

Communication Plan for 2024 Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme



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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

- List of acronyms 3**
- 1. Rationale 4**
- 2. Purpose of the Annual Communication Plan for 2024..... 5**
- 3. Specific Objectives of the Annual Communication Plan for 2024..... 6**
- 4. Indicative communication actions for 2024..... 7**
- 5. Monitoring and evaluation 9**
- 6. Budget for 2024..... 11**

List of acronyms

MA	Managing Authority
JSA	Antenna of the Joint Secretariat, Zrenjanin
CS	Communication Strategy
EU	European Union
JS	Joint Secretariat
ACoP	Annual Communication plan
MDPWA	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration
NA-MEI	National Authority - Ministry of European Integration, Government of the Republic of Serbia
RO-RS	Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme
ROCBC-TM	Regional Office for Cross-border Cooperation-Timisoara

1. Rationale

The Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme is funded by the European Union under the framework of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) - Cross-border Component and co-financed by the Partner States in the Programme: Romania and Serbia. The Programme focuses on increasing the overall competitiveness of the economy in the Romania-Serbia border area and on the improvement of the quality of life for the border communities in both countries.

The Annual Communication plan (ACoP) of the RO-RS Programme is implemented under the framework of the Communication Strategy (CS). The implementation of the ACoP will be ensured by the Managing Authority (Romanian Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration), the Serbian National Authority, the Joint Secretariat within the ROCBC-TM and the Antenna of the Joint Secretariat. The purpose of the ACoP is to ensure the visibility of the RO-RS Programme and to facilitate the sharing of ideas and assets, under the framework of the European Union, for the year 2024. Information and visibility activities are performed in line with relevant European and national legislation.

In 2024, the Communication Plan for the Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme (2021-2027) holds paramount significance and relevance in fostering collaboration, transparency and the effective dissemination of information.

During the year 2024, information and publicity activities under the Programme will be focused on setting a coherent communication policy, on promoting the programme and its specific objectives, ensuring that stakeholders, project partners and the general public are well informed about the role of the European Union in the Programme. Moreover, our goal is to make sure that the potential beneficiaries are informed and well assisted regarding the financing opportunities and requirements for submitting the projects proposals for the programme's second call for proposals.

In 2024, a special focus is put on informing all relevant parties in the Programme - beneficiaries/partners, as well as potential beneficiaries regarding specific rules for communication activities. Also, educating potential beneficiaries with no experience with the projects, about the Programme and the way it works, especially in the current programming period, while promoting the project's results from the previous period, will be one of the main objectives.

The Communication Plan for 2024 serves as a roadmap, providing key messages, channels and timelines, facilitating the seamless exchange of information to enhance project visibility and impact.

The programme's annual Communication Plan for 2024, as well as the framework of the information and visibility activities, will be adopted by the Monitoring Committee and are the result of an extensive consultation process which involved all the programme management bodies.

Several communication measures and actions will be undertaken by the Programme implementing bodies during 2024, especially at regional and local level, both in the Romanian and Serbian Programme area. In general, in this implementation phase great emphasis will be put on communication activities, geared towards potential beneficiaries of the Programme (including newcomers) for the second call for proposals and the general public from the Programme area.

2. Purpose of the Annual Communication Plan for 2024

The overall objective of this annual Communication Plan is to create the premises for better informed target groups of the programme, to communicate and assure greater transparency and information regarding the second call for proposals, including on communicating about operations of strategic importance (OSIs).

In an era marked by digital interconnectedness, the plan not only embraces traditional communication methods but also integrates innovative approaches, leveraging social media, online platforms and other contemporary tools to reach diverse audiences.

All such actions are financed under the Technical Assistance budget. Its purpose is to ensure the visibility and awareness of the RO-RS Programme (2021-2027) and it is meant to ensure awareness regarding the previous results achieved through the projects which were financed by the Programme and of the added value provided under the framework of the RO-RS Programme.

The ACoP is also meant to provide support in highlighting the role of the European Union regarding the establishment and perspectives derived from the RO-RS Programme and to ensure the transparent and unbiased communication regarding the implementation of the RO-RS Programme (2021-2027).

Moreover, as Programme bodies have already started thinking about the future (post-2027) and based on the European Commission toolkit - *Guide for consultations to shape the future Interreg (post 2027)*, the Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme will start consultations with stakeholders and citizens, between February - October 2024, on the Programme website (www.romania-serbia.net).

The Programme website will have a new section, entitled **HELP US SHAPE THE FUTURE INTERREG (POST-2027)**, where both stakeholders and citizens can access the two specific questionnaires, which will serve as useful instruments for the Harvesting Report to be elaborated by the Managing Authority, at the end of 2024, for the European Commission. The questionnaires will also be delivered by e-mail to current and potential beneficiaries and relevant parties, as well as distributed in person, during all 2024 planned events and activities of the Programme.

Within the ACoP the following indicative activities could be supported (the list is not exhaustive):

- Development of an online information framework regarding the RO-RS Programme for all relevant actors (current official Programme documents, applicant guide, frequently asked questions (FAQ), Visual Identity Manual and communication templates, useful tools and guidelines developed for helping potential applicants) - posted and upgraded, if necessary, on the Programme's website - www.romania-serbia.net;
- Organising physical, online or hybrid meetings;
- Awareness-raising events and conferences for promoting the new projects which will receive financing under the first call for proposals and the operations of strategic importance (OSIs);
- Online training for rejected applicants, which applied for financing under the Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme (2021-2027), after finalizing the evaluation of the submitted applications.

- Workshops will be organized after finalizing the evaluation of the submitted applications for helping beneficiaries from the first call for proposals to implement the projects. Thematic training sessions will be organized in particular for financial management and control but, also, for reporting on JeMS, applying specific rules on public procurement procedures, specific rules for communication activities.
- Partner Search Forum will be organized in order to promote cross-border cooperation between Romania and Serbia and strengthen the bonds between participating entities, fostering a sense of shared purpose and commitment towards the goals of the Programme;
- Workshops to promote the Programme and project results from the previous periods (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) will be organized for current and potential beneficiaries and partners;
- The online campaign promoting the European Year of Skills will continue on the Programme's online social media channels, until the end of the European Year (the 8th of May 2024);
- The Interreg Cooperation Day 2024 will be organized by the Serbian authorities and celebrated by all Programme entities, beneficiaries, as well as the general public.
- The programme bodies will organise a series of events dedicated to potential applicants with the purpose of offering support to potential beneficiaries in preparing their project idea and application, including whenever possible, workshops with the aim of informing and educating potential beneficiaries with no experience with the projects, about the Programme and the way it works before launching the second call for proposals.

3. Specific Objectives of the Annual Communication Plan for 2024

In accordance with the general and specific objectives established by CS, during 2024, the following specific objectives will be considered:

General Objective	Specific Objective	Target Groups
G01 - To support the successful implementation of the programme by ensuring an effective communication system (result indicators, channels, targeted messages to all identified targets groups);	SO2 - To create a cooperation community with the beneficiaries to deliver encouraging support during project implementation ensuring efficient implementation, including communication and capitalisation of results;	Beneficiaries; Implementing bodies Stakeholders; EU institutions and bodies
G02 - To increase the knowledge of the potential beneficiaries on the financing opportunities offered by the programme,	SO1 - To make the programme known, attractive and easily approachable to potential applicants of all Policy Objectives	Potential beneficiaries of the programme: local and regional public authorities, NGOs, universities, research institutes, etc.; Stakeholders;

eligibility criteria and selection mechanism for the applications submitted;	of the programme and in all regions of the programme area;	
GO3 -To increase public awareness concerning the programme axes and specific objectives, EU financial support positive impact on the citizens from programme area;	SO3-To promote the benefits of cross border cooperation and positive impact of EU funds widely in the programme area and beyond.	General Public Stakeholders;

4. Indicative communication actions and activities for 2024

No	Measure	Action	Responsible Body	Term of delivery
1.	Information	1. Website -Weekly maintenance and update of the dedicated website and e-mail address of the cross-border Programme (www.romania-serbia.net and romania-serbia@mdlpa.gov.ro).	MA, JS	Permanent
		2. Online Newsletter JS and in consultation with the MA will elaborate and publish electronically monthly newsletters for the applicants and stakeholders from the Programme area with relevant information.	MA, JS	Monthly
		3. Events - physical, online or hybrid (depending on the specificity of the event and on the possible travel restrictions) Specifically targeted events shall be organized as follows: - 1* online workshop for rejected applications; - Monitoring Committee meetings (with focus on selection of projects under first call for proposals); - 1 Major communication event for signing the financing contract for the Strategic	MA, JS, NA, LIP and SIP beneficiari es	2024 March 2024 March 2024 March 2024

		<p>Importance Project (SIPHEALTH) - RORS00008 - Harmonization of cardiovascular diseases management from prevention to heart transplantation in the cross-border area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4* <i>In person training sessions on public procurement procedures</i> for beneficiaries/Partners (2 events in Romania and 2 events in Serbia); - 2* <i>In person thematic training sessions (in particular for financial management and control for reporting on JeMS, applying specific rules for communication activities)</i> for Beneficiaries/Partners - 1 event in Romania and 1 event in Serbia; - 6 <i>Info days/ Workshops (3 events in Romania and 3 in Serbia) for potential applicants with the aim of informing and educating potential beneficiaries about the Programme and the way it works;</i> - 2 <i>Partner Search Forum-</i> 1 event in Romania and 1 event in Serbia; - <i>Interreg Cooperation Day - In person 1 day event (location - Serbia)</i> - 2 <i>Information events for launching the second call for proposals (+ workshop for new potential applicants) - 1 event in Romania and 1 event in Serbia;</i> - <i>Online communication campaign promoting European Year of Skills 2024;</i> - <i>Support for LIP and SIP beneficiaries on organising the communication events.</i> 	<p>*The events will be organised depending on the finalisation of the evaluation process of the application forms.</p>	<p>June 2024</p> <p>June 2024</p> <p>In the second part of the year</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>Monthly - May-June 2024</p> <p>permanent</p>
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2	Promotion and awareness	1. Online information materials - Implementing bodies will develop and provide useful information regarding the 2021-2027 Programme: Programme fiche, presentation of specific objectives, specific criteria and rules for submitting the projects proposals for the second call for proposals, estimated calendar for launching the call, Applicant Guide and communication templates on Programme website and social media platforms for partners, potential applicants and general public.	MA, JS, NA	Periodically
3	Monitoring and evaluation of the ACoP	1. Monitoring - Information & publicity proceedings of the Programme shall undergo monitoring processes in order to foster a sound implementation of the Programme.	MA, JS, NA, MC, EC	Annual MC examination; EC review meeting or written procedure.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

In line with EC regulations, the MC will examine the progress in implementing the information and publicity measures carried out by the programme bodies and the means of communication used.

During 2024, information and publicity activities will focus on establishing a coherent communication and promotion of the Programme policy and axes/specific objectives, informing the target audience regarding the role of the European Union under this type of assistance and provision of support for beneficiaries under the first call for proposals and potential beneficiaries under second call for proposals and also the beneficiaries of large infrastructure and strategic importance projects. Specific activities will target mainly the regional and local level from the Romanian and Serbian Programme areas.

The main information and publicity tools will be physical, online or hybrid events (workshops for current beneficiaries, new potential applicants and general public), online publications (general informative materials for capitalisation of projects' results from the previous programming period, online campaigns with specific information regarding RO-RS programme) and press releases.

Evaluation criteria for 2024:

<i>Communication activity</i>	<i>Type of indicator</i>	<i>Indicator</i>		<i>Finding method</i>	<i>Baseline 2020</i>	<i>Realised Target values 2023</i>	<i>Estimated target values 2024</i>
Events	Output	No. of events <i>(cumulative values)</i>		sum of own data	66	4/year 82 total	18/year 100 total
		No. of participants in the events		sum of own data	1980	3,471	20/event, total 3,811
	Result	Overall usefulness of the event for the participants		survey	75%	82% positive feedback from the surveys received	82% positive feedback from the surveys received
Website	Output	Number of sessions <i>(cumulative values)</i>		web analytics	180,771	193,659	196,881
		Average time per session		web analytics	3 min. 16 sec	2 min. 42 sec.	2 min. 30 sec.
		Number of page views per session		web analytics	2.88	2.1	2
	Result	Number of page views <i>(cumulative values)</i>		web analytics	520,465	548,299	555,257
Social media	Output	No. of reach Facebook		social media metrics	350,000	60,151 reach social-media - Facebook Total:568,372 Page reach: 53,063 in 2023	622,965
		Engagement rate Twitter			3,7%	11,7%	10%
		No. of followers/subscribers Facebook			1,035	1,604	1,654
		No. of followers/Twitter			50	68	100
		No. of followers/Instagram			86	186	220
		<i>(cumulative values)</i>					
		Result	No. of engagements: shares, likes, click-through, comments Facebook			social media metrics	953
	Impressions Twitter		2,300	7,532	9,000		
	No. of likes/ Instagram		100	726	1,000		
	<i>(cumulative values)</i>						
Youtube	Output	No. of subscribers		YouTube Analytics	40	45	60

		YouTube					
	Result	No. of views		YouTube Analytics	5,000	5,597	6,000
Publications	Output	No. of publications issued (including online versions) <i>(cumulative values)</i>		sum of own data	19	22	24
	Result	No. of readers <i>(cumulative values)</i>		survey social media metrics web analytics	1,000	1,891	2,114
Media relations	Output	No. of press releases, adds, interviews in all media, including on line <i>(cumulative values)</i>		sum of own data media monitoring	54	70	80
	Result	No. of media items mentioning the programme in the analysed sample of EU funds related articles <i>(cumulative values)</i>		media monitoring	1,400	1,608	1,700

*given the fact that in the case of 1 event (EC Day) the number of participants could be very large and would have increased artificially the total number of participants, this event was not taken into account when setting the target value of participants/ event.

6. Budget for 2024

The activities financed under the annual communication plan will be related to the use of TA budget for the Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme (2021-2027).