



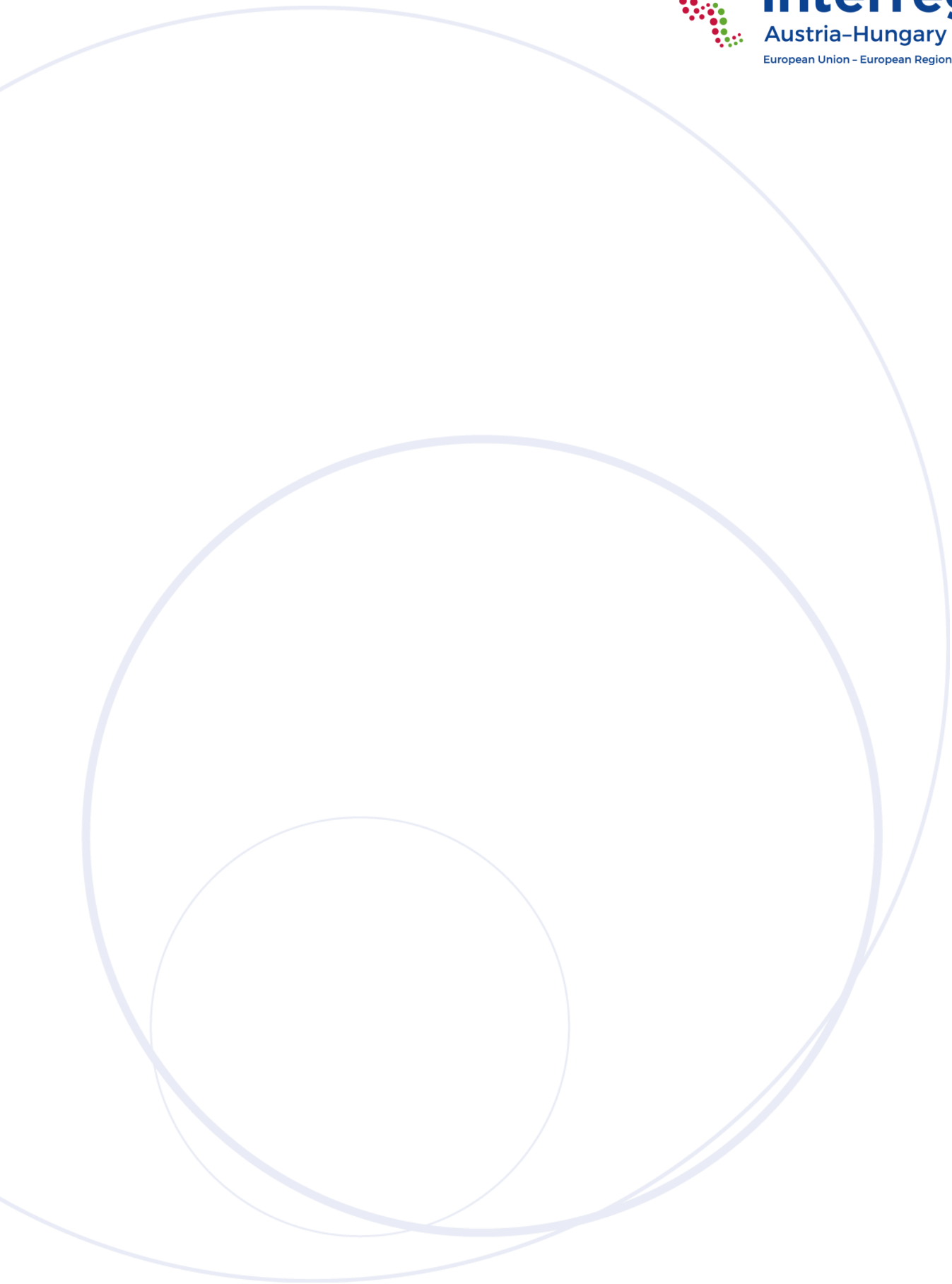
Interreg 
Austria-Hungary 2014-2020
European Union - European Regional Development Fund



COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Final version

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1 Introduction

The communication strategy describes how the programme Interreg V-A Austria-Hungary will approach communication in the period 2014-2020. This document will be guidance to all responsible actors in the programme for a coherent approach towards communication.

Communication as a strategic tool plays a key role in achieving the ultimate goal of cross-border cooperation: to encourage people, institutions and regions to work together and to learn from each other. There's no cooperation without communication. Especially the increased striving for visibility of results and demonstration of added-value of funding sends for communication as an integral part of all working procedures at all levels of project and programme life cycle. Communication will lead us through all this phases!

Beside with the programme, project partners communicate with their partners, with partners from other projects, with actors in their professional field but also with people in their private life, meaning parts of the 'general public'. Therefore all involved programme bodies will contribute to build real dialogue with beneficiaries and stakeholders and move them to strengthen and intensify cross-border cooperation and thus demonstrate the benefits of the European Union, and especially of Interreg, for the citizens.

The programme Interreg Austria-Hungary is a cross-border cooperation programme and is strongly based on the programme implemented in the period 2007-2013. The overall aim is to tackle common challenges identified in the border region. Exploitation of untapped potentials and concentration on issues close to the population of the border region build the brackets around all activities implemented in the programme. Interreg Austria-Hungary allocates 78.8 Mio € ERDF funds to cooperation activities in the border region. The programme has four thematic priority axes (PA) under which cross-border cooperation is financed:

- PA 1: Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs (TO3)
- PA 2: Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency (TO6)
- PA 3: Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures (TO7)
- PA 4: Enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration (TO11)

1.1 Legal background

The general framework for the communication of cohesion policy programmes is described in article 115, 116 and 117 and in annex XII of the Regulation No. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (hereinafter Common Provisions Regulation, CPR).

According to article 115 of CPR, the Managing Authority is responsible for drawing up a communication strategy with a number of elements set out in Annex XII of the same regulation. Article 116 requires that the communication strategy shall be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for approval no later than six months after the adoption of the cooperation programme.

In addition, the Implementing Regulation (EU) No 821/2014 defines in article 3 and 4 as well as annex II the technical characteristics of information and communication measures.

2 Responsibilities of the programme bodies in implementing the communication strategy

Programme communication is a shared responsibility of all programme bodies. A good coordination of tasks is needed for a smooth implementation of the strategy. The main responsibility for communication activities is at the Managing Authority (MA) and the Joint Secretariat (JS). But also the Monitoring Committee (MC) plays a key role for programme communication, just as the projects.

The MA/JS will coordinate the implementation of the communication strategy and will make sure that the requirements as defined in the legal framework are met. The MA/JS will inform the MC at least once a year on the progress of the implementation of the communication strategy and its assessment of results, as well as on the planned information and communication activities to be carried out in the following year. In the JS a communication manager is appointed who acts as a central contact point in communication issues both for programme bodies, for potential applicants and beneficiaries of the programme. They will be guided how to meet the communication obligations, relevant information will be made clearly understandable and communication tools easily available.

The MC will monitor and assess the implementation of the communication strategy and will oversee the communication activities. After approving the strategy, the MC will take care of the progress and discuss the activities yearly planned. Additionally the members of the MC will contribute to achieving the communication aims of the programme as they are important multipliers for the messages of the programme.

The Regional Coordinators (RCs) support applicants and beneficiaries in setting-up and implementing the projects and thus also give advice about communication requirements. The direct contact to applicants and beneficiaries and their role as representatives of the regions taking part in the programme make them an angle point for communicating the programme's achievements in the regions.

3 Programme objectives and communication objectives

The operational objective of the programme Interreg Austria-Hungary is to exploit the untapped potentials in the border area and to concentrate on issues close to the need of the population by preparing strategic actions and pilot projects in specified fields. All communication activities support this objective and aim to strengthen the visibility of the programme and its benefits.

To achieve the programme objective the following communication objectives (CO) and specific communication objectives are defined:

CO 1: To ensure the quality of cross-border cooperation projects and its strong impact on the programme area

- CO 1.1 To strengthen internal communication between the programme bodies for a smooth programme implementation
- CO 1.2 To raise awareness and knowledge of project applicants in order to get high-quality applications
- CO 1.3 To support beneficiaries in all phases of project implementation to guarantee the best possible outcome
- CO 1.4 To strengthen cooperation with other Interreg programmes to share information and best practices

CO 2: to attract wide interest towards the benefits of cross-border cooperation

- CO 2.1 To support and encourage beneficiaries in communication activities
- CO 2.2 To disseminate the benefits of cross-border cooperation for different stakeholders in the programme area

A short description of the communication objectives and thus the communication strategy is given in the following abstracts:

CO 1.1 - To strengthen internal communication between the programme bodies for a smooth programme implementation

A strengthened internal communication of all programme bodies involved is at the core of an effective and smooth implementation of the programme. To improve administrative procedures, clarity and immediate availability of information for all programme bodies is necessary. A regular and close contact and functioning network shall be maintained. This ensures on the one hand a good level of knowledge about the implementation of the programme in general and the procedures defined in the programme. On the other hand it enables the programme bodies to serve all other stakeholders with the most relevant information and thus helps being a multiplier for programme communication.

CO 1.2 - To raise awareness and knowledge of project applicants in order to get high-quality applications

The programme has the strong intention to fund projects of high quality and with the highest possible impact on the programme area. With the stronger focus on result orientation also high quality project development gains in importance. The programme strives to raise awareness of applicants about the challenges and requirements of cross-border cooperation as new projects need to show what change they bring for the programme area. Already applicants need to be trained in administrative procedures and technical requirements to ensure a successful implementation of the projects and thus a smooth programme implementation. Project applicants shall therefore receive clear and

straightforward guidance and templates for their project application, which does not replace individual support for the applicants by the programme bodies.

CO 1.3 - To support beneficiaries in all phases of project implementation to guarantee the best possible outcome

The implementation of a project follows a life cycle with different needs in different phases. All beneficiaries face several challenges during this life cycle. Projects are subject to modifications, there may be changes in the partnership, even a change of the project content may be necessary. In all this phases a steady communication within the partnership and a strong support of the programme bodies help to keep the projects on track. Every support of beneficiaries in all this phases results in higher-quality projects and better outcomes and will raise the beneficiaries' ability to handle the challenges and successfully implement the project. On the top of an implementation manual with detailed descriptions of requirements and procedures, guidance and trainings, tools and the offer for individual support is provided.

CO 1.4 - To strengthen cooperation with other Interreg programmes to share information and best practices

Cooperation and communication is not limited to the projects and the respective programme. Against the background of new requirements, a cross-programme cooperation making use of the knowledge all around Europe gets an extremely important factor of successful programme implementation. Knowledge platforms and the possibility of exchanging best practices are taken up by the programmes. Finding solutions and harmonising procedures beyond the own programme area is at the core of cross-border cooperation in the new programming period. In this respect Interact plays a key role with its thematic networks and highly accepted harmonisation initiatives.

CO 2.1 - To support and encourage beneficiaries in communication activities

The ability of project participants to effectively communicate is crucial for the dissemination of project results. Thus, a clear and understandable guidance about communication requirements shall be given to the beneficiaries. Additionally the programme seeks to provide supporting communication tools that facilitates and strengthens the projects' communication approach. The Interreg harmonised brand and the advancement to a project logo is a core element in this intention. To place parts of the programme website at the disposal of the projects to be used as project websites is an additional measure to help the communication work of the projects.

CO 2.2 - To underline the benefits of cross-border cooperation for different stakeholders in the programme area

Cross-border cooperation has a long tradition in the programme area. Small initiatives as well as bigger investments have created positive impact to the region and influenced the people's lives. As cross-border cooperation is manifold in terms of diverse topics, activities and stakeholders, it is likely that people get in touch with the programme or its projects. An increased visibility of the programme and its benefits will raise awareness of decision makers and the general public for the added-value of cross-border cooperation

in general. The programme’s achievements are represented by the projects’ achievements. Increased communication about the projects’ results will be facilitated through regular newsletters, a well-structured website, target-oriented information for different stakeholders and various events. With the new Interreg brand the programme has a stronger corporate identity and thus, together with the projects using the brand as project logo, a potential for wider visibility.

4 Target groups and their needs

Different groups need to be targeted to reach the communication objectives. Therefore, different target groups are assigned to the specific communication objectives. The target groups can be divided in two main groups according to their role and nature within the programme implementation – internal and external target groups.

Table 1: Overview target groups

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Internal target groups | Managing Authority (MA), Joint Secretariat (JS) |
| | Regional Coordinators (RCs) |
| | Monitoring Committee (MC) |
| | Control bodies (FLCs) |
| | National bodies responsible for coordination of ESI-fund programmes |
| | European Commission, DG Regio Desk Officer of the programme |
| External target groups | Applicants and potential applicants |
| | Beneficiaries (project partners) |
| | Other Interreg programmes |
| | Stakeholder institutions |
| | Groups related to the programme thematic objectives (general public) |
| | European Commission |

The internal target groups consist of people working within the implementation of the actual programme. Their needs differ significantly from information needs of external target groups. Issues of internal communication can be for example:

Table 2: Information needs of internal target groups

| |
|--|
| Changes in the manuals and guidance provided by the programme for applicants, beneficiaries but also for control bodies |
| Decisions of the monitoring committee that influence the implementation of projects |
| Modification of rules on European level that affect the programme and projects |
| Progress in the programme implementation (number of projects approved and rejected, latest approved projects, funds that remain available to co-finance projects, etc.) |
| Explanations and interpretations to eligibility rules |
| Updates on key programme contacts |

The external target groups consist of all other stakeholders that are of interest to the programme to reach its main goals, mainly institutions that could or do already implement projects and the general public. Those groups have to be made aware of the programme and its goals and be strengthened for the implementation of the projects. Examples for the information need of external target groups are as follows:

Table 3: Information needs of external target groups

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Applicants and beneficiaries: | Development of a good project application (when and how to apply, how to find partners, criteria for a qualitative application as regards content, etc.) |
| | Description about the technical procedures in the programme |
| | Information and explanation about eligibility rules |
| | Contact details of supporting institutions like JS and RCs |
| | Success stories of projects as examples of cooperation |
| | Requirements and available tools for project communication |
| | Experiences of other projects |
| Other Interreg programmes: | Experiences and lessons learned in the programme |
| European Commission: | Information about the general progress of the programme implementation |
| | Success stories of projects |
| | Achievements in the thematic objectives of the programme |

Stakeholder institutions and the general public

Benefits of European cooperation close to them and thematically relevant to their interest

Achievements in the thematic objectives of the programme

The programme will take special care that the communication needs of people with disabilities are satisfied whenever possible by measures such as appropriate IT solutions (e.g. a – as far as possible – barrier-free website for people with visual disorders), or events organised at venues accessible for persons with reduced mobility, whenever feasible. Additionally regional coordinators and JS offer individual support in meetings or consultations on the phone in order to serve the programme’s intention to make the material and information needed accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities.

Table 4: Intervention logic of the communication strategy

Overall objectives:

To exploit the untapped potentials in the border area and to concentrate on issues close to the need of the population by preparing strategic actions and pilot projects in specified fields

Communication objectives:

| | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| CO 1: To ensure the quality of cross-border cooperation projects and its strong impact on the programme area | | | | CO 2: To attract the wide interest towards the benefits of cross-border cooperation | |
| CO 1.1: To strengthen internal communication between the programme bodies for a smooth programme implementation | CO 1.2: To raise awareness and knowledge of project applicants in order to get high-quality applications | CO 1.3: To support beneficiaries in all phases of project implementation to guarantee the best possible outcome | CO 1.4: To strengthen cooperation with other Interreg programmes to share information and best practices | CO 2.1: To support and encourage beneficiaries in communication activities | CO 2.2: To disseminate the benefits of cross-border cooperation for different stakeholders in the programme area |

Target groups:

| | | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| MA, JS, RCs, MC, FLCs, national Interreg coordination bodies, EC/DO | (potential) applicants | Project partners of the approved projects | Other Interreg programmes, Interact | Project partners of the approved projects | Stakeholder institutions, groups related to the thematic objectives, general public |
|---|------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|

5 Communication activities and tools

5.1 Corporate design

A corporate design has been developed to ensure high visibility and recognition of the programme. Taking up the Interreg logo and the Interreg thematic icons, the programme develops an own corporate design.

The corporate design will both include elements for the use of the programme as well as elements for the use of the project participants. There will be design templates for programme manuals and other documents defined, as well as the offer of project logos deriving from the programme logo.

Guidance on the specifications of the logos and the use on different publications, plaques and other items will be provided in a logo manual.

5.2 Website and newsflashes

The programme website builds the core of the information and communication measures of Interreg Austria-Hungary. It is the main platform for both internal and external information about the programme, such as:

- General information about the programme (thematic priorities, programme budget and area, possible beneficiaries, status of implementation, list of beneficiaries, etc.)
- News and events
- Contact details
- Programme documents and project documents (cooperation programme, manuals, programme logo, templates for project reports, etc.)
- Information about projects, their status of implementation and the project websites hosted on the programme main website
- Back office for the internal documents (e.g. MC documents)

Against the background that the programme Interreg Austria-Hungary strongly builds on the experiences of the previous programming period, it aims to present success stories of projects from the 2007-2013 period. Therefore a project database will be included in the new programme website. We believe that those examples can serve as impulse for new cooperation.

The programme's corporate design will draw a continuous line both through the main website and the sub-sections for projects.

Regularly published newsflashes (at least twice a year) will distribute news to registered subscribers. It can place short information about programme and project developments to relevant stakeholders and target groups (e.g. beneficiaries, certain thematic networks). This regular short messaging shall call increased attention to the website.

5.3 Publications

5.3.1 Programme general folder and 4 thematic folders

The basic bilingual information material about the programme consists of a general folder with the basic points about the programme and four thematic folders about the different priority axes. This set enables for a target oriented thematic communication to relevant stakeholders.

This leaflets will be available both in print and electronic format.

5.3.2 Manuals

The programme will provide a set of manuals for applicants and beneficiaries that cover all relevant issues of the project life cycle from the initial idea to the submission of applications and the implementation of the projects. Those manuals are about the following topics:

- Programme manual being the general programme folder described above
- Application
- Eligibility of expenditure
- Implementation of projects with information about communication, reporting, project modifications, project closure, audits and irregularities

The manuals will be published in electronic format.

5.3.3 Publication about project results

At a later stage the programme will prepare brochures focused on results of the projects, the benefits for the programme area and thus the added-value of the programme.

5.4 Events and trainings

5.4.1 Kick-off event and annual events

The kick-off conference is planned for summer 2016. This event aims at presenting the new programme in general, bridging the past programme to the new one by picturing the results of projects from 2007-2013 but also at strengthening networks.

Following good experiences with annual information events mostly around EC Day on the 21 September, the programme will keep this practice and organise events target-oriented to the thematic objectives or aiming to present the achievements of Interreg projects in the programme area. Closeness to EC Day is intended but may be differing when reasonable.

5.4.2 Project trainings

Trainings for project partners will be demand driven and dedicated to particular issues, such as contracting, eligibility of expenditure, reporting or communication. The workshops shall primary ensure that beneficiaries learn about the technical requirements

of the programme in different areas but are also aiming to facilitate an exchange of know-how and experiences among beneficiaries and can even result in networks of information exchange.

For applicants and the initial preparation of project applications no such standardised trainings are foreseen from the programme. As already applicants need to be trained in administrative procedures and technical requirements they will receive clear and straightforward guidance and templates for their project application. Beside all available information and guidance documents, the main support structure for applicants are the Regional Coordinators (RCs) backed by the Joint Secretariat. They provide individual support for all requests regarding applications aiming at high-quality projects.

5.4.3 Promotional material

Promotional material will be mainly limited to office and event materials and always be directed to increase the programme's visibility. All material will consistently use the corporate design and facilitate the programme's visibility at programme events and other occasions. In this context especially roll-ups and a banner for bigger locations will serve the visual presentation of the programme. In addition small items are produced, such as notepads, notebooks, sticky notes, pens and memory sticks. In lower quantities, items related to specific events or messages may be produced.

5.4.4 Displaying the Union emblem

In line with the rules set in the Common Provisions Regulation, the emblem of the European Union will be permanently displayed at the premises of the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat in the form of a door sign or others.

6 Implementation of the strategy

The Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat are responsible for the implementation of the communication strategy as well as for the support of other programme bodies in carrying out communication activities. For the coordination of all communication activities a communication manager is appointed in the JS.

6.1 Budget

Communication activities of the programme implemented by MA/JS will be covered from the technical assistance budget. For communication the TA budget includes one half of a staff position (communication manager) and budget items for communication in the budget line external services. The indicative budget dedicated to communication is presented in the following table:

Table 5: Communication budget

| Budget item | Specification | Planned budget |
|--|---|----------------|
| Staff costs | 0.5 FTE for Communication Manager (from 2016 – 2023) | 183,221 |
| External expertise and services | Annual events including kick-off | 55,000 |
| | Communication trainings, 2 per year (venue, catering) | 16,000 |
| | Programme folder | 5,000 |
| | Other Publications | 80,000 |
| | Promotional material | 10,000 |
| | Corporate design | 5,000 |
| | Website | 20,000 |
| | Web support | 20,000 |
| TOTAL | | 394,221 |

6.2 Annual planning

The communication strategy is the framework for all programme communication for the whole programme period. As there are different needs throughout the phases of programme implementation, annual work plans will be drawn up to serve these differing needs. Communication activities will move from promotion of the funding opportunities and results and experiences from the previous period at the beginning, to more prominently raising awareness of the results and benefits of the current programme towards the end of the period.

The annual planning allows for the implementation of the strategy adapted to the needs in the different phases. Milestones for evaluation of the strategy offer the possibility for adjustments and improvements where needed. The annual communication plans and the

evaluation of the strategy's implementation will be presented to the Monitoring Committee on a yearly basis.

6.3 Evaluation

The evaluation of the implementation of the communication strategy is done annually in the process of development of the annual implementation reports of the programme. The evaluation is based on result indicators set for each specific communication objective and the target values are set in the annual work plans.

Table 6: Communication indicators

| Specific Communication objectives | Result indicator | Source of data |
|---|--|---|
| CO 1.1 To strengthen internal communication between the programme bodies for a smooth programme implementation | No. of programme meetings (MC, RC network, FLC network) | Data collected by JS |
| CO 1.2 To raise awareness and knowledge of project applicants in order to get high-quality applications | No. of consultations with applicants (RCs and JS) | Data collected by JS |
| | No. of received applications | eMS |
| | % of the approved applications out of all applications submitted | eMS |
| CO 1.3 To support beneficiaries in all phases of project implementation to guarantee the best possible outcome | No. of downloads of programme manuals from the website | Counter on website |
| CO 1.4 To strengthen cooperation with other Interreg programmes to share information and best practices | No. of participants of MA/JS staff to events/meetings of Interact or other Interreg programmes or other activities focused on exchange of experiences between programmes | Data collected by JS |
| CO 2.1 To support and encourage beneficiaries in communication activities | No. of press releases or other media exposures of the projects | Project reporting |
| | No. of projects active in one or more social media platforms | Data collected by JS, Project reporting |
| CO 2.2 To disseminate the benefits of cross-border cooperation for different stakeholders in the programme area | No. of visitors to programme website | Counter on website |

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