

Building a communication strategy for an Interreg programme

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Guidance paper

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Introduction

The Interreg, Interreg IPA CBC and Interreg NEXT programmes for 2021-2027 are being designed during 2020-2021. Communication will have a prominent role in these future programmes. The Cooperation Programmes will include a chapter on communication, requiring – and allowing – the programming bodies to make communication an integral part of the programmes. In order to be able to provide the strategic outlines for the programme's communication in the Cooperation Programme, a thorough planning process of the communication work needs to be done. The purpose of this document is to guide the programmes and programming committees in this important task.

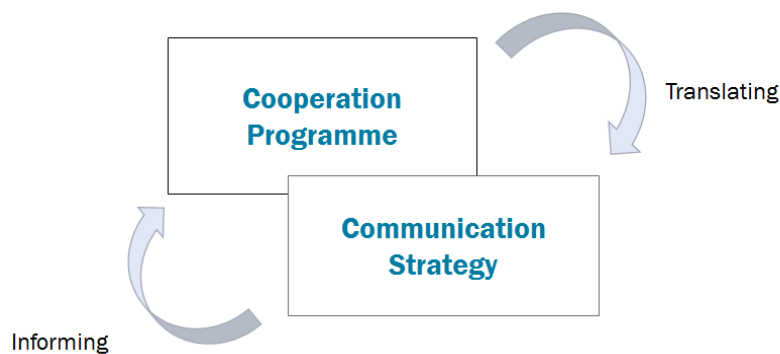
The document starts with outlining the function of communication in a programme and continues to insights on how to define strategically sound communication objectives. Later on, it provides support for planning the monitoring and evaluation of communication as well as the main points for defining a media strategy.

In case of ideas, questions or any comments, please be in touch with Eva Martínez Orosa (eva.martinez@interact-eu.net) or Linda Talve (linda.talve@interact-eu.net) at Interact.

COMMUNICATION FUNCTION IN INTERREG PROGRAMMES

1. Relation with the programme strategy

To be optimally effective, communication needs to be at the center of everything the programme does.



Cornelissen, J., *Corporate Communication*, 2017

The Cooperation Programme explains the overall purpose and scope of the programme to meet its various stakeholders' expectations and needs. It provides the strategic vision for the entire programme in terms of geography, intervention logic, etc.

The communication strategy refers to how communication can develop communication plans towards different stakeholders to achieve that vision and to support the programme objectives.

On the one hand, the decisions that are made at programme management level need to be translated into specific communication programmes for different stakeholders. On the other hand, communication reflects back on the programme strategy by bringing in stakeholder and reputation issues.

2. Communication planning model

A strategy is not fixed or set at a certain point in time but is an ongoing and evolving process. The framework presented here should be used in a flexible and pragmatic manner, cycling back and forth between elements.



Cornelissen, J., *Corporate Communication*, 2017

3. Short overview of lessons learnt from 2014-2020

Communication is everybody's business. Within the Secretariats:

According to the survey, most Interreg programmes (64%) have one full-time employee working as communication manager/officer. 14% of the respondents reported less than one full-time colleague working with communication as their main task.

Some interviewed programmes have tackled this lack of resources by involving in communication their Secretariat colleagues from all fields of expertise. This has not only helped overcome the lack of resources but has also provided additional benefits:

As colleagues are more involved, they are more supportive of the overall communication tasks. They are also experts in their topic so they can suggest out of the box ideas for communication that respond more accurately to the need.

As it is often project officers and finance officers who are in direct contact with project partners, their involvement and understanding of the communication task makes them better prepared to identify communication opportunities and more inclined to pass on useful

information to their communication colleagues. In turn, they also get better at passing on messages from the communication officer to the project partners.

Communication is everybody's business. National/regional contact points

National contact points (NCP) are part of 83% of Interreg programmes. Their role is most commonly to promote the programme's funding opportunities (30%) as well as to help applicants develop their project (27%).

The coordination of the NCPs is most commonly done on the programme level (57%) but often also (43%) outside the programme.

The national or regional contact points know their territories very well and they are in daily contact with local stakeholders. This makes them ideal partners to bring in communication ideas matching the territorial need.

In a similar way as project and finance officers, national and regional contact points who are aware of what you need for your programme communication can play a key role in identifying communication opportunities and to pass on useful information from partners to programme communication officers.

Communication is everybody's business. Project partners

More than 53% of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with the frequency at which they received project information (about their achievements, results...) for their programme communication activities.

This is consistent with the level of satisfaction about the quality of project communication (5 out of 10, on average).

Communication objectives: Highest success rate: Clear objectives with well-known audiences

When asked which objectives had the highest success rate, interviewees mentioned these two. What they have in common these two objectives is that they are clear and refer to well-known audiences. Programme staff know well what their funding opportunities are, and what their applicants and beneficiaries need to know and do.

Lowest success rate: Vague objectives with large audiences

On the other side of the spectrum of success rate we find objectives expressed in vague terms and focused on large audiences who have a less clear or well-known interest in the programme.

General satisfaction with output indicators but need to measure effects better

When it comes to measuring objectives, the feelings are mixed. On the one hand, Interreg colleagues felt that they measured outputs pretty well, but they were unsure about what effects they actually had. This was a handicap to prove the effectiveness of communication.

In some cases, programmes had objectives that seemed measurable and realistic at the moment of writing them, but when the time came to actually measuring if they had been achieved, they were in trouble because the target audiences mentioned in the objectives were unclear or the change expected from them was impossible to measure (lack of a baseline to measure change against)

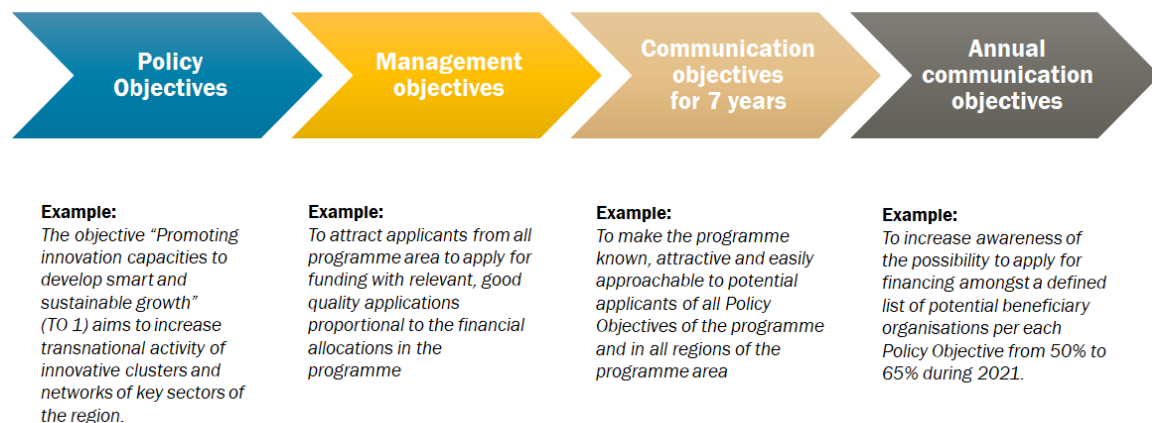
Most programmes interviewed lacked baselines to measure target audiences' opinions, attitudes or behaviours at the beginning of the programming period.

Well defined objectives that are measurable not only give direction to your activities. They also make you accountable for your results and give credibility to the communication function. After the break we will discuss more in detail how to make it possible.

PROGRAMME COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

1. Programme objectives in relation to communication objectives

Objectives of a programme are built on a number of levels, all supporting the achievement of the overall goals of the programme.



Programme overall objectives describe what the programme aims to achieve. They derive from a socio-economic analysis of the programme region and take shape in the Thematic Objectives, Investment Priorities and Specific Objectives (terminology used in the 2014-2020 period). In 2021-2027 there will be Policy Objectives and Specific Objectives.

Examples:

- The objective “Promoting innovation capacities to develop smart and sustainable growth” (TO 1) aims to increase transnational activity of innovative clusters and networks of key sectors of the region.

Source: [The MED Cooperation Programme 2014-2020](#)

- The thematic objective “enhancing competitiveness of SMEs” (TO 3) aims to develop and promote the region as a knowledge based innovative economy, supporting the creation of new companies and promoting small and medium-sized enterprises’ entrance to the international markets.

Source: [Central Baltic Cooperation Programme 2014-2020](#)

Programme **management objectives** describe what the programme needs to do to achieve its goals. They derive from the overall objectives of the programme. Examples:

- To attract applicants from all programme area to apply for funding with relevant, good quality applications proportional to the financial allocations in the programme
- To support beneficiaries in project implementation in a way that enforces result-orientation and ensures efficiency
- To ensure wide acknowledgement of the programme delivering EU support to develop the programme area
- To ensure efficient internal communication within the programme bodies to implement the programme

Programme **communication objectives** derive from the management objectives and are an essential tool to achieve both the management objectives and - finally - the overall goals of the programme. Examples:

- To make the programme known and easily approachable to potential applicants of all Policy Objectives of the programme and in all regions of the programme area
- To create a cooperation community with the beneficiaries to deliver encouraging support during project implementation ensuring efficient implementation, including communication and capitalisation of results
- To create a positive working culture internally within the programme bodies

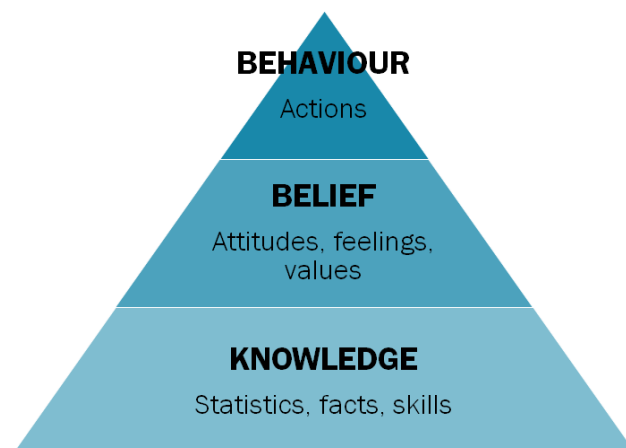
Defining very specific objectives for a long period like 7 years has proven challenging in Interreg programmes. That’s why it can be more efficient and allow for adjusting to changing needs and opportunities in programme communication if communication objectives are set also on an annual basis as part of the programme work planning. **Annual communication objectives** naturally support the fulfillment of the 7-year communication objectives but can

vary according to the programme implementation phase (e.g. promoting funding at the beginning of the period) and reflect specific needs occurring in programme implementation (e.g. a Policy Objective lagging behind in number of applications). Examples:

- To increase awareness of the possibility to apply for financing amongst a defined list of potential beneficiary organisations [see annex] per each Policy Objective from 50% to 65% during 2021.
- To engage all approved projects in starting to share their implementation questions, successes and/or challenges within the support community by posting at least 3 posts or comments during 2021.
- To increase awareness amongst the 9 listed key stakeholder groups (3 per Policy Objective) of how Interreg cooperation benefits their field of expertise by 9 thematic articles published during 2021

2. Communication objectives indicate the change you want to achieve: knowledge, belief or behaviour

Often, communication strategies include a behaviour objective – something we want to influence the target audience to do. It may be something we want our target audience to accept (e.g. Interreg being the best tool for overcoming an obstacle), reject (e.g. to cooperate only locally), modify (e.g. widen their traditional networks), abandon (e.g. working only in their own language), or continue (e.g. strengthening their existing cooperation with neighbouring regions).



Belief objectives relate more to feelings and attitudes. Potential applicants may be aware of being eligible to apply for financing from an Interreg programme, but consider the programmes too complicated to operate.

Often there are also things the audience needs to know in order to be motivated to act.

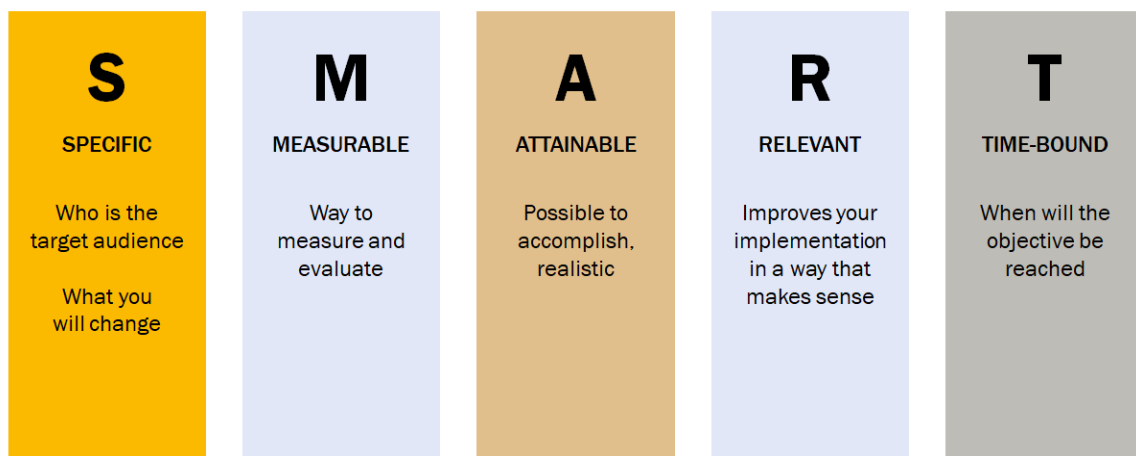
Knowledge objectives include information or facts we want them to be aware of (e.g. there are a lot of guidance documents available for applicants on the programme website), including information that might make them more willing to perform the desired behaviour (e.g. watch the videos before and/or while preparing their application).

This is also the point where we establish **quantifiable measures** relative to our objectives.

3. Components of a communication objective

A good objective is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (i.e. “SMART”). This way it will quantify desired behaviour outcomes as well as changes in knowledge and beliefs.

SMART objectives



S - Specific: what and for whom?

A good objective defines the target audience specifically. When the target audience is unclear or too big, it will be difficult to make the change you're aiming at. A good objective also clearly tells what change is expected within the target audience (knowledge, belief or behaviour).

Be realistic and focus on groups you can research, learn to know and reach from the programme level.

Example: To *increase awareness* of the possibility to apply for financing *amongst a defined list of potential beneficiary organisations per each Policy Objective* from 50% to 65% by the end of 2021

M - Measurable: how to quantify the change?

It is strongly advisable to design indicators as part of setting the communication objectives. If an objective is not measurable, you will have a hard time proving how well you achieved them.

Consider how you can measure the change you want to create. A good test is to think of how you can build a solid baseline for an indicator. This will help to see how realistic it is to later

monitor the indicator. If a baseline is impossible to build, it can be that monitoring turns out impossible as well.

Read more about indicators in the next chapter.

Example: To increase awareness of the possibility to apply for financing amongst a defined list of potential beneficiary organisations per each Policy Objective from 50% to 65% by the end of 2021

A - Attainable: remain realistic!

It is good to be hungry when setting communication objectives, but it can sometimes lead to setting them too optimistic. Knowing the target audiences well (who they are and what they think) is a key to building a realistic objective. Creating a solid baseline with proper research is an investment at the time of setting objectives, and can save many “lessons learnt” later.

Consider working through multipliers (e.g. projects) instead of trying to reach everyone directly from the programme level. Often this can be more feasible in the day-to-day work than building direct contacts with target audiences that are not direct stakeholders of your programme.

R - Relevant: are you working with something that actually changes the thing you want to change?

In the midst of designing communication objectives and indicators, it is every now and then good to go back to the main purpose of the programme and other levels of objectives to make sure that the objective is in the scope of the programme. Is the communication objective one that will improve programme implementation and improve the chances of the programme to reach its main goals better?

T - Time-bound: by when is the change to be achieved?

Some communication objectives are relevant for a longer period of time, which in the Interreg context is most often the full programme period of 7 years. Naturally, a very high level of detail is often not feasible for such a long period, as it will be hard to know exactly how the programme implementation will progress (e.g. when and what types of calls will be opened, how much allocations are done annually, does a single Policy Objective require special attention in regards to applicant guidance etc.).

For more operational aspects it makes sense to build objectives on an annual level. This allows the objectives to reflect the phase of the programme life cycle and the different communication needs the programme has in each phase.

Example of a communication objective for the full 7-years: To attract applicants from all programme area to apply for funding with relevant, good quality applications

Example of a time-bound objective for the first year of implementation: To increase awareness of the possibility to apply for financing amongst a defined list of potential beneficiary organisations per each Policy Objective from 50% to 65% by the end of 2021

4. Communication indicators as a way to steer and measure success in communication

Indicators are your measurement stick while you implement your programme. They are first and foremost a tool to ensure the quality of the done work. Keeping an eye on the indicators will allow for adjusting and improving your activities if needed.

In order to have true benefit of working with indicators, each indicator needs to have a defined starting point and a target. The starting point is called *baseline* and it defines the level where you are when starting implementation. The *target* sets out the desired level where the indicator should be at the end of the time period it is set for. Defining both, realistic baseline as well as a realistic target will often require proper research (e.g. surveys or statistical calculations) to be able to know the circumstances well enough.

Example: At the beginning of the programme an annual communication objective can be “To increase awareness of the possibility to apply for financing amongst a defined list of potential beneficiary organisations [see annex] per each Policy Objective from 50% to 65% during 2021.” Here the done research would have included listing of the potential beneficiary organisations and running a survey amongst them to find out the proportion that is already aware of the financing opportunity. If it was 50% when starting, an estimation can be done that an increase of 15% could be attained in a year. After the year, a new survey would need to be conducted to see whether the objective was reached or not.

Monitoring can turn into a useless headache or even a nightmare if the indicators are not designed well and are hard to monitor or don't measure the right things. Therefore, the following things are worth keeping in mind when designing indicators. Also, it can often be better to have a few well thought through indicators than a long list of bits and pieces.

- Relevance of the indicators
Do the indicators reflect the fulfillment of the objective?
Do they measure activity, outcome or result?
- Baseline and target figures
Do you have enough information to set a realistic baseline and target for the indicators?
- Source of data
How can you collect the data in a reliable manner with the existing resources?
- Schedule
How often can you monitor the indicator performance?
- Responsibility
Who is responsible for data collection?

- Process of evaluation
Where and how will the monitoring data be used in the programme for evaluating programme implementation on its various levels?
- Resources
How much time and money is needed for implementing your monitoring and evaluation activities?

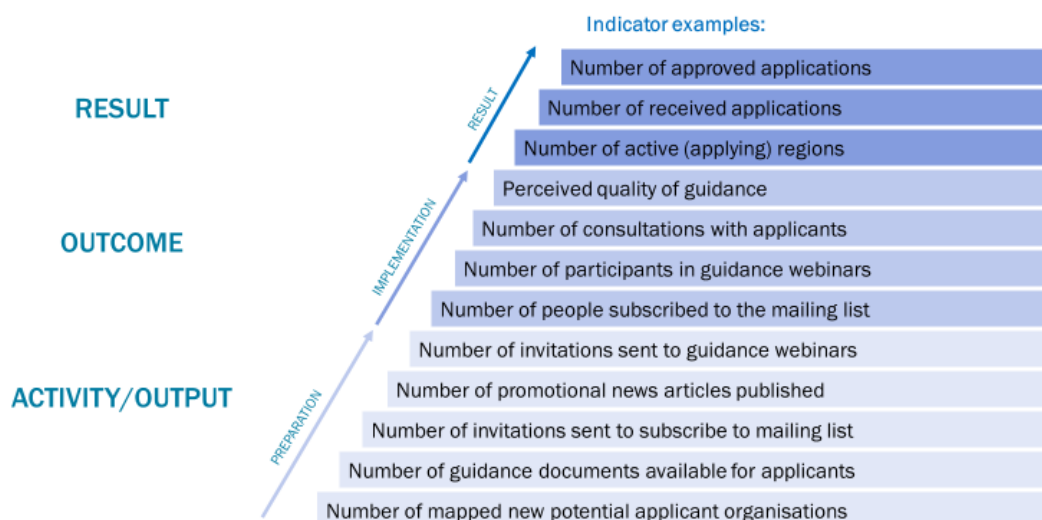
All communication objectives and their related indicators are always best designed together with the whole programme team to make sure the indicators remain close to the objectives and processes of the whole programme and don't become a solo for the communication manager.

Below are some examples of indicators for a 7-year communication objective for the overall programme communication strategy and for an annual communication work plan. They include indicators for monitoring the preparations, implementation as well as the results of the work done. Having all phases of the process covered by indicators will help in assessing where a possible bottleneck can be in case the results are not achieved as planned. E.g. if a lot of invitations are sent out but only very few potential applicants participate in guidance events, the challenge might be in the targeting or attractiveness of the invitations. But if a lot of potential applicants participate in events and use online guidance materials but then don't apply or apply with low quality applications, the problem is likely in the quality of the provided guidance.

Indicators are a friend and an opportunity, not an enemy and a burden. But it requires good planning.

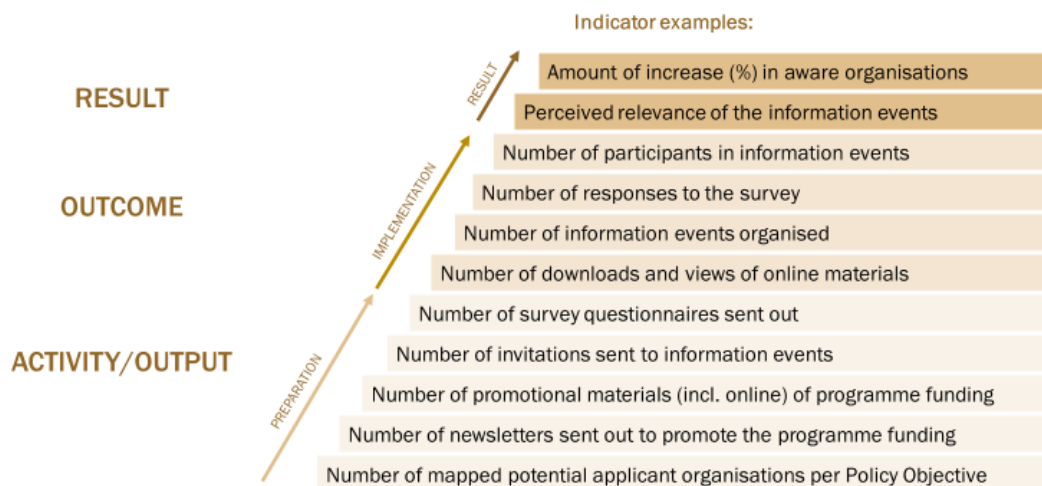
Example – 7-year communication objective:

To attract applicants from all programme area to apply for funding with relevant, good quality applications



Example – Annual communication objective:

To increase awareness of the possibility to apply for financing amongst a defined list of potential beneficiary organisations per each Policy Objective from 50% to 65% during 2021



More ideas/examples of communication objectives and indicators for Interreg programmes can be found [here](#).

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION

Evaluation framework for the 2021-2027 period

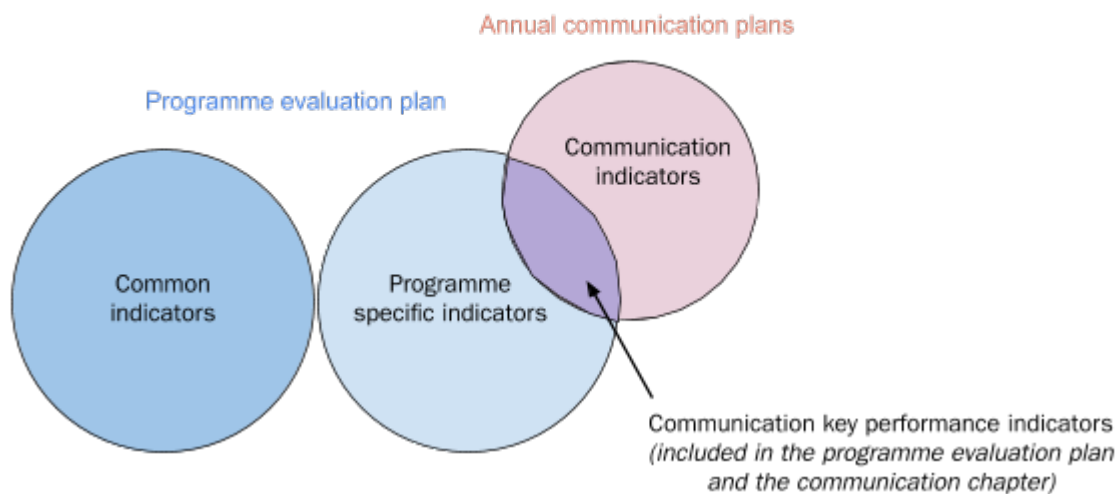
The Interreg programmes will be required to make an evaluation plan for the whole programme, and to submit this to their Monitoring Committee within 12 months of the approval of the programme (*for more information, see draft [ETC regulation](#) Article 34 “Evaluation during the programme period”*).

The common output and result indicators for programmes (see draft [ETC regulation](#) Article 33 “Indicators for the European territorial cooperation goal”) do not include indicators directly related to communication. Programmes will be able to use programme specific indicators to monitor and evaluate programme communication.

The communication chapter of an Interreg programme is, according to the current Commission guidelines, required to include a set of “relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation” of communication. These indicators can be considered to be the key

performance indicators (KPI) of the programme communication. As they will be set for the full programme period of 7 years, these indicators could remain on a level that describes the overall performance of the programme communication. Other, more specific, communication indicators can be set on the annual level for the annual work plans.





An example of linking communication indicators to the programme indicator framework



Communication objectives in time (7-year vs. annual)

The programme life cycle creates different needs for communication in different phases of the programme. In the beginning the programme needs to target applicants while the need to capitalise on results grows towards the end of the programme period. In practise, the weight of different objectives could look roughly like this:

Communication objectives in time

Examples:	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
To make the <u>programme</u> known, attractive and easily approachable to potential applicants of all Policy Objectives and in all regions of the <u>programme area</u>							
To create a cooperation community with the beneficiaries to deliver encouraging support during project implementation ensuring efficient implementation, including communication and <u>capitalisation</u> of results							
To promote the benefits of cooperation widely in the <u>programme area</u> and beyond							
To create a positive working culture internally within the <u>programme bodies</u>							

While the 7-year objectives remain the same, the different needs for communication can be well reflected in the annual implementation plans for communication. As the objectives become more detailed in the annual plans, also indicators to monitor the work done will be more specific.

Indicators should be set to reflect the activities, outputs and results for the work on each objective (see examples in diagrams on pages 12-13). This way the success of the work done can be evaluated already during implementation and used for making needed improvements and adjustments along the implementation.

Example

A programme has set an activity indicator “number of relevant applicant organisations mapped”, an output indicator “number of invitations sent to guidance events” and a result indicator “number of approved applications”.

In practice, the indicators could be used for analysis in the following manner. If a lot of relevant organisations and people have been mapped and plenty of invitations have been sent, but the events do not collect participants, the problem is likely on the activity level (e.g. wrong people invited, unclear invitations, bad timing). This is likely to lead to few applications submitted and therefore also very few approved. However, if a lot of people show up actively at applicant events but still in the end don't apply or apply with low-quality applications, the problem is likely in the quality of guidance provided.

Monitoring is a tool for an ongoing assessment of the day-to-day implementation. It should not be regarded as a sole end-of-the-year or -period exercise.

Finally, the overall setup of communication indicators could look roughly like this, combining the 7-year and the annual levels:

Communication indicator framework, example

Objective A (7 years)		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
	(Activity indicator A)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)
	KPI: Output indicator B	*	*	*	*	(*)	(*)	(*)
	KPI: Result indicator C	*	*	*	*	(*)	(*)	(*)
	Annual objective A1							
	Activity indicator A1.1	*	*	*	*			
	Output indicator A1.2	*	*	*	*			
	Result indicator A1.3	(*)	(*)	*	*			
	Annual objective A2							
	Activity indicator A2.1	*	*	*				
	Output indicator A2.2	*	*	*				
	Result indicator A2.3	(*)	*	*				
Objective B (7 years)		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
	(Activity indicator A)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)
	KPI: Output indicator B	(*)	(*)	*	*	*	*	*
	KPI: Result indicator C	(*)	(*)	*	*	*	*	*
	Annual objective B1							
	Activity indicator B1.1			*	*	*	*	*
	Output indicator B1.2			*	*	*	*	*
	Result indicator B1.3			*	*	*	*	*
	Annual objective B2							
	Activity indicator B2.1						*	*
	Output indicator B2.2						*	*
	Result indicator B2.3						*	*

KPI = Key performance Indicator

* = measured

(*) = measured if feasible

Elements of good indicators

1) Baseline and target

Each indicator should have a baseline, i.e. the level from which you start. Setting a baseline is a useful exercise: if it proves to be difficult to establish, it is worth to consider if monitoring this indicator will also become a challenge during implementation. The previous programme can provide insights for building a baseline.

Depending on the objective the indicator measures (7 years or annual), a target value should be set to describe where the indicator should be at the end of the given time. Setting a realistic target requires knowledge of what is feasible.

Possible sources of information to build realistic baselines and targets can be, for instance: data from the previous programme different EU, national and regional statistical or other databases interviews and surveys

2) Data type and sources

Consider what type of data you need to collect for an indicator. What is the best kind of data to show e.g. level of satisfaction. Is it the number of smiling people leaving the meeting room, a questionnaire (and what exact question) or possibly a telephone survey?

For each type of data there are different ways to collect it (e.g. online, on the spot, over telephone, calculations etc.). Consider and choose a suitable method carefully already when planning the indicator to avoid later realising that the data is very demanding to collect or not available at all.

For data sources you are likely to rely on similar ones as you did while setting your baselines. Don't hesitate to consider if some indicators can rely on data collected from your projects, national contact points, MC members or other stakeholders of your programme. This can be an alternative to collect information that might be otherwise difficult to access from programme level.

3) Responsibility and timing

Remember to plan how often you record the data and who does it. This can require setting a well-planned framework from an early phase in the programme and making sure the relevant people are well aware of their responsibility.

Last but not least, consider the input-output ratio of your indicators carefully. Some indicator data is more easily collected while some is more resource demanding. Choose carefully and put your energy into collecting the most relevant and reliable data.

General recommendations based on evaluators' experience

According to the (draft) ETC regulation, the programmes are to use external experts to do programme evaluations (article 34). Many evaluators have gathered experience in evaluating Interreg programmes. Below you can see some tips from evaluators, with a genuine interest in improving the planning and implementation of programme evaluations. They underline evaluation's role as a quality tool before anything else.

Tips on a well-designed evaluation plan (especially in light of communication):

- Evaluation plan is done early in the programme.
- Builds on a strong intervention logic of the programme.
- Clear objectives are set in the communication strategy as well as in the evaluation plan. I.e. evaluation plan includes well designed evaluation questions.
- The evaluation questions are well scheduled. E.g. impacts should be looked at only towards or after the end of the programme period.
- Well planned data supports the aim of the evaluation and is highly relevant for the evaluation questions.
- Consider carefully which parts of the evaluation are ones for an external independent evaluator to look at and which are ones that you may be able to deal with internally.
- Interreg evaluations could be more goal oriented than process oriented.
- A good evaluation plan takes into account the lessons learnt from previous periods's evaluation processes and outcomes.
- You may consider using external support already in drawing together your evaluation plan, including the evaluation questions, indicators, baselines and targets.

Tips for an effective evaluation process

- Know what you want to evaluate and have the needed monitoring data available for the evaluator. Monitoring/looking for/improving patchy data is not an evaluator's time well spent.
- Collect and have the needed contact information available for evaluators. Looking up people and addresses can also eat up valuable time from the actual evaluation work.
- During the evaluation process, reserve resources also in the programme: the evaluators will need support during the process.
- See your evaluator as a "critical friend" and use their external view to help your programme in becoming the best version of itself. The evaluators interest should be the same as your own: it's not to find faults but to improve your programme.

Interviewed consultants:

*Kai Böhme and Silke Haarich, Spatial Foresight
Ieva Cēbura and Krišjānis Veitners, Safege Baltija*

Further reading on the monitoring and evaluation of communication:

- DG Communication: [Tips and Tools – Communication, monitoring and evaluation](#)

DEVELOP A MEDIA STRATEGY

The communication landscape where we operate today is far more complex than just answering the question of what channels to use.

Everybody is now an editor, interacting with each other in ever more complex ways. It is not about choosing from a handful or so of media. We are rather faced with a tsunami of possibilities, both online and offline.

We have all become "producers". This is a hybrid of a user and a producer, involved in the continuous building of existing content. This is an interesting notion, because it helps us understand the role of outsiders as possible assets for your communication efforts and not just receivers of it. We can go even further to say that stakeholders even expect organisations to engage with them.

We need to be able to create integrated communication strategies that enable communication and engagement across multiple media like internet, video, mobile devices, print, etc.

In simple terms, a "media mix" is the combination of communication platforms that an organisation can use to meet its communication objectives. If we are to succeed at engaging our stakeholders across multiple platforms we also need to be aware of which platforms we employ for which stories and in what order.

Media characteristics (non-exhaustive list):

Platform	Potentials and opportunities for communication	Risks and limitations for communication	Information lifetime	Degree of interaction
Social media	High, yet selective reach	Inflexible technology (if using third party)	Short	High
	Allows direct links to other platforms	Competing communication		
Web	Opportunities for repeat exposures	Technological constraints on format	Long	Medium
	Flexible communication platform	Competing communication		
Outdoor	High reach	Short exposure	Long	Low
	Allows direct links to other platforms	Local restrictions		
Face-to-face on site	Easily noticed	High cost	Short	High
	High repetition	Low reach		
Direct mail	Location specific	High cost	Medium	Low
	Segmented reach	Poor reputation		
	High information content	Competing communication		
	Exposure controlled by reader	Exposure controlled by reader		

Source: *Strategizing communication*, IB T. Guldbrandsen and Sine N. Just

Three considerations when "mixing" your media

- **Level of stakeholder involvement** is about how personally important your offer is to the stakeholder's life. The higher the involvement, the more engagement they will demand from you, and the more complex level of information they will want. Think of the difference between someone seeking Interreg funds as opposed to someone working as a journalist and that you want to convince to write a story about your projects' achievements.
- **Media synergy** refers to questions such as:
 - ✓ How communication in one platform can spill over and create communication and interaction in other platforms?
 - ✓ How to get as much effect as possible out of as little money as possible?

It can happen between offline and online platforms – when an offline platform drives visits to online platforms and vice versa. For instance, how mentioning a website during an event can make people go online and check it out.

Or, within the same type of media. For instance, how a billboard in the subway will alert your attention to a product that you can then also find an ad for in the free newspaper you read whilst riding the train. The idea here is that the first platform (billboard) will work together with the second (newspaper) and in combination they create a bigger effect (provide you with more information and more interaction with the product) than the two do of them separately.

How does this happen? Because people have a tendency to perceive as more credible and therefore more convincing a message they have been exposed to through multiple media platforms. This is because they see the different media as independent sources. Stakeholders also see repetition as costly and assume high expenditure to be an indication of the organisation's confidence in the quality of what they are offering.

- **Media sequence** refers to the order in which different media platforms should be employed.

The order in which you use different media may help you create interest and reinforce your message. This is based on the idea of "forward encoding", meaning that what your audience hears first in one medium will prime their interest and attention to a communication in a second medium. Think for example of how a trailer of a movie may raise your interest to buy tickets to watch it.

People also mentally replay the message of the first medium while being exposed to it in the second. Continuing with the movie example. If you go to watch it after having read a review in a newspaper, some of the points presented in the review may come back to your mind as you watch the movie, as a sort of framework that conditions the way you interpret the movie itself.

So, which sequence works best? Academic studies found that in most cases, the best media sequence is to start with a passive media platform that requires less effort to engage with (e.g. website banner) and follow up with an active one (e.g. social media site). The reason is that this will make the less involved aware of the availability of your offer and remind the more highly involved to see more information on other platforms.