



**MINISTRY OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND PUBLIC WORKS**
Directorate General Programming of Regional Development



**Communication Plan
for
Information and Publicity**

of

**Operational Programme
Regional Development 2007-2013**

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List of Abbreviations

CP	Communication Plan
CCU	Central Coordination Unit
CoM	Council of Ministers
CSG	Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion
EC	European Commission
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
MA	Managing Authority
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MF	Ministry of Finance
MRDPW	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
MSAAR	Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform
NAMRB	National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRDS	National Regional Development Strategy
NRP	National Reform Programme
NSI	National Statistics Institute
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OP	Operational Programme
OPRD	Operational Programme Regional Development
R&D	Research and Development
RDC	Regional Development Council
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RES	Renewable energy resources
RRIF	Republican Road Infrastructure Fund
SME	Small and Medium-size Enterprises
SF	Structural Funds
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis

Chapter 1: Introduction

Bulgaria is a full member of the European Union since January 01, 2007. Consequently, access to European funds creates new opportunities for development in all public sectors. Structural funds themselves are the essential financial tool carrying out the EU convergence policy, thus aiming at elevating such measurable development to a new quality level of dynamic processes - economic and social integration, growth and employment.

It is envisaged that Bulgaria absorbs the funds in an effective, efficient, and transparent manner. The absorption level for the 2007-2013 period shall determine the budget amount for the next programming period (2014-2020). Therefore, assuring of timely, quality-based, and accessible information presupposes an effective and efficient absorption of EU funding.

The obligations of public authorities responsible for Structural Funds assistance have therefore been defined in European Commission Regulation which applies to the entire European Union. Information for potential beneficiaries and citizens has to be carefully prepared and should continue throughout the lifetime of all Programs co-financed by the Structural Funds. This is why the Commission has requested the Member States to draw up and introduce multi-annual communication plans rather than isolated initiatives. In respect to the EU requirements, the Managing Authority has to present the information and publicity measures on the Operational Programme "Regional Development"(OPRD) in a structured way, clearly indicating the objectives, target groups, content and strategy of the actions, along with indicative budget estimation. Indicators enabling the quality and effectiveness of the various tools and actions to be assessed are also clearly indicated in the Communication Plan. Its aim is to enable the Programme managers to present to potential beneficiaries and promoters the funds, which are available and how to access them.

In accordance with Article 69 of Council Regulation N° 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund, the managing authorities of operational programmes shall provide information and publicity on all priority axes and operations to the general public and potential beneficiaries. The main objective is to emphasize the role of the Community, to guarantee transparency and absorption of EU Funds, and to provoke the interest of target groups to apply for funding under operational programmes.

A responsibility of the Managing Authority of Operational Programme Regional Development is to inform the community and target groups.

The provision of information related to the essence, principles and mechanisms for applying under OP Regional Development will contribute to quality project proposals in compliance with the programme's priorities. It will create an opportunity for successful absorption of EU Funds and achieve the main objective of OPRD by improving the quality of life and working environment with a better access to basic services and creating new opportunities for improved regional competitiveness and sustainable development.

The successful applying of policies and achieving of OPRD objectives largely depends on the effectiveness of information and publicity activities. The information and publicity measures of the operational programme are a part of the current Communication Plan. These are an integral part of management and implementation activities under Operational Programme Regional Development 2007-2013 and will be implemented with financial resources allocated to Priority axis 5: Technical assistance, Operation 5.2 Communication, information and publicity.

The Communication Plan is consistent with the guidelines given by the National Communication Strategy and the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). The plan is a national strategic document providing a framework of the activities to be implemented, aiming at promotion of NSRF and OPRD objectives and priorities, as well as providing coordinated communication policy.

Within the strategy are determined the main objectives and priorities of communication policy at the national level. Its main objective is to achieve optimal publicity and provide access to information at all levels.

The main objectives of the strategy are applied in the current Communication Plan – through accessibility and transparency to encourage awareness and motivation of the community and target groups for successful absorption of EU Funds and social recognition of the EU role for development of Bulgarian regions, as well as achievement of the NSRF-Bulgaria objectives to become a competitive state with high quality of life, income and social inclusion until 2015.

Considering that communication plans of different operational programmes are a tool for achieving the National Communication Strategy of NSRF objectives, the OPRD Communication Plan and envisaged measures are upgrading the basic principles of the strategy: awareness, positivity, flexibility, adaptability, unity and coordination, synchronized with the overall government policy as regards the Community and EU requirements.

The Communication Plan supports the administrative activities on management and implementation of the programme, dissemination of achieved results, encourages good practices and coordinates the information flow originating from different structures of the Managing Authority both at central and regional level.

The plan is elaborated by DG Programming of Regional Development of the MRDPW.

Chapter 2: Brief Outline of the Operational Programme

Operational Programme Regional Development is the only operational programme which covers all six regions at NUTS II level in Bulgaria eligible under the Objective 1 – Convergence, part of the EU Cohesion Policy. OPRD has been elaborated in accordance with EU objectives set by the Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion 2007-2013. The programme has been harmonized with the Bulgarian National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and with the National Reform Programme. The complete list of activities under the Programme shall follow Community objectives for sustainable development through strengthening of growth, competitiveness, employment, social integration, and environment protection.

For the ongoing 2007-2013 programming period OPRD has to achieve following mid-term goals:

Programme Overall Objective:

- Improvement of quality of life and working environment through better access to key services, as well as new opportunities for increased regional competitiveness and sustainable development.

Programme Specific Objectives:

- Creating sustainable and dynamic city centers connected with their less urbanized peripheral territories, thus increasing possibilities for prosperity and growth;
- Providing better access to road, ICT, and energy networks for underdeveloped areas;
- Increasing regional tourism potential for development and marketing of sustainable, diversified, and region specific tourism product with higher added value;
- Mobilizing regional and local technical and institutional capacity and resources for implementation of regional development policies.

OP Regional Development intends to draw a strategic focus on limited number of issues in response to the EU objectives for achieving growth and jobs in the light of the re-launched Lisbon Strategy using the instruments of the Cohesion Policy and the Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion 2007-2013. It focuses on several strategic areas, falling along the lines of the first Guidelines:

- *OPRD Strategy is to increase competitiveness and attractiveness of regions and municipalities, in order to be able to reduce disparities at NUTS II level (six regions) through improvement of industrial, residential, social, ecological, and cultural environment of city regions and accessibility of rural areas regarding road, ICT, and energy networks.*

Programme Strategy shall be implemented through five priority axes, as follows:

Priority Axis 1: Sustainable and integrated urban development***Priority Axis 2: Regional and local accessibility******Priority Axis 3: Sustainable Tourism Development******Priority Axis 4: Local development and cooperation******Priority 5: Technical assistance***

Chapter 3: Legislative framework. EU requirements

Operational Programme Regional Development has been officially approved by the European Commission Decision 5440 from 5th of November 2007.

Information and publicity actions corresponding to the Operational Programme Regional Development will be undertaken in compliance with Community Regulations applicable on this subject:

- Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, of July 11th, laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund;
- Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 of December 8th 2006, which establishes the rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006
- Decree No 121/2007 of the Council of Ministers stipulating the routine for provision of grants under operational programmes, co-financed by EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund, and EU PHARE Programme.

The regulations establish communication as a core activity, strategically important for the programmes as financial management or any other management activity.

Article 69 of Council Regulation No 1083/2006 obligates managing authorities to provide information on operational programmes, operations and co-financed projects. According to the regulation every managing authority must prepare a Communication Plan for the respective operational programme. The plan should contain strategy, defined target groups, information measures, indicative budget, responsible administrative bodies, guidelines for publicity, role of the operational programme and that of the EU as well as measures for evaluation, monitoring and control of the plan's implementation. Communication plans are approved by the Commission.

Information events should be programmed, structured and evaluated, and regularly reported to Monitoring Committees.

Each programme must elaborate communication strategy in pursuit of two aims. On one hand, wide publicity activities the Structural Funds support should ensure that funds are absorbed as effectively as possible, while at the same time guaranteeing equal opportunity to all potential beneficiaries. On the other hand, it is important to convey the message that the Union and Bulgaria are:

- working together for the benefit of regions and social categories in difficulty;
- pursuing common objectives (the Funds' objectives);
- pooling their financial resources.

Ultimately, the general public must be informed on implemented activities, and results achieved by structural policy. Transparency regarding the use of public funds is an essential requirement for any member state of the Community. The general public must also understand that structural policy makes a vital contribution to Europe's economic and political integration and thus to peace and stability.

Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 of December 8th 2006 sets out communication objectives, essential target groups and message content. It defines a set of obligations which must be met. It contains responsibilities of the member states for preparing communication plans, evaluation of the measures taken and ensuring transparency of the fund absorption process.

The Regulation sets the main tools, which the Managing Authority should use according to its regional and national specificity while developing its own communication strategy. According to article 5 (2) from the Regulation "The managing authority shall provide potential beneficiaries with clear and detailed information on at least the following:

- (a) the conditions of eligibility to be met in order to qualify for financing under the operational programme;
- (b) a description of the procedures for examining applications for funding and of the time periods involved;

(c) the criteria for selecting the operations to be financed;

(d) the contacts at national, regional or local level who can provide information on the operational programmes.

The beneficiaries also have their responsibilities. The Managing Authority should guarantee that these responsibilities are carried out and to stimulate beneficiaries to be informed about their role in the process of effective implementation of projects. Their activities are the most valuable prove for the fact that structural policy is not only existing but it reaches its goals. Because of this the Managing Authority must involve the beneficiaries in implementing the information and publicity measures of the programme.

Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 recommends that the Managing Authority must disseminate information jointly with at least one of the following entities – local and municipal authorities, economic and social partners, business organizations, professional and trade organizations, NGOs, educational institutions, EU information centres, as well as EU delegations within the relevant country. This cooperation will guarantee dissemination of good practices and attract public interest in relation to information and communication activities.

The regulation demands that the Managing Authority must promote programme's activities as well as inform the general public about EU contribution. The Communication Plan must initiate this process and to implement it successfully.

The role of the European Union: a shared responsibility

Communications often fail to do justice to the European Union's role, reducing it to that of a co-funder. Financing is not however, an end in itself but rather the consequence of a shared development strategy at national and Community level. This team work is inherent in structural policy.

EU information and publicity requirements for all Community co-financed projects are an integral part of operational programmes. The main objective of the publicity activities is to raise public awareness and transparency of the activities of the EC as well as informing potential beneficiaries and professional organizations about funding possibilities provided by OPRD.

The Managing Authority will guarantee that the necessary information and publicity measures are put in place for each grant contract funded.

In addition, the Managing Authority will ensure:

- compliance with the provisions adopted concerning information and publicity activities;
- information on publicity activities and achieved results, supported by evidences such as photos, articles , etc. are submitted to the Monitoring Committee of the programme;
- the Commission receives adequate information for its Annual Report on implementation of the programme related to information and publicity activities of the MA;
- the media is provided with sufficient information on the programme's progress.

The Managing Authority shall inform the OPRD Monitoring Committee of the following:

(a) communication plan and progress of its implementation;

(b) information and publicity measures carried out;

(c) means of communication used.

Chapter 4: Situation Analysis

At the time of Bulgaria's pre-accession period with the European Union, the Bulgarian government and the European Commission through EU Delegation in Bulgaria launched mass media communication campaign to inform Bulgarian citizens about EU - institutions, vision, Community policy, opportunities for funding under Structural Funds to support development of the country and regions. In spite of efforts made by the European Commission and Bulgarian government to inform the community on EU activities, a UNDP study from 2006 named "Are we ready for EU funding", showed that the Bulgarian municipalities think they are less prepared for the Structural Funds compared to 2004.

Meanwhile more of the respondents in the municipalities declared that they have already received enough general information from brochures, but only 23% declared to have complete knowledge of the possibilities for financing their projects. Knowledge is not sufficient as far as EU regulations, Structural Funds (SF) and their management in Bulgaria are concerned.

Most problematic is provision of information in understandable way. In comparison to 2004 demand of information related to Structural Funds through electronic and printing media remains practically the same, while the interest in information published on the Internet as well as different types of trainings has increased significantly.

According to research for readiness and knowledge of SF, done by MBMD-research agency during March 2007, NGOs and municipalities have relatively strong intention for applying for financing from SF (82 % from NGOs and 67 % from municipalities). Research is a part of the promotion campaign of the Ministry of Finance "BE ACTIVE". According to the interviews with potential beneficiaries as problems for absorption of SF in Bulgaria are indicated lack of practical information (62%), heavy bureaucracy procedures (48%) and the absence of experience in preparing projects (26%). Research showed that 65 % from the municipalities and 61 % from the NGOs are ready to start absorption of SF in Bulgaria. These figures show comparatively positive expectations on that matter.

Researches done by now show that potential beneficiaries are in need of concrete and up-dated information on the practical aspects of SF absorption in BG and especially – procedures for application, possibilities for financing and preparation of projects and so on.

The activities for information and publicity, made by the MA of OPRD have already started. In the autumn of 2006 intensive information campaign for OPRD was carried out. Presentation for the main potential beneficiaries in the 6 regions at NUTS II level took place on operations and activities of the programme. OPRD and rules for applying were presented repeatedly – on seminars, information sessions, arranged from stakeholders of the process (NAMRB, FLGR and others).

From the information mentioned above the following initial analysis could be outlined reflecting the present situation:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political and social consensus about Bulgaria's objectives to become an EU member enjoying its full right; - Progress made as regards establishment of effective communication channels that could be further developed and decentralized for the purposes of OPRD Communication Strategy; - Regional centers are created and NGOs work with them; - Six Regional Departments of the Managing Authority were established. They have the capacity to manage the absorption process of the EU funds locally; - Stable structure of the Managing Authority has been designed. It has its departments responsible for programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The community and businesses do not have full confidence in the capacity of state administration and its willingness to work with them; - Poor information about European standards and sanctions; - The communication channels are too centralized – work in the regions and at local level is not sufficient; - Lack of coordination between communication channels; - Communication among different institutions is insufficiently effective (non-governmental, membership and business organizations willing to work with the government); - Lack of practical skills for preparation of projects of OPRD potential beneficiaries; - Available communication network – newsletters and

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - of OPRD as well as for information and publicity; - There is sufficient number of experts in the government and non government sectors which could help implementing OPRD objectives and the Communication Strategy; - Regions and municipalities acquire the capacity needed to absorb EU funds; - There is a heightened interest among general public about the objectives and problems that could be reached and resolved with support from OPRD; - There is a strong interest of non-governmental and business organizations in the economic, social and cultural development of regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internet sites of different institutions – are not sufficiently and effectively utilized. They offer small number of opportunities for feedback from citizens; - Public discussion about absorption of EU funds is not intensive enough and it's not presented comprehensively enough. -
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To stimulate interest for operational programmes among the general public; - To encourage potential beneficiaries for applying with project proposals under OPRD; - To provide Accessible and effective communication channels popular and evaluated as reliable by beneficiaries and the general public; - To ensure transparency in the process of allocation, awarding of grants and absorption of funds under the operational programme; - To improve coordination mechanisms in the process of EU funds absorption by regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distrust of potential beneficiaries and general public concerning possibilities of transparent financing under operational programmes; - Frustration among potential beneficiaries because of slow and heavy procedures; - Unrealistically high expectations of EU funds impact on the Bulgarian economy; - High fluctuation of qualified employees working in the administration; - Not enough qualified and experienced public servants at local level; - Lack of sufficient and comprehensive information provided to the general public and potential beneficiaries.

Operational Programme Regional Development targets to strengthen the capacity of regions so that EU funding at local level has the biggest impact. The Communication Strategy must represent OPRD priorities for the 2007-2013 period clearly and provide information about them at central, regional and local level so the community can contribute to regional development. Bulgarian citizens must have a clear idea of the OPRD benefits. They have to believe in their importance and effectiveness.

Chapter 5: Objective**5.1. Main objective**

Main objective of the OPRD Communication Plan (CP) is to raise public awareness on EFRD and OPRD for the period 2007-2013, attracting public interest, encouraging application with projects and to ensure transparency in the implementation process of the programme.

The OPRD Communication Plan aims at ensuring that absorption of the EU funds for the period 2007-2013 is done in compliance with the principles of accessibility and transparency for the general public, the beneficiaries of OPRD and all involved stakeholders in the process. Furthermore, the goal is to increase the knowledge of the public about the positive role of the European Community's Cohesion policy.

Main objective of the document is to provide information related to national priorities to target groups at local level while considering the needs and specificity of the relevant region. The Communication Plan aims at encouraging communication and cooperation between local structures (local authorities, business organizations, associations, NGOs, etc.), and improving their interaction with institutions at the national level.

5.2. Specific objectives

The main objective is to be achieved by accomplishing the following specific objectives of the CP:

1. Drawing public attention and raising awareness of the community about the OPRD scope, objectives and results and EU contribution.

These activities are oriented towards the general public. The ambition here is to focus the public interest on the programme's essence, its implementation and results achieved.

2. Drawing the interest of OPRD potential beneficiaries, informing them about funding possibilities provided by EFRD through OPRD and make clear eligibility criteria.

This objective requires use of appropriate measures for stimulating the interest of potential OPRD beneficiaries as well as providing support for the preparation of quality project proposals.

3. Informing beneficiaries about their responsibilities in the process of OPRD implementation, including information and publicity measures regarding the projects.

The objective is to guarantee the proper implementation of OPRD projects through providing timely and high quality communication.

All the activities mentioned in the CP of OPRD aim at ensuring:

- transparency on the programme's implementation for all target and stakeholders;
- positive public attitude toward EU initiatives in cooperation with Bulgarian institutions;
- provision of sufficient amount of information for the potential beneficiaries regarding the scope and content of the programme, calls for project proposals, eligibility criteria, stages of evaluations of project proposals and their deadlines, procedures, etc.
- comprehension by all beneficiaries about their responsibilities regarding project, including information and publicity measures.

Chapter 6: Target groups

The Communication Plan of OPRD has 3 main target groups:

TG 1	Internal target group
TG 2	External target group
TG 3	Mediators target group

6.1. TG 1 Internal target group – includes the following structures in the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works:

- Managing Authority of OPRD – Directorate General Programming of Regional Development, MRDPW
- Regional Departments of Directorate General Programming of Regional Development located in the six regions at NUTS II level.
- Civil servants and managers directly involved in the management process of OPRD
- MRDPW employees
- Members of the Monitoring Committee

6.2. TG 2 External target group

6.2.1. General public and social and economic partners

This group involves the Bulgarian society as a whole. All information and publicity measures aim at earning the citizen's trust and to convince them that EU financing from OPRD provides crucial support for their hometowns. **The Bulgarian community and social and economic partners are to encourage municipal administrations in preparation of OPRD projects.** That's why the Managing Authority must provide clear information about the programme activities and funding opportunities.

The Communication Plan is taking under consideration the existence of the social and economic partners like syndicates and trade unions as well as the associations of employers. Their role in the tuning and influencing the public opinion on various topics is increasing over the last years. They must be convinced in the positive role of the support provided by the European Union.

6.2.2. Potential beneficiaries – municipalities, NGOs, specific beneficiaries

Great importance within this target group is placed upon **municipalities** as representatives of the local authorities. Among the most important potential beneficiaries regarding the programme's scope, that's why they should be motivated and encouraged to participate with projects. Up to now, the municipalities are well informed about the essence of OPRD, its priorities, eligibility criteria for funding. All representatives of local authorities must understand the great importance of the continuation of all activities concerning OPRD at local level.

The measures for information and publicity will be directed towards the following representatives of the target group:

- *municipality's officials;*
- *district administrations;*
- *healthcare institutions – municipal property;*

- *social care institutions – municipal property;*
- *public transportation companies – municipal property;*
- *educational institutions – municipal property;*
- *associations of owners of multi-family residential buildings.*

NGOs are simultaneously possible partners of municipalities as well as potential beneficiaries. The experience from pre-accession funds showed that they often originate ideas and stimulate municipalities to implement them. That is why NGOs must be not only informed about the programme but also to be encouraged to apply. Communication activities should aim at NGOs providing healthcare, social, cultural services, tourist associations, associations of municipalities, etc.

Specific beneficiaries under OPRD are the structures of state administration – ministries, agencies and other state authorities. Their responsibilities and financial allocation are static and pre-defined. They must be however, stimulated to do what is expected of them in terms of information and publicity.

The beneficiaries implementing projects should be well aware of the funding opportunities provide under OPRD in compliance with the programme's rules and requirements with the aim to achieve positive results and create quality project proposals.

6.2.3. Beneficiaries

OPRD beneficiaries are the most important among target groups that can inform the community and form its positive opinion on the programme by promoting positive results from projects. Fulfilling of a particular idea and satisfying the need of society, OPRD investments are all activities which could gain wide support from the local public. By receiving grants under the programme the beneficiaries take responsibilities for implementation of information and publicity activities under projects. The Managing Authority should explain their responsibilities by providing them with guidelines for applying EU information and publicity measures and trainings.

6.3. TG 3 Mediators target group

In order for the successful communication a **target group of mediators** must be defined. They will be main partners of the Managing Authority in the process of implementing information activities. In this group we can include the following structures of civil society:

- **media, journalists**
- **trade and professional organizations, economic and social partners**
- **NGOs**
- **representatives at local and regional level, politicians, PR Departments within ministries and municipalities beneficiaries under OPRD**
- **the MA department responsible for information and publicity measures.**

Mass media, including newspapers, TV, radio stations and internet info-portals is not coincidentally regarded as the fourth estate, because it can influence greatly and form the public's opinion, and transform them in one or another direction. As up to now this target group has been informed in full on the preparation process and start of the programme. The press is more or less concerned with information about for the amount of financial resources, their allocation and how the money will be spent. In general the media must be convinced that OPRD is properly elaborated and its objectives and priorities are providing great opportunities for Bulgarian citizens. Main objective of the Communication Plan is to make the press stay "on our side", thus contributing to the programme's successful implementation.

There is a prejudice that journalists always look for the bad news because they ensure headlines in the newspapers or TV/radio time. The rational approach is to provide the media with sufficient information, to be regularly informed on the programme's progress even without request. Thus reflecting the successful implementation of OPRD would seem more efficient regarding the journalists.

Chapter 7: Communication Strategy

Taking into consideration the situation analysis, Structural Funds Regulations, OPRD Information and Publicity Strategy, the Managing Authority should:

- disseminate main objectives, priorities, operations, and eligibility criteria of OPRD. To ensure equal access to information for all who might be interested;
- provide information related to opportunities for joint (EU and national) funding in implementation of programme activities in municipalities and regions, detailed description of funds allocation under relevant operations;
- “go local” in order to inform the citizens about opportunities and expected results on absorption of EU funds in specific regions;
- encourage public discussion on priority issues related to regional development policy;
- organize informational campaigns for all target groups through mass media – radio stations, television, newspapers;
- use contemporary information technologies to provide updated information for the operational programme to those who are unable to have access;
- organize info days and press conferences with mass media representatives in order to disseminate information on the programme;
- make explanations to the general public avoiding specific language and heavy style.

In order for the information concerning OPRD to be disseminated efficiently the Managing Authority must organize information campaigns, trainings and seminars with the support of regional departments in each region. The information provided under launched grant schemes aims to attract local and regional authorities.

The specified measures for informing all target groups will be implemented by using variety of **communication methods and channels** for implementation of activities providing information and publicity to the entire community.

To reach the target group is not only for provision of information. Main messages addressing the most important target groups should be developed in correspondence with their interests. The basic OPRD public encompasses potential and final beneficiaries, municipalities and the general public.

Main slogan for the period 2007-2013 will be: **Operational Programme Regional Development – “Investing in your future”**.

Chapter 8: Communication methods and channels. Activities for achieving the objectives

In order to accomplish the objectives of CP various communication methods and channels will be used. The choice adequate information activities, methods and channels depends on the type of the target group and their expectations.

8.1. Communication channels

The communication channels which will be used for the target groups described above are as follows:

Target groups	Communication channels
Internal target group	Official correspondence, e-mails personal contacts and informal communication
External target group	
Potential and final beneficiaries (municipalities, state companies etc.)	Press releases, web site, e-mails, media
General public	Media, billboards, web site, explanatory plaques, public events, print materials
Central, regional and local authorities and other internal audiences	Media, e-mails, web site
Mediators target group	
Trade and professional bodies, economic and social partners	Press releases, media
NGOs	Media, web site, e-mails, manuals
Press and broadcast media	E-mails, press releases press briefings, press conferences, web site
Selected representatives at regional and local level, public leaders, policy makers	Media, e-mails, web site
PR departments in state institutions and municipalities beneficiaries under OPRD. Department within the structure of MA responsible for information and publicity measures	Media, press releases, web site, e-mails

8.2. Communication methods

8.2.1. Media campaigns

The main measures that will be used to inform the general public and to attract attention and interest of eligible beneficiaries will include the following:

- **Press conferences** for big events and mile-stones (including programme launch, and the Annual Review of the OPRD progress):
 - Press conference related to the start of the programme. A large scale information event was held simultaneously in the capital and the six regions at NUTS II level after received approval by the European Commission on 05.11.2007. For the first time OP Regional Development 2007-2013 was officially presented with overall information about the five propriety axes, operations and funding opportunities. The event was designed for potential beneficiaries and stakeholders as well as for the general public.
 - Annual press conference. Each year is to be held an Annual Press Conference with the Head of the Managing Authority presenting the programme's progress;
 - Final press conference. A large scale information event will be held for the closure of OP Regional Development 2007-2013. At the public gathering will be presented the programme's development from the start, achieved results, successful projects and good practices.
- **Press releases and media surveys, including thorough information on specific topics, photos, programme coverage, good practices, calls for tenders**
- **Press releases** will be a tool to inform the public on OPRD activities and achievements, especially regarding calls for tender and awards of projects;
- **Press briefings**, assisting journalists to write in-depth stories;
- **Regular seminars** for journalists. Media representatives are not obliged to possess the knowledge and experience required for comprehension of the Managing Authority's activities. If the media is not regularly informed and updated its representatives most likely will feel excluded, "kept in the dark" and therefore react more negatively if and when something goes wrong. The strategy is to keep journalists and editors "on our side", thus ensuring the most positive perception possible of the Managing Authority in the mass media;
- **Trainings** for beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries.

8.2.2. Print materials

The Managing Authority will provide a variety of print materials. Initially general information about the programme will be presented, as it will be detailed and enriched later on. The issues will include brochures, leaflets, justifications, guidelines and copies of key documents.

8.2.3. Internet related information

8.2.3.1. Internet/e-mails

This will be one of the most important methods for providing regularly comprehensive and updated information about the OP, including information on European Structural Funds, application forms, application forms, FAQs,

press releases, information on approved projects, calls for tender, and information and publicity measures guidelines.

8.2.3.2. Website

An OPRD web site is developed to provide information to the general public with key messages in order to reach Bulgarian citizens. It contains thorough information on the following matters:

- OPRD;
- Guidelines for applying;
- Application documents;
- Guidance notes;
- OPRD Monitoring Committee papers;
- Press releases;
- Information on approved projects;
- List of OPRD beneficiaries, grant scheme title and grant amount of projects;
- Opportunity for submission of irregularity alerts;
- Guidelines on information and publicity measures;
- Success stories archive;
- Instructions for contract implementation to beneficiaries; financial management, control and monitoring; public procurement;
- Q&A on open grant schemes.

The web site of the programme is interactive and easy to use. Each one of the potential beneficiaries will have his/her virtual space on the web site with information adequate to his/her demand. The address of the website is www.bgregio.eu.

The official release of the programme's web site was accompanied by a wide internet advertisement campaign promoting the internet address. Attracting more visitors can be achieved through placement of banners in popular internet addresses linked to the OPRD web site. All users of the web site are to be registered. Thus, it will support a large amount of contact details on all users related to the operational programme.

8.3. Communication methods reflecting EU support

8.3.1. Visual identity

- A **visual identity** was designed that embraces all the OPs with clear demarcation between different programmes to facilitate identification. For communication and publicity purposes, OPRD Managing Authority, regional departments, beneficiaries and all referents of the Operational Programme will use the following logo:



- **Information and Publicity Guidelines** (Annex 1) clarify the beneficiaries' responsibilities on each project to ensure compliance with EU guidelines.
- **Arranging European flag** to be raised for one week starting May 9th, in front of the premises of the managing authorities.
- Publish information about **EU contribution**.

The general public must be aware of the EU contribution in implementation of the programme's contracts. This will be achieved by:

- use of the OPRD logo;
- use of the European Union flag and the European Regional Development Fund logo;
- signage in compliance with EU requirements;
- application of the information and publicity guidelines;
- publicity and media tools, including newspapers, internet, video, TV and radio;
- procedures for media relations, actions to be undertaken in crisis situations;
- awareness campaigns designed to promote the programme to eligible groups of beneficiaries, communities or sectors,
- publicity and information leaflets and attract the wide public;
- research and writing stories, publishing articles or interviews;
- trainings for contractors of projects and civil servants involved in the programme's implementation;
- templates for press releases and response mechanisms for the media;
- advertising campaigns to promote the progress of the programme;
- permanent explanatory plaques;
- billboards;

Detailed information is to be found in Annex 1 enclosed to this Communication Plan. Billboards are to be removed not later than six months after completion of project activities and replaced with explanatory plaques.

- other publications (brochures, newsletters, leaflets).

The brochures, newsletters and leaflets shall be elaborated in compliance with EU requirements for visual identity.

Publications on projects should contain an image of the EU flag on first page.

8.4. Communication methods for promoting the results of OPRD projects

8.4.1. Annual Report Event on OPRD achievements

Annual event will be organized to report all that has been done by the Managing Authority in the implementing process of OPRD. At the conference will be invited all key representatives from the MA, government, local authorities, media and beneficiaries.

8.4.2. Responsibilities of the beneficiaries

The beneficiaries must carry out at least 2 informational events – one at the beginning and one at the end of the project, if the total public contribution to the operation exceeds 10 000 €. The type of events must be in accordance with the scale of the project. **Financing of these events must be included in the project's budget.**

8.4.3. NGOs information network

Many NGOs have huge member data base being municipalities, other NGOs or private companies. Their mailing system for communication could be used for distributing important information from the Managing Authority concerning the implementation of the programme to various stakeholders.

8.5. Activities envisaged for different target groups

The information and advertising campaign will be planned on the basis of analysis of activities already carried out to promote EU contribution and through identification of the strengths and weaknesses relevant to the campaign. A series of activities are foreseen for each target group.

To achieve the objectives of the Communication Plan the following **activities** will be implemented:

Activities	Objectives	Targets	Institution in charge
Internal communication Working meetings and discussions Trainings	Better coordination and information flow between the bodies working for OPRD	Internal target group	Managing Authority
Create a OPRD web site Organize information events Organize an annual event on the progress of OPRD implementation	Promote transparency Understand key priorities	Potential beneficiaries Final beneficiaries General public	Managing Authority
Update the OPRD web site Organize information days at central and local level	Inform all potential beneficiaries about the opportunities provided by OPRD	Potential beneficiaries	Managing Authority in partnership with economic and social partners
Promote OPRD web site Organize Information days Distribute publications	Inform all potential beneficiaries about the principles of Structural Funds	Potential beneficiaries Final beneficiaries	Managing Authority in partnership with its regional departments
Produce and disseminate on-line and printed guidelines of the Programme's content and procedures	Provide sufficient and appropriate information on programme	Potential beneficiaries	Managing Authority in partnership with its regional departments
Produce and disseminate on-line and printed brochures and leaflets	Inform citizens on EU funds management, , provide clear and accessible information, including the	Potential beneficiaries Final beneficiaries General public	Managing Authority in partnership with its regional departments

	role played by European Union contribution		
Organize seminars Dissemination of the Procedure Manual for management and implementation of OPRD	Establish communication channel to provide appropriate information for development of quality project proposals	Potential beneficiaries	Managing Authority in partnership with its regional departments and international institutions
Promote OPRD web site Organize information days Elaborate and disseminate Guidelines for Information and Publicity Measures	Inform beneficiaries on their responsibilities related to information activities of projects financed by the SF	Final beneficiaries	Managing Authority in partnership with its regional departments
Draw information and publicity focus on the web site Organize Information days Draw out guidelines on I&P requirements	Ensure that beneficiaries are aware of their responsibilities to publicish information on Structural Funds	Beneficiaries Media	Managing Authority in partnership with its regional departments
Intervene at TV and radio broadcasts Organize media campaigns	Raise awareness of the programme and Structural Funds at regional and local level, so that they and their benefits are clearly understood and appreciated	General public	Managing Authority in partnership with economic and social partners and with beneficiaries
Create a database with good practices on the web site Organize Information days	Improve the quality of information through dissemination of good practices and success stories of the programme	Potential beneficiaries	Managing Authority in partnership with its regional departments
Organize final event on a large scale for OPRD closure Publish and disseminate list of OPRD beneficiaries and projects	Promote the benefits of investment made by implementing national, regional and local strategies	General public	Managing Authority in partnership with its regional departments
Inform regularly the media about organization of information events and OPRD progress results (information, promotional, media campaigns, discussion forums)	Provide detailed information on the programme's progress and EU funds absorption at national, regional and local level	Mediators	Managing Authority in partnership with its regional departments

All information and promotional events must be organized under the control of the Communication team in the Managing Authority (experts in Information and Publicity Unit, Programming, Evaluation, Information and Publicity Department of DG Programming of Regional Development).

Chapter 9: Coordination and responsibilities

9.1. Coordination

The Managing Authority's team must keep close relations with various government institutions and other state authorities and stimulate communication with them. This will provide more opportunities for popularizing the operational programme.

National network of the civil servants responsible for implementing information and publicity measures within operational programmes has been created to guarantee cooperation and partnership between the institutions managing EU funds. It will play an important role for establishing good communication and coordination between all planned communication activities, as well as to avoid overlapping of activities under all operational programmes. Within this network are to be exchanged good practices, experience and identified tools for improving awareness and transparency in absorption of EU funds. Sessions of the network will be organized every three months

9.2. Responsible structures and bodies

Managing Authority of OPRD, Information and Publicity Unit, Programming, Evaluation, Information and Publicity Department

- Coordinate the activities as regards information and publicity at central and regional level;
- Implement the OPRD Communication plan;
- Inform potential beneficiaries and the general public about the opportunities provided by OPRD;
- Inform the general public and promote EU role with the financial resources provided under OPRD;
- Carry out information activities as regards progress of OPRD implementation
- Organize and manage institutional and inter-institutional communication activities among MA staff, the ministry's press-centre, and the responsible structures for information and publicity of other operational programmes;
- Coordinate and provide instructions to "Implementation of Programme Priorities" Department as regards the activities of information and publicity at local and regional level;
- Plan publicity activities and information campaigns under OPRD and prepare financial calculations for their delivery;
- Take part in identification/preparation of key messages, speeches delivered by managers, articles, publications, etc;
- Update and develop OPRD website;
- Organize publication of materials related to OPRD – newsletters, leaflets, reports, etc;
- Organize, conduct and manage press-conferences and briefings, participate in media broadcasts and give interviews;
- Collect requests for information from the media and the general public and provide related answers;
- Prepare draft reports to the European Commission and Monitoring Committee about application and implementation of the information and publicity requirements;
- Assist the publication of announcements of calls for tender and observe that rules and project selection criteria are followed;

- Observe EU requirements on visual identity are followed in project implementation financed by OPRD
- Manage all procedural and operative aspects of the information campaigns and events (list of addressees, invitations, location, timing, logistics and documentation) and provide information to be released;
- Maintain relations and provide information to media at central and regional level;
- Disseminate information for positive results on successful projects financed under OPRD (in co-ordination with beneficiaries);
- Implements EU information and publicity requirements as outlined in the regulations;
- Coordinate, monitor and evaluate information and publicity activities carried out by the Regional Development Councils;
- Manage general public awareness survey related to programme activities;
- Manage media briefings;
- Manage advertising campaigns on national media;
- Elaborate OPRD promotional materials to be published in national and local media;
- Prepare publications (leaflets, brochures, newsletters)
- Promote OPRD logo

As follows are the persons representing Organizational Development, Information and Publicity Unit in the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works:

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Regional Departments of DG Programming of Regional Development

- Provide various information about OPRD and its procedures to potential beneficiaries at regional and local level.

Monitoring Committee

- Monitors the way the arrangements concerning information and publicity, defined in the Communication Plan are being implemented;
- Provides information about its proceedings and informs on the programme progress achieved

Secretariats of the Regional Development Councils (RDC)

Provide assistance to the beneficiaries concerning their responsibilities for information and publicity according to Article 8 of Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 such as:

- organize and monitor information and publicity activities at regional level;
- persons interact with local media;
- manage regional information and advertising campaigns;
- assist in preparation of and add complementary information in project proposals.

Secretariats of the RDCs are located in the centers of the six regions at NUTS II level.

Main responsibility of beneficiaries is to promote EU support by implementing projects which contribute to the development of the Bulgarian regions.

Chapter 10: Stages of implementation of the Communication Plan

The Communication plan will be implemented in three stages:

- Preparation phase, to be implemented before the start of the OPRD;
- Implementing phase, which will be carried out during the programming period;
- Final phase (which corresponds to the programme closure and results dissemination).

10.1. Preparation phase (2007-2008)

During this phase, the Communication team prepares an ex-ante evaluation on the basis of previous experiences acquired during the pre-accession period of Bulgaria and current relations with European institutions. The ex-ante evaluation is followed by drawing out the Communication Plan and by establishment of internal and territorial information network.

In order to create the internal and external Information network, the Communication team identifies, informs and provides training to the civil servants responsible for organizing information campaigns about the programme and contact persons in the regional departments regarding requirements for implementing information and advertising campaigns.

10.2. Implementing phase (2009-2012)

The implementing phase includes the following steps:

At the launch of the programme, the Communication team:

- Prepares in partnership with the Representation Office of the European Commission in Bulgaria a major audio-visual broadcast event presenting the launch of the OPRD. The event is held at the same time in the capital and six regions at NUTS II level;
- Prepares and disseminates the first information publications through the territorial network and during the opening event.

The next step is crucial for the programme success. After the first publication of the grant schemes and until the end of OPRD, the Communication team:

- organizes information events on how to apply for funding and responsibilities of the beneficiary on information and publicity
- publishes a user manual on the rules to be followed when promoting information on EU funded projects
- **disseminate the results on implementation of approved projects**
- keeps permanent contacts with the media
- identifies events at which to participate and to present funded projects
- participates in the network maintained by the Commission

10.3. Closing phase (2013)

The final phase foresees mandatory activities such as a final dissemination event on the programme achievements and promotion of good practices. The following activities should be implemented:

- organization of a closing big national event about results dissemination at central and local level
- publication of brochures with information about the best projects funded by the Community
- dissemination of good practices
- evaluate information and publicity events for the Final OPRD Implementation Report

Chapter 11: Monitoring and evaluation

In order to check the effectiveness and efficiency of all information and publicity activities, they should be evaluated before, while and after their implementation. The process of implementing the Communication Plan will be observed by the Monitoring Committee through the entire programming period and will be evaluated by achieved target values.

Monitoring involves a system and continuous gathering, analysis and use of collected information for the purposes of every day management and decision-making. Evaluation is periodic and related to effectiveness and impact of the information provided according to the objectives of OPRD.

In accordance with the legislative requirements a report is prepared of how the information and communication measures are evaluated in terms of transparency, general public awareness of the operational programme and the Community contribution.

Periodical information on the Communication Plan implementation for the Monitoring Committee and the Commission is provided by means of a system of monitoring indicators which are used for benchmarking the performance and the progress made. A selection of result and output indicators that have been approved as part of the OPRD is listed below:

<u>Indicators and targets</u>					
<u>Type of Indicator</u>	<u>Indicator</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Quantification</u>		<u>Information source</u>
			<u>Baseline value</u>	<u>Target Value</u>	
Result	Level of general public awareness	%	15%	40%	Sociological survey
	Number of the OPRD web site visits	Number	0	300 000	Online WEB counter
	Number of citizens who saw the billboards	Thousands	0	2 000	Sociological survey
	Broadcasts in electronic media (TV and radio stations, Internet editions)	Number	0	100	Media survey
	Publications in print media	Number	0	60	Media survey
	Rate of the seminar's participants who increased their knowledge	%	0	80%	Initial and final survey
Output	Placed billboards	Number	0	60	MA
	Guidelines, manuals, brochures printed for the use of potential beneficiaries	Number	2100	200 000	MA
	Press releases, brochures printed for the media	Number	0	20 000	MA
	Information published on the OPRD website	Number	0	200	MA
	Informational events (press conferences, press briefings, working meetings, seminars etc.)	Number	6	60	MA

Necessary for monitoring and evaluation of information and promotional activities are:

- definition of key position, information related to the awareness of EU activity before and now
- monitoring system for collecting information
- obligation for performing formal evaluations

The information related to knowledge about different aspects of the Structural Funds and applying various communication tools is a part of ex-ante evaluation made during the preparation phase. At this stage is envisaged planning of a reliable system for data collecting and processing of information by the methods listed in the above table. Evaluation of the impact and programme effectiveness will be included in the overall evaluation to be elaborated by external expert.

Besides quantitative measurements, measurement of qualitative parameters will be made by using the following quality indicators:

Publications:

- attractiveness
- clarity of expression
- balance between text and image
- on-line and off-line products
- easy to use
- easy access

Events:

- quality of organization
- participation degree in the discussion
- professionalism, clarity and duration of speeches
- quality of disseminated documents
- access to the place where the event is being held

The Communication Plan will be a subject of evaluation. The Communication team will analyze the success of each individual communication activity. This will enable the team to focus its efforts on activities that are proving effective and enable the support for beneficiaries.

Evaluation must:

- help steer the content of future communications
- capture the needs of the audience
- assess whether information being communicated is received and understood by the target audience
- ensure expectations are being met.

It is envisaged that evaluation will take place at different times and could be undertaken through a number of channels including:

- e-mail surveys
- direct feedback from DG Programming of Regional Development staff
- actual attendance at events
- willingness and enthusiasm for further involvement

To be successful, communications must be two-way. The Communication team must be able to process, evaluate and analyze feedbacks quickly, professionally and efficiently. Trust must be built among the general public, so that citizens are able to see that their feedback is valued and is being taken seriously by showing improvements.

Chapter 12: Annual Report on information and publicity

The annual reports and the final report on implementation referred to in Article 67 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 for operational programme shall include the following:

- (a) examples of information and promotional activities for OPRD to implement the Communication Plan;
- (b) regulations related to information and publicity measures referred to in Article 7 (3) including where applicable, the electronic address where this data may be found;
- (c) the content of major amendments in the Communication plan.

The Annual Implementation Report for the year 2010 and the Final Implementation Report shall contain a chapter evaluating results of information and publicity measures in terms of transparency, awareness of the role played by the Community as provided.

The means used for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the Communication Plan shall address information and publicity needs identified in the Communication Plan.

Activity	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Organization of a large scale information event for the start of OPRD	X								
Creating OPRD web site	X								
Organization of information events	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Organization of annual information event on programme progress	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Update of OPRD web site					X				
Organization of information days at central and local level	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Promoting OPRD web site	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Publishing on-line and disseminating printing materials (brochures and leaflets)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Participation in TV and Radio broadcasts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Organization of media campaigns					X	X	X	X	
Data base with good practices published on the OPRD web site					X	X	X	X	X
Regularly informing the media for organization of information events and release of OPRD progress results	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Seminars for journalists					X	X	X		
Organization of a large scale survey on the impact of the information campaign – sociological surveys						X	X	X	
Media relations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Including information about the	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		

results of information activities under the programme in the Annual Report									
Evaluation of the implementation of the OPRD Communication Plan							X	X	
Organization of a major information event for OPRD closure							X		

Chapter 13: Modifications of the Communication plan

While elaborating the Communication Plan it became obvious this document should be dynamic and flexible to changes if needed. When improvident circumstances take place, the Communication plan must be modified in order to reach the outlined objectives.

The Communication Plan could be changed by the Managing Authority. The Monitoring Committee of OPRD will be informed about the modifications in the document's content and of the envisaged information and publicity measures. EC will be timely and duly informed of such changes.

Chapter 14: Indicative financial resources**Indicative budget by years:**

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Budget €	0	324 500	532 850	828 500	828 500	1 332 500	1 153 150
Total:							5 000 000

Year	Budget €	% per phase	% per year	Community funding /ERDF/	National funding	Total funding
2007			0	0	0	0
2008		6,49	6,49	275 825	48 675	324 500
2009			10,657	452 922,5	79 927,5	532 850
2010		70,447	16,57	704 225	124 275	828 500
2011			16,57	704 225	124 275	828 500
2012			26,65	1 132 625	199 875	1 332 500
2013		23,063%	23,063	980 174,5	172 972,5	1 153 150
Total %		100%	100%	85%	15%	5 000 000

The financial resources for implementation of the Communication Plan are allocated among different activities, including national co-financing, and are distributed in the following indicative items:

No	Activities	Amount in EUR
1	Elaboration and dissemination of OPRD materials	306 775
2	Manufacturing and placement of billboards to promote OPRD	613 550
3	Information events	2 103 966
4	Web site	20 452
5	Logo for programming period 2014-2020 r.	25 565
6	Publications in newspapers with largest circulation	255 646
7	Contacts with electronic media	1 175 971
8	Evaluation of the implementation of the Communication Plan	127 823
9	Media and sociological surveys related to the degree of awareness and satisfaction of the community	127 823

Chapter 15: Annex 1

Guidelines

**for the Communication Plan for Information and Publicity
of Operational Programme Regional Development 2007-2013**

15.1. Guidelines for event organization

15.1.1. Events

- Project presentation
- Commencement of a project phase
- Completion of a project phase
- Seminar
- Conference
- Official opening
- Important meeting – Monitoring Committee meeting
- Ministerial visit to a project site
- Announcement of a scheme

Invitation list

Depending on the event, the invitation list should include the minister or deputy minister (when appropriate), local government representatives, local business and community representatives and national and local media. Representative from the European Commission should also be invited. Official Invitations must feature the OPRD logo and the EU logo.

Location

Indoor: Hotel conference room/conference hall, board room, reception area, library

Outdoor: Construction site, new road, new building

The following points of reference should be considered during preparation of the event and implemented as appropriate:

- display a suitable background or a stand featuring OPRD and EU logo as appropriate;
- display Bulgarian and EU Flags as appropriate;
- provide a podium for speakers. Attach a sign with OPRD and EU logo as appropriate in front of the podium.
- provide a PA System and check if the system works correctly prior to the event.
- make sure the room/ location and stage have suitable lighting and check it with hotel/office staff prior to the event. Lighting is very important for photography and video making purposes.
- provide a Top Table and Name Places for Guest Speakers/ Dignitaries/ VIP's and suitable seating arrangement for attendees.
- if you are organizing the event make sure you have a contact person to liaise with regarding the following: projectors, screens, lighting, PA System, drinks and food requirements.
- check with all speakers regarding the required technical equipment for their presentations: overhead projectors, computers, LCD projectors, flip charts etc.
- it is a good idea to have speakers e-mail you their presentations a day or two prior to the event so that they are available on the computer you are using at the event. Speakers should also be advised to bring a copy of their presentations with them on a disc.
- if handouts will be disseminated make sure to make copies in advance.
- if the event takes place outside e.g. the opening of a new road, make sure to provide suitable PA System, a podium for speakers and umbrellas in case of bad weather (umbrellas with OPRD and EU logo for instance)

- For outdoor events make sure your organization has fulfilled all OPRD and EU publicity requirements regarding roadside and site signage/billboards, and permanent explanatory plaques as outlined in the Guidelines for EU Information and Publicity Requirements.

15.1.2. Advertising

Some events may require general public presence. A good way of doing this is by placing an advertisement in the local newspaper outlining details of the event, and/or broadcasting an advertisement on the local radio. Posters could also be displayed in public places. All printed materials should feature OPRD and EU logo as appropriate.

15.1.3. Information packs

Provide information packs for all attendees at the event. The Information packs should include background information of the event, objectives, timetable of procedures, names and titles of the speakers, copies of the speakers' presentations, general information and name and telephone number of the designated person to deal with general enquiries from attendees. If copies of presentations are not available prior to the event make sure that photocopying facilities are available.

15.1.4. Internet site

- Update your organization's website with details of the event. The website will be useful as a reference and information tool for those attending the event and for the media.
- Send details of the event to Communication team for publishing on the OPRD website.
- Provide a link to the OPRD website – www.bgregio.eu

15.1.5. Miscellaneous

- Provide official invitation cards – for major events only.
- Assign an individual to manage all catering activities.
- Provide name tags for all attendees
- Draft agenda or programme of events and disseminate with invitations

15.2. Guidelines for relations with the media

Journalists detest propaganda and like facts and real stories. They also have to react quickly. Effective communication with journalists requires mature consideration.

15.2.1. The facts

A project co-financed by the European Union and the national budget makes it possible to reconstruct a road that will make life much easier for local residents. When communicating this kind of information to journalists use of incomprehensible language. All you need to do is give the essential details for the renovation and the effect it will have upon the population. This is the material which should be included in a press release, that should remain clear and concise.

15.2.2. Confidence and cooperation

The best way to ensure cooperation with journalists is to establish relationship of trust based on mutual respect. There is no point in contacting journalists all the time for insignificant occasions or overwhelm them with too much paperwork: too much information destroys information, suppresses interest in it. It is best to act with diplomacy, involving journalists only when is really necessary. To facilitate contacts with journalists, it is a good idea to have a contact list, a press file which should be updated regularly.

15.2.3. Need to be pro-active

Do not wait for journalists to contact you. Approach them and anticipate their needs by drawing their attention to key events, particularly interesting projects or additional information sources.

15.2.4. Useful contacts

The press is multi-faceted. Journalists work in different media (press, radio, television, Internet) and each of them has its own rules. Every journalist specializes in a different field and has its own interests, at regional or local level for example. This diversity should be borne in mind when communicating with journalists.

15.2.5. Availability

When a journalist is seeking information he wants to obtain it as quickly as possible: for the next day's article or programme. Hence this rule: never leave a question unanswered, always be available.

15.2.6. Relay

In his relations with journalists, the role of the press attaché is also to serve as a relay, where necessary referring the journalist to other competent persons or sources.

15.2.7. "Press book"

Every time Structural Funds topic article appears or a programme is being broadcasted the beneficiaries are obliged to keep a record of it by compiling a "press book". This will facilitate a quantitative and qualitative follow-up.

15.2.8. Media contact list

Prepare contact list of the media you wish to invite to the event. This list should include representatives from:

- national & local press, radio & TV,
- regional correspondents for national TV, radio & press,
- specialized correspondents for national TV, press and radio as appropriate e.g. ICT correspondent, education Correspondent, etc.

2-3 days prior to the event call media representatives to remind them about the event and to check if they will attend.

15.2.9. Informing the media

Be clear about the objectives of the event you are organizing and the message you wish to convey. Prior to the event, issue a press release to the media outlining the details of the event:

The press release should provide the following information:

- where and when the event will take place
- who will attend
- names of speakers/VIP's/dignitaries attending
- why the event is taking place
- explain the project/event within the context of OPRD
- provide financial allocation, sources of funding, etc.
- invite members of the media.

The press release should also include:

- A reference to OPRD and EU Structural Funds as appropriate;
- OPRD and EU logo.

15.2.10. Press packs

Press packs should be available during the event and should include:

- copies of presentations and speeches from guest speakers
- an updated press release providing the following information:
 - what is the action /event
 - who benefits
 - who is responsible
 - where is it taking place
 - funding
- when writing your press release contact speakers, special guests and your spokesperson for quotes to write in the press release.
- if the event takes place over a two or three-day period, update the press release daily.
- press packs should also include background information on the event and should refer to the OPRD and the European Regional Development Fund.
- Your press release should also include a contact name, telephone number and cell phone number of the individual assigned to assist the media during and after the event.

15.2.11. OPRD in the local media

OPRD progress and EU projects should be in the highlight especially in the local media. The objectives are:

- to raise awareness of Operational Programme Regional Development at local level
- to assist all organizations in implementing and managing OPRD and EU funded projects and encouraging their activity
- to provide information locally on local projects funded under OPRD.

15.2.12. Photographs

- arrange for a photographer to attend the event on behalf of your organization.
- arrange appropriate background for photographic purposes during the event for the official photographer and other press photographers who may attend.
- photo editors are always looking for pictures that illustrate a story in an imaginative way and show things happening. Prior to your event try and make up ideas for interesting photos. Make sure you have identified a suitable background and location.
- photographs sent to newspapers or magazines must be clearly captioned, with people's names and titles and a description of the event or occasion. It is a good idea to check beforehand the correct spelling of names and titles of VIPs/dignitaries attending the event.
- after the event the photographer should also provide you with a selection of photographs for publishing on your website and for publications such as newsletters.
- write the name of the official photographer of the event at the end of press releases so the press can source photos directly.

15.2.13. Follow up

It is important to evaluate the success of your event. It may be a good idea to create an assessment sheet using different forms of criteria. The beneficiaries must collect evidences of every event undertaken and every media publication or press release. A copy of the newspaper article and TV or radio reporting material will be enough.

Outlined below are some examples:

- number of replies to invitations
- number of attendees: anticipated number versus actual number
- a short questionnaire/survey for attendees to fill in (for conferences and seminars)
- reaction of speakers/dignitaries/VIP's
- number of requests for further information
- number of public enquiries
- number of media enquiries
- number of interviews
- number of articles/features in the press
- number of photographs published

15.2.14. The journalists' file

It takes time and effort to compile a good press file. But it is an investment which pays off in the longer run. It enables you to target journalists, to contact them effectively and receive a better feedback. For effective communication with journalists you must of course know who they are!

They must be identified in advance and full details of their particulars noted. This preparatory stage has a name: compiling a "press file". Three factors contribute to the effectiveness of a journalists' file.

▪ Diversification

The first requirement is diversity. No media should be ignored in the quest for good addressees: press, radio, television, Internet, general and specialist publications, national, regional and local papers, public and private

media. All journalists can be useful, at some time or another, for the transmission of information. It could also be of benefit to have a file containing the particulars of journalists who are especially interested in Structural Funds. These journalists could then receive information containing basic ideas on the subject, enabling them to speak about it whenever an event provides the opportunity to do so.

- **Updating**

The second requirement is regular updating of information. Journalists frequently change media and columns. New journalists also come on the scene. The press file must reflect this changing reality or it will soon be obsolete. Information must be constantly corrected, added and deleted.

- **Structuring**

The third requirement is a well structured computerized database. The trick is to be able to locate information quickly by introducing a number of key words.

- Type of media (television, radio, press, etc.). It is particularly important to note the frequency of media and who sets the editorial deadline.
- Contact particulars of journalists. Do not forget the fax number, e-mail and the direct telephone number if possible.
- The journalist's role and specialties: editor-in-chief, editorial secretary, column manager, column member, freelance journalist. Avoid sending mail to the media without a reference name as it will get lost amongst everything else.
- Geographical area covered by the media. Journalists (and their readers – listeners – viewers) will be all the more interested in the information if it concerns events taking place close to home.

15.2.15. Press release

The press release is information which is communicated proactively to the media so that they can pass it on in an expanded form and present it in the appropriate manner.

How to ensure that the press release succeeds in attracting the attention of journalists who are in great demand?

- **Practical tips**

- 1) **Target journalists to be contacted.** Depending on the subject and the geographical zone covered, select carefully the journalists to whom the press release is to be sent.
- 2) **Act at the right moment.** Dailies, weeklies, monthlies, etc. have different editorial deadlines. Bear in mind these specific deadlines when sending press releases.
- 3) **Set an embargo.** Specify that the press release cannot appear before a stated date. Any journalist who fails to respect this deadline would be committing an ethical fault.
- 4) **Write it like an article.** To make it easy for the journalist to publish it, the press release should be structured as much as possible like an article the journalist would have written.
- 5) **Make information available on the Internet.** Some journalists will want to provide more information than the press release covers. For this purpose, place on-line various complementary texts in an Internet space set aside for the media.

- **Typical structure of a press release**

- 1) **Heading.** This is the first element which addresses the journalist and the reader. A good heading is a short heading. It is based on words which people commonly use and which appeals to them as they go about their day-to-day lives.

- 2) **The introductory paragraph.** Readers and journalists are in a hurry! They have to be able to get the essence of the message almost at a glance. The introductory paragraph sums up the press release content in a few lines.
- 3) **The text.** Place yourself in the position of the reader you are addressing. Keep to one idea per sentence. Present facts, not value judgments.
- 4) **The subheadings.** These divide the text into blocks of ideas and thus facilitate two-speed reading.

- **Circulating a press release**

If the content is to remain topical, the press release must reach its recipients as quickly as possible. Its circulation must therefore be organized in advance. If news are also announced directly, at a press conference for example, the press release should be distributed at the press conference or in other words where the event takes place. It can be distributed individually or with other documents in what is known as a press pack. In other cases, it may be sent by fax or e-mail, or made available on a website provided the site is known and the journalists targeted visit it regularly. Journalists have little time and work under considerable pressure. These are reasons to make life easier for them by making every effort to ensure that information reaches them without having to go out and look for it.

15.2.16. Press conference

Press conferences are held to mark an important event and enable journalists to be the first to receive information on a particular subject. A press conference provides an opportunity for the organizer to inform journalists on a given subject, while making their job easier in terms of information processing. A successful press conference requires mobilization of substantial resources. For 30 journalists to come to a press conference you generally have to invite between 100 and 150. Careful preparation of a press conference takes between 15 and 20 days full-time work for one person, plus being present on the day and follow-up. A press conference costs money, the amount of which should be calculated in advance. It is not an operation which should be repeated frequently so as to avoid being a drain on budgets or dulling the interest of journalists. Journalists make the effort to attend a press conference because they feel it is going to be worth it. It is vitally important only to hold press conferences for "important" events and not to abuse the method to announce details.

What is the secret of an effective press conference? Quality of preparation! Here are four points which warrant particular attention.

- **The invitations**

Send out the invitations two or three weeks in advance. Send two copies of the invitation to the editorial office: one for the journalist and one for the editor-in-chief.

- **The place**

Choose a central location with easy access; attach a map with the invitation and make arrangements for parking.

- **Reception**

Set aside a reception desk at the entrance to the press room. Journalists will be requested to give full particulars which can then be usefully included in the journalists' file.

- **The follow-up**

The press conference must enable the administration to establish direct and reliable contacts with the media. These contact points must, in turn, be able to "feed" the curiosity and interest of the journalists. There may not always be a major event but that is no reason not to prepare the field so that when something important does

come up the journalist will be ready to talk about it, thanks to the continuous information flow from which he has benefited.

- **Write for the layman**

The Internet facilitates access to official texts approved by the managing authorities or the European Commission. However, these documents can only be read by specialists, i.e. civil servants used to the administrative language in which they are drafted. To encourage interest on the part of the layman, short texts drafted (such as summaries of official documents) in a language they are familiar with are necessary. Before placing a text on-line, tests among likely readers can be a means of checking their reaction and thus finding out if the text is going to be effective. Some well chosen images can facilitate understanding, while purely decorative animation slows down the connection and discourages navigation.

- **Ensuring complementary information**

Websites must be an inherent part of the communication. A simple example: an information leaflet with more information can be ordered from a website. In a particular region for instance, the programme's presentation can be requested free of charge at the site created by the Managing Authority.

15.3. Visibility guidelines for beneficiaries

The beneficiary must inform the general public for their projects as well as the participants in the project. Clear notice of the EU support must be stated. In order to achieve this, the following items should be used:

- the flag of the EU in accordance with instructions for creating the emblem and a definition of the standard colors stated in Annex I of the Commission Regulation EC No 1828/2006;
- reference to European Union;
- reference to the European Regional Development Fund;
- a statement highlighting the added value of the intervention of the Community: "Investing in your future";
- reference to the Operational Programme Regional Development and its logo.

Detailed information about the graphics applied in the above items could be found in the Guidelines for information and publicity of OPRD, which are published on the web site of OPRD: www.bgregio.eu.

15.3.1. Billboards

The beneficiaries shall, during the implementation of the operation, put up a **billboard** at the site of each operation which fulfils the following conditions:

- (a) total public contribution for the operation exceeds EUR 500 000;
- (b) the operation consists of financing infrastructure or construction.

The billboard shall state the type and name of operation, as well as the following Information:

1. emblem of the European Union, in accordance with the graphic standards set out in Annex I, and reference to the European Union;
2. reference to the European Regional Development Fund;
3. a statement highlighting the added value of the intervention of the Community: "Investing in your future";

For small promotional objects, points (2) and (3) shall not apply. The information in (1), (2) and (3) must take up at least 25% of the billboard.

When the operation is completed, the billboard shall be replaced by **permanent explanatory plaque**.

15.3.2. Permanent explanatory plaques

The beneficiary shall put up a **permanent explanatory plaque** that is visible and of significant size no later than six months after completion of an operation that fulfils the following conditions:

- (a) total public contribution for the operation exceeds EUR 500 000;
- (b) the operation consists of purchase of a physical object or financing infrastructure or construction.

The plaque shall state the type and name of operation, as well as the following Information:

1. emblem of the European Union, in accordance with the graphic standards set out in Annex I, and reference to the European Union;
2. reference to the European Regional Development Fund;
3. a statement highlighting the added value of the intervention of the Community: "Investing in your future";

For small promotional objects, points (2) and (3) shall not apply. The information in (1), (2) and (3) must take up at least 25% of the plaque.

15.3.3. Informational materials for popularizing the projects

For the purposes of popularizing EU financial support it is recommended to prepare and distribute informational materials presenting the goals of projects in progress. Such are brochures, leaflets, newsletters, press releases (which are obligatory for organizing informational event for journalists) videos, audio materials etc.

15.3.4. Media relations and activity evidences

Beneficiaries must provide clear notice to the effect from the operation implemented possible under the Operational Programme co-financed by the ERDF. Any document, concerning such an operation shall include a statement to the effect that the Operational Programme was co-financed by the ERDF. The beneficiaries must ensure that those taking part in the operation have been informed of that funding.

The beneficiaries must provide to the RDs photo pictures showing the activities undertaken as a part of the project implementation. The RDs will use these for further publishing of the best practices on the web-site of the MA or in printed materials.

All possible evidences for proving the existence of such events should be kept by the beneficiaries for the purposes of the following monitoring of the project. That includes list of participants, agenda of the event, audio or video records, pictures and all financial documents etc. The beneficiaries should keep a copy from all printed, audio or video materials made for the project.

All possible evidences for proving the media coverage of events organized and project development should be collected and kept by the beneficiary. That includes copies of all newspaper articles, and records of e TV and radio broadcasts, as well as web addresses of the archived news concerning the event or at least a screenshot of the news at the day of releasing.

The beneficiary must clearly show its participation in a project co-financed by the EU on their web site. This should be done by putting the emblem of the European Union, in accordance with the graphic standards set out in Annex I of the Commission Regulation EC No 1828/2006, and reference to the European Union.

15.3.5. Obligatory information events

The beneficiary must carry out at least 2 informational events for the local media – one at the beginning and one at the end of the project, if the total public contribution to the operation exceeds EUR 10 000. The type of events must be in accordance with the scale of the project. For the smallest projects at least two press conferences for local media should take place. At every press conference at least 4 journalists from 4 different media should be present.

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