

Guidance Note 7 Project Communication

I. Introduction

Communication is key to successfully implementing and delivering any project. Publicising projects and all the good work they are achieving is a crucial part of ensuring the success of EU funded projects. Over the last decade project communication has become an increasingly important part of the Interreg programmes. But communicating well does take time and resources (both human and financial) and as a result must be planned properly.

We understand that communication is not everyone's specialist subject so the following guidance note will walk you through the key steps for your project communication and give you some ideas and advice on the types of communication tools and measures that you could use.

This guidance note will be broken down into two main sections:

- 1. Guidance for completing the communication work package of the full application form.*
- 2. The mandatory requirements and best practices that should be considered when implementing your communication strategy.*

The France Channel England Programme has dedicated staff for Communication purposes, who are available for any questions or queries you may have about project communication. Please visit our contact page on our website to get in touch with our Communication staff directly.

Application Form Guidance

The communication work package is the part of the application form that allows you to outline your communication strategy and the key steps you will take to publicise your project throughout its life cycle. It is an important part of the application and should not be seen as an 'add on' to your project but rather as tool in helping you achieve your overall project objectives. The section below will outline some of the key components you should consider when completing this work package and putting together your communication strategy.

A. Objectives

Objectives are fundamental to any communication strategy. All communication that you implement needs to be driven by objectives and goals. It is important that your communication objectives contribute to the achievement of the overall project. In this way communication activities will be recognised not as an "add-on", but as something that is fundamental to the project's success.

Your communication objectives should outline how communications will help deliver your overall project objectives. For example:

Project Objective – Increase the uptake of a new eco-friendly product

Communication Objective – Increase awareness of new eco-friendly product amongst the general public

When putting together your communication objectives it may be useful to consider the acronym SMART as this will help you set realistic and achievable objectives.

S – Specific	Make your objectives clear. Vague objectives will only result in vague communication.
M – Measurable	Make sure you can measure your objectives. This will allow you to see if you have successfully met them.
A – Appropriate	Make sure the objective is relevant to meeting your project objectives.
R – Realistic	Be realistic about what you can achieve with the time and resources you have available.
T- Timed	Set a deadline for when you think you will be able to achieve your objectives.

B. Target groups

Along with your objectives, you need to identify who your key target audiences are. In section 3.2 of the Application form you will have already identified the target groups that you plan to reach with your project. It is important that you keep these target groups in the front of your mind when putting together your communication strategy and look at which communication activities are needed to reach each target group.

C. Activities

Outlining your communication activities is a key part of the communication work package and of any communication strategy. This is your opportunity to talk about how you are going to raise awareness and publicise your project. When thinking about what communication activities to put in-place, consider the following question: How and with what message are you going to communicate to each target group?

Activities may include events, press releases, social media, flyers and so forth. In the second part of the communication note we will go into more detail about some of the activities that could be used and the best practices for each activity.

Each communication activity outlined in the application form will also need to have a deliverable. For example:

Activity: Media engagement – The project will focus on building relations and engagement with the media to enable coverage of the project to the general public.

Deliverable: Creation of an online press-room, 10 press releases published per annum.

N.B. As well as having communication activities that are specific to each project, there are also several activities that must be implemented in-line with EU regulations. This will be referred to in more detail in part III.a. of the Communication Note.

D. Timeline

All communication activities should be accompanied with a time frame. This should be in-line with the key milestones for the overall project.

E. Budget

The final aspect of the communication package is the budget. We recommend that you go through your proposed communication activities with your partners and look at what can be done 'in-house' with your own staff and resources, and what will need to be done by external services. When filling out the budget all third-party costs should be placed under the section 'expertise and external services.' It's also important that partners get an idea of how much certain services (e.g. website creation, events etc.) cost before filling out the budget.

II. Implementing Project Communication

Once your project has been approved and the grant offer letter has been signed you should start to implement your communication strategy. Any communication, such as press releases, social media posts etc., around the launch of the project should be aligned with the Interreg France (Channel) England Programme's communication.

The following section will outline the minimum requirements that need to be implemented, as well as guidance on best practice procedures for other communication activities.

a. Mandatory Requirements

As well as having communication activities that are specific to each project, there are also several activities, in-line with EU regulation, that are mandatory. These requirements are explained in detail in Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 Annex XII.

i. Programme Logo and ERDF reference

Requirement - All communication activities and materials developed by projects need to display the European Union flag and make reference to the European Union and the European Regional Development Fund.

Solution - By using the France (Channel) England programme logo this covers both the European Flag and the European Union reference. The only additional requirement is to make reference to the ERDF. This can be done by adding the text 'Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund'. We advise that within keeping of the style of the Programme logo that you use the text font Montserrat. Or, alternatively, you could use the Programme logo with the ERDF reference which is available to download from our website.

We have also put together a template Word and PowerPoint document (in-line with regulations) that can also be downloaded from the website

Additional Comments - Please note that when using the Programme logo it should not be distorted in any way (colour changed, stretched etc.). If the Programme logo is used on communication materials alongside other logos, EU regulation also says that the union emblem (i.e the flag part of the Interreg logo) must be either bigger or equal (height or length) to the other logos.

ii. Website

Requirement - Creating a project website is not a compulsory requirement, however **all** partners (who have a website) **are required** to have the following information displayed on their websites:

- A short description about the project
- Aims and results of the project
- The amount of financial support towards the project from the European Union
- Reference to the European Union (this is covered by using the Interreg FCE Programme logo)
- The reference to the relevant Fund shall be made visible on the same website/page.
- The Union emblem (the flag) and the reference to the Union shall be visible, when landing on the website/page, inside the viewing area of a digital device, without requiring a user to scroll down the page.

Solution - Most websites have an easy to use content management systems (CMS) where creating a new page to host the project information should be a relatively easy and cost-free process.

Please note: the project webpage is a supporting document of the project activities and Article 140 of CPR applies here: all supporting documents are made available to the Commission and the European Court of Auditors upon request for a period of four years from 31 December following the submission of the accounts in which the expenditure of the operation is included. At the end of the project the website should be archived onto a CD-ROM, USB disk (or other drive) or online permanent storage for a period of 4 years after the project is completed. This period runs from the 31/12 of the year in which the final ERDF balance is paid to the project. If a project is receiving State Aid, specific rules apply, and all supporting documents will be retained and kept accessible by the Lead Partner and the partners for a period of 10 years from the date on which the aid was granted.

iii. Poster

Requirement - All project partners must display a poster with information about the project in a public area. This includes: the financial support from the Union, the total budget spend and the programme priority the project is supporting. Reference to the European Union and the ERDF must be mentioned as outlined in point 2.a.i. All posters must also be a minimum size of A3 and should be placed in a location that is **easily visible to the public** e.g. reception, entrance to a building.

Solution – We have created a poster for each specific objective that can be downloaded from our website and edited for each project partner. Please contact the Joint Secretariat if you have any problems editing the poster.

iv. Temporary billboards and permanent plaques

Requirement

Billboard

If the project has received over 500,000 euros of ERDF and includes the financing of infrastructure or construction operations then the project should erect, in a location visible to the public, a temporary billboard of significant size. This should display the financial support from the Union, the total budget spend and the programme priority the project is supporting. This should remain visible until the completion of the work.

Permanent plaque.

No later than three months after the project is completed a permanent plaque or billboard of significant size must be implemented at a location readily visible to the public for each project that fulfils the following criteria:

- (a) The project has received over 500,000 euros ERDF
- (b) The operation consists of the purchase of a physical object or of the financing of infrastructure of construction operations.

Solution - Please contact the Joint Secretariat to discuss in more detail.

v. Communication materials

Programme Requirement

Please ensure that, where relevant, communication materials are produced in both French and English (flyers, event information etc.). The project website must be produced in both French and English.

vi. Events

For any event or activity (e.g training) related to the delivery of the project, you must ensure that those taking part have been informed that the activity is being supported by ERDF. Any document (e.g attendance certificate) related to the project which is used for the public or for participants must also include a statement stating that the event or activity was supported by ERDF.

b. Style guide and branding




As a programme, in-line with the Interreg branding, we would like promote a unified and common brand image across all the France (Channel) England projects. The following section will provide details of this common visual identity. Although these requirements are not compulsory we do ask you to follow these guidelines wherever possible.

i. Font

For the body of texts in documents and communication materials we propose using Open Sans. This font style should be pre-installed on all Windows operating systems.






ii. Colour Scheme

In-line with the Programme's colours we ask projects to use the following colour scheme for communication materials and documents.

	Colour	CMYK	Hex	RGB
	Light blue	00/80/0/0	9FAEE5	0/51/153
	Reflex blue	41/30/0/0	003399	159/174/229
	Yellow	0/0/100/0	FFCC00	255/204/0

Specific Objective Logos

As a Programme we have developed a logo for each specific objective. We encourage you to use the appropriate logo when communicating about your project. The logos can be downloaded from the communication kit on the website.

Specific Objective	Logo	Accompanying colour code
1.1 Innovation		#f7c111
1.2 Social Innovation		#f7c111
2.1 Low carbon technologies		#1b9863
3.1 Natural and Cultural Assets		#9ac329
3.2 Coastal and Transitional Water Ecosystems		#9ac329

iii. Project Logo

If you decide to develop a logo for your project then we encourage you to follow the Programme's standardised project logo specifications (see below). The project name font colour should match that of the relevant specific objective. An editable logo can be downloaded from our website. If you are having any difficulties editing the logo then please contact the Joint Secretariat. For further guidance on the use of the Project logo please see the Interact guidelines document which is downloadable from our website.



iv. Templates and resources

Below is a complete list of template documents and other resources that can be downloaded in our communication kit on our website.

Template documents

- Word document
- PowerPoint document
- A3 Poster
 - 1.1 Innovation
 - 1.2 Social Innovation
 - 2.1 Low Carbon Technologies
 - 3.1 Natural and Cultural Assets
 - 3.2 Coastal and Transitional Water ecosystems
- Press release

Logos and Images

- France Channel England logo
- France Channel England logo with ERDF reference
- Example Project Logo
- Specific Objectives logos
- Specific Objectives photos
- Area Map image

c. Communication Activities and Best Practices

The following section outlines some common communication activities, along with advice and best practices for each.

i. Events

Events are popular activities for projects as they provide an effective way of reaching target audiences. Project events often include conferences, seminars, webinars, workshops, kick-off meetings, networking lunches etc. Attending external events is also a good way of raising awareness of a project.

Big events should be planned into the communication strategy and appear in the Communication Work Package of the application form. When organising an event consider the following:

- *Objective and audience* - Events should have a clear objective and audience on which the event can be built around.
- *Name* - The name of the event should be clear and short.
- *Date*
 - The date should be chosen well in-advance of the event.
 - Check that the event doesn't clash with any internal or other project events.
 - Event coverage could also be hindered if it coincides with other external events e.g. political events.
 - If possible, avoid organising events on a Monday and a Friday, especially if attendees are travelling internationally. This is likely to force attendees to travel on weekends and could reduce attendance.
- *Location* – The location is an important part to any event. Try and choose somewhere with good travel links as this will impact heavily on attendance. Ideally guests should be able to reach the event using public transport.
- *Venue and support*
 - Choose a venue that is suited to the number of attendees expected at the event. Project partners may have a suitable venue and this will help reduce the cost of the event. If you are hiring a venue or using external caterers remember to follow your organisations internal procurement rules.
 - If more than one room is required (e.g. for breakout groups) then ensure the rooms are close together.
 - Many venues offer audio-visual support but if this is not the case it may be worth considering hiring a third-party to support with this.
 - If the event is due to last all day then catering should also be provided. A buffet is a good way to allow guests to eat and talk in a relaxed way. Remember, if you are planning to provide a catering service, to ask guests if they require and special dietary requirements beforehand.
 - If the event is starting early or over multiple days then on-site or nearby accommodation options should be considered for guests.
 - It is highly recommended to visit the venue and rooms before finalising your choice of venue.

- *Agenda*
 - Build the agenda around the objective of the event.
 - Where possible make the event interactive with break-out and Q&A sessions.
 - For longer events ensure the agenda has coffee breaks included.
 - Consider inviting a guest speaker to the event. This can make an event more dynamic and engaging. Ensure that the speaker's presentation is in-line with the theme and objective of the event.
- *Branding* – Events should have the Interreg France (Channel) England branding where possible. E.g Banners, posters, agendas etc.
- *Rehearsal* – For larger events a rehearsal is recommended beforehand. This includes presenters going through content and also making sure that there are no technical issues with content and AV.
- *Coverage* – Consider how you will cover the event on the day. Will there be a photographer or someone filming? Will the event be covered live on social media? Will you be issuing a press release?
- *Feedback* – After the event has finished ensure that you gather feedback. This can be done by sending out a survey via email to attendees. Both Google forms and SurveyMonkey are free survey platforms.

N.B. If you organise an event please let us know so we can publicise and cover it across all our communication channels!

ii. Social Media

No communication strategy would be complete without mentioning social media! It's a great way to reach and engage with a range of audiences at minimum cost. But for social media to be effective and work well it's important that you dedicate time and resources to managing it. There's little point in creating a range of social media accounts and then not keeping them active. The list of social media platforms is growing by the day so it's important you choose the ones that are most relevant to your project. Below are a few tips and things to be aware of when using social media:

Generic

- Using social media well is time consuming so try and dedicate someone to running and managing your social media accounts.
- Try and publish content regularly. You should be publishing stories at least several times a week.
- Keep content engaging. Avoid acronyms and terminology that audiences might not understand.
- Try and plan a pipeline of stories a few weeks in advance. If necessary organise a meeting with partners to discuss what you'll be posting to social media over the coming weeks.
- Posting information real-time can be more engaging for audiences. For example, if you're hosting/attending an event or if there is an important activity related to your project taking place, try and post about it live.
- Remember that once you've posted something you should assume that it's out there in the public domain even if you decide to delete it later. So make sure you are happy with what you are posting before you hit send.

- Social media is about two-way communication. If you get comments and engagement on posts then try and respond as soon as possible.
- Most social media pages have free analytical tools which are a great way to monitor views and engagement on posts.

Facebook specific



- Facebook tends to be used by younger generations and less by businesses and professionals.
- Make posts catchy and to the point.
- Videos posted to Facebook should have an eye-catching opening frame to grab the viewer's attention. The vast majority of videos watched on Facebook are done so without sound, so ensure any videos that include interviews or voiceover have subtitles.
- *Top tip* - After inserting a link to a post, remove it – the thumbnail will still appear and link through to the content.

Twitter specific



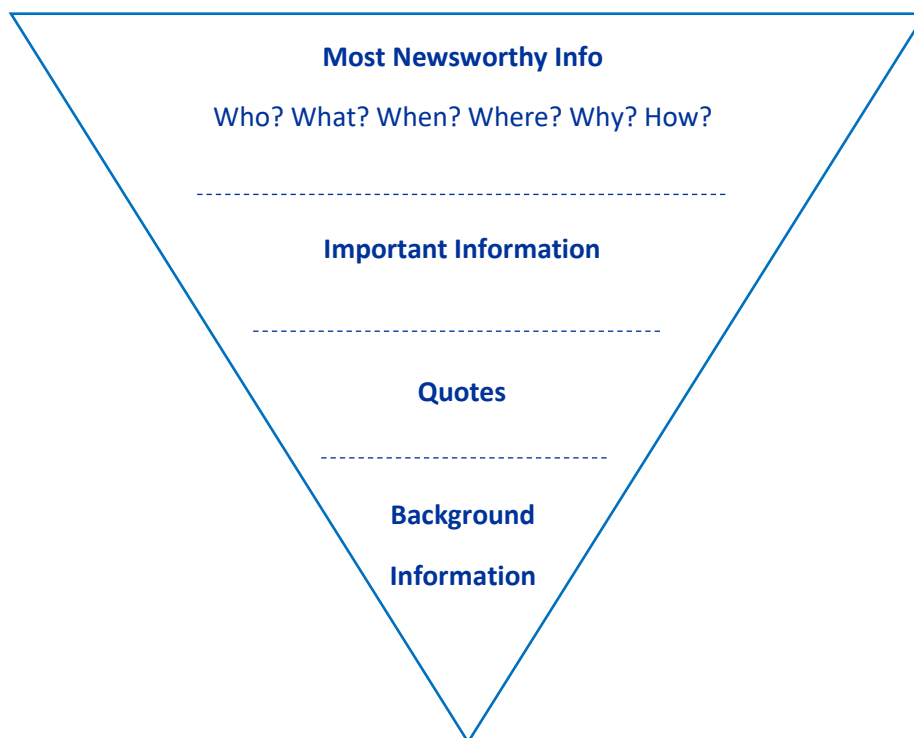
- Twitter is more orientated to businesses and professionals.
- Once you've created your account start by following people and organisations relevant to your network and they will be more likely to follow you.
- Use hashtags relevant to your project to promote discussions and debates.
- Don't be afraid to talk about the same information more than once. Tweets can quickly move down the news feed and not be seen by your audience.
- Add images to tweets to make them more engaging.

iii. Press releases

Getting media coverage of your project is a great way to raise awareness of what you're doing to the general public. However getting journalists to cover your story is easier said than done. Journalists have very little time and are often working to tight deadlines. It's therefore important to keep all your communication with journalists as simple and to the point as possible.

The Inverted Pyramid

The 'inverted pyramid' is a basic template structure that media professionals use for writing stories and press releases. It outlines how information should be prioritized and structured.



- *Headline* – Choose a headline that is short and grabs the attention
- *The lead* – The opening paragraph is the most important. This should summarise the whole story. The reader should be able to get an idea of the story by reading this paragraph alone. In this you should include the famous 5 Ws – Who, What, When, Where, Why.
- *Important information* – Additional information about the story should be included in this section. Make sure you don't repeat what was said in the opening paragraph.
- *Quotes* – Quotes are not always essential but they make the story more interesting and give the story a personal touch. Make sure the person you quote is related to the story and that what is being quoted adds value to the story.
- *Background information* – This is where you should include any information that puts the story into context. For example in this paragraph you could include information about the France Channel England programme.
- *Other tips* – When emailing a press release to a journalist make sure you include the release as an attachment and also in the body of the text, as they will often not bother to open attachments. Remember to also include appropriate high resolution images that are related to the story, as newspapers are more likely to cover a story if it has an image.

A copy of our press release template can be found in our communication kit on the website.

iv. Writing engaging content

A lot of your communication activities will involve producing written content, whether it be newsletters, magazines or website articles. Whatever it is you're writing it needs to be clear, easy to read and consistent. Here are a few pointers to help you:

- *Audience* – Who do you want to read your story? What do you want them to take away from the story? What sort of language will they use and understand? How much do they know about the subject you're writing about? Always write with the reader in mind. Choose a tone of voice that is appropriate to your audience and remember, things that are clear to you may need explaining for your audience to understand.
- *Inverted Pyramid* – If you are writing a news story the structure should follow the 'inverted pyramid'. See the section on press releases above.
- *Tone of voice* – Choose a tone of voice that suits your organisation/project and keep it consistent throughout your communication.
- *Use Plain English* – Try and write in Plain English wherever possible. What do we mean by Plain English? Use short, simple words and sentences and avoid technical jargon and acronyms. Use 'you' and 'we' and avoid using passive sentences. Make sure the vocabulary you use is accessible. Below are a few examples of some Plain English alternatives:
 - Accelerate – Speed up
 - Anticipate – Expect
 - Beneficial – Helpful
 - Demonstrate – Show
 - Generate – Produce, make
 - Initiate – Begin, start
 - Principal – Main
 - On the grounds that – Because