

# Communication Strategy

Transnational Cooperation Programme Interreg

Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020

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## 1. General

### 1.1 “The people’s right to know”

This document is the multi-annual Communication Strategy of the Transnational Cooperation Programme "Balkan – Mediterranean 2014-2020", co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The Communication Strategy was presented during the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Monitoring Committee of the Transnational Cooperation Programme "Balkan – Mediterranean 2014-2020". The Managing Authority, in cooperation with the Joint Secretariat, will be responsible for the implementation of the Communication Strategy.

The drafting of the Communication Strategy, which defines in detail the necessary information and publicity measures for the communication of the Operational Programme, is foreseen by Regulation (EC) 1303/2013, which also defines the content and the strategy of the information and publicity actions.

Information and publicity is the responsibility of the Managing Authority, which is charged with implementing the interventions. This takes place with the contribution of the Monitoring Committee, which is informed about the measures that are being taken for the achievement of these goals. The competent national and regional authorities take all the necessary administrative measures in order to ensure the effective application of the provisions that concern information and publicity with respect to the intervention of the Structural Funds and to cooperate with the European Commission.

For the drafting of the present Communication Strategy, the following have been taken into consideration:

- Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006;
- Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006;
- Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal;
- The European Transparency Initiative (ETI);
- The Transnational Cooperation Programme Interreg “Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020” (hereinafter CP), approved by the European Commission Decision C(2015)6619, dated 25.09.2015;

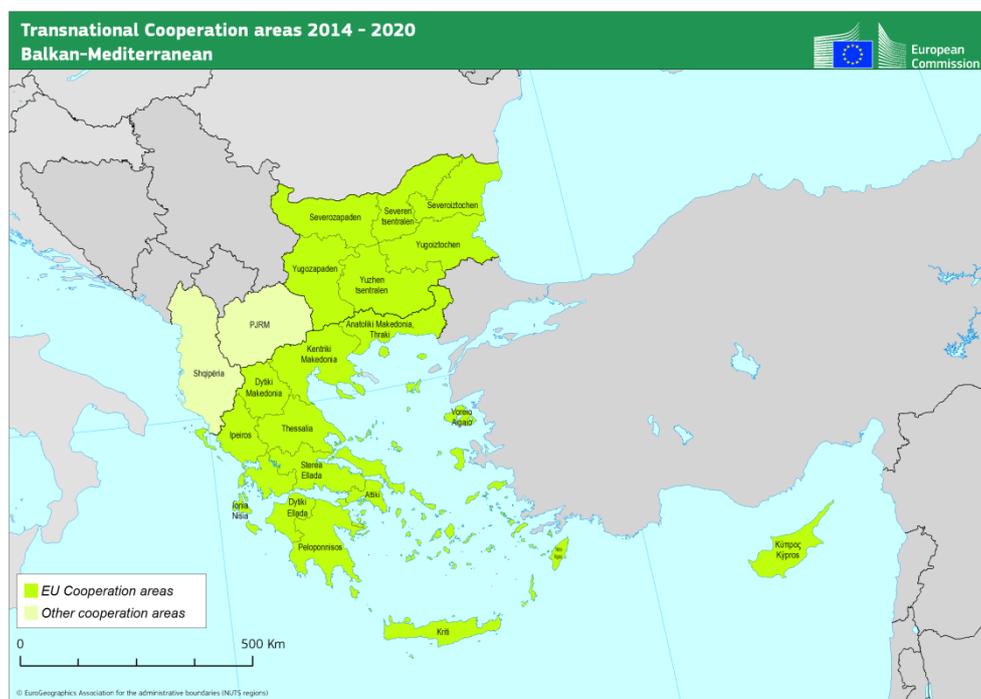
- The experience acquired from the information and publicity programmes that were implemented during the application of the previous Programming Periods.

## 1.2 Summary of the Transnational Cooperation Programme “Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020”

The “Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020” is a new cooperation Programme, deriving from the strong will of the “Balkan-Mediterranean” participating countries to promote cooperation in the area. The Programme brings together five (5) countries, three (3) EU member states (Bulgaria, Cyprus and Greece) and two (2) candidate countries, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

It is the first time ever that the European cooperation addresses the Balkan Peninsula and the Eastern Mediterranean Sea together, in a joint effort across maritime and terrestrial borders, to contribute to the “EU 2020” strategy, for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

After a long period of various cooperation forms, the “Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020” transnational cooperation Programme has been identified as a structured tool to strengthen cooperation in the area, capitalising on experiences and results achieved so far. Accordingly, 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. It is a new cooperation opportunity that enriches the “European territorial cooperation goal” of the new programming period ahead, 2014 – 2020.



The Balkan – Mediterranean Cooperation Programme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with 28.330.108,00 Euros. The total support from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) fund accounts for 5.126.138,00 Euros. Therefore, the total budget of the Programme, including national contribution, is 39.727.654,00 Euros.

For the overall cooperation area, a co-financing rate of 85% is applied (excl. Technical Assistance).

The official language of the Programme is English.

Taking into consideration the territorial analysis, as well as the public consultation process' results, 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. However, limited funding compelled for tougher choices.

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"*

#### ***Priority Axis 1: "Entrepreneurship & Innovation"***

Entrepreneurship and innovation are powerful drivers of economic growth. As the programme area suffers from markets' fragmentation, high unemployment and limited labour force skills, "Priority Axis 1" is dedicated to actions that foster the area's entrepreneurship potential by encouraging SMEs' cooperation and networking, clusters and clusters policies, new business models' applications and in particular the ones promoting innovation, opens up new markets and support internationalisation. Two "Specific Objectives" are established to better focus the above mentioned topics. The first "Specific Objective" (SO 1.1) promotes entrepreneurship on the basis of new ideas and new types of business models, while the second "Specific Objective" (SO 1.2) goes one step forward by facilitating the SMEs' adjustment to the changing socioeconomic and policy/regulatory circumstances.

Bearing also in mind that the Balkan-Mediterranean area also suffers by labour skills shortcomings it is important to foresee knowledge transfer and skills' development, linking the overall business' support to vocational training. The aim is to reach a maximum territorial impact on competitiveness, through internal spill over and leverage effects on knowledge and technology transfer, as education and training will enable entrepreneurs to acquire the necessary skills/tools and enhance the SMEs' capacity, boost their competitiveness, grow towards other markets and introduce innovation in all phases of their business cycle.

By linking education and businesses, the "Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020" cooperation programme also embeds the "Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan" of the EU, stating that "investing in entrepreneurship education is one of the highest return investments Europe can make". Furthermore, against the current economic crisis'

background, the training support for entrepreneurs was identified as crucial in order to maximise the impact and effectiveness of the investment put forward by the prior two “Specific Objectives”. A sole thematic focus on SMEs support with no investment in their respective human capital will jeopardize expected results, as monitoring and management are performed by the entrepreneurs. Therefore a third “Specific Objective” (SO 1.3) is established for transnational training schemes that can provide a powerful platform to address entrepreneurship skills. SO 1.3 along with the SMEs’ thematic support planned by “SO 1.1” and “SO 1.2” ensures an integrate, structured and inclusive approach to effectively address territorial competitiveness and skills’ gaps, to overcome markets’ fragmentation and foster business environment that could further unleash untapped cooperation potential.

### ***Priority Axis 2: “Environment”***

During the public consultation process environment related issues emerged as the main challenge to address over the new programming period ahead. More than 70% consider the deterioration of the environment in the programme area as a major common threat, while over 60% perceive the natural resources’ inefficient use as one of the main problems to tackle.

Accordingly, the “Priority Axis 2” of the “Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020” transnational cooperation programme is built upon natural/cultural heritage and resources’ efficiency. By doing so the programme is also aligned with the “EU Environment Action Programme to 2020” which under “Priority objective 1” aims to protect, conserve and enhance natural capital.

The Balkan-Mediterranean area includes landscape and natural capital of high biodiversity potential, yet under constant human pressure. Ecosystems’ restoration and green infrastructure development have important socio-economic benefits including for public health. Furthermore, management & monitoring of designated areas can generate sustainable growth and sustainable employment, while studying, mapping, zoning and restoring degraded areas enhance both, scientific knowledge and the targeted ecosystems’ quality. At the same time it helps to resolve conflicts over land use and set the basis for ownership on shared sustainable growth goals. In this respect an “ecosystem based” management approach is promoted as it can deliver improved growth patterns. According to Eurostat, the employment in environmental sectors in the EU is steadily growing around 3% annually over recent years.

An integrated approach for sustainable growth can also mitigate the land–sea environmental pressures suffered throughout coastlines of the programme areas. Marine and maritime planning coupled with coastal zones’ management can provide a promising testing bed for transnational cooperation potential in order to alleviate joint pressure from overall marine and maritime activities both, in land and sea. The programme area holds significant potential for sustainable use of natural resources in the fields of resource management efficiency in the waste sector, the water sector, the soil and air pollution as well as in the energy efficiency sector.

The “Priority Axis 2” is further streamlined in two thematic “Specific Objectives” focusing on the one hand in natural ecosystems’ management (SO 2.1) and on the other hand in efficient resources’ management of the waste sector, the soil and the

water sector (SO 2.2). The programme allows different stakeholders to build up partnerships and deal with the protection of natural and cultural heritage. The development and implementation of common strategies and approaches will foster for the protection and sustainable use of natural/cultural heritage and resources' efficiency.

Yet, to learn how to monitor environmental targets and develop common management techniques and approaches, it requires specific skills' development. Furthermore, to implement EU standards requires expertise aligned with the latest scientific knowledge on environmental policies' implementation procedures. To address joint challenges on environmental management to successively tackle green and blue growth, the skills shall be supported accordingly. Developing training programmes geared to green jobs is clearly recommended in the EU Environment Action Programme to 2020 (PE-CONS 64/1/13, p. 38). In this respect, support training schemes to learn how to deal, monitor and manage environmental targets is important in order to reinforce peer review and best practice sharing in all Balkan – Mediterranean participating countries and IPA countries in particular. Therefore the "Priority Axis 2" foresees to bridge the skills' gap by implementing the missing training facilities, for public authorities and stakeholders in particular, in order to improve delivery on environmental legislation monitoring and governance. Consequently, the two thematic "Specific Objectives" (SO 2.1 and SO 2.2) are combined with a third one the "SO 2.3" aiming to "develop skills for better environmental management and increase governance capacities". It is a holistic and integrated approach aiming to improve both, the ecosystems' sustainable use and delivery on legislation and governance.

## 2. Description of the Communication Strategy

### 2.1 Introduction

In order to respond to the communication strategy and objectives, communication of the Transnational Cooperation Programme “Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020” has to take up several challenges:

- Capitalising the lessons learnt from the past

Even though this is the first time the transnational Programme is implemented, it is extremely important to give continuity to the communication activities and tools performed during the previous Programming Period among different Programmes in the area, by:

- capitalising these experiences and tools, avoiding all possible mistakes made in the past;
- carrying out new, more effective and pervasive actions;
- spreading them to the eligible Programme areas (local communities).
- The transnational nature of the TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean” means that it is addressed to a wide variety of audiences in five different countries, with well known consequences in terms of language and culture differences.
- Addressing targets with very different levels of awareness of the subject the TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean” has to address a wide variety of audiences (potential beneficiaries, actual beneficiaries, Programme partnership, other public and private organisations, public opinion, media) whose familiarity with European funding varies widely. The terms of European funding may sometimes appear complicated to some non-specialist audiences. This aspect may constitute an obstacle to understanding the objectives and contributions of the Programme for some audiences.
- Role of TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean” actual beneficiaries in the communication

Actual beneficiaries of the TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean” funds play a key role in the communication, as they have to ensure:

- The respect of information and publicity regulations in promoting the projects’ activities and disseminating their results (Communication at the Project level)
- The provision of all relevant data to the Managing Authority, in order to support the communication effort of the Programme on concrete progress and results (Communication at the Programme level).

### 2.2 Objectives

The general objectives of the Communication Strategy are the following:

- **Awareness:** Highlighting of the role of the Community and the Structural Funds of the European Union for the general public and the promotion of the added value of

Community participation in the jointly funded projects of the TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean” ;

- **Transparency:** Ensuring transparency as far as access to the Funds is concerned. This means that the mechanisms for provision of resources of the Programme have to be transparent to the potential beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, there are certain specific communications goals, which reflect the more general goal of the Programme. They have the objective of identifying the necessary measures in order to deal with the communication gap between the citizens in the eligible areas and the role of the European Union, in particular in the framework of the TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean”.

The specific objectives of the Communication Strategy are the following:

**In terms of Awareness**

- To promote the Programme itself (strategy, objectives etc.)
- To promote the role played by the European Union and the participating Partner States in good transnational cooperation in the area
- To promote the significance of European Territorial Cooperation on the “way” to European integration

**In terms of Transparency**

- To ensure targeted dissemination of information on specific benefits from Programme participation for different groups of potential applicants, as well as the general public (in order to help them identify how they can benefit from transnational cooperation)
- To provide clear, specific and adequate information on Programme rules and procedures to potential project applicants (in order to facilitate participation and quality projects)
- To empower potential project applicants to participate in the Programme (in order to help them acknowledge their role in successful Programme implementation and transnational cooperation)

Therefore, the communication strategy must do the following:

- Promote the Programme and its results to the general public and all the potential interested parties;
- Deliver adequate information about the Programme, its role, impact and aims to the identified target groups;
- Inform the institutions involved in the implementation of the Programme about their role in information and publicity;
- Ensure that the potential Final Beneficiaries have complete, valid, and timely information;
- Inform target groups about the conditions and criteria to be met to access the “Balkan – Mediterranean” Programme’s funding:
  - eligibility criteria, either at geographical, juridical and financial level,
  - projects’ planning criteria,
  - project proposals’ assessment criteria,
  - project implementation criteria (either at partnership and financial level),
  - bodies and persons to contact to receive technical info about the TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean” and projects’ implementation procedures;
- Demonstrate the role of the European Union and the way in which Community resources are spent with transparency;
- Highlight the transversal priorities (sustainability of the development; equal opportunities and non discrimination; respect of competition rules) set up at EU Level

### **2.3 Target Groups**

The main targeted audiences for the Transnational Cooperation Programme “Balkan – Mediterranean” in the period from 2014 to 2020 are the following:

- Potential partners in the framework of the Programme’s actions
- Final Beneficiaries and Lead Partners of approved actions
- Representatives of all the local, regional, and municipal authorities in the eligible areas
- Local, regional, national, European, but also specialized mass-media, which contribute to the promotion of the Programme in the eligible areas
- The general public

### **2.4 Actions per Target Group**

The information that will be provided and the publicity that will be directed towards the various partners will be differentiated based on their separate needs. For example:

Targeted audience	Information/ Message	Goals/ Expected result
<p><b>Potential partners in the framework of the actions of the “Balkan – Mediterranean” Programme</b></p> <p><i>Regional and local authorities</i></p> <p><i>Development authorities at the regional and the local level, which are able to manage public funds</i></p>	<p><b>Available financing::</b> how much, when, how, for what purpose, and who can submit an application</p> <p><b>Information about the Programme:</b> its nature, goals, procedures, benefits, and the expected results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widespread dissemination of the Programme with timely and valid information for the immediate utilization of the financing opportunities</li> <li>• Clear and detailed information about the financing opportunities, the procedures, and the conditions of eligibility</li> <li>• Timely and complete information about the accreditation procedures</li> <li>• Information about the future observation of publicity rules after financing is ensured</li> <li>• Submission of proposals from all the eligible areas for the Programme</li> <li>• A high level of proposals that are compatible with the priorities of the Programme</li> <li>• Effective dissemination of the resources of the Programme to the appropriate actions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Final Beneficiaries and Lead Partners of approved actions.</b> (The Final Beneficiaries may vary according to the nature of the action on each occasion)</p> <p><i>Regional and local authorities</i></p> <p><i>Development authorities at the regional and the local level, which are able to manage public funds</i></p>	<p><b>Information about the Programme:</b> its nature, goals, procedures, benefits, and the expected results</p> <p><b>How an action is managed in the framework of the Programme</b></p> <p><b>How results are publicized</b></p> <p><b>Reinforcement of the expected results through coordination</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about and commitment to adhere to the publicity rules and regulations</li> <li>• Clear, detailed, and continuous information and support concerning the obligations and rights that result from the securing of financing</li> <li>• Motivation and creation of a climate of healthy competition for the highlighting of good</li> </ul>

	<p><b>with similar actions</b></p> <p><b>Reinforcement of the expected results through the recognized good practices of the previous period</b></p>	<p>practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete understanding of the Programme and effective implementation of the actions</li> <li>• Dissemination of information about the results of the Programme to other partners as well</li> <li>• Capitalizing on the results of the Programme</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other entities</b> (Non-governmental Organizations, institutes, universities, professional associations, chambers, economic and social partners, etc.)</p>	<p><b>Available financing:</b> how much, when, how, for what purpose, and who can submit an application</p> <p><b>Information about the Programme:</b> its nature, goals, procedures, benefits, and the expected results</p> <p><b>Benefits from transnational cooperation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring information and sensitization of the entities, local society, and the responsible entities according to the occasion</li> <li>• Ensuring complementarity and synergy for information</li> <li>• Utilization of the range and subject matter for which the entities and the partners are responsible for the creation of networks and strategic cooperation</li> <li>• Submission of proposals from all the eligible areas for the Programme</li> <li>• A high level of proposals that are compatible with the priorities of the Programme</li> <li>• Complete understanding of the Programme and effective implementation of the actions</li> <li>• Dissemination of information about the results of the Programme to other partners as well</li> </ul>
<p><b>The general public</b></p>	<p><b>Benefits from transnational cooperation and expected results</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrenchment of the message of joint contribution by the European Union and the Partner States</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Highlighting of the role of the European Union</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of the Programme, its axes, its vision, and its goals</li> <li>• Promotion of the results and benefits of the implementation of the Programme through the highlighting of good practices</li> <li>• Promotion of the social and economic impact of the Programme</li> <li>• Increase of the public's knowledge of the Programme</li> <li>• Transparency concerning the management of resources of the European Union</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mass-media</b> <i>Local, regional, national, pan-European, and specialized</i> <i>Press, radio, television, and electronic media</i></p>	<p><b>Information about the Programme:</b> its nature, goals, procedures, the resources available, how they are managed, etc.</p> <p><b>Which are the approved projects, who is implementing them, and where</b></p> <p><b>The benefits and expected results of the Programme</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular provision to the mass-media of interesting news about the Programme</li> <li>• Participation of the mass-media in events and actions related to the Programme</li> <li>• Ensuring precision, clarity, and reliability concerning the information related to the Programme</li> <li>• Promotion of the results from the implementation of the Programme.</li> <li>• Categorization of news items and promotion with the appropriate media (at the local or national level)</li> <li>• Support for the initiative</li> <li>• Transparency concerning the management of resources of the European Union</li> </ul>

### 3. Communication strategy

#### 3.1 Introduction

The overall communication strategy will privilege an integrated, multimedia and transversal approach, capable of ensuring high visibility to the Programme, strengthening consensus on Community policies and becoming a development tool in the involved territories.

It will meet the following criteria:

- personalized communication for each target, obtained through tailor-made tools and activities;
- coherent, integrated and synergic actions with concrete and positive fall-out on the territory;
- easy, effective, transparent language aimed to inform and at the same time “bridge the gap” among EU Institutions and citizens;
- key-messages that take into account differences in language, culture, religion, society, etc.
- active confrontation with the stakeholders through methods of participated planning;
- widespread and capillary diffusion through traditional and innovative channels;
- transversal approach (public relations, press office) aimed to inform public opinion of the positive contributions of the European Union.

#### 3.2 Indicative strategic choices

In order to fulfil the goals of the communication strategy five different indicative strategic choices are available.

*a) Activation of the beneficiaries for the acceleration of the implementation of the Operational Programmes*

The role of the beneficiary is important for the implementation of the Programme, because it also operates as a multiplier of information. By entrenching the beneficiary at the heart of the system, the greatest possible diffusion of information to the general public is ensured, as well as the greater effectiveness of the Programme’s implementation.

*b) Ensuring the continuity, uniformity, and simplicity of communication at all the stages of the Programme and for every targeted audience*

Previous experience has proven that for effective communication, the use of simple messages free of excessive information about the jointly financed projects is necessary in order for them to be understandable and to encourage participation by citizens. Information will be continuous and stable for all the stages of every project, from its announcement to its evolution and completion.

*c) The operation of networks of cooperating entities in order to maximize results in terms of communication.*

Staff members of the Managing Authority, the Joint Secretariat, and the Partner States are cooperating with the following:

- social or economic partners in order to inform the target audience about the calls, announcements, eligibility criteria, etc.
- existing networks in the public administration, Universities, and Professional Associations, utilizing the communication and information structures that are already functioning,
- those in charge of publicity among the beneficiaries, with the goal of optimal coordination of the beneficiaries' publicity obligations and the uniformity of messages,
- journalists at local and regional mass-media in order to ensure the diffusion of information to the shapers of public opinion.

The networks of cooperating entities can ensure the widespread dissemination of information, the avoiding of overlaps, and the maximization of the result in terms of communication, as well as economies of scale.

*d) The promotion of already existing examples of participation in the Operational Programmes*

By presenting specific examples, either from the previous Programme Period, or from the current one, both transparency and the encouragement of participation are achieved. The targeted audience, knowing that there are members of local society or some entrepreneurial sectors or the world of education who have already benefited from such Programmes, will express an interest in learning more or participating in the jointly financed Programmes.

All the actions that are included in the communication plan are interlinked and follow a single visual identity.

*e) Pursuing the use of alternative and innovative ideas as measures for an approach, information, and publicity*

The use of alternative approaches and innovative ideas in the selection of measures, on a case by case basis and wherever it is feasible, may strengthen the public's interest and consequently reinforce the effectiveness of the Strategy.

### **3.3 Content of the Communication Strategy**

The information and publicity measures of the Communication Strategy are expected to cover the entire duration of the Operational Programme and to be differentiated for each targeted audience.

The combination of different means of and tools for communication is also necessary in order to ensure the most effective communication possible.

The Communication Strategy includes all the obligatory measures that the Managing Authorities must take in accordance with Regulation (EC) no. 1303/2013.

The official language of the Communication Strategy is English. However, the communication toll/ events/ materials have to be developed also in the languages of the Partner States, in order to facilitate the recipient of the information in the population of Programme Area.

### **3.4 Implementation Stages for Communication**

For the application of the Information and Publicity Actions of the TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean”, a sequence of stages of communication of a graduated nature is foreseen. Each stage constitutes a continuation, complement, and specialized definition of the previous stage.

There are three main stages of communication:

#### **First Stage: General information about the Operational Programme and its actions, inaugural event**

The first stage concerns the development “vision” for the eligible areas of the Programme, the overall intervention within the boundaries of the eligible area. Its goal is the creation of recognition, dignity, and reliability concerning the intervention, the participation of the European Union in this intervention, as well as informing potential beneficiaries about the financing opportunities of the Operational Programme. At this level, the main message that will be followed by all communication and will constitute its identity is being formed.

During the first stage of communication, the objective is to inform the target audiences about the Operational 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 takes care to spread the information in a simple and understandable way about the following:

- Implementation of the inaugural activity
- Hoisting of the flag of the European Union on May 9-16
- Publication of the list of beneficiaries
- Publication of approved Operational Programme documents
- Publication and sending of a synopsis of the Operational Programme, which will constitute the informational guide with basic knowledge about both the Programme and the contribution of the funds of the European Union
- Intensive informing of potential beneficiaries
- Informational correspondence, e-mails, wide use of the internet to spread information

- Informational meetings, single day conferences, and working meetings, press conferences, etc.

**Second 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**

The second stage of communication concerns the general goals of the Operational Programme, the specific goals, and the thematic units that contribute to these goals, as well as the contribution of the European Union to the implementation of these actions. The goal is to inform the public about how the development “vision” for the eligible areas is translated into goals and actions, and therefore, to reinforce the reliability that was created in the first stage of communication and to document the main message of communication. In addition, the second stage of communication concerns the provision of specialized information and the creation of “user” publicity for the potential beneficiaries in order to reinforce the pace of implementation of the Operational Programme.

During the second stage of communication, 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. During this stage, the Managing Authority takes care of the following:

- The implementation of annual activities
- The publication of a list of beneficiaries
- The hoisting of the flag of the European Union on May 9-16
- Widespread use of the Internet
- The publication and distribution of special informational guides
- The systematic organization of thematic meetings and seminars with the potential beneficiaries and the beneficiaries
- The utilization of the available information networks in order to approach potential beneficiaries
- The presentation of good examples and good practices
- Special informational bulletins and periodic informational printed matter
- Periodic press conferences

### **Third Stage: Dissemination of the results and benefits achieved, highlighting of Good Practices**

At the third stage of communication, the results of the implementation of the Programme's actions and the role that the European Union played in the achievement of its goals are promoted. At this stage, communication focuses on the reinforcement and completion of the image that was created in the two previous stages, connecting the development "vision" and the general goals with the "positive" results from implementation. In addition, one goal is to motivate the beneficiaries to highlight their Good Practices, as well as to support them in order to increase the pace of implementation.

During the third stage of communication, the objective is to demonstrate to the general public that the goals of intervention in the eligible areas have been implemented and that the development "vision" is a reality. The actions that the Managing Authority undertakes during the present stage have as their goal to promote the results and benefits that result from the completion of the actions and the strategic projects of the Programme, with emphasis on the highlighting of good practices. Some of the means that are used are the following:

- The implementation of annual activities
- The publication of a list of beneficiaries
- The hoisting of the flag of the European Union on May 9-16
- Widespread use of the Internet
- The promotion of good examples and good practices
- The utilization of the mass media (result campaigns)

#### **3.5 Means of communication**

Each target group determines the message to be communicated and the measure to be used to reach it. In most cases a combination of measures is used to communicate with a given target group.

All means of communication will have a common corporate identity that needs to be elaborated by an external PR company selected through an open call. The main means of communication are the following:

- Key documents
- Publications
- Internet homepage
- Events
- Press and electronic media coverage
- Social responsibility activities
- Social media

### **3.5.1 Key documents**

#### *Transnational Cooperation Programme “Balkan - Mediterranean 2014 – 2020”*

The TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean” document forms the basis for the territorial co-operation in the Balkan – Mediterranean area from 2014 to 2020. It describes the eligible area, outlines priorities and areas of interventions, designates competent authorities and provides information on Programme and project implementation as well as financial implementation and control.

#### *Other official documents*

Other official documents, such as the Programme Manual and the Project Implementation Manual, complement the TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean” document, by giving additional, more detailed information on areas of interventions, objectives, expected outputs and results as well as on implementing provisions to be applied by competent authorities and final beneficiaries.

### **3.5.2 Publications**

#### *Leaflets*

Leaflets are symbolic business cards of the Programme. They are appetisers in so far as they contain general information about the Programme. The target groups of leaflets are the potential applicants, the general public, national, regional and local public authorities and development agencies, trade and professional bodies, economic and social partners, non-governmental organisations (NGO’s), organisations representing business, information centres on Europe as well as Commission representations in the participating Partner States and educational institutions. They are aimed at encouraging a wide participation in the Programme as well as helping to spread information about the Programme. The content of flyers will be developed by the Joint Secretariat in cooperation with partners, assisted by an external PR company selected through an open call.

#### *Brochures*

If leaflets are the business cards, brochures are the product catalogues of the Programme, which give a comprehensive survey of a given programme period with a handful of projects summarising the activities, the results and the outcomes. They are targeted at applicants and at institutions involved in programming and implementation as well as national, regional and local public authorities and development agencies, trade and professional bodies, economic and social partners, non-governmental organisations (NGO’s), organisations representing business, information centres on Europe as well as Commission representations in the participating Member States, educational institutions and project promoters. Such as flyers brochures will also be developed by the JS in cooperation with partners assisted by an external PR company selected through an open call.

#### *Specific publications*

Specific publications include materials for seminars and conferences like presentations and handouts. These are prepared by the JS, the MA or the National Authorities taking into account to meet the needs of information at each occasion.

### **3.5.3 Internet homepage**

A Programme level homepage will be created, which is linked to national and regional level homepages, thus creating a network. The homepage is the key source of up-to-date information, it describes the Programme, it outlines priorities and areas of interventions and it indicates necessary contact details. All relevant documentation such as the Application Pack or the Programme documents will be available as downloads. It will provide information about approved and running projects and it will collect questions and answers. The list of beneficiaries, the names of the operations and the amount of public funding allocated to the operations will as well be published through the home page.

The home page will have a news section (newsletter, events forecast, and press releases), a common internal surface and an electronic partner forum. The newsletters will be placed in the form of archives on the website. The homepage will contain a list of links to other useful websites as well. An external web designer company selected through an open call will be responsible for design and construction and it will develop an editing system allowing the staff of the JS to enter information and to update the website rapidly with the latest information and documentation.

### **3.5.4 Information events**

In order to strengthen personal relations events will be organised to market the Programme to potential applicants and to the wider public. Proper information and partner search facilities are provided to potential applicants by these opportunities. Events will be organised by the JS in co-operation with partner institutions with the help of external experts if necessary.

#### Information days and partner search forums

At the launching of the Operational Programme a major information activity will be organised by the Managing Authority in co-operation with the National Authorities to publicise the OP and to highlight the role of the Community. The event will also provide general information on the OP objectives, priorities and possible areas of intervention.

At later stage regular information days and partner search forums will be organised to help potential applicants to develop their projects and to search for partners. Information days and partner search forums will be organised by the JS in co-operation with the Managing Authority and the National Authorities. These occasions will give way to discuss project ideas, management and implementation issues, to meet potential applicants and to facilitate partner search. These events are to cover areas that participate in the Programme.

#### Conferences and seminars

Contacts between actors involved in the Programme as well as proper information flow to potential applicants/final beneficiaries and to the general public are ensured by means of conferences and seminars held in the frame of the Programme. Potential applicants/final beneficiaries, national, regional and local public authorities and development agencies,

trade and professional bodies, economic and social partners, non-governmental organisations (NGO's), organisations representing business, information centres on Europe as well as Commission representations in the participating Partner States, educational institutions and project promoters, institutions involved in programming and implementation, politicians and representatives of the media will form the basis of target audience of these events.

Evaluation conferences will be organised on a yearly basis to present and assess the achievements of the Programme.

#### Europe Day and European Cooperation Day

One week starting 9 May, the flag of the European Union will be flying in front of the premises of the Managing Authority in order to highlight the role of the Community in the funding of the Programme.

European Cooperation Day (EC Day) is a European campaign, organized each year in mid-September, under the auspices of the European Commission, which highlights the role of cooperation across borders in the European Union and with its neighbours –a celebration of all the benefits European Territorial Cooperation brings to people across Europe. It is an opportunity to discover all the improvements local cooperation initiatives brings to various aspects of daily life; from creating jobs, to improving health care services, transport, energy and environmental protection.

### **3.5.5 Press and electronic media coverage**

#### Advertisements

Calls for proposals published in nationwide and in regional daily papers as well as in professional magazines will make the TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean” more transparent in the Programme area to the general public. Regional papers will cover each participating province / district in the Programme area.

#### Press releases and electronic media coverage

The Managing Authority, via the JS, will work in close co-operation with professional magazines to release brief informative articles in them and with the electronic media to inform them about the main stages and results of the Programme. Furthermore, the Managing Authority and the JS will be responsive to request of information from the press, TV or radio.

### **3.5.6 Social responsibility activities**

The “Balkan-Mediterranean” Programme’s long-term communication goals may be also achieved through intense, targeted social responsibility activities helping to address environmental and social issues. In that sense, social responsibility in communication includes new responses (products, services and models) to social needs that are developed in order to deliver better social outcomes, creating new social relations or cooperation. Actions may be targeted in the fields of public services, culture and leisure, health etc. The “Balkan-Mediterranean” Programme, through its socially responsible communication

activities, strives to inspire and create opportunities for advancement by making improvements to daily life in its eligible area.

### 3.5.6 Social media

Social media represents low-cost tools that are used to combine technology and social interaction with the use of words. These tools are typically internet or mobile based. Social media shall give the Programme a voice and a way to communicate with peers, potential beneficiaries and the general public. It personalizes the "brand" and helps to spread the Programme’s message in a relaxed and conversational way.

**In any case, it should be noted that the communication tools described are indicative and not obligatory. The use of these tools depends on the budget available.**

The table below displays indicative/ suggested material. It is noted that the official language of the Programme is English; however, the production of the material in the official languages of all Partner States is possible in order to facilitate the recipient of the information.

Printed material	Audience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data reports (fact sheets)</li> <li>• Informational leaflets about the Programme, as well as for each Measure</li> <li>• Annual list of all the approved projects</li> <li>• Annual action report leaflet</li> <li>• Banners</li> </ul>	Local and regional authorities, potential beneficiaries, mass media, general public
Audio-visual material	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion film</li> <li>• Advertising spots for radio and television</li> </ul>	Local and regional authorities, potential beneficiaries, mass media, general public
Electronic material	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logos</li> </ul>	Potential beneficiaries
Marketing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pens and pencils</li> <li>• Ecological bags</li> <li>• USB sticks</li> <li>• Shirts</li> </ul>	Potential beneficiaries, European and national bodies, mass media, general public

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cards</li> <li>• Notebooks</li> <li>• Calendars</li> </ul>	
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### 3.6 Technical characteristics of information and publicity measures

All information and publicity measures aimed at beneficiaries, potential beneficiaries and the public shall include at least the following:

- the emblem of the European Union, in accordance with the graphic standards set out by the European Commission, and reference to the European Union;
- reference to the ERDF: ‘European Regional Development Fund’;
- reference to a logo chosen by the Managing Authority, highlighting the added value of the intervention of the Community.

The Managing Authority, in cooperation with the JS, will publish details manuals for the proper usage of the communication means by the final beneficiaries.

### 3.7 Schedule for the Implementation of Communication Actions

The communication timing covers the period 2015-2023, thus representing the actual implementation period of the TNCP “Balkan – Mediterranean”.

A scheduling table of the selected actions that are foreseen and that will be implemented in each region is set out in terms of content, evolution, and the communication needs of the Programme.

Actions	Stages of Communication		
	First Stage (2015-2016)	Second Stage (2016-2020)	Third Stage (2020-2023)
<b>Inaugural Event</b>	•		
<b>Annual Event</b>	•	•	•
<b>Hoisting of the E.U. Flag, May 9-16</b>	•	•	•
<b>Publication of the List of Beneficiaries</b>	•	•	•
<b>Internet</b>	•	•	•
<b>Single-Day Conferences/ Conferences/ Fairs</b>	•	•	•
<b>Training Seminars</b>	•	•	•

<b>Direct Mail (postal)</b>	•	•	•
<b>Newsletters</b>	•	•	•
<b>Working Meetings</b>	•	•	•
<b>Informational Guide</b>	•	•	•
<b>Television</b>	•	•	•
<b>Radio</b>	•	•	•
<b>Press</b>	•	•	•
<b>Press Conferences</b>	•	•	•
<b>Outdoor Advertising</b>	•	•	•
<b>New Media</b>	•	•	•

## 4. Responsibilities

The Communication Strategy will be implemented under the responsibility of the Managing Authority/ Joint Secretariat. The implementation of the measures at Programme level will be carried out by the Managing Authority and the JS, while at project level the National Coordinators will provide necessary information to potential applicants.

The contact person responsible for information and publicity designated by the Managing Authority is:

Name: Themistoklis Chatzikonstantinou

Organisation: Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, Hellenic Ministry of Development & Competitiveness

Postal address: Leof. Georgikis Scholis 65, 570 01, Thessaloniki, Greece

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E-mail address: [tchatzikonstantinou@mou.gr](mailto:tchatzikonstantinou@mou.gr)

The **Joint Secretariat** has the following indicative tasks in co-operation with the Managing Authority and the National Authorities:

- to develop a strategy for information and publicity and to develop an overall system for public relations connected to the Programme;
- to make sure that a common corporate identity for the Programme will be used in all means of communication;
- to develop informational material for dissemination;
- to assist the preparation of presentations, other specific publications and relevant material to be used in public events;
- to maintain and update the Internet homepage;
- to organise information events with partners from the Programme area;
- to maintain necessary public relations with the media;
- to be responsive to any request of information;
- to appoint a person responsible for information and publicity;
- to disseminate the best practices in terms of information and publicity;
- to maintain constant information on committed funds, for further dissemination and project development.

## 5. Indicative budget

The Communication Strategy includes a basic estimation of the budget allocated to information and publicity. For the exact estimation of the budget, the previous experience in conducting communication campaigns during the previous programming period, as well as the specific needs of the Operation Programme are going to be taken into account.

These joint information and publicity measures will be financed through the technical assistance budget in the amount of € 120.000,00.

The following table presents the details of indicative expenses by year and major actions to achieve:

	Amounts	Main activities/outputs
2015	€ 25,000	<p>Mainly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branding and graphical baselines - first package (programme flyer, poster, project guidance etc.)</li> <li>• Website (app. max 10,000 €)</li> <li>• Kick-off event and Info-days on the 1<sup>st</sup>Call for Proposals(app. 10.000 €)</li> <li>• Newsletter or equivalent according to technology development</li> <li>• Simple media work and general awareness raising activities</li> </ul>
2016	€ 20,000	<p>Mainly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual event and/ or smaller events (10,000-20.000 €)</li> <li>• Info-days on the 2<sup>nd</sup>Call for Proposals (app. 10.000 €)</li> <li>• Quarterly Newsletter or equivalent according to technology development</li> <li>• Simple media work and general awareness raising activities</li> </ul>
2017	€ 20,000	<p>Mainly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisions of the website</li> <li>• Annual event and/ or smaller events (10,000-20.000 €)</li> <li>• Newsletter or similar,</li> <li>• Simple media work and general awareness raising activities</li> </ul>
2018	€ 15,000	<p>Mainly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual event and/ or smaller events (10,000-20.000 €)</li> <li>• Newsletter or equivalent according to technology development</li> <li>• Simple media work and general awareness raising activities</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short video</li> <li>• Promotion at external events, exhibitions</li> </ul>
2019	€ 15,000	<p>Mainly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual event and/ or smaller events (10,000-20.000 €)</li> <li>• Newsletter or equivalent according to technology development,</li> <li>• Simple media work and general awareness raising activities</li> </ul>
2020	€ 12,000	<p>Mainly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual event and/ or smaller events(10,000-20.000 €)</li> <li>• Newsletter or equivalent according to technology development</li> <li>• Simple media work and general awareness raising activities</li> </ul>
2021	€ 10,000	<p>Mainly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final event or smaller events (10,000-20.000 €)</li> <li>• Newsletter or equivalent according to technology development</li> <li>• Simple media work and general awareness raising activities</li> <li>• Promotion at external events, exhibition</li> <li>• Final publications</li> </ul>
2022	€ 3,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newsletter or equivalent according to technology development</li> </ul>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€ 120,000</b>	

## 6. Implementation Procedures

The implementation of the Communication Strategy will be effectively managed by drawing up annual Action Plans for Communication, yearly detailing activities, tools and their schedules.

The annual Action Plans for Communication will identify the main activities and tools according to the “Balkan – Mediterranean” Programming phases, and related communication needs and strategy.

The annual Action Plans for Communication will have the necessary level of detail for ensuring the optimised management of the present Communication Strategy and allowing monitoring and evaluation activities.

According to specific and practical needs, the implementation of some communication activities and tools might be outsourced, in the respect of the European principles transparency and respect of the free competition market rules.

The Managing Authority will implement the administrative procedures needed for outsourcing both activities and tools.

### 6.1 Monitoring and Reporting of the Communication Strategy

According to the EC Regulation no. 1303/2013, the Managing Authority shall inform the Monitoring Committee for each operational Programme of the following:

- the Communication Strategy and progress in its implementation;
- information and publicity measures carried out;
- the means of communication used.

The Managing Authority shall provide the Monitoring Committee with examples of such measures.

Moreover, the Annual Reports and the Final Report on implementation of an Operational Programme shall include:

- examples of information and publicity measures for the Operational Programme carried out when implementing the Communication Strategy;
- the specific arrangements for the information and publicity measures, including, where applicable, the electronic address at which such data may be found;
- the content of any major amendments to the Communication Strategy.

### 6.2 Evaluation of the information and publicity measures

The Managing Authority evaluates the information and publicity actions that are expected to be organized in the framework of the Programme. The evaluation of these 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, indicative indicators for evaluation are broken down into the following:

**Output Indicators**, which record publicity actions such as:

- Number of events (single-day conferences, conferences, seminars, fairs etc.)
- Number of news articles (incl. Balkan-Mediterranean website articles, articles developed for other media, press releases, press conferences, etc.)
- Website statistics
- Types and number of communication material
- Number of participants per single-day conference
- Number of social media posts (posts , likes, followers etc.)

**Result Indicators**, which record the result of the actions for each target audience, such as:

- Raised awareness about the Balkan-Mediterranean Programme and its funding opportunities
- Raised awareness about project outputs and Programme results
- Improved knowledge about procedures for applying for/ claiming funding
- Increased capacity for effective project implementation (e.g. LP seminars, guidance, etc.)
- Raised satisfaction with information/ guidance provided to applicants and funded projects

### **Measurement methodology**

In order to better assess the results from the implementation of the Communication Strategy, qualitative field research (surveys with applicants, projects, website surveys) may be conducted. For instance:

Via questionnaires on the opinion of the participants at events and/ or

Via specifically designed field research on the opinion and knowledge of specific target groups before and after specific communication actions.

## **7. Equality between men and women and non discrimination**

The Member States will ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of the gender perspective is promoted during the various stages of implementation of the Funds and any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation will be avoided.

The Programme's web site to be established will include special features to support people whose eyesight is damaged.

In case of organising publicity events –information session, seminars, workshops, and conferences– the venue of the event will be chosen in a way that direct access to people in wheelchairs will be possible, in order to enable their participation. In some cases special services may be needed to enable people with disabilities to access to information. For example deaf people may require interpretation, while blind or physically handicapped people may require personal assistance during events. The invitation for these events will include a question whether the participant needs any assistance and if yes, what kind of. Assistance to disabled people during information events will be organised and such support services will be financed under the TA budget.