

COMMUNICATION PLAN

of

Operational Programme

Technical Assistance

2007-2013



CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....3

**II. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE4**

III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK6

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION.....6

V. OBJECTIVES AND TASKS11

VI. TARGET GROUPS11

VII. STRATEGY...12

**VIII. COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES, TOOLS AND
CHANNELS.....13**

IX. INDICATIVE BUDGET ALLOCATION.....22

X. RESPONSIBILITIES.....23

XI. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT.....25

**XII. ADOPTION OF AND AMENDMENTS TO THE COMMUNICATION
PLAN.....29**

XIII. ACRONYMS USED.....30



I. INTRODUCTION

The actual accession of Bulgaria to the EU and the access to resources from the EU Funds has opened quality new opportunities for our country's development in all aspects of public life. These resources are intended for both the private sector and the structures of the civil society, and the government institutions. In the modern, constantly changing and highly competitive market environment the access to gratuitously provided financial resources is the key, more than ever, to institutions' and businesses' success. Utilizing this potential all stakeholders in the country's economy can overcome many of their identified weakness as well as develop their full capacity.

As a full-fledged EU member Bulgaria has to participate in the elaboration of and the implementation of the European policies in execution of the strategic objectives of the Community.

The resources Bulgaria will receive in the period 2007-2013 from the EU Funds are intended to support the government policy as set forth in details in the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). The National Strategic Reference Framework is based on the National Development Plan for the period 2007-2013 as well as on a socio-economic analysis of the existing disparities in the standard of life, economy and development of Bulgaria and the rest of the EU Member States. NSRF also reflects the Community Strategic Guidelines on the creation of more and better jobs, improvement of knowledge and innovations in view of achieving economic growth, and turning Europe and its regions into a more attractive place to work and live in. The Structural Funds are the main financial instruments of the EU Cohesion Policy, the major purpose of which is to attain greater economic and social integration, growth and jobs.

Operational Programme Technical Assistance (OPTA) is one of the seven Operational Programmes laid down in NSRF, whereby our country will have the opportunity to absorb resources from the Structural Funds of EU. OPTA will be co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund. The budget of OPTA is to the amount of EUR 56.8 million, of which EUR 48.3 million are ERDF contribution.

Pursuant to the requirements of the European Regulations (Council Regulation 1083/2006, Article 69) the provision of information and publicity of the Operational Programmes and activities co-financed by the EU is responsibility of the Member State and the relevant Managing Authority. The Communication Plan has been elaborated precisely in execution of Regulation No 1083/2006.

The OPTA Communication Plan (CP) contains the following obligatory elements: a strategy, a definition of target groups, planning of information and communication measures, an indicative budget and actions to assess the Communication Plan.

This Plan lays down the strategic communication framework for the 2007-2013 programming period and is to be an integral part of the implementation of OP Technical Assistance. In view of the long-term nature of the document, it contains both a communication strategy and a plan with the tools and channels needed for the implementation of the strategy.

The OPTA Communication Plan also complies with the guidelines provided by the National Communication Strategy of NSRF – a strategic national document which lays down the



framework for the future activities related to promoting the objectives and priorities, envisaged in NSRF and OP, and ensures coordinated communication policy.

In order to ensure optimum publicity efficiency and information synergy on all levels, the strategy defines the main communication objectives and priorities on national level.

The main objectives and strategy – to encourage the greater awareness and motivation of the public and the target groups by means of proactive communication and transparency, have been laid down in this Communication Plan. Encouraging a proactive public position will result in efficient and effective absorption of SCF resources, promoting public acknowledgement of the EU role in achieving the goals of NSRF. Thus, the final objective for this programming period is formed, namely Bulgaria to become, by 2015, a competitive EU Member State with high quality of life, income and social sensitivity.

The Communication Plans of the individual OPs are the instrument to meet the objectives of the National Communication Strategy of NSRF. The Communication Plan of OP Technical Assistance is no exception. The measures envisaged therein are based on the main principles of the National Communication Strategy of NSRF – information, positivity, flexibility, adaptability, uniformity and coordination, consistency with the overall Government policy in relation to the Community and consistency with the EU policy and requirements.

The Communication Plan has been jointly elaborated by MA and Public Relations and Protocol Directorate at the Ministry of Finance.

II. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

OPTA has been developed in line with the Regulation laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF) (COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006). OPTA fully complies with the principles and rules on partnership, programming, evaluation, communication, management, including sound financial management, monitoring and control.

The overall objective of OPTA is to: “Further improve the coordination, control, implementation and evaluation of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in Bulgaria for the period 2007-2013”.

The fulfilment of the overall objective requires the following sub-objectives to be met:

- Strengthening the necessary capacity and functioning of the central and local administrative structures, involved in the SCF absorption, and
- Increasing the information and public awareness with respect to the effective and efficient use of SCF in Bulgaria.

In order to achieve these objectives, the following priority axes have been identified:

Priority axis 1 – support to the implementation of the activities, performed by the structures on central level: Central Coordination Unit, Certifying Authority, Audit Authority, NSRF Monitoring Committee, OPTA Managing Authority and OPTA Monitoring Committee. Measures to build up the capacity of the institutions involved in the Structural Funds implementation.



Priority axis 2 – further development and support to the functioning of the Unified Management Information System (UMIS);

Priority axis 3 – promotion of the European Cohesion Policy and its objectives in Bulgaria and ensuring the provision of general and statistical information.

OPTA has been established in order to strengthen the capacity of the structures on central level responsible for SCF implementation. In this sense the programme beneficiaries are:

- **the Central Coordination Unit;**
- **the Certifying Authority;**
- **the Audit Authority;**
- **NSRF Monitoring Committee;**
- **OPTA Monitoring Committee;**
- **OPTA Managing Authority;**
- **the Central Information Office.**

Beside those central level structures identified as OPTA beneficiaries, everyone involved in SCF absorption will benefit from its implementation, namely:

- **Regional and local authorities;**
- **Operational Programmes' Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies;**
- **All administrative structures involved in the implementation of the Structural Instruments;**
- **UMIS users at all levels of the administration;**
- **General public in Bulgaria and potential beneficiaries;**
- **Decision makers and institutions involved in programming for the next period.**

Because of the specific nature of OPTA which aims at increasing the information and public awareness with respect to the effective and efficient use of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in Bulgaria the entire priority axis 3 is specifically designed to include publicity and information measures and actions.

CONTACTS:

Managing Authority of Operational Programme Technical Assistance
Ministry of Finance
Management of EU Funds Directorate
Operational Programme Technical Assistance Department

Galia Mihailova
Head of Operational Programme Technical Assistance
tel: +359 2 9859 2950
e-mail: g.mihailova@minfin.bg

Ivelina Ivanova
Information and Publicity Officer
tel. + 359 2 9859 2945
e-mail: i.ivanova@minfin.bg

Central Information Office
Ministry of Finance



Public Relations and Protocol Directorate

Milena Pehlivanova
Central Information Office Coordinator
tel. +359 2 9859 2084
e-mail: m.pehlivanova@minfin.bg

III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The requirements of the European Commission for information and publicity measures are set forth in Regulation № 1083/2006 and are equally valid for all Member States of the European Union.

Another underlying document is Commission Regulation 1828/2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation 1083/2006.

According to Article 69 of Council Regulation № 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 the Member State and the Managing Authority are obligated to provide information on the Operational Programme, emphasizing on the role of the Community. According to Article 69, paragraph 2 of Regulation № 1083/2006 the Managing Authority of Operational Programme Technical Assistance, as determined by Council of Ministers' Decisions No 747 of 30 October 2006 and No 113 of 26 February 2008, is responsible for OPTA publicity.

In addition, Council of Ministers' Decree № 6 of 19 January 2007 ensures the establishment of an unified information gateway for general information about the management of the EU Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Another underlying document setting out the information and communication principles is Plan D - "Wider and deeper debate on Europe", the new approach of the Communication Strategy of the European Commission and the new requirements to transparency. These requirements are reflected in Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1995/2006 of 13 December 2006 amending Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities.

One should bear in mind the following three strategic principles laid down in the above document:

- Listening to citizens and taking their views and concerns into account;
- Communicating how the policies pursued affect citizens' everyday lives;
- Connecting with citizens by "going local": addressing people in their national or local settings, using their favourite form of media and communication.

The European Transparency Initiative also sets forth rules on the publicity of the EU Funds:

- Transparency in EU Funds management and communication raises public understanding of EU budget allocation and use, which leads to higher results of the policies pursued.
- Free access to information allows analyses to be made of the EU policies, which contribute to reaching conclusions which can lead to better political decisions.



IV. ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION

It is very important for the success of the communication campaign to take into consideration the current status of information of the potential participants in the process of Structural and Cohesion Funds absorption and their notions. In view of OPTA specificity and the scope of activities the stakeholders vary in terms of composition. Each of them is subject to specific communication while taking into account their specific features, expectations and notions. The analysis of the situation also describes the starting point upon launching the Programme and the problems facing its implementation.

According to the latest Eurobarometer 68 survey for Bulgaria (Autumn 2007) positive perceptions of the EU are waning and enthusiasm for EU membership has dropped. For the first time since the Spring of 2006, the majority of Bulgarians who are convinced that their country's EU membership is "something good" is on the decrease and is now 52% (-3 points).

Bulgarians are more convinced that their country has benefited from its EU membership, although to a lesser degree than the average EU citizen.

Bulgarians are moderate optimists regarding the European Union's role for solving the major problems which the country is facing. The comparison with the Spring of 2006 when the EU last posed this question shows that facing the realities of the membership, Bulgarians are less convinced than before, of the ability of the EU to positively influence the country's economic situation (42%, -6 points).

Bulgarians' optimism of a positive EU membership influence over the country's **economic situation**, although higher than the average EU-27 (+3 points), is still more moderate in comparison with the other new Member States where every second citizen on the average is convinced of the positive role of the EU. The distance between the positive and negative opinions of the Bulgarians is 14 points and almost every fifth citizen is hesitant in his assessment.

In order to familiarize and prepare the potential beneficiaries and all stakeholders prior to the approval of the Operational Programmes in the period March – June 2007, the Ministry of Finance carried out a large-scale information campaign called "Be Active". Its purpose was to emphasize the need for building a national capacity and an active behaviour of all stakeholders in order to absorb EU aid successfully and clarify the specific parameters of the process, i.e. the operational programmes, the priorities and intervention measures therein, the institutional and legislative framework, the description of project proposals evaluation procedures, the national criteria for the evaluation and selection of operations, the eligible expenditure, the standard requirements to potential beneficiaries.

"Be Active" Campaign was directed not only to the representatives of potential beneficiaries of EU funds, but also to the general public as well. Given its specifics, the campaign was divided into two parts. It was launched by a massive advertising campaign. It is in this part were produced and disseminated the advertising electronic and print and PR formats. These communication instruments enabled the general public to get familiar with the general concept of SCFs. They effectively reached 84% of the audience at the age of 25-60. During the campaign, the Ministry of Finance was supported by 53 leading national and local press and electronic media.

Since successful absorption requires good cooperation and constant dialogue among all stakeholders, the principle of well coordinated joint efforts was displayed throughout the campaign. Among the partners were NGOs and social and economic partners such as the Bulgarian Industrial Association, the Centre for Economic Development and the



Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria. They supported and actively participated in the organization of 19 debate forums and 3 national conferences in various towns. They were designed in such a way so as to serve the needs of the target audience, i.e. 7 seminars for journalists, 6 seminars for NGOs, 3 seminars for big businesses, 3 seminars for SMEs, 2 press conferences, 12 briefings, a national conference for potential beneficiaries and 2 national meetings of the business.

In addition, 6 meetings were also organized in the planning regions with the participation of government representatives which enabled participants to raise specific questions and receive answers from the Bulgarian Prime Minister and the ministers managing the operational programmes. These meetings showed the importance of the process of and the political will for successful taking of the opportunities offered by the EU in a transparent and open manner. More than 5,000 people took part in these events.

A number of communication channels were used to convey the messages of the campaign, i.e. TV, radio, press, online media, information materials (brochures, leaflets, press releases, etc.), Internet banners and information, special websites. In the framework of the campaign 25 short films were produced jointly with the Bulgarian national television (BNT) which were displayed till the end of 2007 on the above TV channel in the broadcast "For 7 billion euros". The films presented the new moments and all details regarding the process of programming, management and control of the financial resources under SCFs in Bulgaria.

MA of OPTA ordered a sociological survey on the "Preparedness and Awareness for the Absorption of the Structural Funds" targeted at both the general public and the potential beneficiaries. The survey carried out at the beginning and at the end of the information campaign aimed at establishing the level of recognition, the notions of the European Funds and the effectiveness of the campaign.

The main conclusion is that such campaigns are much needed for all beneficiaries. The data of the second POP (MBMD poll June 2007), compared to the first one (MBMD March 2007) shows explicitly better awareness, increase of the capacity and the overall interest to participate in the processes.

69 % of the interviewed representatives of the business demonstrate readiness to take part in the absorption of the EU funds, compared to 39% before the campaign. In March 2007 less than 1/3 of them (29%) were optimistic about the effect of the EU assistance on the Bulgarian economy - in June 2007 this group accounted for 45%. The lack of general information was stated as a main problem by 32% of the interviewed in March 2007, in June this percentage decreased to 21%. The lack of practical information was a problem for 45% of the surveyed in March, while in June such a problem was identified by only 27% of the interviewees.

The third cycle of this survey was conducted in the period 2 - 7 November 2007 in all regional centres of the country and in one other town in every region.

The main conclusion from the survey is that the beneficiaries' preparedness for SCF is much greater in comparison with the first two cycles of the survey. The notions have been transformed into concrete actions related to the elaboration of projects under SCF. The third cycle showed the lack of practical information as the main difficulty for beneficiaries.



The share of optimists in regard to the expected effect of the EU Funds on the Bulgarian economy is increasing. This increase is 10 points for consultants, 4 points - for local authorities and 2 points - for NGOs. It is the largest for the group of journalists - 12%.

All groups state that they **need training with reference to the Structural Funds**, which indicates clearly that both information and training campaigns are required for their successful implementation.

The most preferred sources of information about the Structural Funds, stated by the respondents, are: Internet, the info-points, the line ministries, seminars and trainings.

Analyzing these data we can draw the conclusion that in view of overcoming the “euro-scepticism” and familiarizing the public with the concrete benefits of Bulgaria’s membership in the EU the starting point for the successful communication of SCF in Bulgaria would be the **creation of information synergy and maximum publicity at all levels**. The analysis of the surveys shows that the major problem in terms of public support rests with the structure, quality and accessibility of information, rather than with its absence.

Because of this reason the main guiding principles of the present Communication Plan are as follows:

- Increased transparency, openness and dialogue
- Enhanced accessibility and comprehensibility of the information.
- Emphasis on the brand, creation of a public image;
- Emphasis on quality of the information - reliable and factual contents, diversity in terms of content and format;

According to the results of the conducted forth wave of the survey in April 2008¹, which to large extent confirm the conclusions of Eurobarometer in 2007, 72.6% of the respondents from **the general public** consider themselves unsatisfactorily informed about the structural instruments. Largely, this is due to the fact that about 81% claim they have not searched for any such information, which means either that their interest needs to be stimulated or that they are uncertain about the overall transparency of information. Thus, the Bulgarian NSRF CS should aim to addresses the latter phenomena and the communication needs they present. The logical steps should be in the direction of increased satisfaction with the level of information and knowledge, which can be done by reinforcing transparency and stimulating interest.

Concerning **the potential beneficiaries**, the results² among regional and local authorities, business and NGO sector representatives show that the information about EU funds in Bulgaria is “not sufficient” (in terms of quantity) according to 59.2% of the respondents and 54.5% of this group consider the supplied information about EU funds as “not clear (difficult to understand)”. However, 75 % of the beneficiaries have sought information, which speaks of their stronger motivation to be informed. This share is more that 5 times higher than that of public opinion. In addition, 84.3% claim their willingness to receive directly and regularly by mail or e-mail information about EU funds. This serves as evidence for the serious interest and need of sufficient, clear and substantive information among potential beneficiaries in

¹ MBMD, Research on the Level of EU Funds Awareness – Wider Public (nationally representative), April 2008.

² MBMD, Research on the Level of EU Funds Awareness – Potential Beneficiaries (nationally representative), April 2008.



Bulgaria. Regardless of the marginally better data among beneficiaries, it should be taken into account that the promotion of SCF and the opportunities they offer must continue among beneficiaries. Logically, the CS should aim to increase the qualitative and quantitative information flow, which has to facilitate access to EU funding opportunities.

Results from the survey clearly show that it is imperative to work more actively towards providing information, hence strengthening the positive attitude of the public opinion towards SCF-related issues. Results from the information campaigns and the training for beneficiaries are a fact, but a way must be found to motivate and provoke awareness in the rest of the citizens through clarification campaigns, announcement of results for specific projects, etc. The key concept therein must be that it is everybody who will benefit from the SCF, even though not directly.

SWOT ANALYSIS

<p><u>STRENGTHS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparedness of specific beneficiaries to participate with projects under SCF Operational Programmes – around 30% of the potential beneficiaries; • Interest to participate under OP; • Available structures for SCF management and control within the public administration; • Strong experience with pre-accession programmes and projects at central level (Ministries); • Experience in communication and publicity. 	<p><u>WEAKNESSES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of experience; • Lack of practical information; • Insufficient knowledge of the rules on and procedures for participation with projects under OP; • Centralization of the communication channels; comprehensive work needed in the regions; • Necessity of enhancing the administrative capacity of the structures involved in Operational Programmes management and control - large number of newly employed; • Lack of capacity and preparedness for project implementation on local level.
<p><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging general public's interest in the Operational Programmes as a whole; • Encouraging potential beneficiaries' activity to apply with project proposals under the various Operational Programmes; • Recognizable effective channels of communication identified as preferred by the potential beneficiaries and the general public; 	<p><u>THREATS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distrust by potential beneficiaries and general public in the transparency of financing of Operational Programmes projects; • Disappointment of potential beneficiaries due to delays and complex procedures; • Heightened expectations of the effect of the EU Funds on the Bulgarian economy;



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring transparency of the allocation, provision and absorption of resources under the Operational Programmes;• Improving the mechanisms of coordination in the process of policies' formulation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great turnover of qualified employees;• Lack of sufficiently experienced staff on local level;• Lack of sufficient and accurate information provided to the general public and potential beneficiaries.
--	---

The CP of OPTA should meaningfully communicate to all stakeholders, as well as the general public, the concrete message about the availability and the use of the Structural funds in Bulgaria. It should also outweigh the existing tension and negativism and mobilize the country's human potential in the achievement of the common and individual momentous goals. The society needs to have a clear vision about the goals and benefits, to identify with their importance and tangibility, to be motivated to and allowed to act in a coordinated manner. This multi-layered aim can be attained by reaching out to the diverse audiences through their preferred communication channels, using carefully selected range of tools.

V. OBJECTIVES AND TASKS

The overall objectives of this Communication Plan are:

- To inform about the availability, usefulness and implementation of SCF in Bulgaria.
- To contribute to full transparency as to how EU public funds are spent and managed.
- To promote the achievements and progressive results of the EU Funds interventions in Bulgaria.

The specific aims of the plan are to:

- Support the well-functioning information networks at central and local levels.
- Contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the CS of NSRF.
- Communicate the main objectives, measures and activities of the OPTA while assisting in the successful communication among the participants in view of attaining a dialogue among the parties which is both mutually beneficial and in favour of the entire society;

The successful implementation of the Programme and the achievement of the goals set, respectively, imply ensuring continuous partnership midst various participants in the process as the partnership principle is underlying for the functioning of the Structural Funds. In addition, the provision of consistent and accurate information to the general public is crucial for their motivation. The public support for the Programme would not be possible without ensuring full transparency of the allocation and utilization of the resources under Operational Programme Technical Assistance.

VI. TARGET GROUPS

OPTA has been established in order to strengthen the capacity of central level structures in charge of the absorption of the resources from the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds in



Bulgaria, as well as for promotion of European cohesion policy in Bulgaria. In this sense we can provisionally divide the target groups whereat this Communication Plan is aimed, into three – internal, external audiences and mediators target groups. The communication approach in terms of the channels used and the messages will be strictly specific for each of them and will be in line with their level of information.

The **internal target group**, includes the following units within the Ministry of Finance and the remaining public administration structures:

- Central Coordination Unit – Management of EU Funds Directorate, Ministry of Finance;
- Certifying Authority – National Fund Directorate, Ministry of Finance;
- Audit Authority – Audit of EU Funds Directorate, Ministry of Finance;
- NSRF Monitoring Committee;
- OPTA Monitoring Committee;
- OPTA Managing Authority;
- Central Information Office;
- UMIS users at all levels of the administration;

Besides these central level structures all participants in the absorption of the SCF resources will benefit from its implementation. In this sense we can identify them as an **external target group**, in particular:

- Wider public in Bulgaria;
- Regional and local authorities;
- Decision makers and institutions involved in programming for the next period;
- European Union citizens.

Considering the overall and specific objectives and the aims of the CP, the main focus of the communication will be the **wider public** in Bulgaria.

In view of the successful communication of SCF in Bulgaria and in particular of OPTA we need to identify a **target group of mediators** who in practice will be the main partners of MA in the implementation of the communication initiatives. Representatives of the following structures of the civil society can be considered part of this target group:

- Social and economic partners (employer and trade union organisations);
- Non-governmental organisations;
- Mass media – journalists;
- Public opinion leaders;
- Politicians;
- Experts or units within CCU, MA and IB of OP, in charge of the information and publicity measures;

VII. STRATEGY



The Communication Strategy defines the scope and contents of a long-term communication programme which is in line with the development of the Operational Programme and covers all stakeholders. The communication follows the natural course of the implementation of the support from the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in Bulgaria and includes the following stages distributed over time:

- **First stage – start of the campaign /2007-2009/** - This stage will mark the beginning of a systematized and purposeful communication policy for all target groups, incl. the general public and media. This stage will also include active clarification work with potential beneficiaries and contractors of projects, co-financed from the EU Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund. The communication activities will also be aimed at activating the potential beneficiaries to apply with projects under the various OPs.
- **Second stage – actual /2010 – 2012/** - This stage will feature a lot of activities which, on the one hand, will lead to activation of potential beneficiaries to participate with projects under OPs, and on the other hand will ensure transparency of the spending of the resources from the EU Funds and will contribute to strengthening the positive image of the responsible institutions as European administrations pursuing a determined development policy of high quality. Major emphasis in the communication will be put on successful examples and sound practices in the implementation of projects which have received financing.
- **Third – final stage /2013-2015/** - It will present the overall results from the previous campaigns and their effectiveness. This stage will emphasize on promoting the achievements of the Operational Programme, communicating the results from the period 2007-2013, closing the Programme and preparing for the next programming period.

Taking into consideration the specificity of the communication activities and the results thereof the so described periods can overlap from time to time.

During all three stages, the campaigns will be carried out in a spirit of dialogue and will follow the main principles of the National Communication Strategy. The campaigns will be conducted on national and regional level, and will use easily accessible and adequate to the target-groups channels of communication, as well as the most preferred communication activities and tools.

Special efforts will be exerted on easy adaptation of the information and trainings to the language, experience and professional direction of the individual target groups. Information dissemination will not be a one-off action; on the contrary, it is a process which follows the implementation of the Operational Programmes. Accumulation and demonstration of well managed, innovative and successful projects implemented within the programming period as well as promotion of sound practices of other EU Member States will contribute to future communication through practical examples and the effect from their implementation.

VIII. COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES, TOOLS AND CHANNELS

The selection of the appropriate communication activities, tools and channels is mainly predetermined by the specific features of the target groups, their expectations and notions. It is crucial to use these activities, tools and channels which guarantee to the greatest possible extent that the message will reach the desired audience.



The comparison of the sociological data shows that finding information through printed materials distributed officially and correspondence with central government officials has decreased several times. At the same time, finding information through electronic and printed media has remained almost unchanged. Acquiring information through the Internet and seminar-type training has grown and dominates the scene. Internet access is both a valuable source, since it is used intensively and a problem as for many organizations it is not among their primary sources of information. Moreover, it is precisely Internet access that proves to be a differentiating factor between organizations for many aspects of capacity. In general, the information is gathered from sources and through the use of channels that are inherently different: NGOs are Internet and seminars oriented, while businesses prefer television and press.

The other main issue is the great disparity in the level of awareness between the capital city and the other big cities, on the one hand, and the smaller towns and villages, on the other hand. There is a significant difference in the awareness and motivation for referring and accessing sources of information.

According to the survey, done by Alpha Research in April 2007 only 27 % of the people in the country use Internet, compared to Sofia, where this percentage is 56 %. Another important finding of a survey, done by Vitosha Research in 2006 and included in the annual report ‘E-Bulgaria 2006’ shows that only 4.2 % of the population in the age group 50-69 and 13.3% in the age group 30-49 have the tools and knowledge to use Internet.

The conclusion is that while communication technologies are obviously important, face-to-face contact remains crucial, especially for people who do not have the skills or the facilities to access and use that information. This is particularly important in the case of minorities, disabled citizens, rural areas inhabitants, elderly people, people in the lowest income bracket and other vulnerable groups.

As to reach the Plan’s objectives and to satisfy the target group’s needs, a well balanced and weighted mix has been established. Some of the tools used so to cover the internal and external audiences, are:

- the unified internet gateway for SCF which is used for its high access speed and his long-term effect,
- The Information Networks on Central and Local Levels as two-way direct communication tools, used also as communication channels, with multi-level and multi-function effect, providing quick and thorough coverage
- the public events, such as conferences and seminars, that are characterized by a high message depth regarded the target groups and by a moderate speed in reaching them,
- the persistent work with a wide range of media partners (TV, radio and press) ensuring communication profoundness and relatively high reach to the stakeholders,
- the numerous information materials which further the continuous influence on the public by their high life expectancy and message penetration.

TARGET GROUP	COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES	COMMUNICATION TOOLS	COMMUNICATION CHANNELS
Internal target	✓ Internal	✓ Internal rules of	✓ Official



Communication Plan of Operational Programme Technical Assistance

<p>group</p>	<p>communication;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Working meetings and discussions; ✓ Trainings; ✓ Training visits to EU Member States; 	<p>procedure of the institution;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Materials from the trainings; ✓ Unified Internet gateway for SCF; 	<p>correspondence;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Correspondence via e-mail; ✓ Personal contact and informal communication ✓ Network of communication officers
<p>External target group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Information campaign; ✓ Advertising campaign ; ✓ Media campaign; ✓ Internet campaign; ✓ Information and discussion forums; ✓ Trainings; ✓ Road show; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Visual branding ✓ Information materials – brochures, booklets, leaflets; ✓ Advertising materials with relevant visualization; external advertisements; ✓ Updated, reliable and timely information on the Internet gateway; ✓ Additional materials from public events, incl. from trainings; ✓ District Info Points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ TV channels ✓ Radio stations ✓ Daily newspapers ✓ Weekly newspapers ✓ Magazines ✓ Specialized media; ✓ External advertisements /billboards, posters/ ✓ Information brochures /leaflets, booklets/ ✓ Internet / Unified Internet gateway for SCF; ✓ District Info points
<p>Target group of mediators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Information campaign; ✓ Advertising campaign ✓ Media campaign; ✓ Internet campaign; ✓ Information and discussion forums; ✓ Trainings; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Visual branding ✓ Information materials – brochures, booklets, leaflets; ✓ Advertising materials for the Programme with relevant visualization; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ TV channels ✓ Radio stations ✓ Daily newspapers ✓ Weekly newspapers ✓ Magazines ✓ Specialized media; ✓ External



Communication Plan of Operational Programme Technical Assistance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Road show; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> external advertisements; ✓ Updated, reliable and timely information on the Internet gateway; ✓ Additional materials from public events, incl. trainings; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> advertisements /billboards, posters/ ✓ Information brochures /leaflets, booklets/ ✓ Internet ✓ District info points
<p>Media – apart from being part the group of mediators, they are also a specialized channel of communication. This suggests utilizing of special tools while communicating with them. Within the implementation of the CP working relations will be maintained with national, regional and international media.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Information campaign; ✓ Advertising campaign ✓ Media campaign; ✓ Internet campaign; ✓ Information and discussion forums; ✓ Trainings; ✓ Road show; ✓ Training visits of Bulgarian journalists to EU Member States; ✓ Visits of international media representatives to Bulgaria; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Press releases; ✓ Summaries; ✓ Analyses; ✓ Specialized interviews; ✓ Visual branding ✓ Information materials – brochures, booklets, leaflets; ✓ Advertising materials for Programme with relevant visualization; external advertisements; ✓ Updated, reliable and timely information on the Internet gateway; ✓ Additional materials from public events, incl. from trainings; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Press conferences ✓ Briefings ✓ Internet gateway ✓ Personal communication with journalists
<p>General public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Information campaign; ✓ Advertising campaign ; ✓ Media campaign; ✓ Internet campaign; ✓ Information and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Visual branding ✓ Information materials – brochures, booklets, leaflets; ✓ Advertising materials with relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ TV channels ✓ Radio stations ✓ Daily newspapers ✓ Weekly newspapers ✓ Magazines



	discussion forums; ✓ Trainings; ✓ Road show;	visualization; external advertisements; ✓ Updated, reliable and timely information on the Internet gateway; ✓ Additional materials from public events, incl. from trainings; ✓ District Info Points	✓ Specialized media; ✓ External advertisements /billboards, posters/ ✓ Information brochures /leaflets, booklets/ ✓ Internet ✓ District Info points
--	--	---	---

Description of the communication tools, activities and channels:

I. Main activities, tools and channels

Visual Branding for the overall EU Structural Policy in Bulgaria:

As stipulated in the National Communication Strategy of NSRF, one of the main tools will be the development of a logo of the NSRF, representing the overall EU structural policy interventions in Bulgaria. The visual symbols will include elements of the Bulgarian national identity and the identity of united Europe, combined with the notion of development. The chosen logo will make possible the visualization and promotion of the unified concept, implied in the NSRF. The logo will be applied throughout all programmes together with the EU logo. Additional instructions and guidelines on the logotypes and the graphical use of the logo will be further developed. Where OPs have already developed their own logo, the latter will be used in conjunction according to the above mentioned guidelines.

Unified SCF web gateway:

The Council of Ministers' Decree No 6 of 19 January 2007 gave the foundations of the establishment of a unified web-based portal for general information about the management and implementation of the Structural and Cohesion Funds in Bulgaria. The gateway's purpose is to provide general information for the interested parties, offering easy and quick access to the desired information.

The current web-page www.eufunds.bg has been operational for more than a year now and offers detailed information as to the SCF-related documents, strategic and operational issues, regular events, forthcoming and ongoing tenders, copies of seminar material and presentations. In compliance with the EC full transparency initiatives and normative requirements, list of beneficiaries is also published there. The existing web-page will be reconstructed into unified information portal, presenting information on the SCF of EU in Bulgaria.

The portal will execute the following functions:

1. Internet guide for unlimited SCF information directed to the wider public, potential applicants, social and economic partners, municipalities and NGOs.



2. Virtual office – ensuring restricted access to a specific group of government administration officers, who will be involved in the process of supplying information on the OPs. Moreover, the portal will support the institutions' coordination namely of the employees committed in the SCF absorption process.

The scope of the furnished data will extend on actual information on Structural and Cohesion Funds, the process of resources' absorption, actual and finished operations, tenders, news and information materials. The gateway will comprise actual photos and a Q&A system, which will facilitate the contact with the users. The required information will be put on one place and will be presented in a friendly language and format. As a result, transparency and easy access will be reached.

The gateway's structure will afford the possibility for quick use, as well as inclusion of unlimited number of menus and sub-menus to which will be linked documents, photos and downloadable files. Basic obligatory components are envisaged to be included, precisely: EU regulations on Structural funds; legislation; strategic programme documents; procedure guides, manuals and rules; Information on completed projects; application guides and forms; tenders and procedures; actual news on the implementation of SCF of the EU; operational programmes; public-private partnership.

The design of the portal will be made pursuant to the EU site execution requirements. With thought of the people with vision disturbances, the page will be specially designed for their facility.

INFORMATION NETWORKS

Central Level Information Network And Local Level Information Network

Central Level Network:

As stipulated in the National Communication Strategy, the Central Information Office is responsible for the development and maintenance of an information network, encompassing the experts, engaged with the information and publicity /I&P/ measures within the OP MAs.

The establishment of National Network of Communication Officers will ensure the cooperation and partnership among the experts and institutions, involved in the implementation of the National Communication Strategy and responsible for the information and publicity of the SCF in Bulgaria. The main purpose of the National Network of Communicators is to establish communication and coordination between all planned communication activities and ensure coordinated and more efficient use of the resources for the dissemination of information and transmission of unified messages, to raising the public awareness with regards to the EU, NSRF and the OPs. One of the important implications is the avoidance of overlapping and duplications between the planned activities of all OPs, including the two funded by ESF. The network will also exchange good practices, share experience and identify tools for increasing awareness and improving visibility and transparency of SF implementation and will work in close cooperation with similar structures at EC level (Inform) and Communication Officers Networks in the member-states.



The National Communication Officers Network will also assist in increasing the qualification of experts engaged with the implementation of the information and publicity measures regarding the SCF, and will support when requested on behalf of respective MAs, for the communication process.

Responsibility of the Central Information Office

On Information and Publicity

The CIO is responsible for the implementation of the measures for information and publicity in the following aspects:

- General socio-economic policy of the EC and the specifics of the Bulgarian context,
- The territorial dimension of the EU policies, as mentioned in the Reform Treaty and the local implications,
- The general policy of the EC for the development of regions,
- The Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund of the EU, their priorities and objectives,
- NSRF and the NDP,
- Operational Programmes at the level of strategy, objectives and priorities,
- EU funding achievements in Bulgaria, reinforcing the impression of tangibility and achievability of the NSRF vision and the country's development objectives.

On Coordination

The CIO has a leading role in the process of coordination of the Communication plans of all OPs. The planned measures and campaigns for the implementation of the OP CPs shall be coordinated annually. The activities for the implementation of the measures for information and publicity are coordinated monthly. The CIO maintains the unified website (www.eufunds.bg), containing information about NSRF, OPs and SCF in general, also containing links to the websites of each separate OPs and the EC. The CIO organizes at least twice a year coordination meetings with the managers and experts engaged with the measures for information and publicity in the OP MAs.

Responsibilities of the experts/units for information and publicity of the OP MAs

On Information and publicity

The OPMAs are responsible for the implementation of the measures for information and publicity in the following aspects:

- Contents of the Operational Programmes and their relation to the NSRF,
- Information to the potential beneficiaries about the possibilities and requirements for financing from the respective Operational Programme,
- Activities of the Intermediate Bodies,
- Preparation and implementation of the Operational Programmes,
- Presentation of the achievements of the Operational Programmes,
- Promotion of the European Cohesion Policy and the European policies, which are implemented via the respective Operational Programme.

On Coordination



The OPMA's have a leading role as to the coordination of the measures for information and publicity of the IBs to the respective OP. Each OPMA shall maintain a specialized website with information about the activities of the respective OP, which also includes information about the activities of the respective IBs and links to their websites, the unified website about the SCF, supported by the CIO and the website of the Commission. Each MA has to identify its own specific target groups, most effective communication channels and messages. The OP CPs will provide the opportunities for updating the information, messages and tools corresponding to the variety of the information levels of the target groups and the public support of the different priorities and topics.

Local Level Information Network:

A network approach of resource centres has been adopted to ensure geographical coverage for the territory of Bulgaria. In view of achieving equality and transparency and further ensuring close and appropriate access to information concerning the objectives of the EU Cohesion Policy and NSRF, a network of 28 District Info Points (DIPs) is envisaged to be set up and coordinated by CIO. They will guarantee the right to fair and full access to information about the funding opportunities for all social, ethnic and age groups all around the country, providing wide range of opportunities to obtain that information. Their establishment will further enhance the transparency and promotion of the EU funds implementation in Bulgaria.

The DIPs will function as **“one-stop-desk”**, where general public can go for general advice on Structural Funds, NSRF and OPs scopes and interventions, mechanisms of functioning, implementation and management of the SF financing, EU and national legislation of the matter, etc. The DIP will have at their disposal specially developed database, providing all necessary information in structured and user friendly manner, so that all kind of inquiries can be answered or re-directed competently, providing the clients the facility to ask questions of various nature.

The network will work in close cooperation with other similar structures within other OPs (network of beneficiaries, IBs, information and publicity officers), who have different nature – i.e. support of co-operation between beneficiaries, development of capacity-building, expert advice and consultations and deal only with issues and activities in regard to their own OP.

As contrast, the DIPs will be able to handle **questions of general nature about all of the OPs**, informing visitors on principle procedures and rules, related to the SF projects funding and implementation processes, issues and legislative and normative framework. The information system and the Call Centre of the network will be developed in a manner, allowing integration and interrelation with other existing regional information structures, part of EU funded or national initiatives (such as Europe Direct Information Points).

The database will be developed and regularly updated in close cooperation with all OPs, thus ensuring the provision of competent, accurate, up-to-date and simple information on site to all visitors. The CIO will support the liaison between all these structures and the DIPs and will be responsible for the general management of the process. The DIP will also provide visitors with information about ongoing calls for proposals and tenders of all OPs, projects implementation and status at later stage, will provide them access to specialised literature and promotional materials, and will allow all OPs with opportunity to disseminate information.



All DIPs will also allow access to information by answering to enquiries made by phone, by post, e-mail, facsimile or through Internet. Additionally, each DIP will have specific equipment for **Self-information services, available to the visitors 24/7**.

In support of the operations of the national network of DIPs will be organized a **Call Center**, as part of the network structure. It will aim to render aid in finding information, directing users to additional specific sources and servicing the population that has no direct access to Internet or physical access to a DIP.

Specially designed CMS (Content Management System) will support number of additional features like automatic generation of electronic **newsletter**, subscription to **events calendar** and management of events, feed-back options, evaluation and monitoring tools, **help-desk**, management of the promotional materials module, statistical and report generation module, etc.

II. Other activities, tools and channels

Events: Series of informative events such as public forums, meetings on local level, seminars, conferences and production of supportive information and promotional materials (like folders, press-packs, pens, souvenirs with logos, of use at the events), to achieve high public awareness of the main strategic and programme documents for EU Structural and Cohesion Funds absorption and clear understanding of the process, as well as ensuring understanding and acknowledgment of the role of the Community.

Within the planned various activities, the managing authority shall be responsible for organising the following information and publicity measures, as required in article 7 of Commission Regulation (EC) 1828/2006:

(a) a major information activity publicising the launch of the operational programme;

(b) at least one major information activity a year, as set out in the communication plan, presenting the achievements of the operational programme including, where relevant, major projects;

(c) flying the flag of the European Union for one week starting 9 May, in front of the premises of the managing authority;

(d) the publication, electronically or otherwise, of the list of beneficiaries, the names of the operations and the amount of public funding allocated to the operations.

An information forum took place on the occasion of the official launch of OPTA where the main Programme's objectives and priorities for the period 2007-2013 were presented:

The event took place on 12 November, i.e. five days after the Programme had been approved by the Commission, in "Sredets" Hall of the Sheraton Balkan Sofia Hotel. It was attended by more than 150 beneficiaries' representatives and representatives of the local and regional authorities, the central administration, NGOs, social and economic partners and journalists. The agenda included the official opening by the Minister of Finance, an address delivered by Mr. Michael Humphreys, Head of the EC Representation to Bulgaria, presentation by Ms. Mira Yanova from MBMD of the results of the sociological survey of the preparedness of potential beneficiaries to absorb SCFs financial resources, OPTA presentation by Ms. Galina Mihaylova, Head of OPTA Department, and a Q&A panel followed by an official cook-tail.



Ms. Boriana Pencheva, Director of Management of EU Funds Directorate of the Ministry of Finance, was the moderator for the event. General information was presented on the Operational Programme, its objectives and priorities, the amount of public financing allocated under the activities. The event was covered by more than 25 press and electronic media, which resulted in more than 40 publications and broadcasts on national and regional level.

Information and promotional materials in line with the OPTA graphical concept were provided for all participants in the official launch. Advertisement banners were made especially for the event. Each guest was given a set of the OPTA promotional and information materials– invitations, programs, bags, folders, notebooks, pens, brochures, umbrellas and film, presenting the efforts of Ministry of Finance to raise public awareness by promoting the EU policies.

Referring the European Transparency Initiative and the requirements set out in Article 7, p. 2, d) of the Implementing Regulation 1828/2006, the MA of OPTA has published electronically the list of beneficiaries, the names of the projects and the amount of the public funding allocated to the operations. The information is available on the national website for the Structural and Cohesion funds www.eufunds.bg. On the website is published additional information for the OPTA e.g. main activities, rules, guidances.

The publication data of the OPTA beneficiaries are to be found with the following link:

<http://www.eufunds.bg/?cat=277>

The list of the beneficiaries will be updated in a quarterly basis or in cases of approval of a new project. After the completion of each project and after the final payment, the initial figure on commitments will be replaced by amounts effectively paid. The MA of OPTA has also published information on beneficiaries in a spatial brochure.

Media relations: Active dialogue with the journalists, contributed articles and programmes, co-productions, press-conferences, briefings, press-releases, journalist discussions and trips, trainings and consultations, aimed at promoting the targeted objectives and directed towards media representatives, general public, beneficiaries, potential applicants, professional communities, project target groups, internal target groups and implementing authorities. The media is one of the main channels to effectively reach the general public and potential beneficiaries. In the course of implementing OPTA Communication Plan it will be among the major partners for communication with target audiences. To this end, MA of OPTA will carry out media communication focusing on regional media to which expert information will be provided regularly and methodically so that they can respond adequately to the interest of the general. Regional media usually experience shortage of information and lack of direct contact with the central administration. For this reason they could easily be engaged as partners, in their role of mediators, reaching every single person in their territory of coverage. On the other hand, local audiences will also perceive the information obtained from the media in the particular region as more reliable and closer to their own everyday lives.

The effective communication with central and regional media will be performed through an active dialogue with the journalists who cover economic and financial topics. For OPTA communication activities to be effectively carried out that topic should be constantly and intensely present in national and regional media in the relevant form – interviews, specialized materials, reportages, presentations of sound practices, expert opinions, and European experience. Press conferences, briefings, journalist discussions and trips, trainings and consultations promoting SCF will be regularly organised on central level and locally. The



purpose is to prepare well the information channels so that accurate and updated information reaches the general public and the targeted audiences.

Publications: design, printing and distribution of materials (external – documents, programmes, reports, guidelines, posters, brochures, leaflets, etc. and internal – manuals, instructions, rules, etc) to promote measures and particular aspects of the processes of management, control and implementation of the projects, and subsequently – examples of sound practices.

Standard media: production and dissemination of informative and educational pieces, broadcasting and publishing them in the electronic and printed media, outdoors media, Internet promotions, TV and radio spots, promotional films, national and regional newspapers and magazine advertisements, editorials and advertorials.

IX. BUDGET

Operational Programme Technical Assistance provides overall horizontal support for the coordination, control, implementation and evaluation of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in Bulgaria. One of the goals of OPTA is to increase the information and public awareness with respect to the effective and efficient use of SCF in Bulgaria. By 2015, a budget of EUR 16 043 776 is allocated to priority axis 3 for promotion of the European Cohesion Policy and execution of communication activities and measures related to ensuring information and publicity, of which 13 637 210 are ERDF contribution.

OP “TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE” PRIORITY 3 BUDGET ALLOCATION

	Year	ERFD Resources	National Co-financing	Total €	% per year
N+3	2007	991777	175 019	1 166 796	7,3
	2008	1 451 832	256 206	1 708 038	10,7
	2009	1 976 837	348 854	2 325 691	14,5
	2010	2 083 074	367 601	2 450 675	15,3
N+2	2011	2 230 131	393 553	2 623 684	16,3
	2012	2 378 010	419 649	2 797 659	17,4
	2013	2 525 549	445 685	2 971 234	18,5
	Total	13637210	2 406 567	16 043 777	100,00%
	% of the OP's budget	24%	4%	28%	



BUDGET ALLOCATION BY PRIORITY 3 INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES

Activities	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Activity 1 Breakdown								
Events and Central Level Information Network	15,40%	16,40%	13%	12%	12%	11%	11%	
Media relation	7,40%	20,40%	18%	17%	16%	15%	14%	
Publications and information dissemination	4,20%	3%	6%	6%	6%	5%	8%	
Standard media mix	6%	5,20%	16%	23%	24%	29%	27%	
Activity 1 Total- Supporting public information campaigns of the European Cohesion Policy and managing National Level Information Network	33%	45%	53%	58%	58%	60%	60%	8 809 900
Activity 2 - Ensuring appropriate statistical data and analyses and managing unified web-based SCF information portal	5%	2%	7%	3%	2%	2%	2%	476 125
Activity 3 - Functioning of a Regional level Information network of 28 District Info Points on the Cohesion Policy in Bulgaria.	62%	53%	40%	39%	40%	38%	38%	6 757 752
OPTA yearly allocation	1 166 796	1 708 038	2 325 691	2 450 675	2 623 684	2 797 659	2 971 234	16 043 777

X. RESPONSIBILITIES

The MA of OPTA is responsible for the performance of the information and publicity activities as well as for the compliance of all measures under the Operational Programme with the publicity and information requirements set forth in Commission Regulation № 1828/2006 throughout the programming period. Operational Programme Technical Assistance has been developed in line with the principles and rules on partnership, programming, evaluation, communication, management, including sound financial management, monitoring and control.

MA and Public Relations and Protocol Directorate at the Ministry of Finance will be jointly responsible for the implementation of the CP and the communication campaigns and actions.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MANAGING AUTHORITY

The MA presents the Communication Plan to OPTA Monitoring Committee for approval and informs the latter of the following:

- the progress in the implementation of the Communication Plan;
- the information and publicity measures carried out;
- examples of the information tools or products used;



- the means of communication used.

The annual report and the final report on implementation referred to in Article 67 of Commission Regulation No 1083/2006, on the particular Operational Programme include the following:

- examples of information and publicity measures under the Operational Programme taken while implementing the Communication Plan;
- the parameters and conditions under which the information and publicity measures were implemented, including, where applicable, the electronic address where the data may be found;
- the content of the most significant amendments to the Communication Plan.

The annual implementation report for the year 2010 and the final implementation report are to contain a chapter evaluating the results of the information and publicity measures in terms of transparency, awareness of Operational Programmes and of the role played by the Community.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY OFFICER

In accordance with the requirements of the European Commission there is a position at the MA for information and publicity officer who is responsible for the OP communication activities. The main responsibilities of the communication officer are related to:

- planning, coordinating and monitoring of the implementation of OPTA Communication Plan;
- implementation of publicity and information activities aiming at internal target groups
- preparing reports to the Monitoring Committee on the progress in the implementation of the information and communication activities, the communication tools used, as well as providing specific examples of any measures taken;
- regularly providing information connected to OPTA implementation in view of the maintenance and updating of the Internet gateway www.eufunds.bg;
- preparing press releases connected to OPTA implementation;

The information and publicity officer will be part of the Central Level Information Network of officers in charge of the communication of OP and SCF. It will enable establishing communication and coordination among the communication activities planned under all OPs.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PROTOCOL DIRECTORATE AT MF /CENTRAL INFORMATION OFFICE

According to the internal regulations of the Ministry of Finance the Public Relations and Protocol Directorate will act as a Central Information Office in compliance with OPTA and the National Communication Strategy of NSRF.

CIO will be responsible for:

- planning of the OPTA Communication Plan



- the planning, preparation and implementation of as all publicity and information activities envisaged under OPTA
- implementation of publicity and information activities aiming at external target groups and the group of mediators;
- the planning and development of the National Communication Strategy of NSRF;
- the implementation of the measures envisaged in the National Communication Strategy of NSRF;
- the provision of statistical information, data and analyses of the economic situation and assessment of the impact of the European financing;
- the creation and maintenance of a unified gateway for general and specialized information about the management of EU SCF;
- the setting up, developing and ensuring the functioning of Central level Information Network and Local Level Information Network;

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BENEFICIARIES

According to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund, beneficiaries also have clear responsibilities relating to information and publicity activities. In particular, beneficiaries are responsible for informing the public about the assistance received from the Structural Funds by means of:

- permanent explanatory plaques that are visible and of significant size. They are to be placed no later than six months after completion of an operation/ project where the total public contribution exceeds EUR 500 000. The plaques include:
 - the type and name of the operation/ project
 - the emblem of EU (in accordance with the graphic standards set out in Annex IV)
 - the name European Union
 - the text “European Regional Development Fund - Investing in your future”
- informing the stakeholders that the projects they participate in are co-financed by ERDF
- placing the national logo and the logo of OPTA on all materials related to the project
- including the information that the operation is co-financed by ERDF in all relevant documents under the project (e.g. participation certificates)
- ensuring publicity of the relevant projects in the media
- submitting evidence of the progress made and in the final reports to the project managers - of the information and publicity actions performed by them
- complying with the information and publicity requirements set in Annex V

XI. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT



For the effectiveness and efficiency of all information and communication activities to be checked these should be evaluated before, during and after their implementation. The progress in the implementation of the Communication Plan will be regularly monitored by the Monitoring Committee throughout the programming period and will be evaluated as to how the set goals are fulfilled.

Monitoring is a systematic and continuous collection, analysis and use of the information for the purposes of the daily management and decision making. The assessment is periodic and refers to the efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and influence in the context of the goals set.

According to Article 4 of Commission Regulation № 1828/2006 the Managing Authority is obligated to present regular reports on the implementation of the Communication Plan to the Monitoring Committee of the Programme and to the European Commission. In particular, MA is obligated:

- to inform the Monitoring Committee about the Communication Plan and its progress in terms of the communication and information activities carried out (while providing examples of such activities) and the means of communication used;
- to include, in the annual report and in the final report on the implementation of OP Technical Assistance, examples of the information and publicity measures, the publications of beneficiaries' list (referred to in point (e) of Article 7(2) of Commission Regulation No 1828/2006) and the content of any major amendments to the Communication Plan. The reports are to be sent to the European Commission;
- to include, in the annual report for the year 2010 and in the final report, a separate chapter assessing the results of the information and publicity measures in terms of transparency and awareness of OP Technical Assistance and of the role played by the Community.

Taking into account the EU-level good practices the monitoring and evaluation of the communication activities will be outsourced. Evaluation will be based on careful planning and consistent use of research techniques, by objective that evaluation is not influenced by personal bias or subjective opinions. For the purposes of evaluating the communication activities, the qualitative and quantitative data will be utilized. For the purposes of the mid-term and ex post evaluations and in order to measure impact and sustainability, further research, sociological surveys, focus groups and other tools will be used.

The operational function requires a close link between the monitoring and evaluation processes. The monitoring systems will be designed in such a way that they produce timely, reliable data that contributes effectively to the evaluation process, both in terms of informing decisions on the commissioning of evaluations and providing the necessary data inputs to evaluators.

Nationally representative sociological surveys, polls, analyses, press-clippings and focus groups etc. will be used to measure the direct and indirect implications of the information and communication activities, such as notion, attitude to the Programme of the different audiences and their response

The following **indicators** will be used to monitor and evaluate the communication activities:



Communication tool	Target group	Output indicator	Result indicator	General result indicators
Press releases, thematic interviews, articles, spots and materials	All target groups	<p>Number of radio and TV interviews organised</p> <p>Number of interviews organised</p> <p>Number of press releases produced</p> <p><i>Source: press clipping, CIO, MA</i></p>	<p>Number of interviews/ press releases published in printed media</p> <p>Number of thematic articles, spots produced</p> <p>Rating of the spots in the electronic media, containing materials on OPTA and SCF</p> <p><i>Source: sociological surveys, TV and radio monitoring</i></p>	<p>Share of interviewed persons familiarized with OPTA and SCF via communication channels and tools.</p> <p>Number of participants in operations financed from OPTA and SCF from the target groups as a whole</p>
Press conference	All target groups	<p>Number of press conferences organised</p> <p>Number of attending journalists</p> <p>Number of press-packs prepared</p> <p><i>Source: press centre, CIO, MA</i></p>	<p>Number of materials, articles, spots on the particular topic produced</p> <p><i>Source: press centre, CIO, TV and radio monitoring</i></p>	<p><i>Source: MA, CCU, sociological surveys</i></p>
Internet gateway	All target groups	<p>Quantity and scope of the materials published on the website.</p> <p><i>Source: statistics of the Internet gateway</i></p>	<p>Number of visitors</p> <p>Number of materials downloaded from the gateway</p> <p><i>Source: analysis of log-files, statistics of the Internet gateway</i></p>	



Communication Plan of Operational Programme Technical Assistance

<p>Informative events (incl. road shows, training visits, etc.)</p>	<p>SCF potential beneficiaries</p> <p>SCF beneficiaries</p> <p>OP target groups</p>	<p>Number of events organised</p> <p>Respected balance of the representatives of the different sectors – public, private, NGOs, etc.</p> <p><i>Source: CIO, MA,</i></p>	<p>Number of participants in the event</p> <p>Number of inquiry forms filled in for assessment of the event.</p> <p>Share of the interviewed persons evaluating positively the event</p> <p><i>Source: CIO, MA,</i></p>	
<p>Printed information materials</p>	<p>All target groups</p>	<p>Number of printed materials</p> <p><i>Source MA, CIO</i></p>	<p>Number of disseminated materials</p> <p><i>Source MA, CIO , sociological surveys,</i></p>	
<p>Audio-visual tools</p>	<p>All target groups</p>	<p>Number of produced audio-visual spots, films, co-productions</p> <p><i>Source: CIO, MA, report by the PR Agency,</i></p>	<p>Number of broadcasted audio-visual spots, films, co-productions</p> <p>Rating of the spots in the electronic media, containing materials on OPTA and SCF</p> <p><i>Source: sociological surveys, TV and radio monitoring</i></p>	
<p>Internal communications – trainings, working meetings</p>	<p>Internal target group</p>	<p>Number of trainings conducted</p> <p>Number of training visits to</p>	<p>Number of the employees evaluating positively the trainings and the visits to the EU;</p>	<p>Enhanced capacity of the staff at the units for SCF management and control;</p>

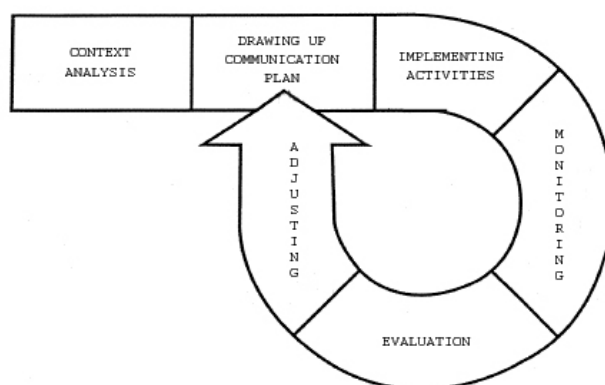


		<p>EU Member States conducted</p> <p>Number of working meetings and discussions conducted</p> <p><i>Source: minutes, etc., documentation of MA</i></p>	<p>Number of the decisions taken by consensus;</p> <p><i>Source: inquiry forms of MA staff</i></p>	
--	--	--	--	--

All activities related to evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the communication measures will be used to better plan the future activities as well as to introduce any possible changes to the plan so that the original objectives to be fulfilled.

XII. ADOPTION OF AND AMENDMENTS TO THE COMMUNICATION PLAN

While preparing the CP of OPTA it was taken into consideration that it has to be a flexible and dynamic document. A cyclic process, comprising 6 major steps, has been chosen for the implementation of the communication activities. First - an **analysis** of the current situation. On this base the main **needs, objectives and mechanisms** of impact are identified. The third component includes the **specific measures and activities** to attain the objectives defined in component 2. The fourth component is **monitoring**, followed by **assessment**; and the last, 6th component is **building-upon**, adapting of the main objectives and needs according to component 2 as a result of the assessment.



This approach enables an adequate response if the need to amend the policies in line with the changes of the priorities already stated arises. It also allows for a timely revision of the objectives and re-planning of the communication activities, if in a result of unforeseen circumstances such is needed.

The Managing Authority may amend the contents of the Communication Plan, if needed. OPTA Monitoring Committee shall approve the major amendments to the contents of the Plan



and to the envisaged information and publicity measures. The European Commission is to be timely and duly informed about the amendments made.



XIII. ACRONYMS USED

ETI	European Transparency Initiative
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
CP	Communication Plan
IB	Intermediate Body
MF	Ministry of Finance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
OPTA	Operational Programme Technical Assistance
DIP	District Info-Points
SCF	Structural and Cohesion Funds
SF	Structural Funds
MA	Managing Authority
TG	Target Groups
CIO	Central Information Office