



## **D 2.2.1 Communication Plan**

Version 1.0

February 2020

<b>PROJECT INFORMATION</b>	
Project acronym:	SmartRural
Project title:	Smart Rural Entrepreneurship
Project ref. no:	BMP1/1.1/2612/2017
Starting date:	01/11/2017
Ending date:	31/07/2020 (Addendum-1)
Project website:	<a href="https://smartrural.eu/">https://smartrural.eu/</a>
Lead partner organisation:	Regional Development Agency of Western Macedonia S.A. (ANKO)
<b>DELIVERABLE INFORMATION</b>	
Title of the deliverable:	D 2.2.1 Communication Plan
WP/activity related to the deliverable (number and description):	WP2: Project Communication and Dissemination Activity 2.2: Preparation of the Communication Plan
Responsible Partner	Major Development Agency Thessaloniki S.A. - MDAT
E-mail:	<a href="mailto:info@mdat.gr">info@mdat.gr</a> , <a href="mailto:kopra@mdat.gr">kopra@mdat.gr</a>

**SmartRural project partners**

<b>Project Partner No</b>	<b>Partner Institution (Full Name)</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Legal Status</b>	<b>Partner role</b>
<b>Lead Partner (LP1)</b>	Regional Development Agency of Western Macedonia S.A	Greece	governed by public law	Lead Partner
<b>P2</b>	Major Development Agency Thessaloniki S.A.	Greece	governed by public law	Project Partner
<b>P3</b>	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki - Special Account for Research Funds - Department of Economics	Greece	governed by public law	Project Partner
<b>P4</b>	Bulgaria Economic Forum	Bulgaria	governed by private law	Project Partner
<b>P5</b>	Local Economic Development Agency - Razlog	Bulgaria	governed by public law	Project Partner
<b>P6</b>	Panagrotikos Association of Cyprus	Cyprus	governed by public law	Project Partner
<b>P7</b>	Municipality of Dropull	Albania	public	Project Partner
<b>P8</b>	Center for development of Pelagonija Region	North Macedonia	public	Project Partner



The present document supports the communication activities of the SmartRural project funded by the Balkan Mediterranean Programme 2014-2020. It presents the communication strategy for the duration of the project.

The adopted strategy gives the general information, suggestions and guidelines to achieve the best possible results of the communication and dissemination process (WP2). It concentrates specifically on the actions and procedures towards a wider publicity and impact that partners have jointly aimed to accomplish within the project.

The communication plan can be considered as a basis to build up the targeted campaigns to promote the project in all participating countries Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece and North Macedonia.

While implementing the communication and dissemination activities the partners should follow certain quality and quantity criteria to measure the desired and achieved results.

The implementation of the project outputs in practice also depends on the success of the communication and dissemination activities within the project. Therefore, it is essential to point out that good communication and dissemination are the basis for involving stakeholders into all WPs.

In addition, each partner should regularly implement activities that will ensure the stakeholders', target groups' and beneficiaries' involvement in the project progress. Therefore, stakeholders, target groups and beneficiaries will be identified and kept informed throughout the whole project duration. This will also contribute to the take up of the project results after the project ends (in close cooperation with WP6 activities).

## 1. Short summary about the project

### The main objective of the project:

**the creation of transnational cooperation for the enhancement of entrepreneurship in rural areas in the BalkanMED countries through SmartRural model specialization.**

The project seeks to achieve these objectives through the provision of free uninvasive **technical, financial and advisory support to entrepreneurs**. Parallel, it will provide **technical assistance to the rural public authorities to apply and implement a business welcome policy based on the principles of smart specialization**. All these are comprised in a SmartRural development model.

For local authorities and the rest of key stakeholders, the project will allow a deeper insight and access to know how, related to effective methodologies and tools for sustainable rural development. This will be achieved by establishing a business oriented transnational network and through the application of a SmartRural specialized development model geared to mitigating specific structural and socio-economic challenges.

### Specific Objectives are:

1. The **establishment of a durable business oriented transnational network consisting key stakeholders and target groups from all participating countries will provide permanent exchange of experiences and expertise.**

2. The support to public engagement processes and local partnerships will identify entrepreneurial opportunities & will disseminate innovative strategies & tools for sustainable rural development in the Intervention Area.
3. The testing of SmartRural model, according to the cooperation potentials & business opportunities at local and international level in order to foster employment opportunities and business activities, as well as, to transfer know how to other territories of European Union.
4. Capacity building of new and existing entrepreneurs in order to implement their business ideas or to expand their enterprises.
5. The promotion of project's outputs & results.
6. The strengthening and attractiveness of the business environment in rural areas by identifying and utilizing the comparative advantages in green, blue & social economy by developing methodologies, tools and policy recommendations.
7. The sustainability of future investments by establishing permanent structures of support.

The main outputs of the project will be:

1. Freely accessible Electronic bank of knowledge tools (SMARTRURAL business development guide, "Business welcome" policy recommendations report, Entrepreneurial Environment Current Situation Analysis, etc.)
2. Web Portal with e-services (i.e. e-platform, networking services, GIS for Rural Business Zones)
3. Permanent structures of consultation and support services (i.e. SmartRural Centres' Support Services)
4. At least 10 enterprises and or startups receiving consultation services

All the above outputs will provide to policy makers and entrepreneurs tools and methods for the improvement of transnational cooperation and rural sustainable development based on the principles of innovation, sustainable economic growth and increase of welfare.

The project's main output is the development of a SmartRural specialized development model for sustainable solutions, especially in low income levels, providing employment opportunities, improving quality of life, mitigate depopulation process in rural areas of the programme. That model, as good practice, can be transferred to other regions of the Balkan-MED territory as well as the rest of EU.

## **2. SWOT analysis regarding communication in SmartRural project**

<b>SWOT Analysis: SmartRural communication &amp; dissemination strategy</b>	
<p><b>STRENGTHS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly defined target groups and communication objectives</li> <li>• Presence of key decision and policy making actors in the project</li> <li>• Experienced partnership where partners have solid and well-established contact networks</li> <li>• Past extensive experience in dissemination of project outputs</li> <li>• New growth opportunities for regional rural and urban economies</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project not well promoted so far in the transnational area</li> <li>• Differentiation among partners and different languages</li> <li>• Not all stakeholders-beneficiaries familiarized with on-line tools and social media, especially in rural areas</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the on-line presence of partners, beneficiaries</li> <li>• Establishment of a collaborative network of relevant stakeholders in the transnational area</li> <li>• Establishment of a favourable rural entrepreneurship environment at national and transnational level</li> <li>• Promotion of policies that are scalable &amp; transferable for rural development which should assist the diversification of the rural economies</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication and dissemination to be successful need to be consistent and aligned among the partners and this is challenging</li> <li>• Similar topics of EU-funded projects that may confuse the similar target groups</li> <li>• Low levels of media awareness</li> <li>• Changes in policies and law, especially in the business environment – differentiated legal environments and different monetary environments</li> </ul>

### 3. SMART RURAL communication Strategy

#### Communication and dissemination objectives

The **Communication Strategy** has the following aims:

- Communication and dissemination of the project's approach and results to regional/local stakeholders -enterprises, local authorities and civil society organizations-
- Awareness raising in potential benefits of SmartRural model for sustainable solutions, providing employment opportunities, improving quality of life, mitigate depopulation process in rural areas of the programme.

Other objectives of the Communication Plan are:

Raising awareness on action's general and specific objectives in a direct communication with local/regional actors and target groups;

Branding and promoting SmartRural business model as a sustainable tool for promoting employment opportunities, improving quality of life, mitigate depopulation process in rural areas of the programme area

Promoting rural entrepreneurship potential of the Balkan Med area

Promotion of sustainable development approaches and practices, modern technologies in learning and innovation;

Encouragement and engagement of entrepreneurship;

Empowerment of the rural local societies

Capacity building of local authorities

Communication means providing information about the project to multiple audiences, while dissemination means providing information about the project results to specific audiences.

The **SmartRural Communication plan** will:

- Clearly identify the target groups which can benefit from and be involved in the SmartRural initiative;
- Set the overall communication approach to be shared among partners in line with the project's specific objectives and the EU communication principles;
- Demonstrate and allocate the communication activities and tools to be utilized throughout the project's lifespan, as well as the methodological planning for carrying them out;
- Identify similar initiatives, projects and awareness campaigns to facilitate common practices and create synergies;
- Establish a simple but effective monitoring system of communication and dissemination activities.

The Communication Plan includes:

- Project communication main goal and objectives
- Target group(s)
- Main messages of the Project
- Tools and methods to achieve the objectives
- Evaluation measures and monitoring
- Budget committed for the Project communication activities

The specific aims are:

- Communication and dissemination of the project's approach and results to regional/local stakeholders -enterprises, local authorities and civil society organizations
- Awareness raising in potential benefits of SmartRural model for sustainable solutions, providing employment opportunities, improving quality of life, mitigate depopulation process in rural areas of the programme.



Other Objectives:

- Raising awareness on action's general and specific objectives in a direct communication with local/regional actors and target groups;
- Branding and promoting SmartRural business model as a sustainable tool for promoting employment opportunities, improving quality of life, mitigate depopulation process in rural areas of the programme area
- Promoting rural entrepreneurship potential of the Balkan Med area
- Promotion of sustainable development approaches and practices, modern technologies in learning and innovation;
- Encouragement and engagement of entrepreneurship;
- Empowerment of the rural local societies
- Capacity building of local authorities

**Goals (qualitative and quantitative):**

- Publish and disseminate the results of the project within the local authority administration and to local relevant stakeholders as well as to the wider community of European rural and urban policy-makers and practitioners
- Attract the targeted stakeholders and beneficiaries to events and activities organised by the partnership
- The stakeholders should become aware of the project's scope and agenda and how these are connected to their own needs and priorities.
- As a consequence, one major challenge for the communication and dissemination activities of SmartRural is to make the stakeholders comprehend the project's relevance to their needs and to consider how the SmartRural model might help them to improve the growth potential and sustainable development in the Balkan region .

**Target Groups**

The project identifies three primary target groups:

1. At rural level, individuals & enterprises which have innovative business ideas. Due to the general unfavorable economic situation, these stakeholders cannot implement their ideas. In the project framework, they will be benefitted by enhancing their business capacities & capabilities in innovative opportunities & networking at national & international level.
2. At urban level, individuals & enterprises, in order to tackle the economic depressed living conditions by returning or turn in rural areas & start new or expand their existing enterprises there. They will be benefitted from having access to necessary information regarding the business opportunities in the rural areas & will enhance their entrepreneurial capacities.
3. Rural public authorities, which are entitled to make policy or can influence significantly the policymaking in Intervention Areas. The public authorities will be benefitted with technical support, for the elaboration of a Business Welcome Policy, which will stimulate the start-up of enterprises in the rural areas, & as a result, local economy will be enhanced.

Other Target Groups include:

- Universities & research institutions.
- Civil society organisations and social enterprises, especially those active in rural economy and/or employability and business orientation.
- Other related projects.

### SmartRural key messages

Three potential core messages for SmartRural:

*SmartRural model & services is an innovative tool for key stakeholders & local communities to boost the creation of jobs, growth potential and sustainable development in the region.*

*SmartRural model can strengthen the attractiveness of the business environment in rural areas by identifying and utilizing the comparative advantages in green, blue & social economy.*

*SmartRural will develop scalable & transferable policy recommendations, towards sustainable development which should assist the diversification of the rural economies.*

## 4. SmartRural communication tools

### Logo and graphic identity

Projects co-funded within the framework of the BalkanMed Programme must comply with the visual identity guidelines of the Programme in all their communication materials. The Programme and Project logo is probably the most important aspect for communication activities.

The Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 (Annex XII, Article 2.2) - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0320:0469:EN:PDF> - requires all beneficiaries to follow a number of rules regarding the use of the logo of the European Union and the respective fund. The logo must be always visible in prominent place and with a comparable size to other logos used. The **BalkanMed logo** already respects all the Programme requirements, and all approved Projects are obliged to use it on all their communication materials (both hard copy and electronic as well as to display it in events).

The **SmartRural logo** has been designed as the main identification tool for all communications issued within the project framework according to the guidelines of the communication guide.

This will allow to make the Project visible and recognizable.

The Project logo must be always included in all communication materials produced both at Programme and Project level. It must be placed in a central and visible position of any produced material and it can never be smaller than any other logo included in the same material.

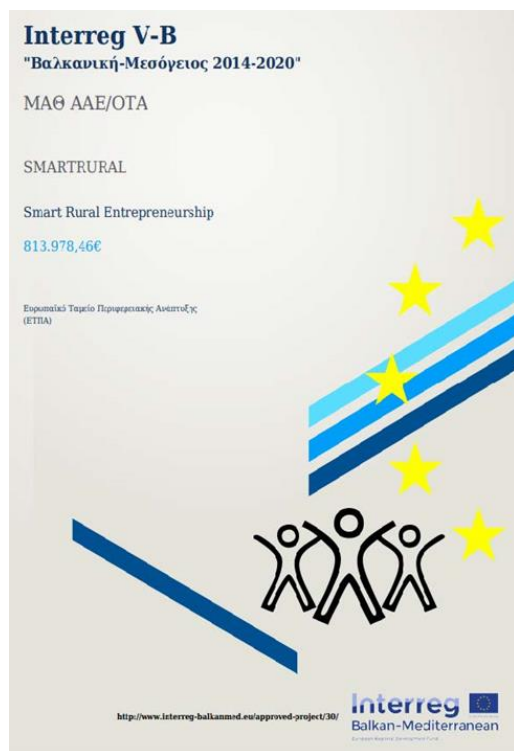
### Fund Mention

In all communication tools and activities, the reference to the funding by the European Union must be clearly indicated.

EU funding to the Project is granted from two different funds, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance II (IPA II), as well as from national funds of the BalkanMed participating countries.

Considering this, the general reference **“Project co-funded by the European Union”** needs to be included in small size in all communication materials. Whenever possible (i.e. written documents), the specific funding should be mentioned i.e. **“Project co-funded by the European Union and national funds of the participating countries”**.

### SmartRural Poster



### Stickers

Stickers must be placed in a visible place in all equipment that is purchased in the context of the Project. The stickers will contain the following mandatory information:

- The Programme`s logo and website address
- The funding reference
- The budget of the Project
- The name of the Project

### Events Material

Within all events organized and participate in the framework of the SmartRural Project and its actions the materials used (presentations, publications, etc.) must have visible the EU flag, and the logo of the project.

## Project interactive portal

PP2 under external expertise have the responsibility of launching the website.

Within this framework the external expert will proceed to the design and the development of the Interactive Portal with the aim of promoting the policies of sustainable development regarding rural sector of the area of intervention and of promoting the Project towards stakeholders, Local authorities, Media and the general public.

The website address will be included on all print communication material, press releases, paper and electronic correspondence, etc.

It is structured practically with the purpose to:

- Present project in detail to different target groups
- To present project partnerships
- To present pilot areas
- To present on-going activities and results and announce events.
- To provide other information in general
- To share project outputs and exchange files among PP
- Library and gallery for photos and video sharing

The website will be regularly updated with news, information on Project's developments/ results, etc

### Sections:

#### 1. "Information/About":

- About the Programme Interreg Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020
- About the Project
- Preamble
- Short Description of the Project SmartRural (description, objectives, expected results, timetable)
- SmartRural Partners
- Beneficiaries
- SmartRural Centres along with description of the "Dimitra Mobile Centre".
- SmartRural Network: Information on Network's activities and reference to the members of the Network with hyperlinks to their URLs

#### 2. "Communication – Dissemination":

- **News:**
  - Announcements on the implementation of the different activities (invitations and results)
  - Biddings: invitations for participation in the Pilot Applications of the SmartRural Model and in the Workshops
  - Pilot Applications of the SmartRural Business Model
  - Workshop
  - Results
  - Pilot Applications of the SmartRural Business Model
  - Workshop
  - Newsletters: E-newsletters and registration
  - Agricultural News: newsfeed on interesting news of rural activities
- **Events: (minutes, photos, videos)**
  - Kick-off Meeting

- Event

- **Dissemination Material**

### 3. “Deliverables”

- Communication Strategy
- Pilot Applications of the SmartRural Business Model
- SmartRural Business Development Guide

### 4. “Support”:

- Contact us
- FAQ
- Knowledge-base (e.g. info on tutorials)
- Downloads: multimedia tutorials, which help the user to familiarize with the Interactive Portal environment

**Social Media:** *It is optimal, not to create new Facebook Page for the project, but for better results in reaching audiences, to promote the SmartRural through the existing Facebook pages of the Partners*

Youtube channel will be an option once events will be launched.

#### **Responsibilities and budget**

*Budget: Budget for this is planned in WP2, under External Expertise of PP2*

#### **The SmartRural Electronic Newsletters.**

The SmartRural project E-Newsletter will keep the SmartRural community informed about the project progress, the project results and the development of local implementation plans.

The aim of the newsletters is to ensure that all interested stakeholders receive a regular flow of information about the project in order to maintain awareness throughout the project lifetime.

The cover page of each newsletter must clearly identify the Project as being part of the Balkan Med Programme and must follow the Programme’s visual guidelines.

Will be in accordance to milestones achieved. The e-newsletters will be short with maximum of 3-4 important news for the project with photographs and will be in English and translated in local languages.

3 Newsletters will be produced – 1st early 2020, the 2nd by the end of April – early May 2020 and the 3rd before project closing.

The Newsletters will be distributed electronically through the mailing lists of the partners and through the project website.

#### **Responsibilities and budget**

*Budget: Budget for this is planned in WP2, under PP8 (development and drafting in the local language as well as in English. They will be subsequently sent to all beneficiaries and to P6, P4 and P7 for translation.*

#### **The SmartRural online promotional campaign**

External experts will develop an online promotional campaign to advertise the project.

It includes the development of a showcasing video illustrating the project, its objectives, results, and outcomes.

**Responsibilities and budget**

*Budget: Budget for this is planned in WP2, under PP6 (at least 20,000 Youtube video plays in the intervention area 0,30 per play through adwords or similar model).*

**The SmartRural Booklet**

It will cover the Partners, the project, its goals, desired outputs, and results: 15 pages long and will be presented in English. 2500 copies will be produced and send in an even split amongst the partners hosting events.

**Responsibilities and budget**

*Budget: Budget for this is planned in WP2, under PP4.*

**Project Banner**

External experts will develop a project banner and advertise it in websites relevant to the rural sector.

**Responsibilities and budget**

*Budget: Budget for this is planned in WP2, under PP8 – External Expertise.*

**Events**

- Final Event in Thessaloniki to present the project results to the public.
- Info days to present the project to the public showcase the project and its achievements
- Partners 'participation in external event, such as a Programme event and/or a conference to present and promote the project and its objectives.

**All events will have a communication added-value and impact among the relevant stakeholders and will be communicated broadly.**

**Responsibilities and budget**

*Budget: Budget for this is planned in WP2, under the responsibility of PP5 (and LP contributing in the preparations PP7-PP8 contributing in materials).*

**Also, PP7 will run a media communication, to promote and disseminate the project in social media, as Facebook and Twitter.**

## **5. The SmartRural Network Networking & Sustainability (WP6)**

The project will develop an **Action plan for the development of a network of stakeholders** (Guidelines for basic standards of operation, good practices and instructions for networking, achievement of methodology).

The network includes recording of potential stakeholders, their strategic approach, the strategic objectives of the network, etc.

An **IT tool** for the networking will be developed:

A modern and attractive informative hub which will inform partners and stakeholders about the center's activities and the network scheduled events.

The portal will contain a brief description of the network members and references and summaries of the main deliverables of the project.

It will be connected with main project website!

The project will produce an assessment of the Network's durability and sustainability.

It will postulate corrective actions to ensure continued and post project operation and aim to serve as presentation of Good Practice.

## **6. SmartRural Major Communication Activities Events with Communication Added-value**

- The new tool "**SmartRural Business Model**" as main output of the project will be at the centre of the publicity and communication strategy and it will involve all partners, their stakeholders and the observer partners.
- **All publications:**
  - Business guide of investment instruments focused on the agricultural sector, investment strategy in rural areas, etc.
  - Action Plan for the development of the network of stakeholders
  - IT tool for the networking as a modern and attractive informative hub
  - Networking support activities to establish synergies and strengthen cooperation between authorities and organisations of rural sector
  - Assessment of the Network's durability and sustainability as a capitalization action to ensure continued and post project operation and aim to serve as presentation of Good Practice.
  - Action Plans for entrepreneurs
  - Policy recommendation

All the above will be part of the Communication Strategy and will be accordingly disseminated to their specific target groups

All the above will be developed and processed during implementation through project activities, tools and plans and will build on their capitalisation through extensive dissemination and communication during and after implementation.

The creation of the SmartRural Network of Stakeholders and the assessment of its operation after the project cycle along with its actions and hub activities will be the main instrument that will promote the SmartRural Model after project completion.

All partners will have equal ownership to project outputs and results to promote and disseminate them within their local, regional, national and EU networks and on the digital platform.

## **7. Partner contribution to project communication**

The contribution of partners is essential for the communication strategy objectives. It is therefore necessary for each partner to contribute to the communication plan at the several levels. Partners will have to provide information such as contact lists and website content to assure accurate content and successful dissemination. The inputs required from the partners are the following:

### **Content for website**

- Information on the partner.
- Any other type of information /event to communicate through SmartRural website, tools and newsletter: Partners are requested to regularly send updates and news about their activities.
- Logos and general photographs.

### **Establish relation with its local Media**

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Smart Rural will also require partners' press contact lists and press agencies. Partners are requested to send their contact lists of all general and specialised press. Send out invitations to Press Conferences and Press releases.