



STREAM CITIES

Communication Plan

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Why a communication plan for Stream Cities Project?

European projects are a tool in a wider toolbox set by European Institutions able to build up a European spirit for integrating 27 member states and for creating a neighbourhood area of cooperation.

To be effective a European Program needs visibility to be known and useful to the beneficiaries. Every program is based on the participation of the eligible partners presenting proposals, on the mobilisation of a larger experts' community to share ideas and experiences. In a world European programs and projects need a good communication strategy.

STREAM Cities Project (STRategic European and Mediterranean Cities) aims to develop an innovative approach in Urban Strategic Planning based on a participatory method in policy development.

This is at the same time a challenge for all the partners involved into the project and a great instrument for the Med-Pact managing authorities and users.

What is a communication plan?

Public authorities creates policies to solve or prevent problems and the policy itself is an action plan, that states the objectives, the means and the times to achieve those objectives. A policy is created when a choice needs to be made from several problem solutions.

To create a communication policy, it needs to be well aware of the connection between the organisational policy and the communication policy, that is part of the total organisational policy.

To effectively approach a problem and develop policies, it is very important to work systematically. Communication planning is a means of achieving this.

Such an approach is the best guarantee for well thought-out solutions.

The communication work is generally divided in staged plans, created for divergent objectives. For whom is interested to deepen the knowledge on this matter, the final chapter of this paper provides further information.

Who has to communicate?

In a European project all the partners have the task to communicate and put under lights how they are managing the European money and demonstrate that it contributes to the aims it has been provided.

At local level, the Med partner-cities (Bethlehem, El Mina, Fez) need specific tools to communicate to the other partners, the managing Authorities and the programme technical assistance the steps they are going forward, the activities

done, the difficulties encountered, the challenges they have faced and the goals they have reached.

Furthermore each Meda partner has to communicate to the citizens the evolution and the achievements of the project. Taking into account the fact that Stream cities is a project that pretends to ameliorate the daily life of specific economic sectors and improve them, each partner is expected to make a special effort in involving all the stakeholders in the processes of the urban development the project pursuit.

The EU partner-cities (Catania, Reggio Emilia, Valencia) and networks (ReCS and Anci Ideali) have the specific role of spreading the European best practices in the field of urban regeneration, and to support with study visit and advises the Meda partners in the implementation of the project.

Furthermore, the STREAM cities project will have a strong visibility among the other Med-Pact projects, so that managing authorities, decision makers and the scientific community should constantly get informed about the project, the ongoing process and the results achieved. In addition the results of Med Program can be useful for further insert into other cross border cooperation in the Mediterranean area as ENPI CbC, Ciudad, ect.

An integrated communication strategy for Stream City Project should easily develop:

a top-down approach

in order to give visibility to the actions carried out during the project communicating the project at local level

a bottom-up approach

in order to spread the results of the project at European level in relation to the other European Programmes for Cooperation, and in the other non EU countries involved in the project activities.

Communicating Stream Cities at EU level

The Med-Pact managing authority, the other projects financed in this framework, European decision-makers and the scientific community will be constantly informed of the carrying out of the project.

To promote a strong visibility to the project, as well as to the partner cities, it is important to coordinate at central level the communication work, to maximize the impact of the information provided and to give concrete and effective value to the actions carried out along the project.

The ANCI IDEALI Foundation will coordinate the network of local press

officers, providing updated and centralised information about the project and spreading the press releases to be translated from Italian, English and French and, eventually, to be rearranged according to local communication needs.

The communication tools used by the press office of the ANCI IDEALI Foundation to promote the project are :

- The website of the project www.streamcities.eu
- The Foundation website www.ideali.be (in Italian and English)
- The Foundation monthly newsletter
- Press releases on the project

The main beneficiaries of the communication work at European level will be

- Foreign correspondents based in Bruxelles
- Specialized journalists on Euro Med Cooperation, at European and national level
- Med-Pact managing authorities and other Med-Pact city and media partners
- European Commission, European Parliament and Committee of the Regions officers
- Regions and cities offices based in Bruxelles

The most important communication tool is the official website of the project, www.streamcities.eu, provided in English and French by the ANCI IDEALI Foundation from June 2009.

The website is divided in four main sections

- Project, that contains the abstract and the objectives of the STREAM Cities project
- Methodology, that regroups documents on the analysis of strategic plan and work tools to assess the outputs and the goals achieved by the project
- Activities, that reports agendas and minutes of the project meetings
- Partners, that contains technical sheets on each project partners

In the Project section is available a box to send questions about the project partners in charge of the technical assistance and communication.

The network of Euro- Med communicators

ANCI IDEALI will establish a network among the officers in charge of the communication of the project cities, with the aim of receiving updates and informations about the activities carried on at local level.

The news sent by local communicators to the Foundation will be displayed on

the website of the project, to make the public aware of the efforts realised by the partner cities.

Furthermore, ANCI IDEALI will establish effective relations with the communication partners of the other MED Pact projects, in order to unificate the communication strategies and maximize the impact of the STREAM Cities work

Communicating STREAM Cities in the MED countries

Each city partner may have already given information to the local press when the project has been approved but informing citizens along the duration of the process is crucial to ensure the participation of the public to the processes of urban regeneration encouraged by the project.

At municipality level, it is important to choose the information to communicate and to spread the results of the actions carried on.

As mentioned before, all these news should be directly forwarded to the partner in charge of the communication and dissemination (ANCI IDEALI) to update the website and to coordinate all the communication work.

The most suitable communication tools to use at local level are

- press releases, to send to local press in the occasion of events and activities involving the local authorities, also abroad
- press conferences, to present special actions and further progresses along the project, as well as at the end of the project to present final results and achievements for the city
- articles on the official website of the city, on newsletters and other publications financed by the local authority or directly linked to
- specific meetings and workshops to inform target groups about the project, with the aim of involving as much citizens as possible

The same tools could be used also at territorial and regional level, to spread the results of the project and to make the entire area benefit of the achievements of the project

At the regional and national level, the project should be promoted on

- national press agencies
- newspapers and magazines
- trade journals on urban and regional issues through
 - press releases
 - articles on the project
 - interviews to Mayors and project officers

- leading articles written by the Mayor or by deputy mayors in charge of the issues tackled by the project

Communicating STREAM Cities in the EU countries

Also in this case, maybe the city partners have already given information to the local press when the project has been approved but it is important to spread information along the duration of the project to show to the citizens the achievements gained by the cooperation policies promoted by the local authority.

The EU partners of the project should communicate the actions of the project by promoting the results achieved during international and cooperation meeting, giving relevance to what has been done with the MED partners along the process.

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- specific meetings and workshops about the project to inform target groups focused on international cooperation

Communicate when public policy try to find the good solutions to problems

A communication plan is composed by different stage plans. Some of them are more focused on creating multiple-year policy plans, whereas others are created for project plans or operational plans for a fixed period. A specific staged plan is an aid for systematically approaching a problem.

Working through the staged plan from beginning to end it is not the only strategy to follow to reach the communication objectives, but it is necessary to adapt the work to the situation and to the context of the project, especially if the project is in progress and new facts may appear. The first step is to determine the target groups and objectives, with the aim of defining the communication strategy. Once approved the plan, it is possible to work on the operational aspects and in the execution of plans.

A communication strategy is never made alone, but always with other people and subjects involved in the organization. The communication is often aligned with the organisation policy

and the marketing policy. In view of it, it is necessary to discuss the approach at regular intervals with the parties concerned.

The staged plans offer a framework within which it is possible to divide the communication plan into clear stages but it is also possible to deviate from this framework if practice states otherwise.

Creating a communication plan

Creating a communication plan begins with facing a problem or a critical point to solve. The first draft of the communication plan has to analyse the problem and it has to contain different approaches to share before defining the plan.

Informal interviews, exchange of ideas, briefing and debriefing are the tools most suitable to collect information about the communication needs of the project, or the activity, to communicate.

At the end of the first stage, it is clear what has to be communicated and it is possible to outline the stages to be gone through in order to find solutions to the communication problems.

The second stage is the situation analysis, in which is possible to research, collect and analyse information about the project and activities to communicate. In this phase is very important to underline the context of reference where the activities take place.

Only by having a good insight into the situation, it is possible to assess whether communication is the correct medium for the purpose. An achievable communication plan should contribute to the objectives of the project towards achieving the policy objectives of the organization involved.

A communication plan is effective only if it fits within the needs of the project.

The situation analysis follows three stages:

- *An internal and external analysis*
- *Formulating the core-problem*
- *Formulating the policy objectives*

With the analysis of the situation it is possible to study the essential contours and nature of the problem at hand and to pull together the elements necessary for analysing the communication problems which have to be resolved.

Similarly the strengths and weakness, and assets and opportunities, can be identified as well as the obstacles and constraints. These all need to be taken into account during the planning process and in the implementation period, along with the risks and assumptions on which the strategy is based.

The third stage is the communication analysis, in which is possible to define the type of communication and the tools to use during the project and the activities.

Adapting the right tools to the needs of the project and of who is going to receive the communication is the priority in this phase. It is also necessary to give coherence to the link between the message to communicate and the medium used, in the context of the project.

The communication analysis follows three stages

- *Analysis of the party involved*
- *Defining the role of communication*
- *Formulating the communication goals*

The next phase, i.e. the identification of target groups and objectives, is complementary to the phases exposed below and it aims to underline the groups to who the communication is addressed and the objective of the communication work to reach during the project.

After the stages of preparatory work it is possible to set a communication strategy, that is the core of the communication work.

The design of effective communication strategies can only be done with a blend of rigour, professionalism, team work, participation and creativity. This approach follows the basic precepts of sound planning:

- *Organise thoughts*
- *Link between activities and resources to anticipated results*
- *Determine the performance indicators and the means of verification*
- *Sharing responsibilities, and communicate clearly, concisely and unambiguously*
- *Adapt to changing situations, and assess risk*

There are different models to set a communication strategy

Healthcom's 5 step management from AED (Academy for Educational Development):

- 1- *Assess*
- 2- *Plan*
- 3- *Draft, pre-test and produce*
- 4- *Deliver*
- 5- *Monitor and evaluate.*

the P Process of JHU/CCP:

- 1- *Analyse*
- 2- *Strategic design*
- 3- *Develop, pre-test, review and produce*
- 4- *Manage, implement and monitor*
- 5- *Evaluate impact.*

The AIDSCOM model :

- 1- *Evaluate/Plan: Research; Strategise; Pre-test; Final Plan*
- 2- *Intervene: Produce; Distribute*
- 3- *Monitor: Audit Process; Evaluate Products; Evaluate Impact.*

The 11 Steps of Sylvie COHEN (UNFPA, 1993):

- 1- *Identify the communication and programme objectives*
- 2- *Select audience groups and order by priority*
- 3- *Identify the desired changes in each audience*
- 4- *Identify the environmental factors favourable or unfavourable to desired changes*
- 5- *Determine the types of IEC activities necessary to provoke changes*
- 6- *Present the major thrusts of key messages and their strategies*
- 7- *Determine the range of channels of communication*
- 8- *Identify organisational and management strategies (including monitoring and evaluation)*
- 9- *Calculate the amount of resources necessary for these activities*
- 10- *Make a realistic schedule and chronology for all steps*
- 11- *Re-examine the strategy, adapt it and let it be adopted.*

The communication strategy brings together the combined approaches which have been selected for triggering, by delivering appropriately carried messages to the target, the changes necessary for solving the communication problems encountered, and thus contributing to solving the development problem at hand.

Setting a strategic framework requires following elementary elements

- *Objectives of communication*
- *Targets*
- *Types of approach*
- *Key messages or ideas for messages*
- *Channels and media for communication.*
- *Define and formulate the objectives of communication*

The term “objective of communication” is used to describe the expected final result of a communication activity, in terms of the changes or verifiable result in the given target group. This is summarised as being SMART:

- *Specific*
- *Measurable*
- *Appropriate*
- *Realistic*
- *Temporal (being based on time frames).*

After fixing the objectives, the next step is to select who should be reached by the communication activities either because they are directly affected by the issues of the project at hand, or because they play an important role to place in its resolution, or continuation. These ‘parts’ can be called target groups, audiences or beneficiaries, and they can be divided into two categories:

- *Primary target groups, those who need to adopt an opinion, attitude or behaviour*
- *Secondary target groups, those who can help the above to change their behaviour*

The selection of priority target groups is important in order to avoid a dilution and dispersal of energy.

- *Primary target groups are the people most affected by the problem;*
- *Secondary target groups are the people who could most easily adopt the message as it is; they are those who could best influence the primary target groups and to persuade them to take heed of the message and to respond in the desired way.*

To draw up the key messages for target groups, it is necessary to formulate the themes or ideas of the message aimed at a target group in such a way that it provokes the desired effect. The message should therefore flow logically from the stated objectives of communication and the desired changes at the level of each target group, taking fully into account its knowledge, attitudes and practices with regard to the problem at hand.

The definitive messages are developed later, at the stage of producing the communication material.

At this stage it is the themes of the message which need to be determined. In the case of more specific and limited strategies, it is also possible at this stage to determine the tone of each message and the source from which it should be transmitted.

In terms of content, the message contains some of the following elements:

- *The what and the why*
- *The where, the when and the how*
- *The guarantee and support*

Selecting channels and media for communication is fundamental to deliver messages and to succeed in the communication work. It has to be considered all the different aspects linked to each channel, that has advantages and disadvantages.

The main channels are:

- *Institutional channel*
- *Media and mediatised channel*
- *Socio-traditional and socio-cultural channels*

The criteria for selecting channels and media are

- *Geographical coverage*
- *Matching the target group (access, preferences, degree of familiarity)*
- *Credibility*
- *Costs*
- *Impact*
- *Participation*

The operational part of the strategy involves drawing up an implementation plan. This should envisage the elements which are required for a successful implementation: Institutional framework, production of communication material, training of human resources, strengthening of institutional capacities (if necessary), monitoring and evaluation, budget and timetable.

It is necessary to design an institutional framework which can ensure the effective implementation of the strategy. This involves:

- *The selection of the institution which can provide the leadership and coordination required during the implementation of activities*
- *Determining the operational mechanisms of the institutional framework.*

The institutional framework should be formalised to make effective the cooperation among the stakeholders collaborate and coordinate their activities on a clear foundation

To succeed in the communication work is necessary to plan the production of communication material

The production of materials or media for communication is a relatively complex set of activities often involving significant resources and several partners: Content specialists,

communication experts, technical advisory services, members of target groups, production technicians and artists, media professionals, traditional communicators, researchers, centres for the production and reproduction of material, future (end-) users, etc.

This requires the establishment of mechanisms for ensuring the participation of all stakeholders, or at least the vast majority: for this purpose, a production plan is drawn up. The latter will list the various tasks associated in the development of materials, the production methodology, the time-frame for each task, and the resources needed (human, technical and financial) for completing work on each medium, as well as presenting the allocation of responsibilities.

Generally speaking, the development of material is organised in the following steps:

- 1- Design Of Material*
- 2- Production Of Drafts And Rough Designs;*
- 3- Pre-Testing Of Drafts With Members Of The Target Group;*
- 4- Finalising Of Texts And Designs;*
- 5- Reproduction.*

The implementation of the strategy will sometimes require the setting-up of an appropriate infrastructure, equipment and human resources.

In the communication work, is fundamental to set a planning of activities, that consists of the identification and description of activities, time-span and - possibly - the place where they will be undertaken, resources, the person or organisation responsible, and the expected results.