluation actions are concerned, the Joint Monitoring Committee and the Commission will receive the required information concerning the implementation provisions on publicity issues as these are specialized in the present document. The information will refer to the quality and the effectiveness of the actions undertaken in the publicity and information field. This information will be presented in the Annual Reports.

2. Aims and target groups

The main goal pursued with the development of the Communication Plan is to ensure that both the potential beneficiaries and the general public from the region are well informed about the Programme opportunities and the Programme results and benefits of territorial cooperation programmes co-financed by the European Union..

The communication plan is based on the common vision of the programme area, reflecting those basic themes and operating principles described in the IPA CBC programme.

A starting point for the implementation of the programme is the **equal participation** of both countries. Information measures cover implementation of the IPA CBC programme on both sides of the border.

2.1. Purpose

The Communication Plan aims:

To inform the public of the European IPA Funds and of the European Union and to promote the positive image and the benefits of the IPA CBC Programme in both participating countries.

2.2. Objectives

- To promote funding opportunities offered by the European Union by providing clear information about the IPA CBC Programme in Bulgaria and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and by disseminating best practice.
- To raise public awareness of the role of the European Union in regional development in Bulgaria and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia through IPA Funds.
- To guarantee the transparency during the Programme implementation
- To ensure an effective internal communication between interested parties/bodies/authorities involved in the implementation of the IPA CBC programme.
- To achieve the successful implementation of the programme by ensuring effective communication system at all levels and by providing full, timely, responsible and effective provision of information for all identified targets
- To make available all relevant information that a potential applicant must know
- To ensure visibility and multiplication of results obtained by implementing the IPA CBC Programme;
- To foster synergies and complementarities with the regional initiatives active in the area;
- To disseminate information in relation to different projects that have received assistance from the programme
- To promote the overall themes of the Programme: internationalisation, equal opportunities, information society, sustainable development, etc.

From this starting point, the programme communication emphasises on:

- **openness and flexibility:** Open, constructive and problem solving communication helps to achieve a common understanding of the foundations for the joint co-operation programme, assisting in creating a network among various organisations involved in the implementation of the programme.
- **consistency and lucidity:** clarity in expression enables illustrating the possibilities provided by the programme
- **up-to-date information and equal communication:** both programme management and project applicants require up-to-date information about the programme
- **customer orientation and practicality:** in order to achieve the programme objectives, the solutions of the programme implementation need to be sought from the view point of the practical project work. The programme management should respond to the actual needs of cross-border co-operation, so that the projects that contribute to the programme objectives can be realised.

- **exchange of experience and know-how:** exchange of experience is important on both the Programme and the project level because it brings the benefit of learning from both the best practices and past mistakes (thus learning how to prevent and solve potential problems).
- **openness and publicity of activities:** showing concrete projects and activities helps to bring the Programme closer to both target groups,

2.3. Target groups

In general the target groups are specified as follows:

- Primary (including potential beneficiaries / applicants, grant holders and their partners)
- Secondary (including the general public, decision makers, mass-media)

The activities under the Communication plan should be directed mainly to potential and final applicants/beneficiaries forming **the primary target group**, in order to ensure that they are properly and timely informed about the opportunities of funding, about calls for proposals, administrative processes and implementation mechanism.

According to the Programme the list of potential applicants/beneficiaries is:

- Local and regional authorities
- Regional structures of central administration
- Research Institutes, schools, training centres and Vocational schools
- Chambers of commerce;
- Institutions of labour market administration
- Professional education and Qualification organizations
- Universities
- Nature parks administrations
- NGOs
- Associations of the above organizations

The secondary target group is the general public as indirect beneficiary who should be aware of the existence of the programme, its goals and expected results as a whole, as well as of the results and benefits achieved by the projects implemented.

Relevant information about the programme implementation should also be provided to institutions involved in Programme management and in policy-making in fields related to priorities of the programme, stakeholders and information disseminators.

This target group includes:

- Population of the eligible regions
- Programme management bodies: Joint Monitoring Committee, National Authority, Audit Authority, Certifying Authority
- European Commission
- National, Regional and Local authorities and administrations and other competent public bodies
- Mass-media;
- NGOs active at local bordering level;
- Economic and social partners;
- Professional associations and business communities;
- Women and youth organizations;
- Cross-border associations;
- Cultural, research and scientific organizations;
- Other non-governmental organisations, especially bodies promoting equal opportunities, social inclusion and bodies working for the protection of the environment.

3. Strategy and content of the information and publicity measures

Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA Cross-border Programme has been elaborated and will be implemented under the rules of the **new** Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance. In order to achieve the Communication Plan goals, this document proposes a set of measures that will support the process of implementation on the Programme/project level through a diverse range of joint information and publicity actions.

The elements of highest importance, which have been taken into consideration for the programming and implementation of the strategic communication measures, are:

- Use of the key messages creating the interest of the target groups.
- Expression of messages in an attention-holding way making them easily understandable and accessible for the target audience.
- Use of various communication channels, relevant to the expected impact.
- Messages over a sustained period of time, maintaining the interest of the target groups.
- Development of messages with a view not only to inform but also to motivate potential beneficiaries to undertake actions.
- Permanent and systematic monitoring and evaluation of the information and publicity measures.

All the measures and actions to be undertaken for the implementation of the Communication Plan are presented in the table below.

No	Measures / Activities	Responsible Body	Target audience
1.	Website		
	<p>The internet website of the Programme will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide general information on the Cross-border Programme Bulgaria – the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: regulations, institutional framework, official documents, etc. • Provide complete information on the financing opportunities, format and content of the applications, selection criteria, procedures to follow etc. • Contact details in the Managing Authority, the Joint Technical Secretariat and the Branch JTS • Partners' search facility • Publish the list of the beneficiaries, the names of the operations, the titles of the projects and the amount of public funding allocated to the operations • Provide information for mass media – press releases, announcements, news, events, awareness campaign, photo-gallery, contact persons. <p>Present the examples of best practices.</p>	MA, JTS	Primary, secondary
2.	Promotional materials		
	<p>For every call for proposals a bilingual leaflet (Macedonian - Bulgarian) will be printed, that will promote the specific call, providing useful information for the potential applicant in a summarised form. The leaflets will include the objective of the call, the eligible applicants, the type of actions that can be financed, the deadlines and where additional information can be gained etc.</p> <p>Special attention will be paid to the dissemination of these leaflets. The general programme leaflet which will mainly serve as a programme's presentation will be widely distributed through all local stakeholders, i.e. regional and local authorities, RDAs, Banks, local Chambers. The distribution will be done electronically and/or by post depending on the financial resources available. The leaflets will be made available also on the website.</p>	MA, JTS	Primary, secondary
	<p>One brochure promoting the programme as a whole will be developed at the beginning of the implementation. The leaflet will be made in a simple language presenting the priority axis of the programme, its objectives, the eligible potential applicants and the expected results.</p> <p>Additionally a brochure will be developed annually, presenting the call for proposals that were launched and the projects that were receiving financing. The best examples will be further developed providing pictures and short interviews of the beneficiaries.</p>	MA, JTS	Primary, secondary
	<p>Some actions of the Programme could be promoted through posters or banners, posted in public areas in the interested territories. They could be used to promote the Programme and its objectives, as well as to inform about the launch of a specific call for proposal or about the implementation of a project considered particularly relevant for a specific area.</p>	MA, JTS	Primary, secondary
	<p>A wide range of other promotional materials (gadgets) will also be produced and/or inscribed, in order to complement</p>	MA, JTS	Primary,

	the above actions (e.g. CDs and USBs having key-information on programme implementation issues, pens/bags/folders bearing the programme's logo, notebooks, files, calendars, backpacks, post-it, stickers etc).		secondary
3	Information seminars For every launch an information seminar will be organised in both countries to present the call for proposals.		
	Info-days - JTS/ communication officer will organise the promotion activities. The purpose of such events is dissemination of information concerning the Programme content, priorities and requirements, as well as for explanation of the procedures for submission of proposals, evaluation of proposals and any other useful information for the general public and potential applicants	JTS	Primary
	Thematic seminars/ workshops for the potential beneficiaries will concentrate on addressing the information needs of the potential beneficiaries regarding the financial assistance provided within the programme. They will be taught how to generate projects, how to find partners and how to develop eligible projects by taking into consideration the IPA specific rules.	MA, JTS	Primary
4	Publicity campaign The media campaign will concentrate on the promotion of the Programme, dissemination of information and news concerning the financing opportunities, availability of the financial assistance and ways to access it, with the purpose of attracting potential beneficiaries towards the more in-depth information sources available.		
	Print media campaign The Managing Authority and JTS Communication officer will initiate and maintain close relations with the press, especially in terms of news feeding. The Web site will provide all the necessary information for the media – press releases, announcements, news, events, contact persons, etc.	MA, NA, JTS	Primary, secondary
	Press conferences could be organized both by the MA and the NA on the approval of the Programme and on the occasion of any milestone. They will be held to make news, announcements, to mark and bring into media's attention major events like programme launch or closing.	MA, NA, JTS	Primary, secondary
	Press releases will be regularly sent to National and Local media, when newsworthy information exists. A press relation officer at National level will coordinate the information given on the national press and will organise interviews with key staff of the Managing Authority. At local level the JTS will coordinate with the assistance of the press officer the regular feeding of local press with newsworthy information.	MA, NA, JTS	Primary, secondary
	Press Advertisements - every call for proposals will be advertised at Local press. All press advertisements will carry the Programme logo. Poster / Billboard campaign <i>Starting with the 9th of May, flying the European flag for a week on the site of all projects co-financed by the Funds is mandatory.</i> •	MA, NA, JTS	Primary, secondary
	<i>TV and radio Campaign</i>	MA, NA, JTS	Primary,

	<p>One <i>TV</i> spot that introduces the Cross-border Programme Bulgaria – the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be designed for the general public, both in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria. It will be broadcast on local TV channels in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria, in the border counties and districts. The TV spot aims at informing the target groups of the project on the priorities and measures of the Cross-border Programme Bulgaria – the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The TV concept is designed to announce the arrival of Programme and to drive traffic, especially potential beneficiaries, to the website for further information and registration.</p> <p>Two <i>radio</i> spots will be developed in every language, to promote the programme as a whole. The spots will be aired at local radio stations, in the period before every launch of a new call for proposals. Radio is a very cost effective tool that can be used locally. The radio campaign will mainly serve the secondary target group and will inform the general public in the bordering region about the programme.</p>		secondary
5	Active training		
	<p>Active training will be organized for the potential beneficiaries and the beneficiaries in order to help them develop the skills necessary for ensuring the quality of the request for financing and thus, to <i>constantly increase the absorption capacity of the financial assistance and respectively to contribute for development of capacity for project implementation phases, reporting requirements, required quality standards, etc.</i></p> <p><i>For controllers and external assessors – in order to develop the skills necessary for effective and efficient controlling and assessment activities during the implementation of the programme, specialized trainings shall be carried out.</i></p>	JTS	Primary
	<p><i>For the MA/NA/JTS representatives</i> – in order to develop the skills necessary for effective and efficient management and implementation of the programme training activities are foreseen under INTERACT and other EU initiatives for representatives of both participating countries</p>	MA/NA/JTS	Secondary
6	Other		
	<p><i>The beneficiaries should be informed on their responsibilities concerning the publication/information measures in a timely manner. This information should be included in the Applicant's Guide and the subsidy contract. More detailed description of the above responsibilities is given in the Project Implementation Manual.</i></p>		

4. Indicative Budget for the CP Implementation

In accordance with the Bulgaria – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia IPA CBC Programme, all measures projected for the communication action plan are covered by Technical Assistance budget. For 2007-2009 the total TA budget amounts the sum of EUR 775 604 and approximately 5-6 % are foreseen to address the information and publicity measures.

The budget will include expenditures on preparation of publicity and information materials (leaflets, brochures, banners etc.); promotional, information and training events including rent of hall and equipment, catering and consumables; support materials; website development; publications in mass-media, photography, etc.

The Annual Evaluation will provide an opportunity to review the budget for information and publicity measures of the Programme.

5. Responsible Bodies for the CP Implementation

The Managing Authority (MA) is responsible for the implementation of the communication strategy at central level. In addition, MA must inform on an annual basis the European Commission on the interventions implemented. The Managing Authority shall act in cooperation with the National Authority from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In tasks referring to the information and publicity activities the Managing Authority is assisted by the JTS (particularly by the Communication officer).

6. Indicators of how CP measures are going to be evaluated

Monitoring and Accountability

The Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) will consider the Annual Implementing Report which must contain a section on information and publicity.

DG "Programming of Regional Development" as Managing Authority will provide the JMC with information on the quality and effectiveness of the publicity and information measures, supported by suitable evidence. The strategy will be revised if necessary and the revised version will be approved by the JMC.

The MA will provide the European Commission with information for the implementation of the measures to verify that it is complying with Information and Publicity Strategy.

MEASURE	ACTIVITY	TIMING	INDICATOR	QUANTITY (per year)
Website	General information	Permanently on the web-site and updated when necessary	<u>Number</u> of web-site visits	min.2000 per year
	Partners' search facility	Permanently on the web-site and updated for every call for proposals	Number of web-site visits	min. 2000 per year
			Number of new potential PPs in the database	min.20 per Call
	Contact details	Permanently on the web-site and updated when necessary	Number of web-site visits	min. 2000 per year
Promotional materials	Leaflets	During every Call for Proposals (or at other times, as deemed necessary)	<u>Number</u> of leaflets produced	min. 500 per call
			<u>Number</u> of leaflets disseminated	min.80% of the leaflets produced
	Brochures	For each Call	<u>Number</u> of brochures produced	min. 500
			<u>Number</u> of brochure disseminated	min.80% of the brochures produced
	Posters & banners	For official events	<u>Number</u> of official events	min. 2
	Other promotional materials (gadgets)	Permanently	<u>Number</u> of materials prepared for promotion of the programme	min. 200 per call
			<u>Number</u> of promotional materials disseminated	min.80% of the materials produced
Information seminars	Info-days	Before every Call for Proposals	<u>Number</u> of organizations/bodies represented	min. 40 per Call
			Number of persons attended	min.60 per Call
			Increase in the number of proposals submitted	min. 3% compared to previous Call

	Thematic seminars/ workshops	Minimum 1 per year	<u>Number</u> of organizations / bodies represented	min. 20 per event
			<u>Number of people attended</u>	min.40 per event
Publicity campaign	Print media campaign	Minimum 1 information material per year	<u>Number</u> of newspapers publishing issue(s) concerning the programme	min. 4 per year
	Press conferences	After official events	Number of press conferences held	min. 2 for the duration of the Programme
	Press releases	After official events	Number of press releases	min. 1 per year
	Press Advertisements	For every Call for proposals	Number of advertisement published	min. 2 per Call
	Internet media advertisement	Minimum 2 per year	Number of advertisement / eBanners	min. 2 per year
	e Newsletter	Minimum 2 per year	Number of e Newsletters	min. 2 per year
	Publications in regional initiatives and fora	Minimum 1 per year	Number of events	min.1 per year
	TV Campaigns	TV -- upon decision by the MA and the available financial resources	Number of TV advertisement aired	min. 1 for the duration of the programme
	Radio Campaigns	During every call	Number of radio advertisement aired	min. 1 per country for each Call
Active training	Training for beneficiaries	After completion of grant awarding procedure	Number of participants	min. 20
			Number of trainings	min.1
	Training of MA/NA/JTS staff	Depending on INTERACT events and other initiatives	Number of participants	min. 50 % out of the total staff
	Training for Controllers performing FLC	Annually	Number of participants	min. 30
			Number of trainings	min.1
	Training for External assessors	Annually	Number of participants	min.10
			Number of trainings	min.1