



# COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

INTERREG VI A RO-BG PROGRAMME

“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.”

*Anthony Robbins*

Approved by the Monitoring Committee on 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2023 (Decision 10/31.10.2023)

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## Section 1 - Purpose and objectives

### Purpose

Communication is a strategic tool that helps the management bodies of INTERREG VI A Romania-Bulgaria Programme to reach a high degree of awareness of EU financial intervention in the cross-border region that leads to preparing and selection of quality projects by potential beneficiaries that contribute to an increased economic, environmental and social conditions for the cross-border population. In this respect, communication plays a key role in reaching the purpose of the Programme, namely to develop the cross-border area by common projects.

The Communication Strategy aims to promote INTERREG VI A Romania-Bulgaria Programme by focusing on highlighting the role and impact of EU financing in the cross-border region and developing common projects that bring added value in the region. In the same time, the Communication Strategy aims to ensure easy access to all interested parties and transparency regarding the use of EU and public funding.

### Communication objectives

In order to reach the desired impact, the communication objectives are designed by the management bodies of the Programme by taking into consideration the *communication needs specific for each stage of Programme life cycle* and the *communication needs of each target group*, thus leading to the best possible outcome of Programme implementation.

Following the same logic, each communication objective is developed into specific *communication activities*, defined on the yearly basis, depending on the stage of the programme and the needs of the target groups. In this respect, at the beginning of each year, the Managing Authority, together with the Joint Secretariat and the National Authority will define the specific communication activities for that year, as well as a timeframe for implementation of the activities and the responsible structure. These activities will be included in the Annual Communication Plan, elaborated by the Managing Authority, in collaboration with the Joint Secretariat and National Authority.

Furthermore, at the end of each year, the Managing Authority, together with the Joint Secretariat and the National Authority will present the Monitoring Committee the communication activities carried out by the management bodies during the related year during the annual review meeting.

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The communication activities will focus on increasing the awareness about the new Programme, its priority axes and financing opportunities, as well as on providing communication tools designed to support project partners in promoting the projects results. Regarding the promotion of projects, the management structures of the Programme elaborated guidelines for project partners (“*Communication guidelines: Starter Kit*”- at project level).

**General objective:** to increase the visibility of the Programme and EU funding and its benefits in the cross-border region

**Specific objectives:**

1. To raise general awareness towards the Programme
2. To attract the interest of potential project partners about financing opportunities
3. To support project partners in all stages of project implementation, including communication of project results
4. To disseminate the achievements and the results of the Programme and highlight the added value of EU funding
5. To strengthen communication between Programme bodies and cooperation with other external support groups

## Section 2- Target groups

The geographical area of the programme is the extended border region between Romania and Bulgaria largely divided by Danube River.

The counties/districts that are eligible under the programme are:

- Mehedinti, Dolj and Olt counties - parts of the Romanian South-West Development Region Oltenia;
- Teleorman, Giurgiu and Calarasi counties - parts of the Romanian South Muntenia Development Region;
- Constanta county is part of Romanian South-East Development Region;
- Vidin, Vratsa, Montana and Pleven districts - parts of the Bulgarian North West Planning Region;
- Veliko-Tarnovo, Ruse and Silistra districts - part of the Bulgarian North Central Planning Region;

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- Dobrich district is part of the Bulgarian North East Planning Region.

The Programme identified the following target groups from both countries:



- **Applicants and project partners:** public authorities and institutions, NGOs, public sector and community institutions and organizations, etc. throughout the Programme area.

- **Governmental and non/governmental actors national and regional:** decentralized bodies in Bulgaria and Romania relevant to the border regions, national, regional and local authorities and administrations, Municipalities, County Councils, District Administrations, NGOs active at border level, Trade associations of the border regions, Women and youth organizations, Cross-border associations, Cultural, research and scientific organizations, Organizations representing economic and social interests
- **National/regional/local media**
- **EU institutions and bodies:** European Commission (DG REGIO), European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions, European Court of Auditors, Representation of the European Commission in Romania and Bulgaria, European Parliament
- **General public (citizens from the Programme area and EU general public)**
- **Internal support group:** the staff of the management bodies of the programme (Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, National Authority, Audit Authority), the members and observers of the Monitoring Committee (MC)



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and of the Strategy Board(SB) and the support services within the management bodies

- **External support groups:** Interact, other Interreg programmes, communication networks, influencers, bloggers etc.



**Section 3 - Key messages**

The content presented in communication activities and social media campaigns usually consists in information and entertaining items, such as designs, images, photos and videos.



Messages are statements designed to catch the attention and interest of an audience.

Each communication action/campaign sends a message to the target group we are addressing.

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The information presented should be clear, consistent and sufficient for the target audience and should include at least one key message. In social media campaigns, the visual content is very important due to the fact that is very likely to be shared first than other types of content.

The sent-out messages shall be clear in order to communicate effectively. When preparing messages for a communication action/campaign, the following tips may be used:

- Less is more when it comes to length. Leave out words that do not contribute to the main focus of the communication. This can make the reader work harder to know what you wrote (use an average sentence length of 15-20 words)
- Say only one thing per sentence (when in doubt, use a full-stop)
- Use everyday words that you would use daily, a language accessible to as many people as possible
- Avoid jargons and acronyms
- Use a conversational tone rather than an academic or overly formal one, a tone that will catch the attention
- Use first and second personal pronouns to refer to the organization (we, us, you)
- Insert the most important fact at the beginning of the text so it can be found easily
- Use bullet points rather than long paragraphs
- Think like a journalist (make sure you answer the 5 Ws: who? what? when? where? why?)
- Use active sentences, not passive ones (Active: The European Commission published the document in January. Passive: The document was published in January by the European Commission).

When designing a content message to one or more target groups, we take into *consideration what information the target group needs/expects to receive, the detail*

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level the information is delivered, the preferred communication channel, the timing of the campaign is promoted etc.

As well, for each major communication campaign dedicated to one or more target groups, a specific key message may be created (please see below some examples of key messages).

Target group	Examples of information needed/expected by the target group	Examples of key messages to be used in communication actions to raise interest of the target group
Potential project partners	Info necessary for a good project application and training on how to write a good project Success stories as examples of previous cooperation practices	<i>A good project idea will contribute to improved economic/social conditions by.....</i>
Project partners	Information about the implementation and the results of projects	<i>The project generated a real change in the cross border region.....no of km/...people trained etc. (project indicators) The management structures of the Programme support beneficiaries by.....</i>
Governmental and non/governmental actors national and regional  National/regional/local media	Information focused on the added value of the programme in the region	<i>Cooperation helped the cross-border community improve..... Cooperation saves us time and money by.....; Cooperation works</i>
EU institutions and bodies	Info regarding the progress of the programme implementation, results and achievements of the programme	<i>The programme is successfully implemented by.....</i>
General public (citizens)	Information focused on the added value of the programme in the region	<i>The Programme helped people in the cross border region improve/have better access to.....</i>
Internal public (staff of management)	Information regarding how to improve the rules and procedures of the Programme	<i>The Programme is successfully and efficiently implemented</i>



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bodies, members of MC)		
External support groups (Interact, other Interreg programmes, communication networks, influencers, bloggers)	Information regarding experiences and best practices of other programmes	<i>We offer a platform of the Programme results and share our experience and best practices</i>

**Section 4 - Communication channels**

We plan to use a mix of communication tools, customized to the type of the target group we are addressing and to each stage of the life cycle of the programme: preparation and launching of the programme, launching of calls of proposals, selection of projects, implementation of projects, closure of the programme etc.

**1. Programme website**

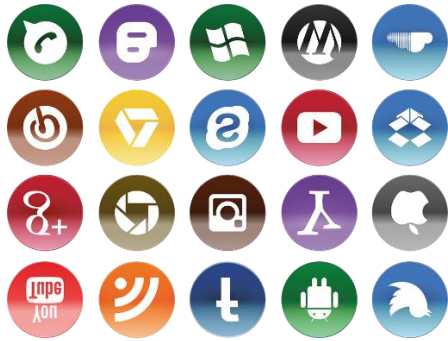
According to the conclusions of Interreg VA RoBg Programme evaluation, the website, played an important role in promoting information about the Programme. Therefore, the website will remain the main tool of communication. A dedicated website was set-up: [www.interregviarobg.eu](http://www.interregviarobg.eu).



The website will present all the information required by the Regulations in force (art. 36 paragraph 2 of EU Regulation no. 1059/2021), but also other additional useful information, demonstrating our commitment towards transparency (eg., status of the Programme in real time, payments made, map of projects, presentation fiches of every project, useful documents, legislation, contact details, aso). As well, a timetable of the planned call for proposals will be published on the website, including all mandatory data mentioned in art. 49 paragraph 2 of EU Regulation no. 1060/2021 and will be

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updated at least three times a year. Moreover, the list of selected operations published on the website will include all mandatory data mentioned in art. 49 paragraph 3 of EU Regulation no. 1060/2021, in all 3 languages, in an open, readable format and will be constantly updated, at least every four months.

**2. Social media**

In comparison with the programming period 2014-2020, the role of social media in communication has increased considerably. Nowadays, social media is the most important tool used by people to communicate.

Social media networks are considered to be the most useful tools for ensuring the visibility of the Programme among the general public, so that we plan to use it in the current programming period in every stage of the life cycle of the programme.

By using social media platforms, we can reach very fast large and different audiences, namely all our target groups identified in the communication strategy as these platforms will contribute to raising our Programme and logo awareness which will attract potential applicants interested in developing joint projects.

As social media was intensively used for promoting the Programme and project results in the implementation stage of our projects during the programming period 2014-2020, we plan to continue this approach that has proven to be very successful (also mentioned in the Programme evaluation reports).

Moreover, we will encourage our project partners to be more active in promoting their projects in social media, by providing them specific guidelines, namely a *communication package for promoting their project* (“*Project communication guidelines: Starter Kit*”).

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Due to the measures mentioned before, we expect to also increase the traffic to the Programme website, as most of the posts will include a link to the Programme website for a detailed content.

Social media is easy to monitor as we can determine how many people are interested in our posts, by registering the numbers of likes, shares, comments etc. This data is very useful to us in evaluating how successful social media campaigns are. The necessary data may be collected as well by accessing the analytics tools provided by different social networks (for ex, the Insights section for Facebook pages and Analytics sections on Twitter and YouTube).

In promoting our Programme in social media, our intention is to use the following platforms:



**Facebook** is the most common social media platform used during 2014-2020 period and the most popular social media platform in Romania and Bulgaria. Therefore, we plan to use it as well as the main communication platform with all our target groups.

We will post short messages, images and videos, links to different websites or other social media networks where more detailed information may be found. For ex., we intend to use Facebook in order to announce events in advance but also in order to share their results, using links to presentations, interviews, photos etc. Too much information in a Facebook post is not indicated, as there is the risk for the audience to lose interest. We will use it to upload videos and to ensure live streaming of our organised events open to public, such as conferences.

We are currently using **Twitter** for our programme and due to the fact that twitter has a limitation of characters (approx. 280 characters per tweet), we plan to use it for important announcements presented in a short and specific message, accompanied by a suggestive image.



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We may include as well, links and hashtags, but no more than 2 so that the message is simple and easy to read. For content that is longer than the admitted limit, we will use Facebook posts.



*You Tube* is a frequently used platform by us and we intend to use it as well in the future as it can be easily accessed by the general public and our specific target audience. We will use it to upload videos and to ensure live streaming of our organised events open to public, such as conferences.

As well, useful tutorials dedicated to potential applicants and project partners will be created on YouTube and posted on the website and social media channels. The posted videos must be of a high quality, attractive and short so that the audience does not lose interest. In the same time, You Tube analytics may provide us useful information about the number of our viewers and comments, so that we have a clear image about the impact of our video.

We are using also *Instagram*, as it is an effective platform for increasing the visibility of our Programme through photos, video-sharing (Reels - 15 seconds short-form videos) and representative hashtags for a specific event or project.



Captions together with short descriptions will be posted to announce future events, their outcomes or to describe the campaigns we will develop. We will also use the *Story* option to announce upcoming events or share news about our progress, by posting a short message with a link to our Facebook page or our website. Since the audience is more focused on the visual aspects (photos and videos), long descriptions are not recommended. We will focus on creating short messages with engaging pictures, reels and hashtags. We may also use it to ensure live streaming of our public events.

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### 3. Events

The Programme evaluation reports of the communication activities carried out during 2017-2020 period underlines the important role of the events in communication, organised by the management bodies of the programme.



The evaluation reports revealed a great interest of our target groups in the events organised by the management structures of the programme and that the information and promotion activities have been effective, so that we plan to continue organising events in the current programming period, events that involve physical presence of the participants as well as on-line events.

We will keep all type of events dedicated to the promotion of our programme that have proven to be very useful to our target groups, as follows:

➤ **Events dedicated to all target groups (conferences and promotion events)**

Conferences are public events which involve participation of a large number of people, addressing to all target groups mentioned in the strategy. In this category are included the launching conference of the Programme, the annual conference of the Programme, the launching/closure conference of a project etc.

Promotion events address to general public or large groups of people and represent an opportunity for the programme to be promoted in the context of an European or local celebration event as European Cooperation Day, Europe Day, outdoor campaigns with a specific thematic, fairs, festivals etc.

For all these events, we plan to ensure as much as possible live web streaming on Youtube and the links to the videos to be available on the programme website and social media platforms for future viewings, thus increasing the visibility even more.

Moreover, this type of events will be followed by a press conference, so that involving journalists will contribute directly to an increased awareness and visibility.

We encourage project partners to inform constantly the managing bodies of the programme about any conference or promotion event they plan to organise in advance, so that we are able to promote the event as well as the outcomes of the event (videos, presentations, testimonials etc.) on our website and social media networks.

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By taking this approach, we expect to create a multiplier effect, through subsequent dissemination of information by participants to other stakeholders.

➤ **Events dedicated to potential applicants**

During 2014-2020 programming period, this type of events was considered as very useful for potential applicants in the launching of the call for proposals phase of the Programme.

The programme bodies will organise a series of events dedicated to potential applicants with the purpose of offering support to potential project partners in preparing their project idea and application.



These events (for ex. info days, caravans, trainings, partner search and thematic seminars etc.) will have an interactive format and represent an opportunity for a direct dialog between potential applicants and programme management bodies.

They may take the form of an event organised in different locations in Romania and Bulgaria, involving physical presence or may consist in webinars, tutorials or on line meetings, depending on the situation.

As well, for further dissemination, following the consent of participants, these events may be registered or transmitted live and promoted on the website and the social media platforms of the programme.

➤ **Events dedicated to the project partners**

In the implementation phase of the projects, the managing bodies of the programme will provide project partners continuous support by organising different events such as thematic seminars and trainings covering different aspects related to the implementation of the project, project visits, on-line meetings etc. All these events will be promoted on the programme website and social media networks.

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At the same time, with the purpose of helping project partners to increase the visibility of projects and to promote better the project results, the programme bodies have elaborated specific guidelines, a communication package for promoting the project - *“Project Communication Guidelines- Starter Kit”*.

### 4. Videos

As visual content plays a very important role in communication, we intend to design short videos for the presentation of the new programme, for the launching of calls for proposals and for different stages of the life cycle of the programme or events, which will be posted in social media and website of the programme.

Specific provisions regarding the elaboration of videos for promoting the results and achievements of the projects are mentioned for beneficiaries in the *“Project Communication Guidelines- Starter Kit”*.

### 5. Publications

Due to the need of stop cutting trees and become eco-friendly, paper publications are not recommended.



We plan to develop and encourage our target groups to use mainly on-line publications. As well, for exchanging information and best practices in the implementation stage of projects among project partners, communication platforms and networks may be developed.

### 6. Press advertisements and releases

For the same reasons mentioned above, all press advertisements and releases will be presented mainly on line and we will ensure their publication and dissemination on our website and social media.

Programme bodies shall monitor the press after one media campaign is released (possibly via a press monitoring service) or after a press add is released (google alerts or other similar on-line services).

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## 7. Promotional materials

We will continue the elaboration of promotional materials that will be distributed to participants to different events organised by the programme bodies. They are useful in terms of increasing the visibility of our logo and programme among different target groups.

Our approach in designing promotional materials is to be made from eco-friendly, recyclable materials, by taking into consideration the recommendations included in the guidelines *Go Green*, elaborated by the programme structures.





**Section 5- Communication matrix**

The Programme structures approach on communication may be synthetized in the following communication matrix:

Stage of Programme life cycle	Objectives	Indicative communication activities	Target audience	Responsible body	
<i>Preparation and launching of the programme</i>	To attract the interest of potential project partners to prepare high quality project proposals, to become more visible	events (launching conference, seminars, trainings conferences etc.	General public Potential project partners	MA	
		website promotion			Governmental and non/governmental actors national and regional National/regional/local media EU institutions and bodies
		social media campaigns	JS		
		publications		NA	
		press articles			
		promotional materials	Potential project partners		
on line meetings					
<i>Launching of calls of proposals</i>	To prepare good quality project applications, by providing potential project partners	events (infodays, caravans, conferences, partner search and thematic seminars etc.) website promotion	Potential project partners	MA JS	

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	clear and useful information	social media campaigns publications press articles promotional materials on line meetings		NA
<i>Implementation of projects</i>	To support project partners so that they implement successfully the project and to communicate better the project results and increase the visibility of the project	events (thematic seminars and trainings for project partners, project visits, conferences and other info and communication events etc.) website promotion, tutorials social media campaigns, tutorials on line meetings, webinars direct email publications press articles promotional materials	Project partners	MA JS NA

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		<p>communication platforms among project partners to share best practices and project results</p> <p>other info and communication activities that may increase the visibility of the project and its results</p>		
<i>Programme closure</i>	<p>To present the impact and added value of the Programme/projects, to promote capitalization and prepare the next EU funding period</p>	<p>events (closure conferences, seminars etc.)</p>	<p>General public Project partners Governmental and non/governmental actors national and regional National/regional/local media EU institutions and bodies</p>	MA
		<p>website promotion</p>		JS
		<p>social media posts</p>		NA
		<p>publications</p>		
		<p>press articles</p>		
<i>All life stages of the Programme</i>	<p>To exchange information and best practices</p>	<p>events (conferences and seminars, trainings)</p>	<p>Staff of management bodies (MA, JS, NA)</p>	MA
		<p>staff exchange</p>		JS
		<p>tutorials</p>		NA
	<p>To share information and lessons learnt with external groups</p>		<p>Members of MC, SB Interact, other Interreg programmes, communication</p>	

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	and to receive support of other external groups for a better promotion of the Programme	on line meetings, webinars	networks, influencers, bloggers	
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## Section 6- Monitoring and evaluation

In line with *article 28* of Interreg Regulation, the Monitoring Committee shall examine the implementation of communication and visibility actions.

In this respect, in accordance with the provisions of the communication strategy, at the end of each year, the Managing Authority, together with the Joint Secretariat and the National Authority will present the Monitoring Committee the communication activities carried out by the management bodies during the related year during the annual review meeting.



The communication and information measures will be subject to evaluations as part of the Programme evaluations, based on the indicators and evaluation criteria defined in advance.

The evaluation will be performed on the basis of the following logical framework of intervention:

<i>Communication activity</i>	<i>Type of indicator</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Finding method</i>	<i>Baseline value 2021</i>	<i>Intermediate target value 2024</i>	<i>Target value 2029</i>
Events	Output	No of events	sum of own data	0	11	31
		No of participants in the events	sum of own data	0	250	600
	Result	Overall usefulness of the event for the participants	Survey/Questionnaire	0	3	4

<b>Website</b>	Output <sup>1</sup>	No of page views	web analytics	0	100.000	250.000
		Overall usefulness for the readers regarding the information received on Programme EU funding intervention in the region	Survey/Questionnaire	0	3	4
<b>Social media</b>	Output	No. of followers/subscribers	social media metrics	2.193	2.300	2.400
	Result	Likes and reactions: comments and shares	social media metrics	770	2.000	6.000
<b>Publications</b>	Output	No of electronic publications issued	sum of own data	0	2	6
	Result	No of questionnaires sent through email	Survey/Questionnaire /Feedback form	0	1	3
<b>Videos</b>	Output	No of views on Youtube Programme channel	web analytics Youtube	700	1.400	2.200

<sup>1</sup> For this output indicator we can calculate the baseline value, as the website is already functional and constantly used

	Result	No of shares of the videos	web analytics Youtube	0	10	50
Media relations	Output	No of local press and media appearances	sum of own data media monitoring	0	120	300
	Result	Number of media items mentioning the programme in the analysed sample of EU funds related articles	media monitoring	0	100	700

## Section 7- Budget

The communication activities are financed from the Technical Assistance (TA) budget for the Programme.

The total TA estimated budget for 2021-2027 foreseen for publicity and information activities of the Programme is approximately 1 million Euro.