



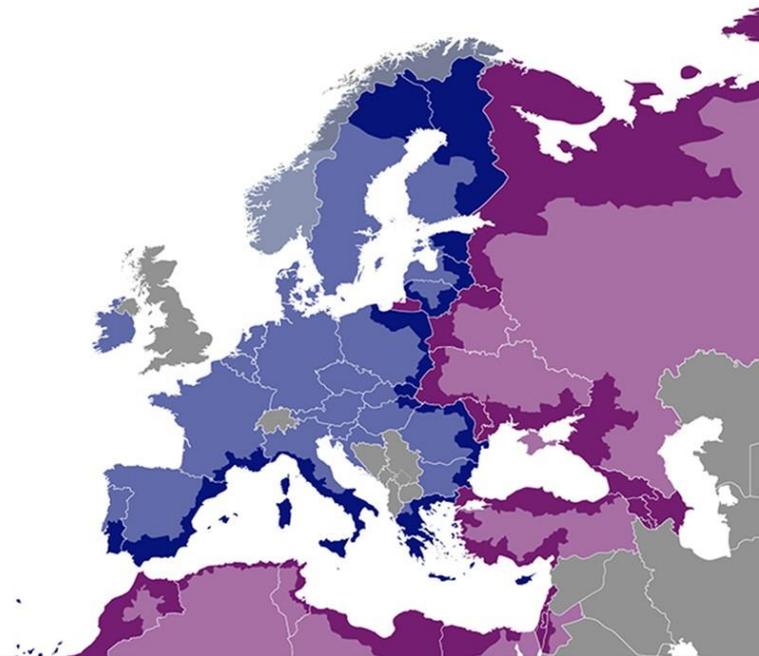
TESIM

Technical support to the implementation
and management of ENI CBC programmes

Network meeting of ENI CBC communication managers

(Online – 9 June 2020)

Proceedings



Introduction to the event

The preparation for the 2021-2027 programming period is on-going in the entire ENI CBC community: communication and visibility are an important part of the preparatory work. The aim of this year's ENI CBC Communication Network was to give an overview of the regulatory framework 2021-2027 regarding communication, particularly for what concerns the specificities of external cooperation programmes. The meeting was also the occasion to present the final template of the annual information and communication plan (AICP), which has been finalised after a long preparation.

The meeting - initially planned as a physical one to take place in Warsaw (Poland) on 13 May - was postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions for 09 June and transferred as an online event, hosted by Zoom. The webinar was attended by 32 participants from 15 ENI CBC programmes, together with 4 representatives of DG REGIO and 1 from Interact. The participants received a link as well as the instructions on how to join and a contact point in case of technical failure. The final version of the AICP was also shared beforehand in order to collect remarks.

The webinar started with welcoming words by TESIM Team Leader - **Carlos Bolaños** - who also did a reminder on the technical rules for participation and provided an overview of the objectives of the meeting: presenting the new communication rules for 2021-2027 (**session 1**) and advancing the details of the final version of the AICP (**session 2**). Thereafter, **Tanya Dimitrova** - Programme Desk Officer in Unit D1 of DG REGIO - delivered welcoming words and introduced herself, having recently joined the team.

Session 1 – EU communication rules for the 2021-2027 programming period

Tanya Dimitrova presented the overall context of the first session and pointed out the need for this event in order to address the specificities of the ENI CBC community in view of the new programming period.

Gianluca Comuniello and **Hanna Soderstrom** - DG REGIO Unit A2 - presented the new communication approach for the period 2021-2027. The presentation (**Annex I**) revolved around four aspects:

- the single rule book for communication, in particular **the single set of rules** for all programmes: art 17 (3) specifies the mandatory elements for the future communication chapters, namely the communication objectives, the target audiences, the channels, the planned budget and the indicators;
- **the single branding**, With no more reference to individual funds, with the exception of Interreg. As such the central brand, and thereby the central message to citizens is EU and Interreg support



- a **common project data and calls system at national level**, applying also to Interreg to bring together all the information on one platform;
- a **single network and coordination**: the existing Union networks (INFORM & INIO) will be replaced by the INFORM-EU, where Interreg programme communication officers will also be represented.

The presenters did also address a number of issues related to Interreg only, among which:

- the fact that for **operations of strategic importance** the obligation to acknowledge support belongs to each partner of the Interreg operation;
- the Managing Authority shall ensure that a website is available with the information covering the Interreg programmes and that **one website can cover several programmes**;
- and that Member States should appoint a **single national communication coordinator**, not a different coordinator for Interreg programmes.

The new set of rules gives an increased importance to the communication and aim at simplifying and harmonising different funds and instruments. The session gave room for an open discussion with the representatives of the European Commission.

Questions and answers

The **first Q&A session** was opened by the questions received from ENI CBC programmes at registration time. Other questions were received through the chat and addressed by the EC representatives (**Annex V**).

Among the main points coming out of the discussions:

- A booklet with tips for evaluating communication actions and providing support for communication indicators is finalised by DG REGIO and DG COMM, and can be circulated with the participants;
- The communication chapter, together with a mature programme draft can already be submitted to the EC for feedback as part of informal dialogues;
- An online generator for project beneficiaries to create ready-to-print communication items; billboards, plaques, posters, stickers, based on shared templates will be ready in the first quarter of 2021

Session 1 - 2021-2027 programming period: single branding

Daniela Cavini - TESIM Communication Coordinator - shared the results of the survey on the single branding carried out among ENI CBC programmes after the new regulations for the 2021-2027 programming period were presented in Vilnius.

Daniela recounted how EC's proposal led to programmes' different reactions, which were collected by TESIM, elaborated and forwarded to the EC. Eight programmes out of 15 answered to the survey and the issues they raised were multiple: some were of common



interest for the whole community, others were of concern only for a particular group, and implications in relation to projects were also raised. Daniela presented to the EC the main points of the survey (**Annex II**), and here is how Simona Pohlová (Team leader of the ENI CBC team in DG REGIO) and Gianluca Comuniello answered to the questions:

QUESTION	ANSWER
<p>1. Is “Interreg NEXT” the official name for ENI CBC programmes?</p>	<p>(Simona Pohlová): “Interreg Next” is the name introduced by DG REGIO together with the European External Action Service to acknowledge that these programmes indeed continue to contribute to both the Cohesion Policy and the EU’s External Policy, including the EU-Russia relations. It is the name being used in the so-called Joint paper on the Interreg Next Strategic Programming, which will become later on the multi-annual strategy document, to be adopted by the Commission as an Implementing Regulation. This name has already been acknowledged by the community of the External Commission DGs and DG NEAR has used it officially in their communication on the Eastern Partnership that has been published recently. Though this is the official name for the programmes, it has not yet been agreed within the EC how to incorporate it in the brand. Interact will be asked to work on it.</p>
<p>2. What about the name of the programmes? Would it be possible to use the brand of the programme?</p>	<p>(Gianluca Comuniello). An important distinction needs to be made between the Regulation requirements and branding requirements for a community. “Interreg Next” is the label of the Interreg external programmes. The article 35 of the Interreg Regulation, requires that “Interreg” is spelled out next to the EU emblem. “NEXT” can be added, as long as a graphic solution can be found within the dedicated space for Interreg for that purpose. To ensure the proper visibility of EU contribution the following elements must be observed: Interreg + Emblem + slogan “co-funded by the EUROPEAN UNION”. In addition, and accordingly, a programme name if it fits in the structure suggested.</p> <p>An online generator which is being prepared for the next programming period will have four slots, one slot for the EU emblem and sentence “co-funded by the EU”; another slot for Interreg/Interreg Next; two additional slots can be used for the purposes programmes see fit, for the specific needs of the programmes taking in to consideration the requirements set and agreed with the partner countries. Flexibility in terms of information provided on a given physical communication element is foreseen.</p>
<p>3. What about CBC Partner Countries contributing up to 50% of the funding? Will they be acknowledged?</p>	<p>(Gianluca Comuniello). The starting point of the EC is to ensure the visibility of the EU contribution, the minimum requirements are laid out in the CPR. The visibility of Partner Countries should be decided in accordance with CPR. As per the regulation the EU contribution should be at least as visible as any other.</p>

	<p>Acknowledging the partner countries' contribution and participation should not be at the detriment of the EU visibility.</p> <p>The online generator and the branding manual, are a free service provided for programmes all over Europe, without an obligation to use it; however, it also gives clarity and reassurance regarding the correctness of what is being printed, displayed or published.</p>
<p>4. What instructions are there for project beneficiaries?</p>	<p>In addition to the afore mentioned online generator the Commission will provide a brand manual for the correct use of the EU emblem and on how to best fill the requirements laid out in the CPR. Any requirement set by the Partner Countries will need to be discussed accordingly. The EC gives from its side a simple and harmonised solution: the EU flag and the slogan "co-funded by the EUROPEAN UNION".</p>

The **Questions&Answers** session continued with the issues raised by the participants, which were also addressed by **Gianluca Comuniello and Simona Pohlova (see Annex V)**. Among the main points coming out of the discussions, the following ones should be highlighted:

- It is fair that the financial contribution from non-EU countries is made visible. However, acknowledging the significance of Partner Countries' contribution and participation should not be at the detriment of the EU visibility;
- A draft of the branding manual should be ready by the end of 2020;
- The online generator foresees the possibility of using national languages of the partners involved to produce templates.

Session 2 – The adoption of the new AICP: the arrival point of a long and winding road.

Carlos Bolaños explained the purpose of the second session and gave the floor to **Olga Prokharava** - TESIM Communication expert - who provided an overview of the history of the communication plan (**Annex III**). Olga explained how the need of producing a template was tackled already in June 2016 and how the proposed template was reviewed to consider the comments received from the programmes. Olga also updated the audience on a new element introduced in the discussion, namely the need to anticipate the post-2020 requirements on indicators.

Following this intervention, **Daniela Cavini** presented the final version of the template (**Annex IV**), structuring the intervention around the two parts in which it is divided: the reporting on past activities and the planning of future ones. Daniela specified that the communication of future activities should be results-oriented: objectives should be at the core of the plan, and everything else should revolve around them. The communication plan should contain targets, messages, tools, activities, resources, and indicators measuring outputs and results. The presentation continued showing the template filled out as example.

On behalf of the ENI CBC Community, **Daniela Cavini** put forward to **Tanya Dimitrova** some key issues, which were further elaborated by the EC representative:

<p>1. Why a template of AICP is needed?</p>	<p>At the moment, it is a challenge to overview the programmes progress in visibility and communication actions, due to the existence of three, different in their content, documents that are not always entirely linked. i.e. Communication strategy, Communication plan and Annual Technical reports (the communication part).</p> <p>All communication strategies are structured differently but, at the end, all of them includes similar, common, <u>elements – such as</u> target groups, key messages, tools, activities and resources.</p> <p>This information is now included in the new template for the Annual Implementation and Communication plan. Furthermore, the Communication plan consists of a reporting part (what has already been done) to help the Joint Monitoring Committees (JMC) and EC to better understand the performance of the communication activities.</p> <p>The idea of the unified AICP is to reduce the complexity of the planning and reporting exercise, and to unify the communication data submitted by the programmes with the Annual Report in February every year. The template should be also seen as a valuable planning and reporting tool for the communication activities in the next programming period.</p>
<p>2. Which is the planning year - the calendar year, or the accounting year?</p>	<p>Regarding the <u>timing</u>, the timeframe will not be changed. The programmes should do as they are doing so far. The EC has seen that some of the programmes have already planned their communication activities per calendar year and that some others are doing it for the accounting year plus 6 months, according to the reporting rules applicable to the AIR.</p> <p>No interruption in the process will be made for those programmes that have already started the partners consultations on the Communication plans, i.e. the programmes that plan the communication activities per accounting year.</p> <p>The template of the AICP shall become a mandatory document only after an official notification by the Commission (to be issue in July 2020).</p>
<p>3. Budgeting for specific activities can be challenging,</p>	<p>When we talk about result-oriented programmes, we have already stated that budgeting is a tool for good monitoring</p>

<p>many factors can affect costs: could it be more relevant to define the total budget for communication activities for reporting period?</p>	<p>of the programme performance. This is also valid for the communication activities. The communication officers often budget the communication activities per actions for the subcontracting procedures, where more details are needed for the elaboration of technical specifications. Consequently, the budgeting in the AICP should be taken as an important element of the planning process. This will not imply additional administrative burden; on the contrary, it will help the programme bodies to plan the activities more clearly and the JMC to monitor the visibility actions better.</p>
<p>4. The result-oriented approach is already present in the technical part of the annual implementation report: what is the added value of more indicators? Outputs and results are already defined at programme level in the Communication strategy: is there a need to foresee such indicators at activity level?</p>	<p>When we talk about result-oriented programmes, we already know that indicators are the tool for monitoring the programme performance. This is also valid for the communication activities as well.</p> <p>The idea of introducing indicators already now is linked to <u>practising and preparing for post-2020</u>. In the new ETC regulatory proposal (article 17), it is stated that the cooperation programme must contain the envisaged approach to communication and visibility through defining its objectives, target audiences, communication channels, social media outreach, planned budget and relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>Some of the programmes have already communication indicators in the Joint Operational Programmes (JOP) for the current programming period. Others put them in the communication plans. However, even if a programme do not have written indicators, they are already monitoring what they have done in order to report to JMC, and these are exactly the indicators that the EC would like ENI CBC programmes to present via the AICP.</p> <p>If the programme has already indicators in the JOP, it is quite easy to transfer them to the AICP; if they do not have them, they may consider to introduce some of the Interreg indicators published by INTERACT and TESIM.</p>

A **Question&Answers session** followed, where the EC and TESIM representatives answered the questions received from the participants (**Annex V**).

Among the main points coming out of the discussions the following ones should be highlighted:

- An official letter with the template will be sent by the EC to the programmes asap;

- The AICP template will be applicable for the next programming period as well;
- The EC is aware of the transitional period: what is already in the pipeline can keep the old format;
- A virtual “tour de table” showed that only 3 out of the 15 programmes have already submitted their plans to the JMC

Taking the occasion, **Linda Talve** (Interact) invited the ENI CBC communication managers to take part in the Interact online event (16 June) on building a programme communication strategy, which will have a particular focus on setting measurable communication objectives for the future programming period. She announced that after the summer break further events will be organised by Interact to address other topics related to the strategy.

Wrap up of the event

After the last Q&A round, the EC representatives thanked all the participants. TESIM experts mentioned the availability for individual support to programmes and online capacity building training on communication matters for project beneficiaries. **Carlos Bolaños** closed the discussion thanking all participants and the representatives of the EC.

Evaluation

The summary of evaluation forms is attached (**Annex VI**).

Annexes

Annex I. Communication, Transparency, Visibility (Gianluca Comuniello & Hanna Soderstrom)

Annex II. Interreg Branding: what's for NEXT? (Daniela Cavini)

Annex III. The annual information and communication plan: a long and winding road.
(Volha Prokharava)

Annex IV. Annual Information & Communication Plan (Daniela Cavini)

Annex V: Questions and Answers

Annex VI. Summary of evaluation forms