



Interreg Europe Programme Communication Strategy 2014-2020

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1. Statement of purpose

This communications strategy is designed to help the Interreg Europe programme achieve its overall operational objectives and disseminate funding opportunities widely to potential beneficiaries and all interested parties. In particular, it will set a road-map for:

- Engaging effectively with stakeholders
- Ensuring the relevant people understand what we do
- Demonstrating the success of our work

2. Current situation

The Interreg Europe programme, financed by the European Regional Development Fund and partner country contributions, runs from 2014-2020. It is the successor programme to INTERREG IVC (2007-2013). Interreg Europe is a cooperation programme designed to help (mainly) public authorities across Europe exchange good policy practices and learn from peers to improve their own regional policies in the fields of Innovation, SME competitiveness, Low-carbon economy and the Environment and resource efficiency.

a. PEST analysis

Based on analysis of the INTERREG IVC programme evaluation, which also looked at programme communication, feedback received from INTERREG IVC projects, discussions during Interreg Europe Programming Committee meetings and internal desk analyses, we have identified the following list of what worked well, and what didn't work so well, with INTERREG IVC communication. This is important to know from what basis Interreg Europe communication is starting from, and to learn from previous lessons.

What worked in INTERREG IVC communications?

- The outreach ensured almost all regions represented in a project
- The opportunities to meet and network at dedicated events
- The positioning of the programme in the European mindset as an important tool for exchange and learning that ultimately improves policy implementation
- Partnerships with European organisations and networks (Committee of the Regions, European Parliament)

What could have worked better in INTERREG IVC communications?

- Local adaptations of messages¹
- More developed online support tools
- Better exploitation of project activities to amplify communication

¹ Cf Intermediate evaluation of the INTERREG IVC programme



What has changed from INTERREG IVC to Interreg Europe?

<p><u>Political</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ EC regulations and discussions with Partner States have led the programme to focus more clearly on influencing Cohesion Policy (so structural funds programmes in particular, not just any regional policy). Impact on target groups for project promotion; need to create demand where it doesn't exist	<p><u>Economic</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Difficult economic situations in many countries led to a reduced budget and human resources for communication activities in comparison to INTERREG IVC. Impact on number and type of activities that can be carried out; need to prioritise fields of action and high-impact activities
<p><u>Social</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Partnerships have been extended to include private non-profit organisations. Impact on target groups for project promotion; need to reach completely new target and ensure understanding of our objectives▪ Initiative to have better overall visibility for cooperation programmes (INTERREG). Impacts on Interreg Europe branding and positioning; potential for synergies and cost savings when it comes to 'awareness-raising'; risk of confusion with other programmes.	<p><u>Technological</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Advances in social media put pressure on the programme to be more present via these channels▪ Tools and relative costs for online support such as webinars have to be considered compared to resources for physical seminars

b. SWOT analysis

These external factors can be combined with an analysis of internal factors and trends to produce a SWOT analysis.

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Experienced communication team at JS▪ TA funds available for partner state points of contact▪ Large base of motivated public organisations to work with (can help reach new target groups)	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Reduced capacity to implement communication actions due to less staff▪ Uneven resources (and will) on national level to support communication activities
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Restricting programme focus too narrowly may exclude partners and



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ New programme focus will allow for clear positioning compared to other programmes▪ New feature (platforms) can help establish programme as the go-to reference for regional policy▪ Branding: clearer programme name without 'shelf life' alongside initiative to raise awareness of 'INTERREG' in general can be used to position the programme in the long-term, not subject to change from one funding cycle to the next. | <p>create unrealistic expectations for objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Multiplicity of new features and target groups may create confusion in what programme does and who it is for▪ Service delivery expectations from partner states may exceed programme resources – needs to be managed▪ Potential staff fluctuations at JS |
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It is clear that the changes in programme focus combined with the reduced resources for programme communication requires a very careful analysis of where the money should be spent to achieve the most impact. Setting priorities, and identifying what activities cannot be carried out, is an essential strategic task. The next section identifies what communication objectives can help the programme reach its overall objectives, since all communication actions will have to visibly demonstrate their added-value.



3. Overall programme objectives

The overall objective of the Interreg Europe programme is defined in the Cooperation Programme: ***To improve the implementation of policies and programmes for regional development, principally of programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal and, where relevant, of programmes under the ETC goal, by promoting exchange of experience and policy learning among actors of regional relevance.***²

This is the overarching aim that all the programme's activities should be contributing to reach. These are broken down into specific objectives, each of which have a measurement indicator, also laid out in the Cooperation Programme.

Specific operational objectives³:

1. *To facilitate ongoing EU-wide policy learning and capitalisation of practices among actors of regional relevance in order to strengthen regional policies, and in particular the implementation of programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC.*
 - ➔ *Measurement: 25% of EU regions (NUTS2) registered to policy learning platform*
2. *To support exchange of experience and sharing of practices among actors of regional relevance with the aim to integrate the learning from the cooperation into regional policies, in particular through their programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC.*
 - ➔ *Measurement: Support 200 interregional cooperation projects between 'actors of regional relevance' having an influence on EUR 768m structural funds*

On top of this, the programme has also selected four thematic objectives:

Thematic objectives

1. *Research and Innovation*
2. *SME competitiveness*
3. *Low-carbon economy*
4. *Environment and resource efficiency*

4. Communication objectives

Communication activities are not carried out for their own sake. As a strategic management tool, the communication objectives must contribute to the programme objectives. In order to help the programme achieve the above-stated objectives, the following communication objectives have been identified.

1. *To increase to 50% the awareness of defined list of 'actors of regional relevance' of the policy learning platform's existence by 2020*

² *Cooperation Programme, p.12*

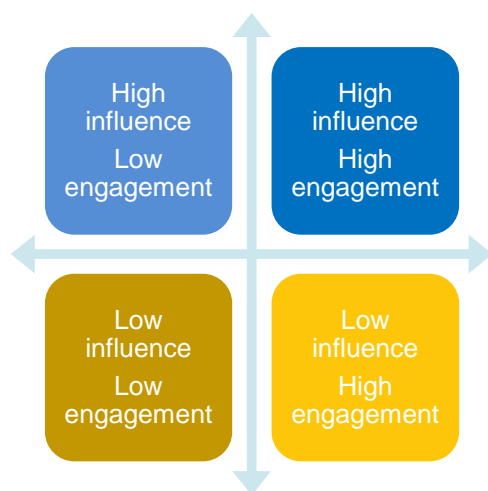
³ *Idem, p.13*



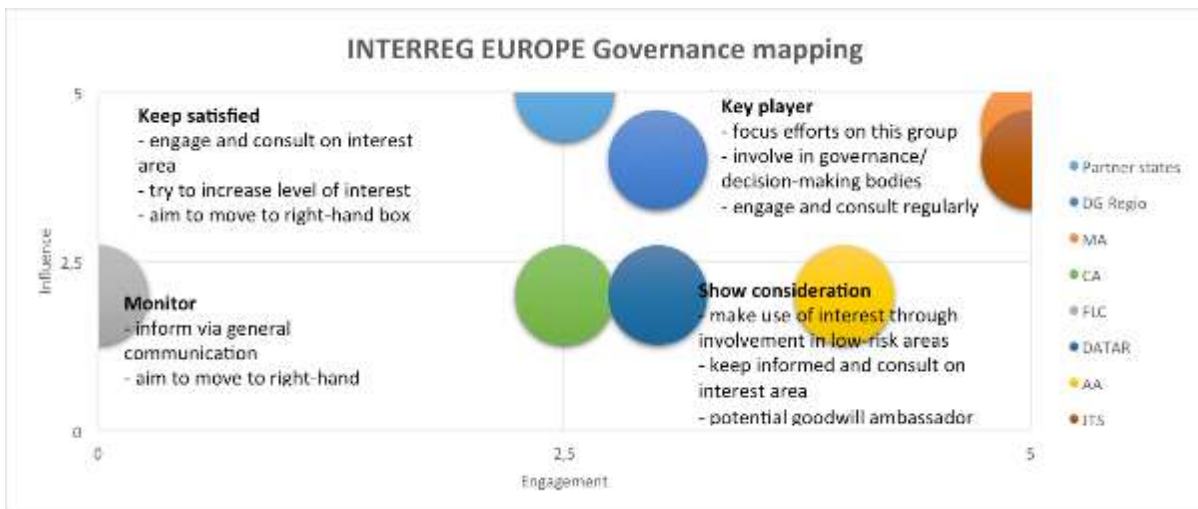
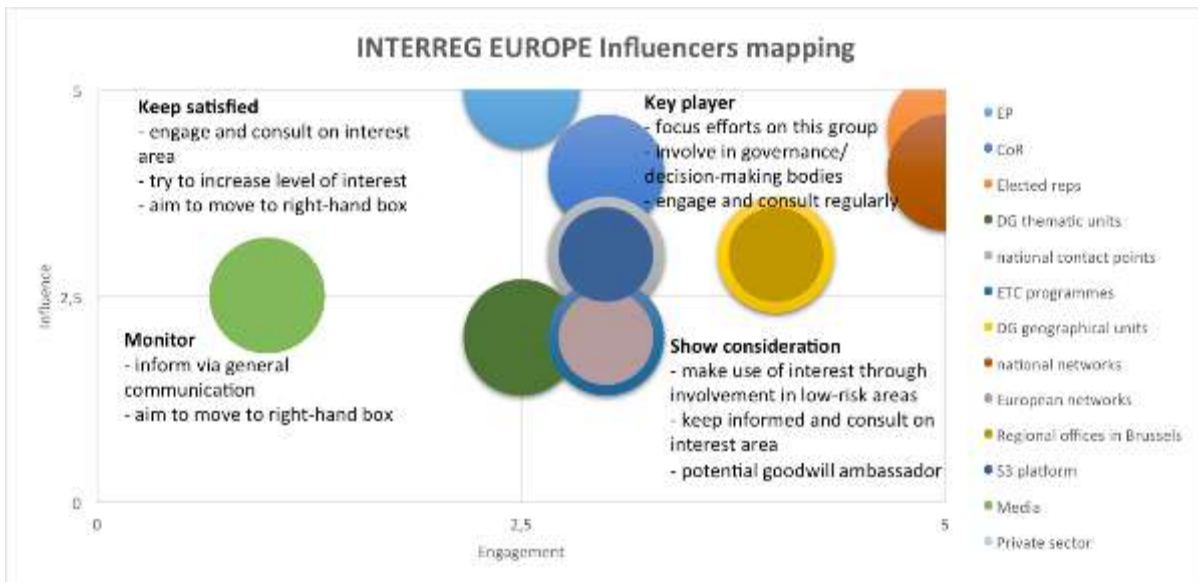
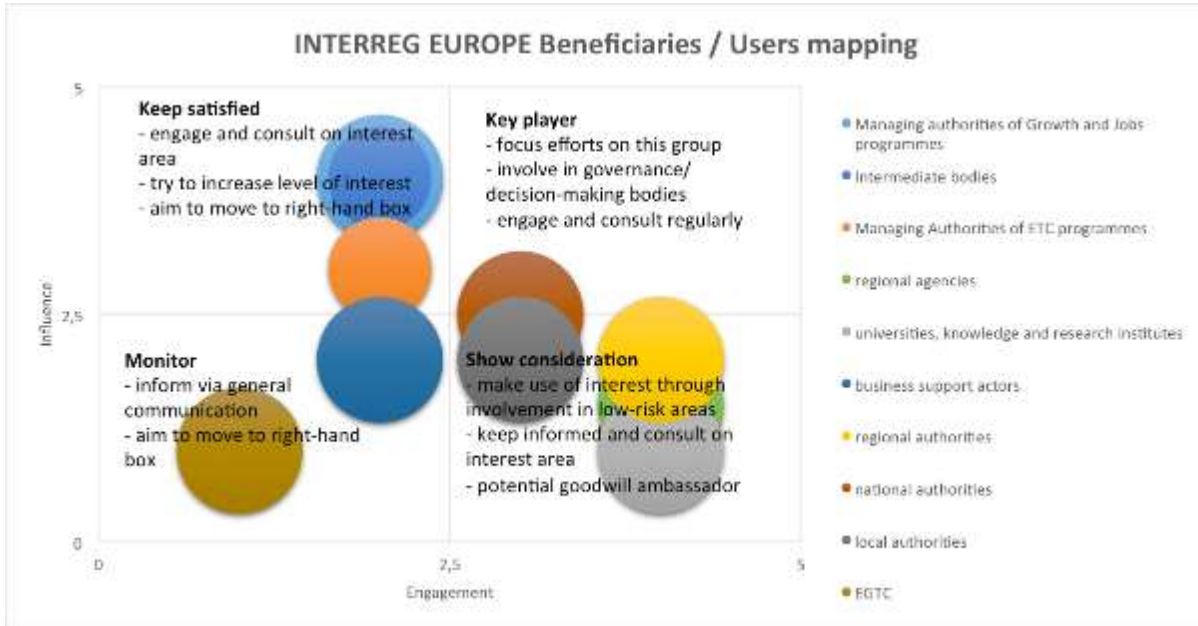
2. To inform 90% of identified target groups of potential funding opportunities by 2018
3. To assist successful implementation of 200 projects
4. To increase access to good practices by establishing Interreg Europe as the programme to turn to for policy issues
5. To demonstrate the positive impact of interregional cooperation to European institutions and partner states

5. Target Audience / stakeholder mapping analysis

The geographical and thematic scope of the programme, and the overall programme objectives of improving regional policy, results in a large list of target audiences. These can be broken down into groups: Governance, Beneficiaries/users, Influencers. The programme partner states and the joint secretariat carried out a stakeholder analysis of these target groups, classifying them on a scale of influence and engagement.



It resulted in the following schema:





A number of key target audiences can be identified, those in the 'key player' and 'keep satisfied' boxes of the graphs above, which shall be the main focus of our communication activities.

Primary target audiences:

(Potential) beneficiaries:	Preferred methods of receiving information	Barriers to receiving info/message
public authorities	Mailings; events: existing national channels	Unaware of programme's change of focus
bodies responsible for Structural Funds programmes	Existing national channels; mailings	Language; cooperation seen as 'extra' activity to already time-consuming main ones
intermediate bodies	Existing national channels; mailings	Language; cooperation seen as 'extra' activity to already time-consuming main ones
managing authorities of INTERREG programmes	Mailings; events: existing national channels	Limited opportunity for participation
Approved project partners	Programme events; mailing	Timing of 'extra' activities

The main challenge that can be noted here is the placement of the majority of Interreg Europe key beneficiaries on the lower end of the 'engagement' scale. This means that efforts need to be initially concentrated on trying to increase the level of engagement of these groups, to ensure their participation in the programme. The programme communicates in English only, which is a possible barrier for these potential beneficiaries to get the first level of information about the programme (necessary to increase their engagement). In addition, tactics brainstorming with the partner states revealed that for these target groups in particular, it is important to use existing national channels for programme communication. The role of each partner state point of contact in identifying these channels and supplying the necessary information in the appropriate language becomes a crucial pillar in the communication mix.

Influencers	Preferred methods of receiving information	Barriers to receiving info/message
Elected officials	Briefings-digital & in person; public events; case studies	Competition for attention
Former project partners	Digital, storytelling, video	Little incentive



National networks	Mailings; events	Language
Committee of Regions	Events, publications, digital	Competition for attention
EC geographical units	To be explored	Relative insignificance of cooperation compared to national tasks
Regional offices in Brussels	Newsletters, events, digital	Not direct beneficiaries
Partner state points of contact	Digital, meetings	Competition for attention from other programmes
Interreg programmes	Events, digital	Unclear on this programme's specificity
European Parliament	Briefings; digital	Competition for attention
INFORM group (DG REGIO)	Digital (yammer); meetings; bilateral briefings	Competition for attention

Programme governance

Governance	Preferred methods of receiving information	Barriers to receiving info/message
Partner states	Meetings; mailings/extranet	Time lag between meetings; changing representatives
DG REGIO	Structured reports; briefings	Competition for attention among other programmes/initiatives; misaligning EC priorities with programme objectives
Managing authority (of Interreg Europe)	Briefings; digital	Internal/regional political imperatives; strive for standardisation among all programmes it manages (Interreg 2 Seas and North-West Europe)
Joint Secretariat	Email; reporting; meetings; events	Time available to dedicate to treating all inputs



First level control bodies	Checklists; meetings	Language; ensuring common understanding of rules
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6. Key messages

Messages are the statements that will feed into each communication action. They are driven by an understanding of what our target audience wants/needs, and should be clear on the action required by that audience upon hearing the message. Messages are supported by proof points, stories, testimonies. The main impulsion of messages are outlined here, but it is crucial that key messages are refined and revised according to the activities planned annually. Specific messages will therefore be developed for each major communication action.

Target audience	Desired action	Key messages	Potential outputs
Public authorities + other potential beneficiaries	Submit relevant project applications	'cooperation helped to improve x in my region'	Training seminars, guidelines
Bodies managing structural programmes MA/IB)	Submit relevant project applications Support related bodies in project applications	'cooperation saves time and money'	Success stories from peers (video ; meetings)
Beneficiaries (project partners)	Successfully implement project according to programme rules Communication on project achievements	'successful projects can generate real change in your region'	Branding guidelines Training; videos/web-tools
Former project partners	Testify usefulness of cooperation (goodwill ambassador)	'cooperation helped me (my region) do x'	Publications; support statements
Elected officials	Support interregional cooperation at political level Support cooperation projects on territory	'cooperation saves time and money' How specific region has benefitted from cooperation	Briefings; high-level events
National networks	Relay information on calls; results	How your national partners can make use of the programme	Social media posts; mailings



International organisations (Committee of Regions, European Parliament, OECD etc)	Support interregional cooperation at political level Relay information Become committed partner	Cooperation works	Visibility on thematic platforms, events
EC geographical units	Promote programme to MA of Investment for Growth and Jobs operational programmes	Key link with beneficiaries	Briefings, notes
Regional offices in Brussels	dissemination	Your region can get funding, join initiatives	Events, mailings
Partner state points of contact	Complement programme actions on national level ; Reach country-specific target groups	Your commitment make the difference	Events, trainings, mailing
Interreg programmes	Consult/contribute to thematic platforms	We can provide a platform for your results	mailings
INFORM group (DG REGIO)	Increased awareness of/esteem for Interreg Europe;	We produce effective, innovative communication products	INFORM meeting presentations
Partner states	Support programme	The cooperation programme is well-executed	MC meetings and documents
DG REGIO	Support programme	The cooperation programme is well-executed	Annual reports; contribution to EC initiatives
Managing authority (of Interreg Europe)	Support programme	The cooperation programme is well-executed	
Joint Secretariat	Ensure clear, common communication	We speak simply, transparently, with one voice	Branding, templates



First level control bodies	Ensure understanding of programme rules	clear of Simplification	Guidelines, training
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7. Communications mix

The mix of communication tools to implement this strategy needs to take into account the programme's thematic objectives, in order to be fully relevant. This means a sustainable and innovative approach that is reflected in the choice of tools below. A consequence of this approach – combined with the budgetary rigour required in public spending – is that no promotional 'gadgets' or 'gifts' will be produced unless a clear requirement to achieve the intended objective. This applies not only on programme level, but to project and platform communication spending.

The communication strategy also takes into account the programme's horizontal principles on discrimination and gender equality. This will be reflected in the composition of speakers at events, imagery used to illustrate communication material etc.

a. Online

Website – given the wide range of target groups across Europe, a robust digital strategy is required to a) provide as much relevant information as possible to those organisations looking for it (encouraged by other communication actions) and b) provide the tools to build an online community, creating links among similar groups who otherwise may not have the chance to meet, discuss and exchange. The Interreg Europe website (at the address www.interregeurope.eu), and policy learning platforms, will be the hub of this online community. It will be supported by creating relevant groups using existing tools on LinkedIn, Facebook, and twitter (detailed in the sub-section on digital strategy).

Project websites - an integral part of the online strategy is an ambitious aligning of project online presence with the programme. Difficulties in accessing up-to-date information, promoting effectively the ongoing work and the results of each project, being able to exploit potential project synergies were all identified under INTERREG IVC. To overcome these difficulties, and to reach the objectives stated above, the programme offers a 'website creation tool' for projects. A study has shown that the majority of project websites have a similar structure and features, and on average projects spend € 11.000 on developing their websites. By offering a tool integrated into the programme website, projects will save time and money on website development, content will be streamlined easily with the programme website, and project outputs will be permanently available. This approach removes the burden of ensuring project websites remain accessible after the project has ended, as all is hosted on Interreg Europe servers. Adequate training for project partners on the use of the website CMS has to be taken into account in the workplan.

Policy learning platforms

While the thematic policy learning platforms are managed and budgeted separately, it is important from the strategic point of view that the user identifies them as an integral part of the Interreg Europe programme, and not something completely separate. The website will be the main entry point to the thematic learning platforms. Specific features and modalities of the platforms will be tackled in a separate document, but they will fully be in line with the programme's communication strategy.

Social media – 'going to where the audience is' describes the programme's approach to social media. A two-way conversation on these platforms is considered essential for community-building. Focus will be put on facebook, linkedin and twitter.



Webdocumentary – a robust storytelling approach using video and sound combined with interactive features of data visualisation and click-on content has proved its worth. It is a powerful tool to reach several target groups listed above.

Webinars, e-learning, webstreaming of the events will be part of the online strategy and will ensure the durability and wide accessibility and of the information also to the interested parties who can't be present at the international events physically due to the time and budget restrictions.

The full digital strategy and annexes on web tools can be found in the supplementary strategy to this document – see section 13 Supplementary strategies

b. Public & Media relations

Partnerships – convincing a relatively unengaged audience of the utility of cooperation should be best overcome through convincing public relations: success stories from peers, effective promotion via existing networks using case studies, newsletters, ambassadors speaking at events. Specific focus will be put on developing existing partnerships:

- with the Committee of the Regions, particularly around the Open Days of Cities and Regions (annually in October), and further possibilities explored around online learning
- with INTERACT, URBACT and ESPON as the pan-European programmes

and creating new partnerships with the influencers identified earlier:

- DG REGIO thematic and geographic units, to leverage access to managing authorities of Structural Funds programmes
- OECD, to reach out to the wider policymaking community with good practices

Partnerships should be structured and formalised through written agreements.

Networking – the programme should build on its existing reputation of sharing good practice not only in policymaking but also in programme management by participating in the following networks

- INFORM network for communication officers of Structural Funds programme: both as a source of input for communication activities, and as a target group for promoting the programme's (successful) activities to the European Commission. The INFORM group is also a channel to pass messages to the potential beneficiaries of managing authorities.
- INTERACT's networks for financial, project, communication and capitalisation officers: being a force of proposition for project and programme management within these networks to cement reputation as a competently-managed programme

The programme will inform information centres on Europe (Europe Direct), as well as Commission representation offices, and information offices of the European Parliament in the partner states (in line with Article 2.1.3 of Annex XII of Regulation No 1303/2013).

Network of partner state points of contact – Each partner state supports the JS when it comes to communication:

- providing national specific information including on potential beneficiaries
- providing a point of contact for potential applicants
- ensuring wide dissemination of programme information
- organising events in a given country



It is up to each partner state to decide how these tasks are carried out, and whether a point of contact will be established, depending on national/regional practices and available resources. The administrative set-up therefore varies from one partner state to another, so the articulation between the Joint Secretariat and the partner state points of contact will be flexible, in liaison with the JS communication officer for points of contact. In addition, around half of the partner states did not opt in to use technical assistance budget for these tasks, but finance them through their own national/regional budgets. It is not fully appropriate therefore to monitor the impact of the point of contact activities on reaching the programme objectives. The programme values the efforts made in each partner state to help achieve the programme objectives, beyond the resources already allocated to the JS. Each partner state will be invited to share their activities with the JS, and to provide input to the indicators outlined in this document. The secretariat will ensure adequate briefings on programme content as well as training for the points of contact.

In line with EC regulation 1303/2013 Article 117(1) the designated information and communication officer from each member state shall coordinate actions on their territory including those of the Interreg Europe programme. Partner state points of contact will play an important role representing the Interreg Europe programme at the national level and liaising with the appointed national information and communication officer.

Guidelines for points of contact, which seek to capture the varying levels of resources in each partner state, can be found in section 13 – Supplementary strategies.

Ambassadors – the programme has identified that ‘goodwill ambassadors’ are potentially powerful contributors to passing the appropriate messages. These ambassadors come from the main stakeholder groups identified. Former project partners (from INTERREG IVC) can testify to the benefits that cooperation brought them; partner state points of contact and partner state representatives who are convinced of the benefits of cooperation are also powerful message-carriers. Programme staff and contracted policy learning platform experts can provide a level of engagement, enthusiasm and credibility to ensure the programme’s messages are heard.

Media/Press relations

As a tool to reach the key target groups, media relations does not have a large role to play at the level of programme communication. Fruitful opportunities for media outreach should be identified alongside other major communication activities, such as events linked to EU Presidencies. But the programme itself is not the main focus for media stories, it is the effects of the cooperation projects in a particular place that is ‘newsworthy’. Project beneficiaries in particular have a key role to play in disseminating the impact of European funds on citizens, so the programme will focus on training this group on how to effectively engage the media. Measurement of this aspect has been integrated into the project reporting.

c. Events & meetings

The Interreg Europe approach to community building is based on the experience that successful online communities will only develop where a meaningful face-to-face interaction has already taken place. Human interaction is essential for building trust and allowing cooperation.

Events and conferences – to fully complement the integrated online strategy, the need for ‘offline’ meetings is a real one. As a tool to reach beneficiaries and influencers, it is important that events direct the participants to take action afterwards, by accessing the web tools or interacting with the learning platforms for example. Events will therefore be conceived as ‘hybrid’, mixing online and offline participation and learning opportunities. Based on the needs identified, they will take the form of:

- European-wide fora (annual or biannual)
- high-level political meetings or briefings (as per feedback from the INTERREG IVC capitalisation initiative, and Programming Committee discussions)



- seminars/workshops for potential beneficiaries (linked to open calls) N.B. effort will be directed into testing webinar set-up. Online tutorials should help reach a wider number of participants than those able to be present at physical meetings.

Trainings and meetings – to achieve the learning potential offered by online tools, the importance of personalised trainings offering opportunities for discussion and debate cannot be underestimated. Targeted to those already involved in programme activities, such as projects or platforms, they cover:

- trainings for project beneficiaries (on learning, communication, financial management etc.)
- trainings for first level controllers
- briefings for partner state points of contact
- thematic seminars for policy learning
- peer reviews

Participation in third-party events – in order to achieve the objectives of increasing awareness of the programme, access to good practices and sharing positive policy stories, the programme should continue to seek participation in relevant third-party events as speakers or through exhibitions, etc. Given the multitude of events organised on potentially interesting topics Europe-wide, clear participation criteria need to be established to aid decision-making and make the most of the programme's limited human resources. Events and meetings organised by already identified influencers would be a priority.

In terms of internal communication, the communication unit should ensure that any external participation follows the messages and identity outlined in this strategy.

8. Accessibility of formats

In line with EC regulation 1303/2013 art 7 the utmost care will be taken to ensure that information and activities are accessible to persons with disabilities. The most recent web accessibility standards will be implemented, and due care will be taken in regard to accessibility of event venues.

9. Branding

A clear identity for the programme is vital to ensure a coherent visual presence that reinforces the programme's message. At the same time, Interreg Europe does not operate in a vacuum. In the 2007-2013 period, there were more than 80 cooperation programmes, each with their own brand, not to mention the thousands of projects with their own logos too. Interreg Europe actively supported the development of an overarching 'Interreg' brand, as coordinated by the Interact programme, in the form of a common name (Interreg), common graphical element (logo) and common use of EC-defined colours and icons representing the selected thematic objectives.

Interreg Europe's position compared to the other Interreg programmes is quite unique:

- It is the only Interreg programme that allows all EU countries to work together, no matter their geographical location on four themes: Research and innovation, SME competitiveness, Low-carbon economy and Environment & resource efficiency;
- It is a cooperation programme built on exchange and learning: its main aim is to discover which policies worked well in some contexts, and if they can be transferred to other regions. It does not finance any investment or infrastructure.



This analysis led the programme to adopt partially, but not fully, the common Interreg logo.⁴

The visual presence of the interregional cooperation projects and policy learning platforms will be aligned with the corporate identity of the programme.

10. Budget and resources

Budget

A total budget of €2,299,000 has been designated by the Programming Committee from the Technical Assistance budget for communication and dissemination purposes, from 2014 until 2023. This represents 7.9% of the total TA budget.

A further €270,087 is earmarked for use by certain of the programme's national (or sub-national) points of contact.⁵

All communication activities linked to the promotion of the policy learning platforms are financed from the separate 'Policy Learning Platform' budget. This budget covers design and implementation of communication activities, but responsibility for ensuring coherence with the programme's identity and messaging remains with the programme's communication unit.

An indicative breakdown of the budget follows:

- Digital: EUR 440k
- Public & media relations: EUR 345k
- Events: EUR 1,434k

Category	Type of activity (indicative)	Budget 2014-2023
Digital	More performing website including real-time project details from database; data visualisation tools;	€190,000
Digital	Project website creation tool	€50,000
Digital	Videos/webinars/how-tos 10 * €10k	€100,000
Digital	Webdocumentary 2 * €50k	€100,000
Public and media relations	Thematic Publications 4 * 40k	€160,000

⁴ See Seventh Interreg Europe Programming Committee, Athens, 5/3/2014, document 05 – Programme branding note for more details

⁵ Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, France, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain have opted for programme financing of national activities. Full details of the modalities can be found in Annex 1 of Points of contact guidelines.



Public and media relations	Results publication (incl. design, content & delivery)	€60,000
Public and media relations	Other communication actions	€125,000
Evaluation	Evaluation of communication actions 2 * 40k	€80,000
Events	Information seminars	€390,000
Events	European-wide events	€1,044,000
Total budget		€2,299,000

Detailed annual budgets will be provided with each annual workplan.

Resources

A total of five people (one coordinator, three officers and one assistant) at the Joint Secretariat are dedicated to planning and implementing the programme’s communication strategy. External assistance will be contracted to manage and implement the specific policy learning platform communication strategy. The general profile of each person is presented in annex to this document. While each have cross-cutting tasks, each also has a main responsibility: one officer following implementation of the digital strategy, one officer ensuring liaison with the points of contact, one officer responsible for planning and implementing events.

A point of contact for each country can be designated by each partner state to perform an agreed list of minimum tasks. The important role of partner state points of contacts is also heightened since the programme no longer supports Information Points (who previously covered North, South, East and West Europe).

11. Timeline

The focus and scope of activities will follow the programme’s funding cycles, initially focusing on promotion of funding opportunities and awareness-raising, moving to dissemination of results and capitalisation in the later programme stages. Detailed actions and their timing will be provided in each annual workplan.

12. Evaluation

A robust and ongoing evaluation of the communication strategy is required to ensure objectives are being met. If necessary, the strategy must evolve to take account of new priorities, activities or target groups.

Each objective will be measured by a result indicator.

Objective	Baseline/Target value	Means of measurement
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<p>Inform 90% of potential beneficiaries of funding opportunities by 2018</p>	<p>From Questionnaire (Q) / 90%</p>	<p>Questionnaire to programme beneficiaries that will be sent every 2 years (questionnaire used to define baseline values for CP) Event feedback / type of beneficiaries N° of website sessions Points of contact activities (optional)</p>	<p>Q: Have you heard of Interreg Europe / Are you aware of the possibilities for cooperation with other European regions?</p>
<p>Facilitate partner search to achieve 200 projects</p>	<p>60% of approved partners used programme partner search tools</p>	<p>Questionnaire to beneficiaries N° of website profiles created N°/type of participants in networking events/activities Points of contact activities (optional)</p>	<p>Q: Did you make use of any of Interreg Europe programme tools for partner search?</p>
<p>To assist successful implementation of 200 projects</p>	<p>90% of project lead partners participate in programme trainings</p>	<p>Event feedback</p>	<p>Q. how useful did you find the programme trainings on implementation?</p>
<p>Increase awareness of 'actors of regional relevance' about policy learning platforms</p>	<p>From Q / 50%</p>	<p>Questionnaire to programme beneficiaries (MA/IB) that will be sent every 2 years (questionnaire used to define baseline values for CP) N°/type of actors involved N° of sessions on thematic web pages Points of contact activities (optional)</p>	<p>Q: Are you aware of the existence of Interreg Europe's policy learning platform in the field of (..)?</p>
<p>Increase access to good practices</p>	<p>From Q / 25%</p>	<p>Questionnaire to programme beneficiaries (MA/IB) that will be sent every 2 years (questionnaire used to define baseline values for CP) N° of sessions on project pages (via project reporting)</p>	<p>Q. have you made use of a good policy practice you discovered through Interreg Europe?</p>



	N° of sessions on website N° of participants in dedicated events Feedback from participants in dedicated events Points of contact activities (optional)
Show positive impact of interregional cooperation	Interreg Europe showcased in external events N° of media outreach activities N° of appearances in media (project reporting) Points of contact activities (optional)

Output indicators for the main activities:

- Average number of visitors to website, per month
- Number of appearances in media (project reporting)

Specific output indicators for each activity will be defined on an annual basis as part of the annual workplan.

Ongoing evaluation of the communication strategy will be included as part of the overall programme's ongoing evaluation measures.

13. Supplementary strategies and guidelines

A. Digital strategy

B. Points of contact guidelines

14. Approval and monitoring of communication strategy

In line with the EC Regulation 1303/2013 Article 116(2), the programme's monitoring committee will examine and approve the communication strategy no later than six months after the adoption of the programme. Any amendment of the strategy is also subject to monitoring committee approval.

The monitoring committee will also examine the implementation of the communication strategy. To this end, the managing authority shall inform the committee at least once a year on the progress of implementation and its analysis of results.



Annual implementation reports submitted to the European Commission will include, in particular in 2017 and 2019, the results of the information and publicity measures carried out under this communication strategy following the EC Regulation 1303/2013 (Article 111 (4b)).

15. Annual workplans

The annual workplans are complementary to this strategy. The workplan for the following year will be presented to the monitoring committee, who will give its opinion if it is considered appropriate.

16. Contact

The body responsible for this communication strategy is **Nord - Pas de Calais Regional Council** as managing authority of the Interreg Europe programme.

On operational level, the following person is designated by the Managing Authority as responsible for information and communication:

Nuala Morgan, Coordinator - Communication & Points of Contact

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Communication Strategy Annex: digital communication strategy

30 October 2015

This document was developed by Arctik for Interreg Europe.

Executive summary

Communicating policy has changed. With the increased uptake of digital engagement, the development of a robust digital strategy is critical to a successful Interreg Europe communication. Media devices, smart phones for the masses and experiential/digital mash-ups have made our exposure to digital channels almost ubiquitous. People can engage, and be engaged, online in a plethora of different ways. Digital communication presents a huge opportunity for public institutions such as Interreg Europe, which is connecting a wide array of stakeholders across Europe and beyond.

The overall approach for the digital strategy lays on a single motto that shows the richness and complexity of its communications “*Policy learning, Policy sharing, Policy stories*”. Interreg Europe is in a unique position to finance, discuss, learn and share Europe’s Regional policy stories, while inspiring change. Using digital tools to making the subsidiarity principle a reality, closer to citizens closer to decision-makers.

The proposed digital strategy and digital communication plan aim at establishing Interreg Europe as a reference, an authority, in four thematic areas that are *research & innovation, SME competitiveness, low-carbon economy, and environment & resource efficiency*. These are four themes that are key for Europe’s growth, jobs and global competitiveness. Messages and content should be created around benefits of the Interreg Europe Program (impact), testimonials (stories) and statistics (numbers) and alternate between content ‘push’ and ‘pull’.

In the years to come a series of (online) tools will build on the success of the Interreg IVC programme (capitalisation). Thanks to consistent and mainstreamed communications, each digital step (web, social media, web-tools, policy learning platforms, videos...) will raise awareness about the programme, its project and funding opportunities, to existing and new target groups while contributing to the EU wide capacity building by supporting networking and exchange of experience among relevant stakeholders and organisations.

Digital starts offline. Whether it is to show the project achievements (and exploit them), to run the policy learning platform(s), or improve the quality of the programme’s content, it is the active understanding of the Interreg Europe communication team and policy officers, Monitoring Committee and European Commission as well as the platform secretariat expertise that would fit the ambition of the Interreg Europe.



Building and communicating within and towards the PLPs is in particular a challenge that would require a communication mix at the digital crossroad between knowledge management (push and pull systems), Interreg Europe internal management, and community building.

Digital Strategy at a glance

The digital strategy has very clear **objectives**:

- Be the reference point. Become an authority
- Consistency
- Outreach
- Including new target groups
- Show project achievements

The **approach** for the digital strategy is **“Policy learning, Policy sharing, Policy stories”**.

The approach is further fine-tuned around:

- Past and future
- Content is king
- Push and pull

The **audiences** for the digital communication are clearly defined following an Interreg Europe stakeholder analysis of beneficiaries, influencers and governance.

Messages are tailored to the priority target audience being the managing authorities (project beneficiaries). **Interreg Europe messages** focus on:

- Benefits
- Exchange of knowledge
- Support for participating in the Programme

In the section on **channels** we give an overview of the channels and tools that should be part of the digital communication plan. The channels and tools are further developed in the annexed advisory notes. For effective digital communication several channels and tools will be combined such as seminar, training, event, website, policy learning platforms, mailing, social media, meetings, newsletter, personal contacts, email.

The **communication mix** develops different messages for different audiences. The model of the **engagement triangle** gives guidance for putting digital communication activities on a timeline following the structure of campaign, top topical, format and flow. Finally, for a good **evaluation** several result indicators for digital communication have been developed.

“You can make a real difference by preparing a well-founded digital strategy that seamlessly connects to, and interacts with, the strategy and processes of your company.”

Prof Steve Muylle, Expert in B2B marketing and digital strategy

Interreg programmes aim to strengthen economic and social cohesion within the European Union by promoting cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation. While Interreg IVC (2007 – 2013) is under finalization, Interreg Europe Programme (2014 – 2020) took over. Interreg Europe is instrumental in delivering the Europe 2020 strategy at regional and local levels. It specifically aims at improving regional development policies, the policy implementation as well as exchange good practices.



The digital strategy supports the wider Communication Strategy for 2014 – 2020 and the Communication Plan for 2015. The latter aims to finalise Interreg IVC communication activities and showcase the work done and the results on one hand, and on the other hand to promote Interreg Europe. Developing a variety of online tools will ensure a wider reach of the new target groups (private non-profit organisations) and will optimise applicant support and exchange of good practices and avoid having to organise too many events.

1. Digital Strategy

1.1 Digital communication objectives

The following **digital communication objectives** were defined together with the Interreg Europe Joint Secretariat Team (JS) during a collaborative workshop organized on 9 April 2015. They are to be followed in parallel with the communication objectives from the Communication Strategy 2014 – 2020.

Setting the Interreg Europe digital objectives helps to create an efficient plan to guide Interreg Europe towards the realisation of the agreed objectives. Objectives will be reached while executing the work plan.

It is very important to set very clear objectives from the beginning. Thanks to clear objectives a 'begin with the end in mind' approach can be followed; the direction is clear. This means that every digital communication action will contribute to the achievement of the objectives. Clear objectives also help set priorities in the work plan, which is key for impactful communications.

Objectives for the digital communication strategy.

1. Be the **reference point**. Become an **authority**. Be the place to turn to for regional policy advice.

Given the noisy, cluttered state of the web it is the authoritative site that earns the attention. How to become an authority? By serving your audience, by genuinely knowing your stuff, by caring, by being strategic and by taking the long view.

2. **Consistency** - Mainstreaming communication on all levels.

Consistent tone and logical flow of the communication points will mainstream the overall communication.

3. **Outreach** - Develop an effective process for reaching out across Europe to whom we need to reach (people and institutions) and engage them.
4. Include **new target groups** - Integration of all targeted stakeholders online.
5. **Show project achievements** from Interreg IVC until Interreg Europe projects show achievements.

The **communication objectives**¹

- To increase the 50% the awareness of defined list of 'actors of regional relevance' of **platform's existence** by 2020.
- To inform 90% of identified target groups of potential **funding opportunities** by 2018.
- To increase access to good practices by establishing Interreg Europe as the programme to turn to for policy issues
- To demonstrate the **positive impact** of interregional cooperation to European institutions and partner states.

¹ Interreg Europe Programme Communication Strategy 2014 – 2020



The **operational objectives**²:

- To facilitate ongoing EU-wide policy **learning** and capitalization of practices among actors of regional relevance in order to strengthen regional policies, and in particular the implementation of programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC. This translates into ensuring that 25% of EU regions (NUTS2) will register to the policy learning platform.
- To support **exchange** of experience and sharing of practices among actors of regional relevance with the aim to integrate the learning from the cooperation into regional policies, in particular through their programmes for Investment and Growth and Jobs and, where relevant ETC. This translates into supporting 200 interregional cooperation projects between 'actors of regional relevance' having an influence on EUR 768m structural funds.

The *Digital Communication Strategy* is a supplement to the *Programme Communication Strategy* and ultimately serves the same objectives and supports the programme to reach its overall objectives.

1.2 Achievements

During the creative and strategic workshop on 9 April 2015 at the premises of the JTS, the **achievements** of the Interreg IVC were listed and categorised. The results can be found here below.

These achievements serve as strategic **facilitators** in the digital communication activities. The achievements are solid building blocks on which Interreg Europe can further build successful communication. Interreg Europe should build on its achievements rather than starting from scratch.

1.3 Branding or rebranding?

- Strong social capital (quote from the 9 April workshop: 'a lot of enthusiasm among beneficiaries, they believe in Interreg')
- One of the leading EU programmes (authority) - strong brand already

A brand is a promise. Potential project beneficiaries engage with Interreg Europe because it delivers on its promises. That makes Interreg Europe a strong brand. There is a need however to (re)connect the new visual identity to the existing Interreg Europe brand and to transition the existing audience and followers from Interreg IVC to Interreg Europe.

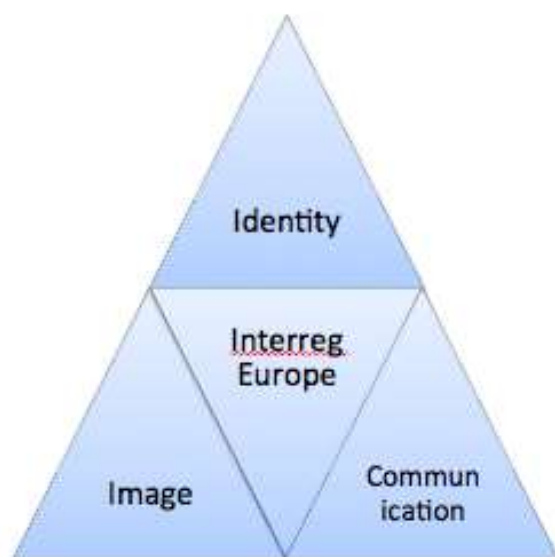
The below triangle shows which elements need to be consistently aligned for successful branding.

- Identity: who Interreg Europe believes to be
- Image: how Interreg Europe is perceived externally

² Idem



- Communication: how Interreg Europe communicates



When these three elements work together consistently, a brand's communication can be very impactful.

This applies to both offline and digital communications. *If, for example, the website of an organisation looks very professional, but an event that is organised is very sloppy, then the perceived image is weak.*

Interreg IVC has transitioned into Interreg Europe. By the end of the year 2015 the Interreg IVC social media accounts will be closed. The Interreg IVC Twitter account has 1.794 followers and indicates 'Interreg IVC has come to an end. Follow us on @interregeurope'. This is a very clear and effective message with a call to action at the end.

The new brand and visual identity of Interreg Europe has been launched at the end of 2014. The new Interreg Europe website will be launched in September. The Interreg IVC website will remain visible but will not be updated from the end of this year. The associated social media accounts will remain visible but not updated, at least for another year. Exploit to a maximum all opportunities to post, place and

publish the new Interreg Europe social media links.

Please find below a few recommended actions to transition from Interreg IVC to Interreg Europe:

- The launch of the new Interreg Europe website is an opportunity to celebrate past accomplishments and outline the Interreg Europe's vision for the future. It is also an opportunity to reconnect with past contacts, as well as the media and prospective contacts and followers. This is the time to remind and communicate who you are, what you stand for, and what you can deliver for them.
- The upcoming inactivity of the Interreg IVC social media accounts and website should be clearly and repeatedly communicated. Do post and tweet a few more times the message that the Interreg IVC social media accounts will become inactive with a call to action. Once the new website is launched the same message should be communicated on the new website as well. Avoid posting any new information on the old accounts.
- On the info tab (Facebook) and in the Twitter bio of the Interreg Europe social media accounts indicate that this is an old page/account and add a call to action to go to new page with link. Same logic for the Interreg IVC website.

1.4 Content

- Good resources (capitalisation)
- Positive stories

Earning attention with valuable information is the key to successful digital communication and authority building. Interreg Europe has plenty of valuable content or information to share via online tools and digital channels.

Recommended action:



- Refurbish existing content. When there is no specific news to announce it is recommended to take existing content from the capitalisation initiative, from the Interreg IVC online report or previous successful projects and show the people, the stories and the benefits.

1.5 Network / community

- Elaborate database of relevant contacts
- Direct contact and multipliers
- Strong partnerships

A well-defined and well-targeted audience is key for impactful communication. Interreg Europe can build on a solid and existing network of relevant contacts.

A few figures, updated August 2015, on Interreg IVC are worth mentioning here.

The interreg4c.eu website had a constant progression in terms of traffic (statistics from 2012 – when started using Google analytics - to 2015). If in 2012, 41,851 sessions per year were counted, in 2015 254,310 sessions by August were reached – 6 times more. To this, the traffic of other digital products can be added, such as changing-regions webdoc (1 899 sessions since release – Sept 2013) & Interreg IVC online report (5 710 sessions in 3 months period).

The newsletter has 2006 subscribers. The online community subscribers (partner search and project ideas) are 2 963. On social media, Interreg IVC has the following presence: Facebook – 1 102 likes / Twitter – 1 790 followers / LinkedIn group – 419 members.

Recommended action:

- In order to grow your online community it is recommended to add wherever possible and appropriate a call to action such as ‘subscribe to our online community’ or ‘subscribe to our newsletter’. For the latter it may make sense to create different newsletters adapted to different audiences with according contact lists.

The strong Interreg Europe brand, the availability of good content and the existence of a solid network and community will give the execution of the digital strategy a head start.

1.6 Strategic approach

1.6.1 “Policy learning, Policy sharing, Policy stories”

A digital strategy starts with a specific approach. What is the red line to follow? What is the overall picture one has to follow when executing the strategy?

Interreg IVC has shown excellence in interregional policy learning. More than 2000 projects beneficiaries tried and tested policies in a range of fields, all dedicated to regional development, sustainability, innovation, entrepreneurship (...)

But what’s more important, the hundreds of policies and recommendations or the 2,357 partners across Europe that practice Europe everyday and, thanks to Interreg IVC, were able to offer insights into their territorial development, to open their regional policy practices for review and scrutiny, and to finally share, test and analyse policy strategies.

We would suggest that the digital communication strategy should seek to **capture the life behind the projects**, the figures and the words to better communicate *Why interregional policy sharing works, why one should care about it?*



Beneficiaries have names, lives and personal stories to tell. Social media, web-documentaries, and certainly the policy learning platforms will be excellent means to **monitor**, **engage**, **extract** and **report/inform** to ensure a wider reach to the (new) target audience.

We suggest taking what is inside the projects; the **people**, the **benefits**, the **positive feedback**, the **actual impact** as main focus point for the digital communications.



“Policy learning, Policy sharing, Policy stories”

The strategy is based on storytelling (empathy) and a sound execution of a digital plan. Balancing from real stories to content is obviously the ultimate goal - “Does our ‘story’ and content enhance the customer experience?”

After having defined objectives, we propose an approach that will scope the digital communication activities. The digital strategy approach for Interreg Europe is based on the below grid with focus points.

“Policy learning, Policy sharing, Policy stories” is the red line of the digital strategy. The red line is further detailed with specific concepts for creating content; past & future, content and the push & pull. For each aspect of the red line (learning, sharing, stories) these concepts

Red line	Specific concepts for creating content		
Policy learning	Past & future	Content	Push & Pull
Policy sharing	Past & future	Content	Push & Pull
Policy stories	Past & future	Content	Push & Pull

1.6.2 Past and future

In its strategy Arctik recommends digital communication actions for both **Interreg IVC** and **Interreg Europe**.

The digital communication on **Interreg IVC** will focus on communicating the results, building on the enthusiasm of beneficiaries. Good examples are the **Capitalisation** initiative (<http://www.interreg4c.eu/capitalisation/>) and the online report (<http://report.interreg4c.eu/>), it underlines the results at the end of implementation (7 years) & showcases project examples and stories.

The Thematic Interreg IVC Capitalisation initiative is an approach that focuses on collecting, analysing and disseminating the thematic knowledge gained from projects working on the same topic. The systematic analysis of the projects by experienced external experts aims to deliver the following results:

- Identified innovative approaches that could be relevant also to other regions in Europe
- Policy recommendations for the national and the EU level
- Possible synergies and mutual enrichment among the Interreg IVC projects dealing with similar issues
- Projects links to related initiatives in other EU programmes
- Specific topic related recommendations to the projects

The digital communication for **Interreg Europe** will focus on the benefits of the Interreg Europe Programme. As these benefits will only be known in a few years communication on Interreg Europe can seek to capture the life



behind the Interreg IVC projects, using the figures and the words to illustrate *Why interregional policy sharing works, why one should care about it.*

Recommended actions to bridge between the past (Interreg IVC) and the future (Interreg Europe):

- As the results of Interreg Europe are not known yet, results of Interreg IVC can be presented in the form of interviews with project beneficiaries, putting a face and a story on Interreg IVC.
- Co-create content. For example ask feedback 'do you have suggestions for improvement of the application process?' and use the answers as a basis for news items in the newsletter and/or posts on Facebook. Why not add a picture and short description of the person who gave the suggestion.
- As soon new funded projects are known, build up to announce the date when the (lead) applicants become (lead) partners. And once the results are known, following (showing people, showing stories) a few of the projects and the people behind the project that were granted funding and regularly bring their positive story.
- Build-up to second call for proposals. Use testimonials (both positive and with points for improvement) from successful first call applicants to guide second call applicants.

1.6.3 Content is king

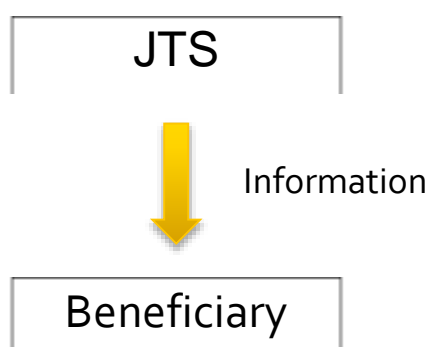
Content is king were wise words from Bill Gates in 1996 and they are still true. For better communication we also focus on 'context is king'. With this we mean, publishing content that is **relevant** for the target audience.

Content should be focused around:

- **Benefits** (why should you respond to the call for proposals and what can you learn from previous projects);
- **Testimonials** (positive stories) and;
- **Statistics** (numbers talk)

Interreg has plenty of source content to pick from, so it will be a matter of choosing the most relevant and compelling content and translating it into appropriate channels and tools for the target audience.

1.6.4 Push



Whilst it is important to push for your own messages to go out, it is equally important and especially so in digital communications to listen to your audience. What information are they pulling out?

Enter the notion of push (talk) and pull (listen) PR.

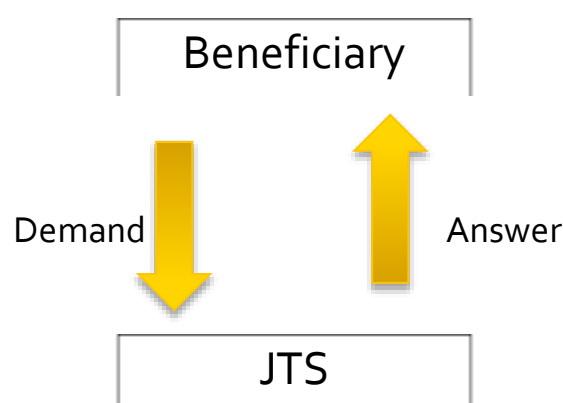


Push basically means the tactics used to distribute a company's news including using press releases sent out via wire services, email or fax. It also includes pitching the media on story ideas and contributed articles.

Pull activities are based on the demand consumers have for online news as well as the search activities of people in the media looking for subject matter experts, researching past news coverage and looking for story ideas. Pull PR makes it easy for the media and your intended audience to find and pull themselves to your news.

On a continuum, push and pull would be on either end with media coverage in the middle. Achieving media coverage by one or both push and pull allows you to further extend the reach of your news. First, by pulling more readers to your message via the publications that have picked up your story. Second, by using that media coverage as a direct marketing promotion via email or direct mail.

1.6.5 Pull

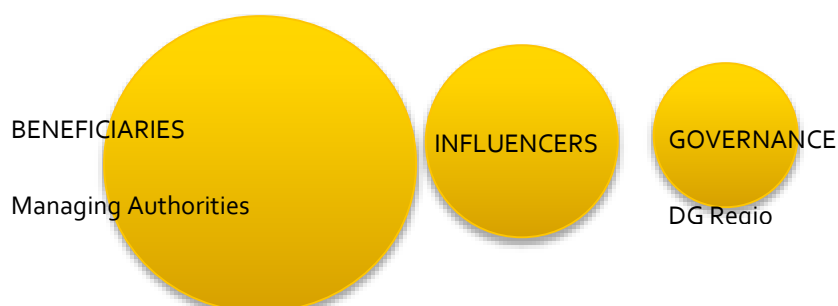


A balanced combination of push and pull will help Interreg Europe build authority and develop a strong brand. The push and pull approach is also developed in the discussion paper on the Policy Learning Platforms.

1.7 Audiences

In this section we start from the Target Audience / Stakeholder Mapping Analysis where we distinguish three types of stakeholders; beneficiaries, influencers and governance.

Clearly defining audience(s) will help JTS select appropriate messages and better way(s) to deliver them. A simplified representation of the main stakeholders is as follows:



1.8 Beneficiaries

Project beneficiaries are those who will derive some benefit from the implementation of the project. The managing authorities (project beneficiaries) are the priority target audience. There was less of a focus in Interreg IVC on Managing Authorities and the bodies responsible for Structural Funds. Under Interreg Europe more attention will



be given to the Managing Authorities of Growth and Jobs programmes, Intermediate bodies, Managing Authorities of ETC programmes.

Other beneficiaries are: regional authorities, regional agencies, universities, knowledge and research institutes, business support actors, national authorities and local authorities, NGOs and relevant private non-profit organisations involved in policy-making/delivery.

Although the EU citizen is the final beneficiary of the Interreg Europe projects, they are not taken into account directly among the target audiences. It is up to the national level and project beneficiaries to communicate with the citizens via national/local channels. Hence the national level and projects should serve as a multiplier for Interreg communication.

1.9 Influencers

Project influencers are the particular person, group, or individual who, while not directly related to the project in question, not a member of the specific project team or a project team leader, nevertheless for one reason or another may bear significant influence or weight on the project in general. The partner state points of contact are the most important influencers.

Other beneficiaries are: EP, CoR, Elected reps, DG geographical units, DG thematic units, ETC programmes, national networks, European networks, Regional offices in Brussels, S3 platform, Media and Private sector.

1.10 Governance

Interreg Europe requires strong political leadership for successful implementation, hence the importance to define the stakeholders at governance level.

DG Regio and the partner states are the most important governance stakeholders. Others are: MA, AA, CA, FLC, DATAR, Joint Secretariat.

1.11 Empathy map

We advise to create a persona to represent the main target audience, being regional and national managing authorities via an **empathy map**. Developing an empathy map helps deeply understand the person we are designing communication products for. By doing so we take the perspective of our customers or business partners. We will strategically analyse the desires and needs of those important to Interreg Europe, and thus uncover ways to improve communication products and services. Further information on how to build an empathy map is annexed to this document.

1.12 Messages

A message is a **simple and clear idea** that summarises the essence of your programme or projects. It should function as a guiding principle for all kinds of communications, from the contents of leaflets, brochures and websites, but also for media interviews or conversations with your stakeholders.

The main point is that messages must be **clear and consistent** across all kinds of communications. The best would be to apply the KISS-rule: Keep it short and simple! Without clear messages, a communication agenda lacks clarity and focus and your agenda risks becoming diluted. Too many different messages will breed confusion.

Start by deciding your **programme's message** – a sentence that states clearly and simply what your programme is trying to do. Try to avoid too general issues and focus on a specific achievement/challenge/opportunity. For example 'Regions of Europe sharing solutions.' or "Regional cooperation is good, you can save time and money"



A digital message does not differ from a message for traditional channels or tools. A different tool or channel may allow for the message to be more elaborate (print brochure) or require it to be shorter (tweet).

It is recommendable to constantly communicate the messages to your target groups, for example by including them on your promotional material such as website, press releases and so forth.

Rules of thumb:

- Provide **consistent** messaging
- **Tailor** your messages to your different targeted audiences
- Adapt your messages to the **online context** (short and well organized)

Messages are tailored to the priority target audience being the managing authorities (project beneficiaries).

Interreg Europe messages focus on:

- Benefits
- Exchange of knowledge
- Support for participating in the Programme

Messages will also be developed for important influencers such as partner state points of contact. Messaging evolves around the why, how, who, what, when of the Programme. Partner state points of contact serve as multipliers for the messages.

For developed messages we refer to the **communication mix** in this document.

Last but not least it is important that a **positive message** goes from project level all the way up to policy level. Interreg Europe is instrumental in delivering the Europe 2020 strategy at regional and local levels, hence the importance of this communication to higher hierarchies. The annual implementation reports to the European Commission provide a good opportunity for this.

The following model is based on the governance model from the PM4SD (Project Management for Sustainable Development) methodology manual.

Levels of governance





1.13 Digital channels

In this section we start by giving an overview of the channels and tools that should be part of the digital communication plan. The channels and tools are further developed in the annexed advisory notes.

A communication channel is a medium through which a message is transmitted to its intended audience. A communication tool is an information carrier or a communication product. A tool can also be a channel. An online platform is an example of a tool that is also a channel. An infographic is a tool that can be used in several channels.

In communications we refer to digital communication whenever online media, tools or channels such as website, newsletter, social media and webinars are used. The rise of digital communication has allowed to build online communities and to communicate in a more targeted way. Digital communication is part of the overall communication. Traditional communication should be combined with digital or online media, tools and channels for effective and integrated communication. For example when an offline event takes place it is promoted and reported via digital communication as well.

One way of looking at channels is by distinguishing owned media, earned media and paid media channels.

We suggest Interreg IVC and Interreg Europe focus primarily on optimising owned and earned digital media. The new website and the Policy Learning Platforms will become very important catalysts in the Interreg Europe digital communication. Together with the appropriate online tools the digital communication will be very effective.

The motto aligned with the objectives and the approach is 'earn attention and authority with valuable information'.

For a campaign (for example the video campaign to promote Interreg Europe) it is recommended to include paid media as well. Including paid media will help activate new potential beneficiaries.

Owned media	Earned media	Paid media
Customers	Super Fans	General Consumers
Website	Twitter	Direct mail
Platforms	Word of Mouth	Paid search
Facebook	Facebook comments	Advertising
LinkedIn	LinkedIn comments	...

As mentioned earlier, channels are developed in separate advisory notes. These advisory notes can be found in the annexes.



1.14 Website

The new Interreg Europe website is currently under construction. The website will be the main tool facilitating the link between projects, platforms & programme and will be the main communication interface of the Programme. Therefore it should perform the following:

1. Feature **general information** about the **Programme** as the funding priorities, calls for proposals, guidance for project applicants, news and events, contacts, etc.
2. Present information about the **projects** and their **status of implementation**. This implies interoperability between the website and the programme online monitoring system, depending on the needed update frequency, this function could be automated by linking to the in house server or simply by importing an Excel table or XML file.
3. Present information about the thematic **platforms** and their **status of implementation**. This implies interoperability between the website and thematic platforms' CMS

The www.interregeurope.eu will be the **main digital presence for the Interreg Europe Programme**. Once arrived here, the potential public should be able to easily find the way to the Interreg Europe proposed “products”:

- projects (results or implementation) and
- platforms

The website will equally be connected to the Interreg Europe presence on social media. It is important to add the link of the website to all online tools and to all digital channels.

The basic principles for the website are:

- Clear structure
- Clean, simple design
- No dead-ends
- Integrated search
- Tagged content

Note for integrated digital communication

The new website will be launched before the platforms and is being built by a different contractor. For consistent communication it is important that the website and the platform are well integrated.

1.15 Web tools

In 2015, the development of a variety of online tools will ensure a wide reach of the new target groups. In this section we will help conceive the content and a set-up strategy for web tools (such as webinar, chat, etc.)

An Advisory Note on the Web Tools will be delivered with the final strategy.

1.16 Policy Learning Platforms

The platforms will act as an expertise hub. The four thematic online platforms will be dedicated to:

- Research & innovation



- SME competitiveness
- Low-carbon economy
- Environment & resource efficiency

A separate document will detail the implementation of the policy learning platforms.

1.17 Video

Video has the ability to effectively share information and impact audiences Europe wide. Video is also visually attractive. Those are great advantages, especially in digital communication. Several video products will be created for the digital communication, the first being the Promotional Video on Interreg Europe.

An Advisory Note on the Overall Video Communication will be provided with the final strategy.

1.18 Web documentary

The existing web documentary will be updated with new testimonials of enthusiastic previous project beneficiaries by the JTS.

1.19 Social media

Social media are an essential part of digital communication. This section will provide some figures followed by general guidelines in line with the above stated digital communication objectives.

In the last two years, all digital initiatives (webdoc, hybrid events, online publications etc) have been important traffic boosters for the Interreg website . These digital initiatives, backed up by social media campaigns, improved considerably the overall traffic. The existing website was developed and improved constantly (new module to present events; development of online community; social media integration etc.) and as a result the audience returned or stayed longer on the Interreg website.

The figures on traffic acquisition for the Interreg website are: 54.7% organic search, 22.7% direct, 18.4% referrals, 3.1% social and 1.1% e-mail. (August 2014 – August 2015)

"Don't be on social. Be social."

A distinction should be made between Interreg IVC's presence on social media and Interreg Europe's one.

In terms of community most followers were gathered around Interreg's Twitter presence. The use of Twitter in association with events and allowing a larger public the possibility to "attend" even if not on spot, helped build a larger following.

On LinkedIn, a closed group designed exclusively for exchange between project representatives was created.

The Interreg Europe accounts (Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn company page & associated group, Google+ with Youtube) were created in October 2014 – just before the Open Days where the programme was about to have its first official appearance. This moment was chosen at that point also to foresee the big launch event which was in December 2015 - #europecooperates.

With the launch of Interreg Europe, presence on social media was extended and the newly established accounts benefited from the capital of image gathered around Interreg IVC. The Interreg Europe social media accounts have been particularly important in the past year also because the new Interreg Europe website is not launched yet. The launch is foreseen in September 2015.

Some statistics about the progression of Interreg Europe social media accounts in time:



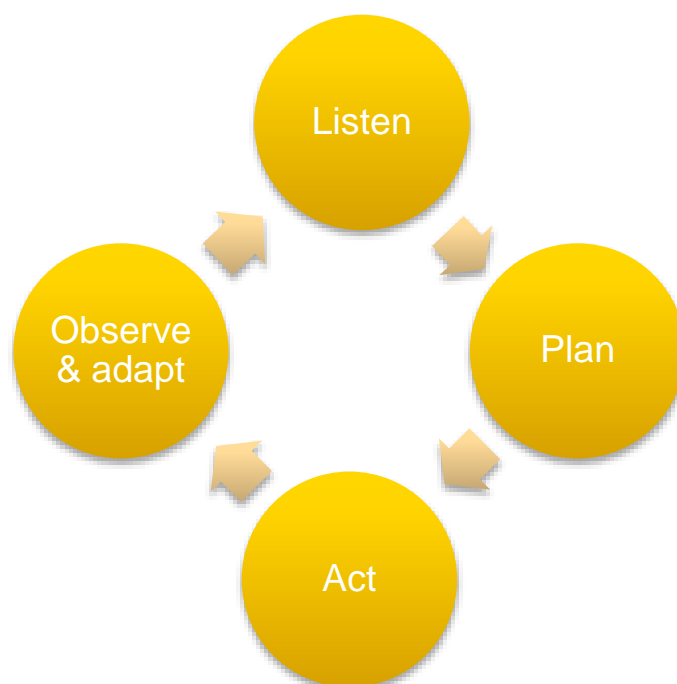
- Facebook: January 2015 (after #europecooperates event) – 692 likes; 27/02/2015 –1 000 likes; July 2015 – 2 000 likes; 06/08/2015: 2 283 likes. Posts that include content (photos, videos etc.) work the best & important announcements such as launch of call.
- Twitter: January 2015 (after #europecooperates event) – 397 followers; February 2015: 627, 06/08/2015: 1 235 followers
- LinkedIn company page (the social media where we performed the best : gathered quite a community in a short period of time): January 2015 – 596 followers; 06/08/2015: 1 632 followers.
- Google+ account with associated services: company page, youtube, photos. Established mainly for traffic optimisation reasons – link to establish between the new website, youtube account, google analytics, photos etc.

The main challenge in 2015 is to transfer the online community created around Interreg IVC to Interreg Europe social media accounts. Specific recommendations can be found under 2.4.2. Past and future.

Guidelines

- 🌱 It is highly recommended to consistently draft the social media updates around the same, targeted messages. Thanks to repetition your target audience will recognize and remember the Interreg Europe brand better.
- 🌱 An effective process by consistent push and pull communication on social media will ensure reaching out across Europe to whom we need to reach (people and institutions) and engage them.
- 🌱 Also, important in the management of social media is the capacity to listen. Most companies and organisations don't do this very well and rather focus on push content. Listening to your 'customers' questions, issues, problems, and obstacles at social media is extremely valuable in the process of creating more impactful communication. We advise to follow the below cycle for the management of social media content.

Social media content cycle:



- It is recommended investing time in continuously analysing what kind of posts work best, create new ones based on what works best and add the newly planned posts to the communication action plan.
- The inclusion of new target groups will be achieved after campaigns (see the engagement triangle in this document).
- Social media are also an excellent tool to apply the digital communication approach 'Policy learning, policy sharing and policy stories'. Links in social media posts can refer to these elements, linking through to specific success stories in the updated web documentary, linking through to a news item on the Interreg Europe website, to name a few examples.

Different social media channels help reach out to different audiences. We recommend prioritising going where your audiences are over being active on as many social media channels as possible.

Social media	Target
Facebook	Potential beneficiaries and potential project partner, other ETC programmes, general public and 'friends' of the programme.
LinkedIn	Project partners, potential beneficiaries
Twitter	EU institutions and organisations, experts, thematic communities
Youtube	EU institutions and organisations, potential partners & project beneficiaries, regional authorities, general public
Google+ / Picasa targets	EU institutions and organisations, potential partners & project beneficiaries, regional authorities, general public



Social media channels can and should be activated for each layer of the engagement triangle.

Youtube and all Google associated products are mainly used as channels (posting a video for later on promoting it via other social media). It is recommended to use Youtube and Google associated products even if only as channels because it helps Interreg Europe obtain overall better results in google searches.

1.20 Info graphics (tool)

Info graphics can be a very useful tool. Info graphics are essential snapshots of your statistical information (numbers talk). Info graphics are very visual and help present complex information quickly and clearly. Other benefits are visual attractiveness and easy retention. Once created, info graphics can be used to illustrate social media posts, news items, newsletters, webinars, etc.

1.21 Communication mix

During the collaborative workshop organized in April 2015, JTS and Arctik worked together to extract key messages and appropriate channels for various audiences. The below communication mix brings audience, to do's, messages and channels together. For building authority and becoming the reference point it is important different audiences' needs are served. The communication mix is an excellent tool for this. The communication mix also helps optimize the outreach by providing the elements for an effective communication process.

The engagement triangle provides guidance for planning communication actions over time.

Digital objectives addressed	Audience	To do	Message	Channels
Outreach New target groups	Influencers: Points of contact (national and regional)	Proactively reach managing authorities, beneficiaries in own language via national channels	Show / explain benefits? Why should organisation get involved? How to get involved? Project partner? Support letter?	Off line annual meeting – online extranet (doc depository), emails, templates (cf. press pack), questionnaires, Interreg Europe Platform
Reference point New target groups	Potential beneficiaries: (managing authorities, public bodies, not-for-profit organisations)	Know the program and apply for the projects, create active account on platform	Communicate benefits, create credibility	Website, mailing, via partner state points of contact, events, live and online on LinkedIn and Facebook
Consistency Show project achievements	Citizen, interested person in the four themes	For now, no specific action required.		



		(member of platform)		
Reference point		Know the rules, be competent, communicate about Interreg Europe, participate in the platform; pass information on the project partners	Interreg Europe objective and finance, receive information on rules, where to get info and how to get help	Seminar, webinar, training, event, website, mailing, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter
Outreach	Project leaders			
Show project achievements				
Reference point		Know the logic, take smart decision, trust the competence and management of JTS, know the program achievement and results, be the ambassador at the local level.	Good projects, good program, we want to continue to have happy partner countries	Meetings, events, website, extranet, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, newsletter
Show project achievements	Partner states			
Consistence				
Outreach		Know Interreg. Should think that Interreg does a great job. Should invite our projects to events, partner up, because we have the content/stories, join relevant events and the platforms.	Interreg Europe is an instrument tool/partner to reach the goals of the EU2020 strategy	Website, personal contacts, email, Twitter, newsletter
Show project achievements	EU Institutions			

In the Interreg Europe Programme Communication Strategy 2014 – 2020 the following messages are developed. They are consistent and clear and focus on the benefits. These key messages can be further supported by policy stories.

Target audience	Desired action	Key messages
National authorities/potential beneficiaries	Submit relevant project applications	‘Cooperation helped to improve x In my region’



Bodies responsible for structural funds programmes	Submit relevant project applications. Support related bodies on project applications	'Cooperation saves time and money'
Former project partners	Testify to usefulness of cooperation (goodwill ambassador)	'Cooperation helped me (my region) do x'

1.22 Engagement Triangle

As explained during the workshop the digital communication plan will be based on the below **engagement triangle**. We work with this model because it has proven effective and it facilitates placing different communication activities on a timeline following the different layers of the triangle.

The triangle is focused on attracting customers (new project applicants, policy makers, managing authorities) on the top and focused on keeping customers engaged towards the bottom layers.

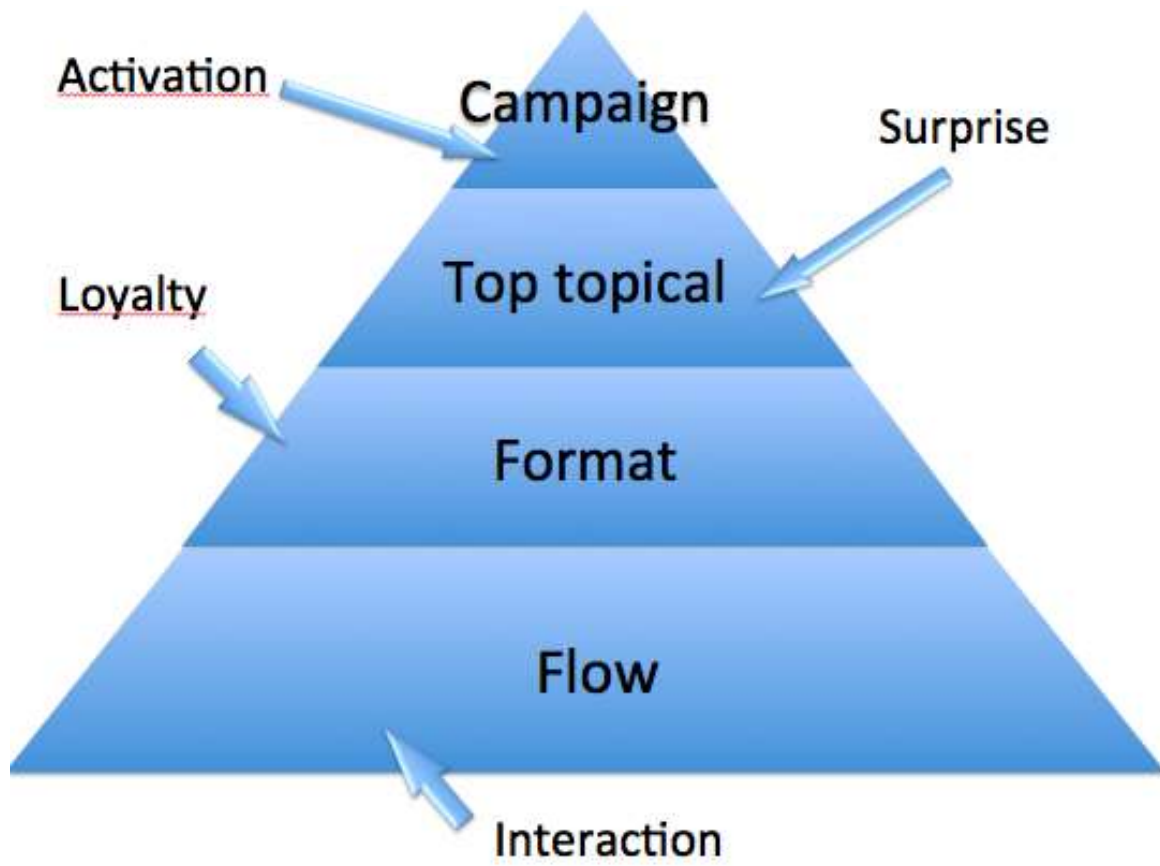
Overall the engagement triangle serves the purpose of becoming a reference point or authority (cf. digital communication objective 1). It forms the basis for an effective process to secure a good outreach (cf. digital communication objective 3) and for including new target groups (cf. digital communication objective 4). In general, communication activities will follow the programme's funding cycles.

On top of the pyramid there is the **Campaign**. A campaign serves to attract new 'customers'. Typically a campaign will be organized once or twice a year. For example around the announcement of approved projects or a new call for projects.

Then we have the **Top Topical** communication; this part refers to engagements via external hooks, for example International Day of Innovation. This part could in your case also refer to seminars or webinars. On average a communication action will be organized on a monthly basis or every two months.

To maintain a steady relationship over time you can use a fix **Format** such a newsletters to enhance loyalty among your 'customer's. Newsletters go out every week, every two weeks or every month, depending on the amount of new information available. The frequency should be consistent.

At the bottom of the pyramid we see the **Flow**, this refers to the daily interaction with your customers via social media, via email and via telephone.





1.23 Evaluation

In order to perform an evaluation of the work it is important to translate the objectives into result indicators. Result indicators should follow these criteria:

- Must reflect the organisation's objectives
- Must be key to its success
- Must be quantifiable (measurable)
- Usually are long-term considerations

The most recent Google analytics report for www.interreg4c.eu covers a one-year period from August 2014 to August 2015. Since the new Interreg Europe website is launched in September 2015, monitoring and tracking should start anew.

A short note on www.interregeurope.eu analytics: a basic page under this address was released towards the end of June 2015; traffic so far: 6.230 sessions (23 June – 6 August 2015).

In terms of tools for monitoring (all free services):

- Google analytics for website & other associated digital products (webdoc & online report)
- Hootsuite for social media, stream monitoring – mainly Twitter oriented
- Analytics provided by each platform for Twitter, Facebook & LinkedIn

Result indicators are listed in the Interreg Europe Programme Communication Strategy 2014 – 2020 under the evaluation section.

The following result indicators more specific to digital communication should be added:

Objective	Result indicator	Type	Tools	Sept 2015	January 2016
Website authority - keywords	Tracking keyword rankings	Quantitative	Google analytics or equivalent	List most important keywords	
Website authority - traffic	Traffic volume	Quantitative	Google analytics or equivalent	>50% of sessions come from organic search	
Website	Traffic quality	Quantitative	Google analytics or equivalent	- # of sessions : 0 - Average Session Duration : 4'12"	14.500 5' 49,7%



					47%
Website authority - conversion	# of sessions on project pages	Quantitative	Google analytics	0	7.000
Website authority - conversion	# of sessions on policy pages	Quantitative	Google analytics	0	6.000
Website Outreach	# new users to website/month	Quantitative	Google analytics	0	1.000
New target groups	# new subscriptions to mailing lists	Quantitative	Mailing tool	0	50
Stakeholder interviews (sample from Key audience)	Semi-opened questions	Qualitative	Interviews	Summer 2016	
Online questionnaire	Closed and semi-opened questions	Qualitative	Questionnaire	January 2016	
Twitter	# of followers	Quantitative	Hootsuite	1.288	1.500
	# of interactions			add number	add number
Facebook	# of monthly likes	Quantitative	Hootsuite	1.200	1.400
LinkedIn	# of community members on company page	Quantitative	Hootsuite	1.632	2.000

It is recommended that the evaluation of the digital communication strategy be part of the overall programme's on-going communication evaluation measures.



Annexe 1 Empathy map

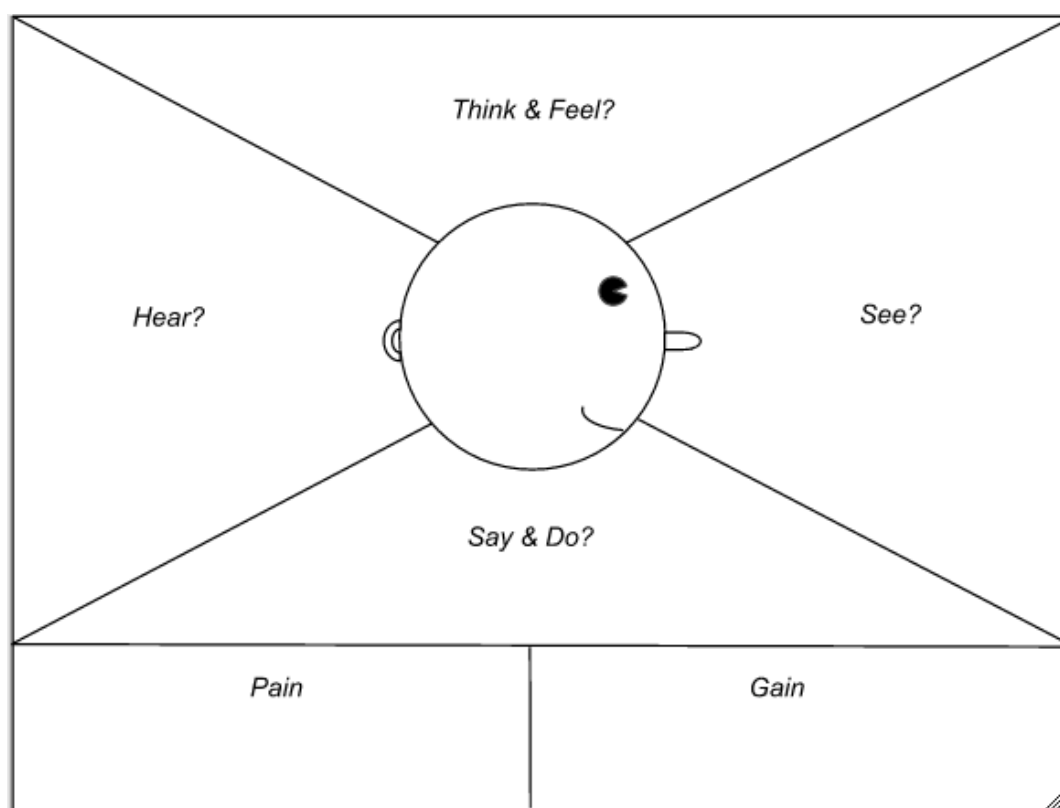
What is an empathy map?

An empathy map is a collaborative tool teams can use to gain a deeper insight into their customers. Much like a user persona, an empathy map can represent a group of users, such as a customer segment. The empathy map was originally created by Dave Gray and has been gaining popularity with the agile community.

What Does an Empathy Map Look Like?

An empathy map consists of a simple face surrounded by six sections:

1. Think & Feel
2. Hear
3. See
4. Say & Do
5. Pain
6. Gain





How Would I Use an Empathy Map?

A sample empathy mapping session may be as follows:

Assemble your team and have them bring any personas, data, or insights about the target of your empathy map.

Print out, or sketch, the empathy map template on a large piece of paper or whiteboard.

Hand each team member sticky notes and a marker. Each person should add at least one sticky to every section.

Ask questions, such as what would this user be:

- Thinking & feeling about their worries or aspirations?
- Hearing while using our product, from their friends or boss?
- Seeing while using our product in their environment?
- Saying & doing while using our product in public or in private?
- Experiencing as a pain point or fear when using our product?
- Experiencing as a positive or gain when using our product?

Have the team members speak about the sticky notes as they place them on the empathy map. Ask questions about deeper insights so that they can be elaborated for the rest of the team.

To help bring the user to life, sketch out the characteristics this person may have on the center of the face.

At the end of the session, ask the team members what insights they've learned. More importantly, ask them what hypotheses they now have about the users that they'd like to validate.

When Would I Use an Empathy Map?

Empathy maps can be used whenever you find a need to immerse yourself in a user's environment.

They can be helpful when, but are not limited to:

- Diving into the customer segments of a business model canvas
- Elaborating on user personas
- Capturing the behaviors when pair interviewing a customer
- Building out the "user" in your user story



Communication Strategy Annex: Points of contact guidelines

30 October 2015

This document presents guidelines for the partner state points of contact, a supplementary document to the Interreg Europe programme Communication strategy 2014-2020.

Background

Interreg Europe is an interregional cooperation programme with 30 partner states – 28 EU member states, Norway and Switzerland. Each partner state supports the joint secretariat on a number of agreed tasks. It is up to each Partner State to decide how these tasks are carried out, and if a point of contact will be established, depending on national/regional practices and available resources. In addition, around half of the Partner States have not opted to receive technical assistance funding for these point of contact activities. While these activities play an important role in reaching the objectives of the programme, it is not fully appropriate for the programme to monitor the impact of such activities. This document is designed to be a guidance, for the programme to be fully aware of the resources and capabilities available in each partner state, and for partner states to use, if they find it useful, to provide input to the programme's communication objectives.

Challenges

Analysis of the primary target groups – bodies responsible for Structural Funds programmes – shows their low interest and engagement in the programme (average 1.6 on a scale from low - 1 to high - 5). A hardly 10% return on the baseline survey (60 replies received from 663 addressed) is yet another evidence that more needs to be done to increase their awareness about Interreg Europe and engage them actively either as partners in projects or beneficiaries of the platform services.

One of the key identified barriers to reaching and mobilising these target groups is the language. The language of the programme is English, but the proficiency of the target groups in English is not always guaranteed.

Another challenge at the programme level linked to reaching the primary target groups is the programme staff's knowledge of the national context and having access to channels of communication with them at the national/regional level.

Yet another barrier to these target groups' engagement in the programme is their lack of trust in a distant European programme offering projects which is an additional task on top of their already busy days.

The points of contact can play an invaluable role in overcoming these barriers by:

- adapting the programme messages to national or local context, including the language
- distributing the programme messages through national or local communication channels
- presenting the programme to the target groups from a position of a trustworthy national partner
- feeding information on the country-specific features back to the programme secretariat



A special status

The points of contact and partner state representatives in general are a special group with respect to the programme communication strategy. They are both a target group for the programme's communication (see 'Influencers' in the main communication strategy document) and an important channel for reaching the programme's beneficiaries/users.

The programme is at the service of its partner states; and the partner states have agreed a certain number of tasks to be carried out in each country. This document is meant as a guideline to ensure the complementarity of activities carried out by the secretariat and the points of contact. It can serve as a tool assisting the programme bodies in the efficient allocation of often scarce resources, trying to ensure the programme has an impact on the most relevant organisations in each partner state.

A programme target group

As a target group of the programme communication, the points of contact represent an important 'influencer' on the programme as such. However, their engagement levels in the programme activities vary from one country to another, depending for example on the administrative set-up, the human resources allocated to the programme, and on the points of contact having more than one programme to manage.

Target group analysis

The Interreg Europe programming committee decided to leave the set-up and allocation of resources on national level to the decision of each individual partner state. As a result, there is a variety of administrative set-ups for the programme to liaise with. This has an impact on how each partner state carries out the agreed list of tasks. To make the communication effort as consistent and complementary as possible, these guidelines can be used by the points of contact, if they need input about where to allocate their scarce resources and on what activities to focus.

The programme would like to tailor its own messages and services towards the points of contact. An accurate overview of the administrative set-up and resources available in each partner state can help in that respect. This information was requested in summer 2015 and is presented under 'Resources' below.

A communication channel

The points of contact represent an invaluable channel of communication vis-à-vis the primary target groups (beneficiaries/users) of the programme communication strategy, in particular the bodies responsible for managing Structural Funds programmes (Goal 1 & Goal 2 programmes' managing authorities and/ or intermediate bodies).

In this respect, the 30 partner states agreed on a list of tasks to be fulfilled by each partner state (point of contact(s) or other partner state representative(s)) to support the programme implementation¹:

1. Eligibility check of partner status – this is further described in sections 4.4.2 and 5.1 of the Programme manual
2. Check relevance of letter of support signatory – developed in article 8.1 of the Interreg Europe monitoring committee Rules of Procedure on the eligibility assessment
3. Provide national specific information incl. on potential beneficiaries, esp. relevant Goal 1 & 2 players
4. Point of contact for potential applicants
5. Wide dissemination of programme information
6. Organise national/ regional events (for information, dissemination, project partners, first level controllers, and so on)

¹ see point 8 on the Role and financing of National Contact Points in 'IR EUROPE - PC05 - Decision Notes Final'



The tasks 3-6 are instrumental in reaching the communication objectives of the programme and these guidelines suggest ways how to fulfil them.

As a reminder, the programme's overall communication objectives are:

- To increase to 50% the awareness of the defined list of 'actors of regional relevance' about the platforms' existence by 2020
- To inform 90% of identified target groups about the programme's funding opportunities by 2018
- To increase access to good practices by establishing Interreg Europe as the programme to turn to for policy issues
- To demonstrate the positive effect of interregional cooperation on regional development to European institutions, partner states and the public

Target group analysis by country

The programme communication strategy contains an analysis of the level of influence and engagement of each of the identified target groups. This is based on an overall, or aggregate, view of each of these groups. However we know that national administrative and political differences mean that the analysis varies within each partner state. Each partner state completed a national stakeholder analysis in 2014² focusing only on the group 'Beneficiaries/Users' (see Annexe 2). While in one country, the body responsible for Structural Funds is the managing authority, in other countries this responsibility has been delegated to an agency, or it is under the functional control of a ministry. For the programme to ensure it is reaching the appropriate organisations eligible for funding, messages and channels need to be tailored to each specific country situation. We invite points of contact to build on their own mapping of beneficiaries (projects)/users (platform services), by identifying selected specific communication channels and activities. A tailored approach to target audiences in each country can greatly help to make the programme a success.

We would welcome if each point of contact **developed their own communication plan**. A simple table listing the programme communication objectives each linked to a specific target group and specific activities could help the points of contact use their scarce resources in the most efficient way.

Communication objective	Country-specific target group	Tailored activity using a specific channel of communication
-------------------------	-------------------------------	---

The secretariat will provide both training support and templates to ensure consistency and efficiency of the communications at the national/ regional level whenever possible and necessary.

→ Points of contact are encouraged to focus primarily on reaching the 'beneficiaries/users' target group, which they identified specifically for their country (stakeholder analysis in Annexe 2)

Contribution to the programme communication objectives

The contribution of the points of contact to the programme communication objectives is crucial to make the programme a success. The programme sees the primary contribution of the points of contact in their direct and often face-to-face contact with the key target groups. The programme suggests a number of activities and tools to the points of contact in order to assist the programme in:

- Raising awareness about the platform services;
- Informing about the funding opportunities;
- Making the good practices better accessible; and
- Demonstrating the benefits of cooperation.

² 'IR EUROPE - PC07 - Decision notes - Ax 08 Overview national mappings (updated)'



Events

The role of the points of contact in organising smaller national or regional events to initiate the first contact with the programme is strategic. The points of contact are encouraged to organise:

- Information days linked to programme calls
- Dissemination events on programme results
- Training seminars on country-specific features (FLC)
- Support the programme in organising platform events in the country (logistics)

The point of contact is a valuable ambassador for the programme, and if capacity allows, they could also identify third-party events at which they could speak or otherwise represent the programme.

The secretariat is ready to support the points of contact in this role by:

- Providing feedback, advice and suggesting speakers for partner state events
- Participating as speaker if requested, and if staff capacity available at the time
- Providing data beyond what is immediately available on programme website or database, contributing to presentations if requested, providing other information support

Public relations

Another very important element of the programme's communication strategy are public relations activities with face-to-face encounters with the (potential) beneficiaries, especially with the representatives of Goal 1 & Goal 2 programmes.

The secretariat will meet the target groups mainly at programme events – annual European-wide fora, high-level political briefings and various meeting and trainings for the (potential) beneficiaries. Successful public relations will also build on strategic partnerships with other programmes and European institutions so that the right messages get to the right people. When it comes to the media, the programme decided to use this channel mainly in an indirect way, via its beneficiaries. It is up to the approved projects to establish the links with the local media and present their work and achievements to the local public.

The role the points of contact can play in supporting the programme public relations activities is invaluable for a number of reasons, for example their ability to overcome the challenges spelled out above. They can:

- communicate in local language(s)
- found the communication on trust in an institution which is known to the beneficiaries
- build on the knowledge of the local context for communication
- benefit from the access to local channels of communication (for example local or institutional media mailing lists)

The points of contact are encouraged to fulfil the following tasks:

- Serve as the point of contact for (potential) beneficiaries with
 - Information about the programme in general and the funding opportunities
 - Training activities linked to the preparation for the programme calls and national certification
 - Help in 'framing' partner search requests and project ideas
- Disseminate widely the programme information
 - At relevant events in their country (thematic, specifically focusing on Goal 1 & Goal 2 or general events on SF funding)



- By targeted communication in local language with Goal 1 & Goal 2 representatives (with programme information material or a country-specific material prepared by the point of contact with the 'raw' data provided by the programme)
- Via institutional communication channels (for example, by placing the programme announcements on the national website or distributing them via their local mailing lists)

Whenever possible, the points of contact could help the project partners coming from their countries promote their project. This could be for example by helping the projects reach the local media through their own media mailing lists, if such lists are available. Or the points of contact can help by placing the project news or announcement in their department's newsletter or at the news website of their organisation. The programme manual suggests to projects to liaise with the points of contact in their partner countries for this purpose.

Online tools

According to the Regulation 1303/2013 (EU) Article 115, each partner state has to provide information on the national structural funds as well as European territorial cooperation programmes on a single national website. The secretariat will link the programme website to each of them and make this information easily accessible to all users via country-specific pages.

The programme website can serve as a useful tool for the points of contact. They can:

- keep their contact point details up to date (name, address, contact details etc)
- inform directly about their national/regional events and news
- see the secretariat's feedback on project ideas from their countries
- see project ideas, people's profiles, project partners, good practices and any other programme data for their country

The points of contact also need to link the information on the programme website to their national websites, keeping the information about Interreg Europe in their country as up-to-date as possible for all (potential) beneficiaries.

The selection of specific communication means and activities is at the discretion of each point of contact.

The points of contact are encouraged to share and discuss their plans with the secretariat before implementing them because it can help in finding synergies and using all available resources efficiently both in the secretariat and at the national/ regional level.

The points of contact should also think about sharing their experience with the other partner states. The secretariat will do its best to ensure that all inspiring communication activities or tools developed by one of the points of contact are known to the others and can serve as an inspiration for future planning of communication at the country/ regional level.

Annual meetings

The secretariat will organise annual briefing/ training sessions for the points of contact on the upcoming calls or other programme activities to:

- prepare them adequately for various requests for information and/ or support from the programme target groups, and
- ensure the coherence of information provided across all the partner states
- discuss planned activities for the upcoming period
- facilitate exchange and search for synergies among the points of contact in their activities



Further trainings can be included in the annual communication work plan, if required by the partner states.

Resources

The secretariat has a communication officer appointed to play the liaison role between all the points of contact and the secretariat and ensure a prompt feedback on the requests for support coming from the partner states. The secretariat ensures regular updates of the points of contact about the programme developments via electronic tools (email, newsletter, social media) and aggregates available information about the national and/or regional activities foreseen for the upcoming year.

Financial support

Fifteen partner states opted in for a financial support for the organisation of national/ regional events (information events, dissemination events, or training events) and travel and accommodation costs of the points of contact to such events and other programme meetings.

The partner states have the following resources available:

Country	No of points of contact	Number of staff dedicated to Interreg Europe (if known)	Opt in Yes/ No	Financial allocation
Austria	1		no	
Belgium	3		yes	13,135
Bulgaria	6		yes	8,674
Croatia	1	0.5	yes	5,207
Cyprus	1		no	
Czech Republic	2		no	
Denmark	2		no	
Estonia	1		yes	1,532
Finland	3		no	
France	2	2 x 0.5	yes	77,338
Germany	0 (16 first points of reference)		no	
Greece	2		yes	13,366
Hungary	1	0.3	no	
Ireland	2		yes	5,425
Italy	1	2 x 0.5	no	
Latvia	1		yes	2,417
Lithuania	1		yes	3,556
Luxembourg	1		no	
Malta	1	0.75	no	
Netherlands	1	0.5	no	
Norway	1	1	no	
Poland	1 (16 regional)		yes	45,624
Portugal	2		no	
Romania	1		yes	25,282
Slovakia	1		yes	6,398
Slovenia	1		yes	2,433
Spain	1		yes	54,689
Sweden	2		no	
Switzerland	1		no	
United Kingdom	1		no	



Information on how to benefit from this support was presented at the INTERREG IVC National contact point briefing in Rome on 17 October 2014³ (see Annexe 1 on financing procedure).

Sharing information on communication activities

These guidelines are dependent for their effectiveness to a large degree on cooperation in and coordination of the communication tasks among the secretariat and all the partner states.

Having in mind that many of the points of contact carry out their activities with their own resources, it seems important to try and capture the extra effort put in by partner states, and how it benefits the programme. Points of contact are invited to provide information on how their activities contribute to the programme's communication strategy objectives.

Information sharing tool

The points of contact are encouraged to share with the secretariat their plans of activities as soon as possible. The secretariat will aggregate this information and make it available to the others for possible synergies, inspiration and cooperation.

The secretariat will develop an online tool (a form/ a questionnaire) to make this sharing and aggregation easy and accessible. This tool will be open for updates and input throughout the year. Points of contact are invited to complete the information form insofar as possible, including how activities have contributed to the programme's communication objectives. Any information shared in this form will be used to demonstrate the programme's actions above and beyond the technical assistance budget allocated to the programme.

³ point 4 of the 'INTERREG EUROPE – NCP – Meeting notes final' sent on 15 December 2014



Annexe 1 –Financing procedure

Eligible activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Events organised for the promotion of the Interreg Europe programme, training of project partner staff and the dissemination of programme results, - MC participation (travel) 													
	Travel costs for PS	Meeting & event costs* for the organisation of Interreg Europe events by the PS												
Eligible costs	<p>contribution to the travel costs of Points of Contact (and other bodies authorised by the PS fulfilling Point of Contact functions) for attending conferences, from their place of office to the venue of the activity and return</p> <p>contribution to the travel costs of MC members to the MC meeting</p>													
Simplified calculation basis (inspired from Jean-Monnet Programme rules)	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">10 to 99km =</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100 to 499 km =</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€180</td> </tr> <tr> <td>500 to 1,999 km =</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€275</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2,000 to 2,999km =</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€360</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3,000 to 3,999km =</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€530</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4,000 to 7,999km =</td> <td style="text-align: right;">€620</td> </tr> </table>	10 to 99km =	€20	100 to 499 km =	€180	500 to 1,999 km =	€275	2,000 to 2,999km =	€360	3,000 to 3,999km =	€530	4,000 to 7,999km =	€620	<p>contribution to costs linked to the organisation of conferences, seminars, workshops etc. to promote the programme, train project partners and disseminate the programme results (minimum of 10 participants per event)</p> <p>Unit cost per participant according to overview below</p> <p><i>*In case of events shared with other programmes and receiving reimbursement for the event from other sources on a real cost basis, the financing of the event cannot exceed 100% of the costs.</i></p>
10 to 99km =	€20													
100 to 499 km =	€180													
500 to 1,999 km =	€275													
2,000 to 2,999km =	€360													
3,000 to 3,999km =	€530													
4,000 to 7,999km =	€620													
Supporting documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - agenda of the meeting or event (carrying the INTERREG EUROPE logo) - number of participants proven through the signed participants list (original or certified copy) - for travel costs: proof of distance between office place and meeting place (calculated with the help of the following tool: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/distance_en.htm) - account information (account holder, bank name, IBAN, BIC, reference) <p><u>It is not necessary to prove the actual costs to the JS with the request for reimbursement and to submit invoices, bank statements, procurement documents etc.</u></p>													
Reporting frequency	max. of 1 report per year, minimum amount of €1000 per report (except for duly justified cases such as final report for example)													
Off-setting with TA contributions	If a Partner States wishes to offset the reimbursement with their annual TA contribution, the reimbursement can be made to the Interreg Europe TA bank account and the request for the annual TA contributions will be reduced accordingly.													



Partner States applying for financing

Partner State	Total amount available
Belgium	13,135
Bulgaria	8,674
Croatia	5,207
Estonia	1,532
France	77,338
Greece	13,366
Ireland	5,425
Latvia	2,417
Lithuania	3,556
Norway	5,009
Poland	45,624
Romania	25,282
Slovakia	6,398
Slovenia	2,433
Spain	54,689

Unit cost per day per participant for the organisation of programme related events	
Partner State	Unit cost per day per participant in EUR
Austria	95
Belgium	90
Bulgaria	40
Croatia	47
Cyprus	69
Czech Republic	58
Denmark	93
Estonia	47
Finland	85
France	84
Germany	91
Greece	70
Hungary	46
Ireland	82
Italy	77
Latvia	41
Lithuania	41
Luxembourg	143



Malta	56
Netherlands	100
Norway	139
Poland	46
Portugal	57
Romania	40
Slovakia	53
Slovenia	65
Spain	78
Sweden	95
Switzerland	103
United Kingdom	92

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/funding/2013/documents/jean_monnet_ka1/ira_flatrate_LLIP_c_all_2013.pdf



Annexe 2 – National stakeholder analyses

see excel file 7.3.1 National stakeholder analyses