

# Assessment of Information & Publicity Measures

Transnational Cooperation Programme Interreg  
Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020  
CCI 2014TC16M4TN003

Presented to the Monitoring Committee in Tirana on 11/07/2018

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## Background

The “Assessment of Information and Publicity Measures” for the transnational Cooperation Programme Interreg V-B “Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020” (BalkanMed) is intended to assess the implementation of the Programme’s Communication Strategy and related activities. This assessment is addressed to the members of the Programme’s Monitoring Committee.

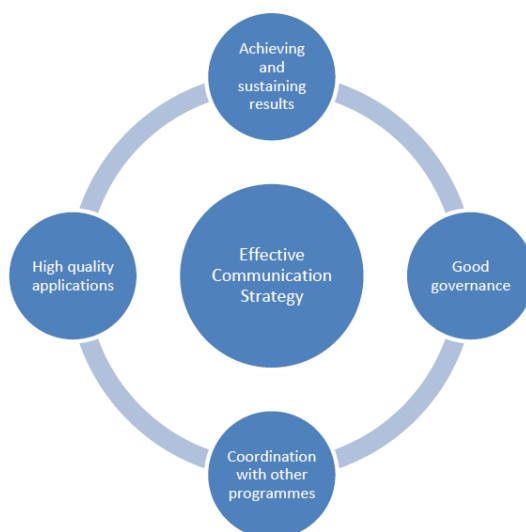
The BalkanMed Programme is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under its objective “European Territorial Cooperation” (ETC) in the funding period 2014-2020. The Programme supports the know-how and experiences’ sharing, improvement of the public policies and networking, between national, regional and local authorities and other territorial actors of the whole Balkan-Mediterranean cooperation area. The main needs and challenges shared by the Programme actors can be grouped to the following headings:

- socioeconomic development and demography,
- environment and climate change,
- natural and cultural heritage.

In response to all regulatory requirements, a strong thematic focus has been promoted to address two key challenges: territorial competitiveness and environment. Accordingly, the Programme is built upon the following two Priority Axes:

- Priority Axis 1: “Entrepreneurship & Innovation”
- Priority Axis 2: “Environment”

The Communication Strategy is, therefore, an integral part of the implementation of the Programme. Beyond the challenge of raising awareness among the general public, the strategy must complement and support communications that are integral to the core objectives of the Programme.



*Figure 1 – Link between the Communication Strategy and the Programme strategy*

## Methodological Approach

The requested assessment comes at the point, where the BalkanMed Programme has just started being implemented, with the aim of assessing information and publicity measures taken and delivering recommendations aimed at improving the Communication Strategy. It should be noted that the assessment covers the period from the acceptance of the Communication Strategy by the Programme's Monitoring Committee on 26th November 2015 until 31/12/2017.

Given that the Joint Secretariat (JS) was fully staffed only in July 2017 and that there only a few of the Projects have been implemented for more than three months (the Projects were selected in March 2017 and contracting started in July 2017 and ended in January 2018), the Managing Authority (MA) opted for an "in house" evaluation. The scope was to self-assess the implementation of the Communication Strategy, in order to decide the steps both the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat need to take in the near future. The evaluation of the communication activities is proportional to the degree of activation and implementation of the Programme.

The approach to this assignment was based both on Desk Research and specifically designed field research and qualitative analysis with specialized questionnaires during Programme events and online. In order to conduct the assessment, priority documentation materials and platforms were considered, allowing benchmarking of outcomes against objectives and methodologies, outlined in the Communication Strategy. Communication outputs were assessed against the Communication Strategy's indicators, including issues of clarity, accessibility, visual identity, EU visibility and adaptation to target audience.

## Assessment

The assessment has focused on a two-fold approach:

- Assessment of messages, in order to assess the effectiveness and impact of the Programme's messages in line with the Programme's communication's objectives.
- Assessment of communication tools, in order to examine the effectiveness of the Programme's chosen communications tools, with particular focus on its main identified tools of website and promotional activities.

## Achievement of Indicators' targets

Moreover, the Programme's Communication Strategy clearly provides that the evaluation of the information and publicity actions "takes place based on the contribution of the actions to the achievement of the goals of the Communication Strategy and in accordance with qualitative and quantitative objectives according to the nature of the actions". In particular, indicators for evaluation are broken down into **Output Indicators**, which record publicity actions, and **Result Indicators**, which record the result of the actions.

### *Output Indicators*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Indicative target value</b>	<b>Value achieved by 31/12/2017</b>	<b>Comments/ explanations</b>
Number of events (info-days, conferences, seminars, fairs, Programme annual events etc.)	30	Sixteen (16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Launching Event</li> <li>• 6 Info-days on the 1<sup>st</sup> Call for Project Proposals</li> <li>• 5 Info-days on project implementation</li> <li>• 4 EC Day Events (BalkanMed also supported and actively participated in ten other EC Day Events)</li> </ul>

Number of participants per event for potential beneficiaries and Project Partners	100	Target surpassed in all events	
Number of news articles published on the internet	>500	Target surpassed	<p>More than 5,000 articles specifically on the BalkanMed Programme, and its Projects were found on the internet.</p> <p>The target value of the indicator needs re-definition</p>
Number of social media posts	150	220	The number refers to the post in the official BalkanMed social media accounts (Twitter, LinkedIn)
Website statistics	50,000 hits	>100,000	<p>The number refers to the total number (not individual) of hits on the Programme's website (<a href="http://www.interreg-balkanmed.eu">www.interreg-balkanmed.eu</a>), as well as on the news item related to the BalkanMed Programme in the Managing Authority's website</p>

			<a href="http://www.interreg.gr">www.interreg.gr</a>  The target value of the indicator needs re-definition
Types of communication material produced	7	8	Folders, pens, notepads, brochure, ecological bags, jigsaw puzzles, key rings, mugs

*Result Indicators*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Baseline value</b>	<b>Indicative target value</b>	<b>Value achieved by 31/12/2017</b>	<b>Comments/ explanations</b>
Raised awareness about the Balkan-Mediterranean Programme and its funding opportunities among potential beneficiaries	20%	45%	.....	An online research has been conducted and the results look very positive (presented briefly below). However, the indicators should be better quantified at a later stage.
Raised awareness about project outputs and Programme results among potential beneficiaries	n/a	50%	.....	

Raised satisfaction with the information provided within the Balkan-Mediterranean Programme among potential beneficiaries	25%	75%	.....	
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## Qualitative analysis of the events organised

### *Launching Event*

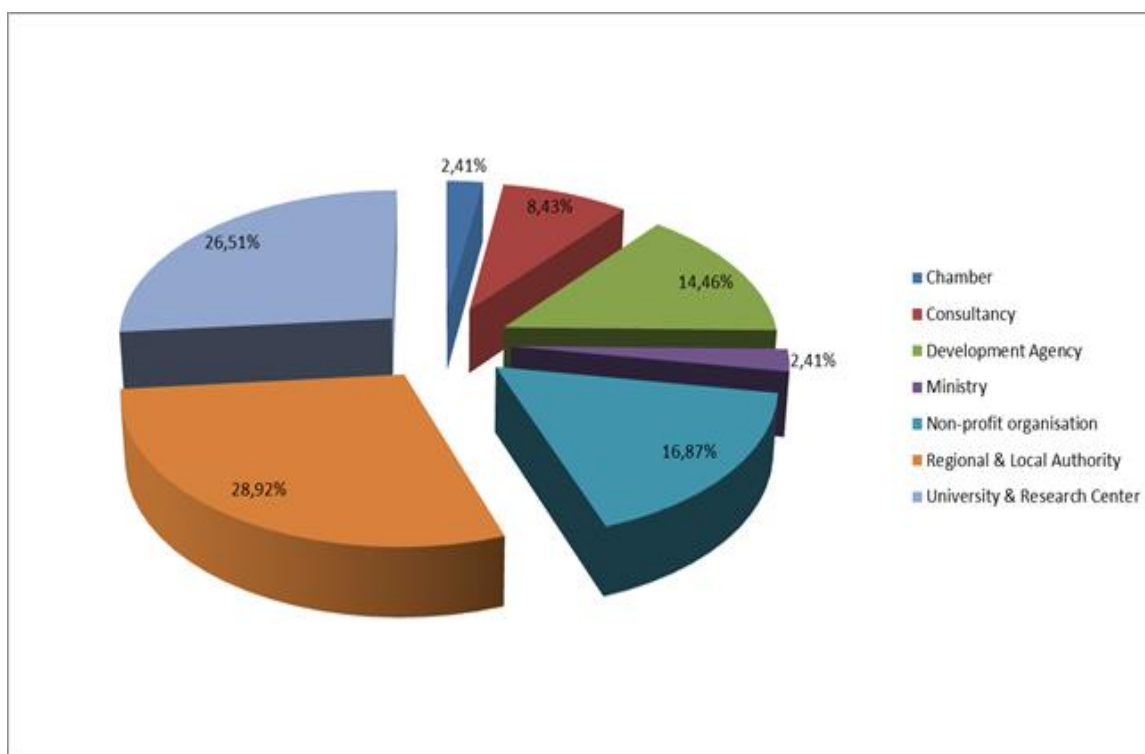
The Programme's Launching Event was organised in Thessaloniki on 22-23 June 2015. The Managing Authority organized the "2nd European Territorial Cooperation Conference: Launching the Programming Period 2014-2020 – The Challenge of Synergies". The Conference was massively attended by 1,000 participants, representing more than 700 stakeholder entities (the conference was also the Launching Event of all Programmes managed by the Hellenic Managing Authority of European territorial Cooperation Programmes, so not all participants were exclusively interested in the BalkanMed Programme).

### *Info-Days on the 1st Call for Project Proposals*

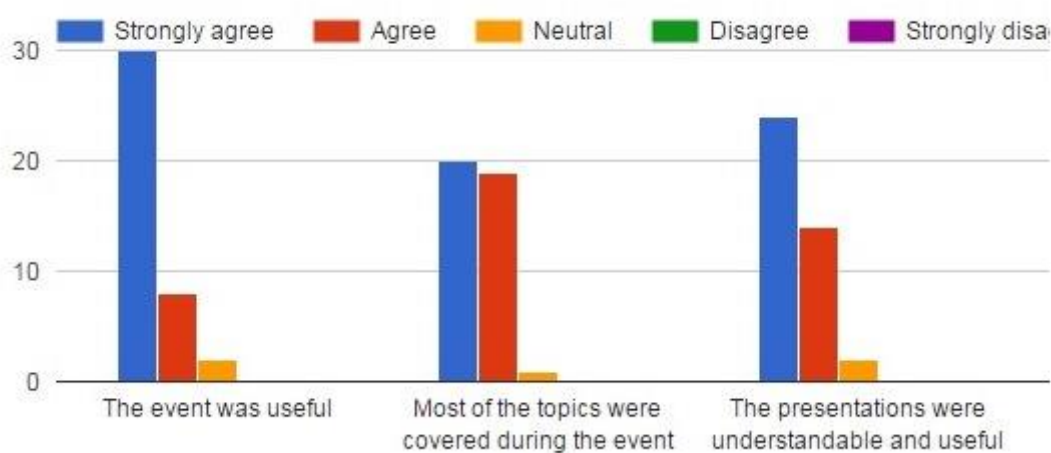
Upon the publication of the 1st Call for Project Proposals Info-Days and partner search forums were organised in all participating countries to help potential applicants to develop their projects and to search for partners. Overall, six (6) Info-days were organised in co-operation with the National Authorities. More than 1,000 participants attended these events, which gave way to discuss project ideas, management and implementation issues, to meet potential applicants and to facilitate partner search.

The majority of the participants represented local and regional authorities, universities and research institutes, as well as NGOs, as presented below:

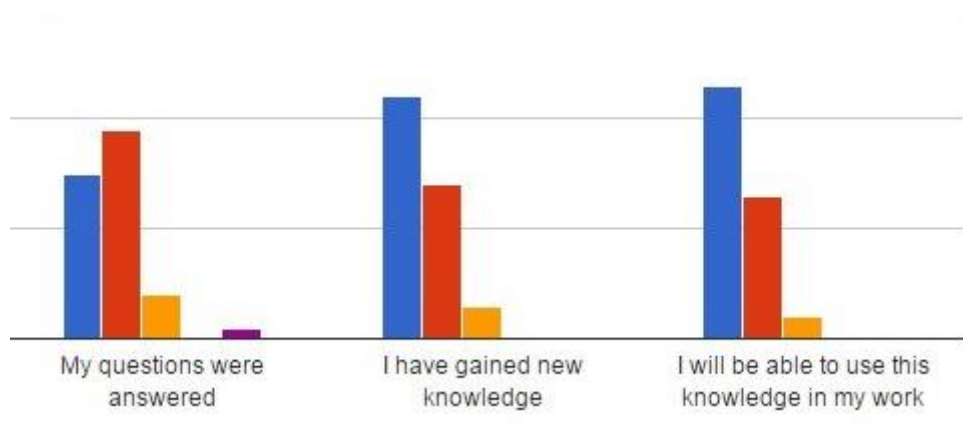




The huge majority of the participants -in a percentage that exceeded 98% (Strongly agree/ Agree)- declared that the events were useful and covered all their needs, questions and queries. This took place in an easy to understand and comprehensive manner.



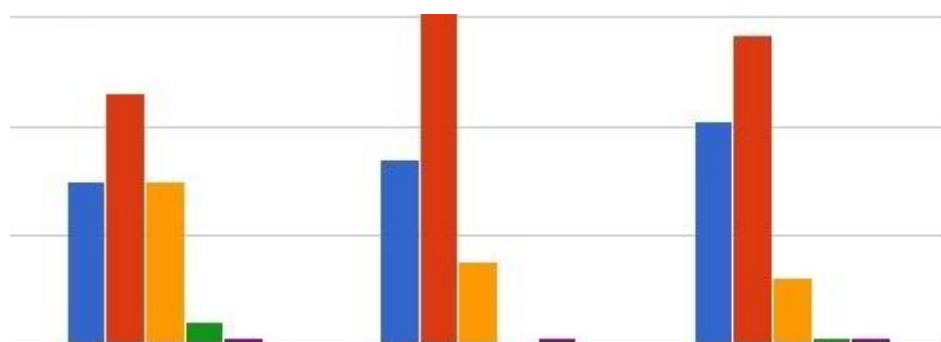
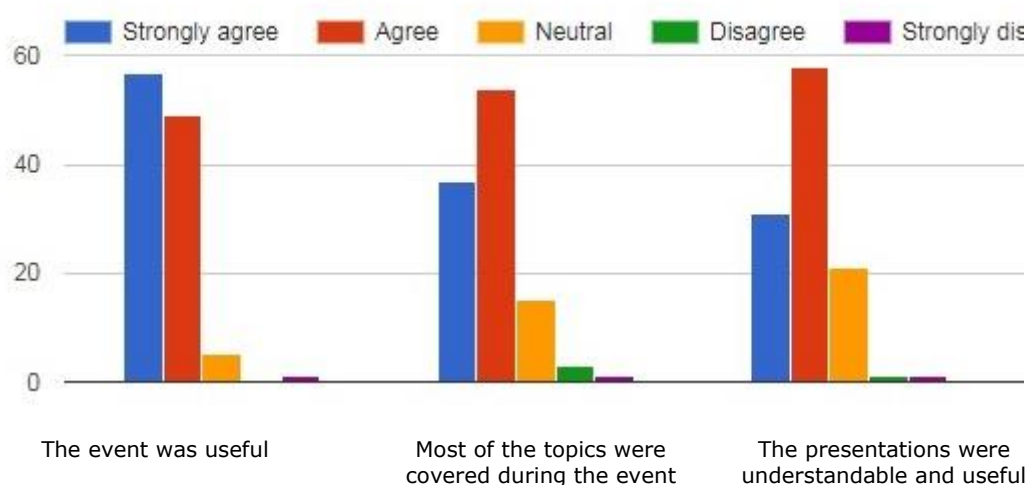
The most important aspect is that 95% (Strongly agree/ Agree) declared that they have gained new knowledge regarding the Programme, its procedures and the Call, and that they will be able to use this information and knowledge in their work. This element underlines the necessity of the events, as well as the quality of the information provided by the MA.



### *Info-Days on Project Implementation*

In autumn 2017 the MA/ SA, in co-operation with the National Authorities, organized five (5) Info-Days on Project Implementation in all participating countries, in order to present the Programmes' requirements on Project implementation, including the First Level Control system and national co-financing, and provide assistance to all beneficiaries.

The Info-Days were attended by 94% of all BalkanMed beneficiaries, who, in a percentage that exceeded 85% (Strongly agree/ Agree), declared that the events were useful and that they gained new, comprehensive and ready-to-use knowledge.



My questions were answered

I have gained new knowledge

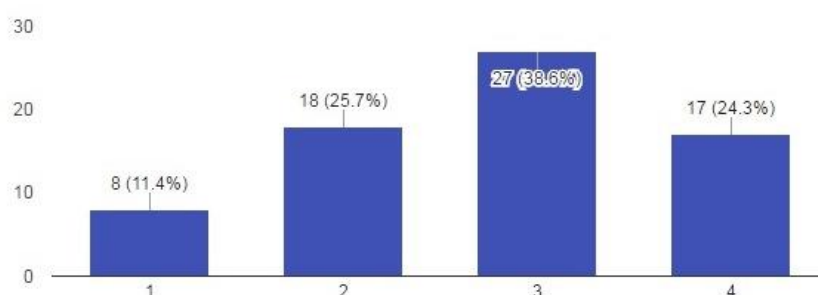
I will be able to use this knowledge in my work

## Overall qualitative analysis

The MA/ JS has conducted an online survey regarding the evaluation of the BalkanMed's Communication Strategy (please note that the survey ended before the contracting and thus, the start of Project activities). The main findings are presented and analysed below:

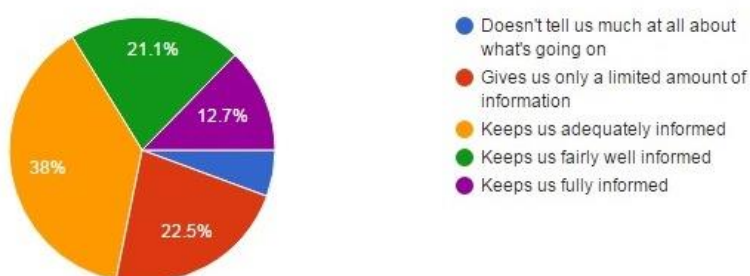
To what extent are you satisfied with the tools offered by the Managing Authority/ National Authorities?

70 responses



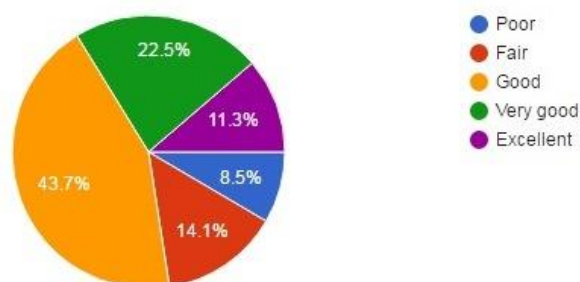
Which best describes your impression of the information offered?

71 responses



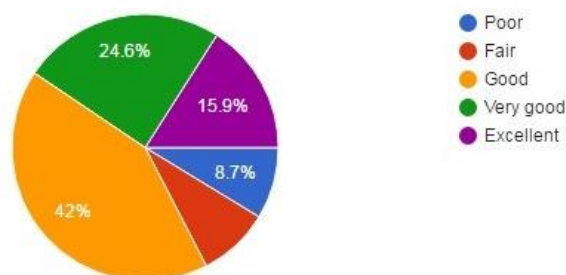
What is your overall evaluation of the information provided?

71 responses



What is your overall evaluation of the BalkanMed Programme?

69 responses



## General Assessment of the Communication Strategy

The Communication Strategy was implemented in a way guided by the need for Programme activation and acceleration. Given that the Projects were just starting to being implements by the end of 2017, the implementation of the Communication Strategy could be deemed very satisfactory.

In that sense, the first implementation stage of the Communication Strategy has been fully implemented, while the second implementation stage is still ongoing, even though the bulk of it has been implemented.

According to the Communication Strategy, the first stage (**General information about the Operational Programme and its actions, inaugural event**) concerns the development “vision” for the countries participating in the Programme. During this first stage, the objective is to inform the target audiences about the Programme and the basic content (general objectives, axes, strategic projects, expected results). During this stage, which begins after the approval of the Programme by the European

Commission, the Managing Authority has taken care to spread the information in a simple and understandable way.

Almost all activities envisaged in the first stage of the Communication Strategy have been undertaken and fully implemented. The goal of this first stage has been achieved both through the Launching Event, the Info-days and the widespread of information dissemination online. The great participation and expression of interest in the events and in the 1st Call for Project Proposals (384 Proposals submitted), both before and after their organisation (more than 450 participants), as well as the publications about the Programme in the media proves that all directly interested parties and –to a good extent- the wider public have been informed on the Programme.

The second stage of communication concerns the **Creation of an opinion about the Programme and its actions among the various target audiences, easy access to particular actions and to the opportunities that it offers, creation of a disposition to participate in the financing opportunities.** During this stage the objective is to motivate the target audiences, either in order for them to participate in the Programme or in order to function as multipliers of information. This stage is characterized by the provision of more specialized knowledge about the content and the evolution of the Programme, the criteria and the procedures for the integration of actions, the management and monitoring of the actions of the Programme, with the goal of preparing and activating the potential beneficiaries, in order for them to have access to the financing opportunities of the Programme. In addition, a goal of the present stage is to inform the general public in a simple and understandable way about the evolution of the Programme's interventions as well.

The MA/ JS is at the moment adequately implementing this phase of communication activities. Implementation is considered satisfactory, as the goal of the second stage of communication has been achieved both through the training Info-days and the publicity given to the 1st Call for Project Proposals. The high number and the quality of proposals submitted prove that the message has been delivered to the relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the production and distribution of information material on the Programme, as well as the interest of the media in the Programme shows that the general public is being at least constantly informed on the Programme's activities and its goals. However, it has to be pointed out that this stage of communication is still on-going, as the Programme's resources have not been fully activated yet.

It should also be noted that the three stages for communication, foreseen in the Communication Strategy, are of a graduated nature. This means that each stage constitutes a continuation, complement, and specialized definition of the previous stage, occasionally overlapping time-wise.

Moreover, the successful implementation of the Communication Strategy relies on the BalkanMed Projects themselves, which need to be involved in the communication process, by promoting their activities and results and thus, the Programme. The MA has already taken the necessary steps in order to activate and incorporate them in its communication activities, by giving specific and tailor-made guidelines on communication, tracking –and intervening by means of advice, whenever needed- the Projects' activities and publishing a very detailed "Integrated Communication Guide for Projects".

Therefore, as far as the communication is concerned, the Programme is on the right track and that the communication goals will be fully achieved within the timeframe indicated in the Communication Plan.

## **Specific quality issues on the implementation of information and publicity measures**

### *Corporate identity and key visuals*

BalkanMed has opted to join the Joint Branding initiative of Interreg Programmes under one single brand name and one single logo. The Programme's logo and visual identity is aligned to the one commonly applied throughout Europe. The initiative is extended to Projects as well, as all Projects will be required to follow the same branding instructions, thus creating an homogenized visual identity.

### *Target audience: beneficiaries vs. other target groups*

BalkanMed has successfully reached the "internal" target audiences. The high number of participants in the communication events, specifically designed for potential and final beneficiaries, as well as the high number of proposals submitted in the framework of the 1st Call for Project Proposals proves that **potential and final beneficiaries are well informed about the opportunities** offered by the Programme.

However, the MA acknowledges that the Programme has not yet been as successful in approaching other target groups listed in the Communication Strategy, such as local, regional, national, European, but also specialized mass-media and the general public. These audiences have been reached but not extensively. Their approach was not based on a clear-cut communication strategy, implemented by the Programme's bodies, but so far relied on personal networking.

This imbalance between "internal" and "external" target audience has already begun to be addressed. A clear communication product is expected in the near future, especially in cooperation with other Interreg transnational Programmes. However, the support of the Projects is needed, as the bulk of the Programme's promotion will be channeled through their communication activities.

### *Appropriate, coherent and effective communication tools?*

Special focus has been placed on the Programme's website, which is the main communications channel, as in all Interreg Programmes across Europe. The **website hosts very substantial content and frequent updates**. In terms of information, networking and communicating opportunities the website is clearly a very useful resource for Project beneficiaries, and potential beneficiaries, as well as the media and the general public.

The website has been re-designed from scratch, in order to better accommodate the needs of the 2014-2020 Programming Period. It provides information to potential beneficiaries regarding the role of ERDF, the EU funding opportunities (e.g. Calls for

Project Proposals and relevant documentation), important documentation available as downloads regarding all aspects of Project implementation (including electronic templates to help beneficiaries respect the EU visibility requirements), questions and answers, information on the approved Projects in a specifically designed pages per Project, etc.

The main features of the website are in line with the modern trends in web design. Moreover, they will offer visual harmonisation with the Interreg family (including the Programme logo, which is fully part of Interreg joint branding initiative). Content-wise there is an effort to move from a technical terminology to a jargon-less content.

The website is conformed to the "WCAG, 2.0, Level AA" standards, in order to meet the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities.

## Key steps for the future

Based on the findings, a number for key steps for the future have been identified and developed. In particular, recommendations concentrate on improvements to current communications tools, integration of communications tools, messaging, target audience focus, matching communication with the guidance given in the Operational Programme. In fact, quite a few of the recommendations, which appear in this section, have already been taken on board. In a way that was the added value of the “in house” assessment, as it served as an on-going evaluation, highlighting weaknesses, and it helped accelerate the solution of the problems recognized.

The following are the main recommendations:

- **Annual Operational Communication Plan:** the annual information on communication activities provided to the members of the Monitoring Committee could evolve into a detailed Annual Operational Communication Plan, including an annual budget for communication. This could help the Communication Officer of the JS to question the impact of the previous year’s activities and to adapt strategy according to changing needs. It should spell out in detail objectives, target audiences, specific activities and dissemination channels, potentially helping the MA and the JTS adapting more imaginative approaches towards communication. Additionally, a media plan to complete the overall communication strategy might be required and local media, interested in territorial cooperation at regional level should be targeted.
- **Extend communication to “external” target groups:** Media and press, mainly at local and regional level, opinion formers, decision-makers, partners of other EU Programmes and European Institutions and the wider public should be reached in a more “aggressive” way. Media outreach should be monitored centrally. Local media are more likely to be interested in territorial cooperation (see suggestion below).
- Avoid the use of **acronyms and specialized terminology** in any new publications, news or redesign of the Programme’s website. Attractive, short headings and subheadings for the website and for the news and the use of bold for key phrases would help attract attention.
- **Incorporate messages throughout the Programme’s communications** –in introductions, subheadings, quotes and in newsletters, brochures, publications, and website. The Programme should take advantage of the subliminal impact delivered by the constant repetition of key words and slogans.
- **Usage of local media:** For example, the BalkanMed Programme could initiate a series of feature stories written by local journalists, which could then be uploaded on the Programme’s website. Stories should be written in the local language and be translated in English, creating a pool of features on the Programme’s impact. Articles could highlight the contribution of the European Union to the regions’ development.



- **Territory evokes place and Cooperation evokes people:** chose visual elements that convey a message. In that framework, the Programme should take advantage of the visual impact of the Projects' activities as well.
- **Storytelling** creates an identity of the Programme and conveys the message that this is what territorial cooperation is about: working on the ground, improving real people's lives, improving real people's environment.
- **Closer networking with beneficiaries from a communication perspective:** Clear communication guidelines for beneficiaries are already published. Additionally, all communication tools that can be of interest to an external audience can be promoted on the websites of the national, regional and local authorities that participate to the BalkanMed Programme.
- **Social media** represents low-cost tools that are used to combine technology and social interaction with the use of words. Social media shall give the Programme a voice and a way to communicate with peers, potential beneficiaries and the general public. It offers the opportunity to reach the widest audience and it is seen as a tool for raising awareness. Social media provide a platform for generating interaction with present and potential beneficiaries as well as with relevant stakeholders, while at the same time it helps to spread the Programme's message in a relaxed and conversational way. In order to attract the widest audiences possible, BalkanMed is already channeling Programme messages through the already existing Twitter and LinkedIn accounts and Youtube channel. This trend should continue and be reinforced.

## Conclusion

The MA/ JS of the transnational Cooperation Programme Interreg V-B “Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020” opted for an in house “Assessment of Information and Publicity Measures” of the Programme, in order to self-assess the implementation of the Communication Strategy. The goal was not only to track the implementation of communication activities, but also to highlight weaknesses, identify the steps needed for the future and accelerate the solution of the problems identified. The evaluation was proportional to the degree of activation and implementation of the Programme.

The Assessment concluded that the Communication Strategy is being implemented in a way guided by the need for Programme activation and acceleration. The implementation of the Communication Strategy could be analogically deemed very satisfactory, as the first implementation stage of the Communication Plan (General information about the Programme and its actions, inaugural event) has been fully implemented, while the second implementation stage (Creation of an opinion about the Programme and its actions among the various target audiences, easy access to particular actions and to the opportunities that it offers, creation of a disposition to participate in the financing opportunities) is still ongoing, even though the bulk of it has been implemented. In general, as far as the communication is concerned, the Programme is on the right track and that the communication goals will be fully achieved within the timeframe indicated in the Communication Strategy. However, a number of weaknesses have been identified (see analysis above) and the MA/ JS is already moving towards their solution, by taking on board the key steps suggested in this document.

## Annex 1: Annual information to the Monitoring Committee



### General

This Annex aims to present the communication activities undertaken in 2016 in the framework of the transnational Cooperation Programme “Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020”, as well as the next steps, as envisaged in Art. 116 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

### Undertaken communication activities

#### *EC Day 2017*

BalkanMed Programme actively participated in the 2017 version of European Cooperation Day (EC Day), co-ordinated by Interact. BalkanMed co-organised six (6) different events, in cooperation with other Interreg Programmes. More particular:

- On Tuesday, 05/09/2017, BalkanMed and the Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme “Greece – Albania” organised an action focusing on reducing the use of plastic in the port of Argostoli Kefalonias. The two Programmes informed citizens and tourists alike on the devastating effects of the wide use of plastic and offered mugs of multiple use and cotton bags as a showcase of avoiding the use of disposable plastic items. It was an action having a distinctive environmental impact and directly related to the targets of the Interreg Programmes.
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- On Tuesday, 12/09/2017, BalkanMed and the cross-border Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A “Greece – Cyprus” organised and participated in a blood donation event in Mytilene. Blood was collected and donated to local hospitals in cooperation with voluntary organisations. The main aim of this campaign was to sensitize the wide audience and raise awareness about blood donation – such an invaluable gift of vital importance for all humans, while at the same time promoting Interreg and territorial cooperation.
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- On Wednesday, 20/09/2017, BalkanMed and the cross-border Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A “Greece – Bulgaria” organised a post-card exhibition, featuring an interactive presentation of the history of the post-cards, in the Regional Museum of History of Haskovo. It was a one-day exhibition, dedicated to 20th century post-cards. The post-cards follow the changes in the appearance of selected Bulgarian and European cities throughout the last century. Museum staff, trained within a joint Greece-Bulgaria cooperation Project, prepared and presented in an interactive way the history of post-cards as a mean of communication widely used in the near past.

For the youngest participants of the event an educational entertainment “Treasure Hunt” was also organised. Using booklet-questionnaires, the participants searched and found specific objects (treasures) from the museum’s permanent exhibition. The fastest/ most successful treasure-hunters were awarded with small gifts

- On Thursday, 21/09/2017, BalkanMed and the cross-border Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A “Greece – Bulgaria” co-organised and participated in a blood donation event in Orestiada. An open air desk was installed in the central square of Orestiada aiming to raise awareness about donating blood. Music, balloons, leaflets, small presents and lots of volunteers that shared their smile and gave information on the sensitive issue of blood donation. Additionally, a mobile unit was present, in order to collect blood that would enrich the blood stocks of the local hospital. More than 40 blood units were collected. Finally, the two Interreg Programmes actively participated in a blood donation volunteers’ torch race, passing through Orestiada and its vicinity on the evening of the same day.

- On Saturday, 30/09/2017, BalkanMed and the Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme “Greece – The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” organised a gliding fly-in and air-show event in Edessa. The event was primarily attended by school students from Edessa, Arnisia and Bitola. The children had the opportunity to visit the AeroClub, take a tour of its facilities and see gliders from nearby. The luckiest ones had the opportunity to fly with a glider. The main aim of the campaign was to sensitise the wide audience and raise awareness about this sport and its accessibility, while at the same time promoting tourism opportunities in mountainous regions.



- On Saturday, 30/09/2017, BalkanMed and the Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme “Greece – The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” organised a film show and a discussion on migration, also in Edessa. The movie “Amerika Square”, containing several stories interwoven against the backdrop of the immigrant crisis, was displayed. A discussion on the film and migration, with the participation of the director Yannis Sakaridis, followed, aiming at reaching a common understanding on how migration related issues and implications could be tackled within Interreg Programmes. The film has already garnered several awards in worldwide festivals and it has been for consideration in the category of “Best Foreign Language Film” at the 90th Academy Awards (Oscars) Ceremony. It has been described as “One of the best European films to date on the subject of immigration” by the Hollywood Reporter.



### *Info Days*

Upon the decision of the Monitoring Committee for funding of 37 Projects and their subsequent contracting, **Info Days on Project Implementation** were organised in all participating countries, in order to present the Programmes' requirements on Project implementation, including the First Level Control system and national co-financing, and provide assistance to all beneficiaries. Info Days were organised

- in Thessaloniki on 20/09/2017
- in Sofia on 04/10/2017
- in Skopje on 05/10/2017
- in Tirana on 10/10/2017
- in Nicosia on 19/10/2017

in co-operation with the National Authorities. The Info-Days were attended by 94% of all BalkanMed beneficiaries (see further qualitative analysis in p. of the main document).

### *Website*

The [www.interreg-balkanmed.eu](http://www.interreg-balkanmed.eu) website, which is the only official source of information on the Programme, was launched in April 2017. The website was **re-designed from scratch**, in order to better accommodate the needs of the 2014-2020 Programming Period.



The website provides information to potential beneficiaries regarding the role of ERDF, the EU funding opportunities (e.g. Calls for Project Proposals and relevant documentation), important documentation available as downloads regarding all aspect of project implementation (including electronic templates to help beneficiaries respect the EU visibility requirements), questions and answers, information on the approved Projects in a specifically designed pages per Project, etc. It also contains sections of news, events, an area specifically designed for MC members and a list of links to useful websites, creating a network.

The main features of the website are in line with the **modern trends in web design**. Moreover, they offer **visual harmonisation with the Interreg family** (including the Programme logo, which is fully part of Interreg joint branding initiative). Content-wise there is an effort to move from a technical terminology to a **jargon-less content**.

The website is conformed to the "WCAG, 2.0, Level AA" standards, in order to meet the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities.

The finalization of the Web platform of the Programme, containing websites to all projects, also took place in 2017. The web platform is a vast capitalization tool which is expected to raise the visibility of the BalkanMed projects and further highlight the BalkanMed community. All visual and technical support; logos, branding, and individual websites within the platform, are provided by the Programme, while the projects provide the contents to their own websites.

### Social Media

Social media represents low-cost tools that are used to combine technology and social interaction with the use of words. Social media shall give the Programme a voice and a way to communicate with peers, potential beneficiaries and the general public. It offers the opportunity to reach the widest audience and it is seen as a tool for raising awareness. Social media provide a platform for generating interaction with present and potential beneficiaries as well as with relevant stakeholders, while at the same time it helps to spread the Programme's message in a relaxed and conversational way.



In order to attract the widest audiences possible, BalkanMed Programme is channelling Programme messages through the already existing **Twitter account** ([https://twitter.com/Balkan\\_interreg](https://twitter.com/Balkan_interreg)) as well as the account of the Managing Authority ([https://twitter.com/etc\\_interreg](https://twitter.com/etc_interreg)) and **YouTube channel**



(<https://www.youtube.com/user/GrINTERREG>). Additionally, the Programme has its own **LinkedIn** page (<https://gr.linkedin.com/in/balkanmed-programme-12a374127>).

The social media profiles and pages of the Programme have been regularly updated, following Programme events and the interaction with the community of followers and those participants the Programme follows. The numbers have been increasing each year. To improve this activity there is yet to draft and set in place a specific strategy for social media communication. This has been foreseen for 2018.

### Events

BalkanMed has participated in a number of external events promoting its work and its Projects. The most important of these was

- the 82<sup>nd</sup> International Fair of Thessaloniki, where for seven days the Managing Authority presented BalkanMed and other Interreg Programmes to more than 260,000 visitors. In the special stand for the Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes of the Ministry of Economy and Development, Greece-Bulgaria Programme had the opportunity to inform live with the contribution of printed and digital material to a large number of people about the open and future actions;



and

- the European Cluster Matchmaking Event, co-organised by the European Commission, DG GROWTH in Thessaloniki on 13-14/09/2017, where the Joint Secretariat and the chance to present the BalkanMed Projects dealing with clustering and innovation.

BalkanMed was also present in all “internal” discussions of the Interreg world on communication and was a key contributor in the meetings of the “Transnational Cooperation and Interreg Europe communication network”.

### Tools for beneficiaries

BalkanMed has prepared an online tool for the creation of Programme and project posters. The tool is available through the Programme website to all Project beneficiaries and helps them implement the provisions of the Regulation EC 1303/2013 (Annex XII, § 2.2.2.b).

The Joint Secretariat has also prepared and published “An Integrated Communication Guide for Projects” providing specific guidelines on Project communication.



### *Promotional material*

In order to present a uniformed visual identity, the BalkanMed Programme has created promotional and marketing material, evolving around the Programme logo (provided by INTERACT’s common branding initiative). The purchased material in 2017, which included, among other, pens, mugs of multiple use, hats etc., was distributed during the EC Days.





### *Active Participation of JS in Project's opening events*

Through the participation of JS officers' in kick off project meetings, it is intended to stimulate a technically-inclined audience and make them aware of the many unique and untapped possibilities to apply knowledge to their own field.



As such, dialogue, exchange of experience and lessons learned transfer is encouraged through the active participation in these meetings. The sessions include high-level talks, covering topics ranging from guidelines for project implementation and financial management as well as their obligations for MIS data input to publicity requirements. Beneficiaries are challenged to see beyond the planned implementation of their project and find out how they can help develop new cooperation strategies to their own benefit. These events are the perfect opportunity to foster discussion and networking between partners.

## Future communication activities

The main aim of this task is to set specific and realistic **objectives** for the future of the transnational Cooperation Programme Interreg V-B "Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020", in view of a transparent and efficient communication between the Programme, the beneficiaries and the wide audience.

It is expected that the materialisation of these communication and dissemination activities, encouraged by partners' relevant activities, will achieve maximum and wide awareness of the Programme.

However, it must be kept in mind that communication and publicity is not a static process; it is needed to react to circumstances and translate external changes into effective communication tactics.

Communicating the work of those involved in the Programme both internally and externally will be key to its success and will require a collaborative approach to ensure a common understanding. It is essential that everyone involved in the Programme is aware of the dissemination activity taking place.

Effective communication and dissemination can be achieved by taking into consideration the key audiences and making messages and information relevant to them. Providing specific messages according to the targeted group or making messages relevant to a lot of those groups simultaneously can increase the effectiveness of communication and dissemination. The stakeholder groups identified are the following:

Stakeholder Group	Stakeholder Nature
Managing Authority/ Joint Secretariat	Produce communication material and monitor the communication strategy of the programme
Monitoring Committee	Recipient of the communication material. Evaluate the communication strategy of the programme
Project Beneficiaries	They Co-fund the project, implement project activities, create project deliverables and are responsible for project's success
European Union institutions	Keen interest in tools, methodology and know-how on how to organise and implement Innovative actions on entrepreneurship and environment
NGO's, agents and actors and industry with an interest in	Keen interest in entrepreneurial and environmental policies and practices and would

Entrepreneurship & Environment	like to help shape the agenda
Public actors and/or local government	Key interest as responsible for organising and promoting both entrepreneurial and environmental activities
Wider Domestic and Cross-border Audience	Build new bridges with the citizens. Every citizen has the capacity to become not only a passive recipient but also an active producer of information.
Wider European Audience	European citizens must be able to better understand how the EU affects their daily life, and most importantly they also need to feel that they are fully part of the European project

Within this context the following issues are expected to be tackled:

#### *Website*

The website of the Programme is always a high priority in the context of our communication strategy. The main objective is to communicate all news and events through the website. News and events may refer both to the Programme and EU activities or to projects' activities. Our responsibility is to keep it updated and give all the stakeholders the opportunity to communicate their events, news etc

Part of the communication strategy of the BalkanMed Programme is to monitor the beneficiaries' website, encourage them to keep it updated and communicate all the project's events and news with respect to the rules mentioned in the Programme's communication guide.

#### *Social Media*

The management of the Programme's social media (Linkedin, Youtube and Twitter) is a crucial task of the communication strategy of the BalkanMed Programme. Keeping updated the Programme's social media and make them even more popular to the wide audience is crucial in order to raise awareness of the Programme's results.

In the same context, main aim of the JS is to encourage the beneficiaries to use social media in order to communicate to the wide public their project's actions and results.

To that end BalkanMed is planning to draft and set in place a specific strategy for social media communication.

### *Workshop on Communication Tools*

One of the main objectives of the communication strategy of the BalkanMed Programme is to encourage the beneficiaries to be more active regarding communication and dissemination activities. We believe that every citizen has the capacity to become not only a passive recipient but also an active producer of information. In this context, we suggest that we organise an event on communication tools dedicated to project beneficiaries, with the aim to give them the knowledge and the tools to develop an effective communication strategy and disseminate properly the activities and results of the project to the wide audience. More specifically, it is suggested that the main tasks of the seminar are the following:

- Presentation of the BalkanMed Communication Manual
- Communication Tools
- Social Media Content
- Social Media Strategy
- Storytelling

The character and the agenda of this seminar will be finalised after close cooperation with the communication officers of all Interreg Programmes in Greece.

### *Cooperation with Beneficiaries*

Provide assistance to all beneficiaries to materialise the communication strategy of their projects and prevent them from any possible mistake

### *Promotional Material*

Produce promotion material of the Programme – carrying the logo of the Programme with a view to communicate Interreg and European funding to the wide audience. Promotion material will act as a media to introduce the Programme and its objectives / results to the wide audience. The specifications of the material produced must be in line with the rules described in the communication guide of the Programme.

### *Branding – Use of Logo*

The proper use of the logo of the Programme in every communication material is one of the main priorities of the communication strategy. In this context, the communication officer must encourage beneficiaries to use their Acronym/logo in every communication material taking into consideration the rules for the development of their logo mentioned in the communication guide of the BalkanMed Programme.

### *Participation in International Conferences/ Events*

Try to participate in events organised by European Union bodies with the aim to learn more and introduce the Programme to European colleagues. More specifically, the

intention is to participate in such events not only as a participant but as a speaker as well, in order to raise awareness of the objectives and the results of the Programme, in general and of the projects, especially.

#### *EC Day 2018*

An event of high importance for all European Interreg Programmes is the European Cooperation Day 2018. This year the EC Day event will take place in Albania, which holds the presidency of the BalkanMed Programme. Synergies with other Programmes will be sought in order to maximize the BalkanMed's visibility.