Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020

Communication Strategy

Adopted by the Monitoring Committee on 10th June 2015

Contents

1. Introduction

This document outlines the 7-year communication strategy for the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020 (NPA 2014-2020), as adopted by the Monitoring Committee on 10th June 2015.

In line with the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 Articles 115-117 and Annex XII, and Implementing Regulation 821/2014 Articles 3-5 and Annex II, the programme is responsible for drawing up a 7-year communication strategy, which is operationalised into annual communication plans. It is stipulated that the communication strategy should be adopted by the Monitoring Committee within 6 months after the approval date of the programme, 16th December 2014. Reviews of the annual communication plans should be presented to the Monitoring Committee each year.

This strategy document outlines the main communication objectives of the NPA 2014-2020, the main target groups identified, the messages that will be communicated to the target groups and the channels that will be deployed. The document ends with an overview of roles and responsibilities, methods for evaluation of the strategy and the amounts earmarked for the implementation of the communication strategy in the Technical Assistance budget.

2. Communication Objectives

Compared with the previous programmes, the NPA needs to put considerably more efforts into achieving tangible results and measurable changes at programme area level. The Communication Strategy plays a crucial role in obtaining these results, besides more traditional communication objectives. Thus, the following aim and objectives have been defined for the communication strategy of the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020:

To raise awareness about the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020, its objectives and its outputs by engaging with (potential) beneficiaries, relevant stakeholders and the public, thereby facilitating the achievement of the changes sought by the programme.

Ultimately the purpose of the communication strategy is to support the implementation of the programme strategy, thereby achieving the results sought by the programme. An effective communication strategy is expected to contribute to the development of high quality project applications, good governance of the programme, and an active coordination with other programmes.

This translates into the following communication objectives, linked to the programme objectives:

- Achieving and sustaining results:
    - To raise awareness about the added value of cooperation for achieving the specific objectives and results sought.
    - To raise awareness about outputs and impacts of funded projects and programme results, thereby increasing the dissemination of the results as well as giving accountability for invested funds.
- High quality applications:
    - To raise awareness about the NPA 2014-2020 and its funding opportunities.

- To increase the capacity for high quality applications and effective project implementation and thereby facilitate the development of viable project outputs.
- Good governance:
    - To support efficient and effective governance of the programme in cooperation with its partners.
    - To engage with the (potential) stakeholders of the programme in order to build a trust relationship with beneficiaries.
- Coordination:
    - To coordinate with other programmes and funding instruments operating in the NPA area, by informing them about the NPA-specific profile and supported projects, and to stay informed about them.

Figure 1 – Link between the communication strategy and the programme strategy
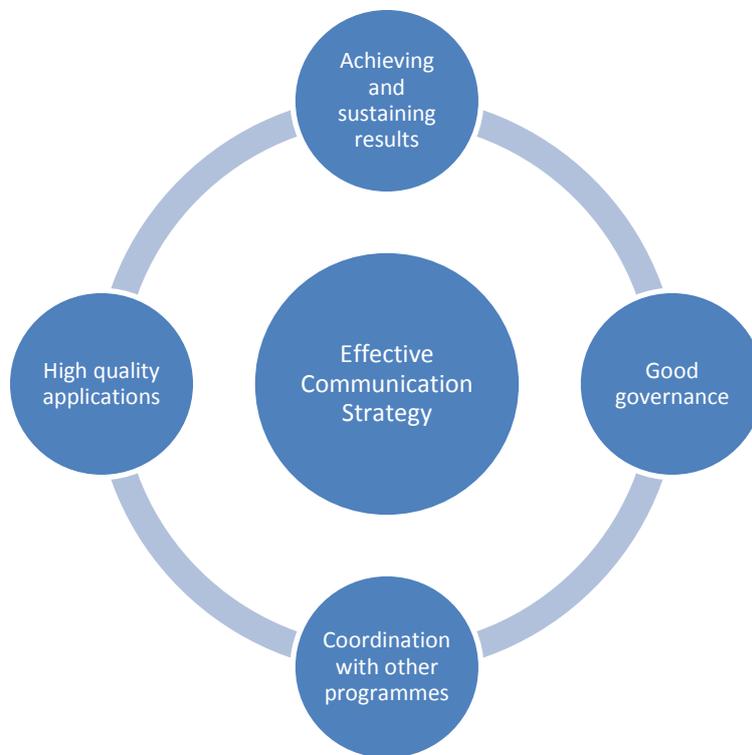
3. Main target audiences

- **Potential beneficiaries/applicants**: organisations that have an interest or have the capacity to participate in NPA projects; organisations that participated in previous programme periods, as well as new organisations. This group includes applicants known to the programme bodies as having the intention to submit an application.
- **Beneficiaries/funded projects**: organisations receiving funding from the NPA 2014-2020
- **Programme bodies**: organisations and groups involved in the governance of the programme. They include the Joint Secretariat (Denmark), the Managing Authority (Sweden), the Audit Authority (Sweden), Regional Contact Points (one in each of the 9 countries), national and regional

representatives on different programme committees for all 9 countries. The European Commission DG Regio also falls in this category.

- **External audience**:
    - <u>End users and the wider public</u>: those making use of or potentially being impacted by project outputs and programme results.
    - <u>Influencers/multipliers</u>: authorities and policy makers, match funding providers, politicians, third sector organisations, trade and industry, educational and research institutions, EU info centres, the press, etc.
    - <u>Others</u>: this may include organisations acting as observers on the Monitoring Committee, other programmes and their projects and other national and international organisations, especially those with overlapping areas in the Arctic, neighbouring regions in Russia and Canada.

4. Strategy

4.1 Tactics

The NPA 2014-2020 can build on the good reputation of its predecessors (NPP 2007-2013, Interreg IIIB NPP, Article 10), having a track record of being a well-run and unique programme.

The programme has a long-standing practice of consulting its stakeholders and where relevant involving them in the decision-making and implementation. This approach of fostering a trust relationship with programme bodies, regions and (potential) beneficiaries, allows the programme to be proactive and efficient.

A number of important developments have taken place since the previous communication strategy was drawn up 7 years ago:

- As a result of an increased focus on the Arctic dimension, the programme's profile has risen, attracting interest from a wider audience, national and international institution. This places a bigger emphasis on the need for coordination with other EU programmes in the same region[1].
- The NPA 2014-2020 has the ambition to build on the results from the previous programme, by freshening up existing partnerships and tapping into new groups of potential project partners. In addition, the European Commission has emphasised the importance of private sector involvement. Two of the NPA priority axes are targeting SMEs, representing approx. 60% of the programme funds. This requires the programme to utilise new messages and channels tailored to the needs of new potential applicants, including SMEs[2] and intermediary bodies.
- Since the previous communication strategy was drawn up, technological developments and social media have transformed the way in which people share information and participate in networks.

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[1] The Northern Periphery Programme 2007-2013 has funded a preparatory project to develop a pilot to test the concept of coordination around regional development activities and projects in the Arctic and near-Arctic.
[2] The MC acknowledged that it would be impossible for the programme to address SMEs in general, but it might be possible to address specific groups, e.g. SMEs dealing with Blue Growth. In addition, the programme could target organisations dealing with entrepreneurship, e.g. chambers of commerce and intermediate bodies in the region.

The developments described above justify the need for an up-to-date and comprehensive communication strategy. At the same time, the programme's communication budget and staff resources are limited compared to the vast geographical area to cover. For this reason, the communication activities need to be extremely efficient.

Routines and tools will be set up to allow clustering and targeting of information at programme and project level. Through dialogue with its stakeholders, the programme will identify information sources and needs and develop targeted messages for different target groups. In addition, it is expected that the programme evaluation strategy will provide necessary input to communicate the programme results.

4.2 Messages

The table below shows and overview of the main programme messages, by target group and communication objective.

Table 1 - Matrix of main programme messages

Programme objectives	Communication objectives	Target groups	Main messages
Achieving and sustaining results	To raise awareness about the added value of cooperation for achieving the specific objectives and results sought	Potential applicants, programme bodies, regional/national/EU policy makers, other multipliers such as sectorial bodies/associations	*NPA cooperation can bring added value to regions and communities, as formulated in specific objectives and results sought*
	To raise awareness about outputs and impacts of funded projects and programme results, thereby increasing the dissemination of the results as well as giving accountability for invested funds	Programme bodies, regional/national/EU policy makers, potential end users, other multipliers such as sectorial bodies/associations, potential applicants	*NPA projects develop tangible outputs that have positive impacts in regions and communities. The investment of public funding in NPA cooperation projects is worthwhile.*
High quality applications High quality applications	To raise awareness about the NPA 2014-2020 and its funding opportunities	Potential applicants, Regional Contact Points and other bodies providing guidance to applicants, intermediary bodies working with SMEs	*The NPA supports projects addressing the specific objectives of the programme. Private sector partners can apply for NPA funding.*
	To increase the capacity for high quality applications and effective project implementation and thereby facilitate the development of viable project outputs	Potential applicants, Regional Contact Points and other bodies providing guidance to applicants	*The NPA offers guidance and support for developing high quality applications and good project management.*
Good governance	To support efficient and effective governance of the programme in cooperation with its partners	Programme bodies, national/regional/EU representatives, MC observers	*The NPA takes a proactive approach to programme management.*
	To engage with the	Potential applicants,	*The NPA involves its*

		beneficiaries, Regional Advisory Groups, potential end users	*stakeholders in the decision-making and implementation in order to be proactive and responsive to the needs in the programme area.*
	(potential) stakeholders of the programme in order to build a trust relationship with beneficiaries.		
Coordination	To coordinate with other programmes and funding instruments operating in the NPA area, by informing them about the NPA-specific profile and supported projects, and to stay informed about them.	Other programmes and strategies, national/regional/EU policy makers, INTERACT network, multipliers	*The NPA is aware of neighbouring programmes and takes a proactive role in exchanging information.*

4.3 Roles

The NPA 2014-2020 covers a vast geographical area compared to relatively limited resources. For this reason, the implementation of the communication strategy will be a joint effort.

Main actors in the communication strategy:

- **Joint Secretariat**: the main body responsible for the development and implementation of the communication strategy.
    - o Part of the duties of the Programme Manager for Information and Communication is to design and implement the overall programme communication strategy, to develop publications and promotional materials, to develop and manage the programme website and other online platforms, to organise annual conferences, and to develop communication trainings and materials for NPA projects and Regional Contact Points.
    - o The Joint Secretariat also provides other programme bodies and the European Commission with information relevant for the governance of the programme.
    - o In addition, the Joint Secretariat acts as a multiplier for disseminating project outputs and results, news from Regional Contact Points, and news from the European level relevant for the NPA audience.
- **Managing Authority**: the main body responsible for communicating formal information to the European Commission, programme bodies, national authorities, and projects.
- **Regional Contact Points**: the network of Regional Contact Points (RCPs) acts as an extension of the Joint Secretariat in each programme partner country. RCPs play an important role in making (potential) beneficiaries aware of the funding opportunities, providing information and guidance about the programme to applicants, project partners and other stakeholders. RCPs are often the first point of call for project idea holders, and in this capacity they play an important role in filtering ideas, thereby helping to create a pipeline for high quality project applications. RCPs also act as the secretary for the Regional Advisory Group in each programme partner country, and are for that reason in contact with a wide range of regional stakeholders. They organise information events about the programme in their region on a regular basis.

- **Monitoring Committee members**: National and regional members on the Monitoring Committee have access to national and regional politicians, as well as national and regional decision makers in European and other international institutions. For this reason, MC members have a role in translating the added value of the programme to national and regional politicians and decision makers.
- **NPA projects**: project partners form a link between the programme and the communities in the programme area. Projects are primarily responsible for communicating with their main target groups about the project outputs under development and their results, always acknowledging the support received from the programme (ERDF). This means that project communications should mainly focus on communicating their outputs rather than on branding the project as such, which is only a temporary cooperation aimed at developing the outputs. Secondly, projects are expected to feed back to the programme level by sharing examples of promotional materials, success stories, and descriptions of (expected) outputs. For this reason, the programme has stipulated a number of mandatory communication measures that projects are expected to develop within the first 6 months after approval.
- **INTERACT and other programmes**:
  - Together with other transnational and cross-border programmes, INTERACT has developed a strategy for harmonised branding of Interreg programmes. The purpose is to join efforts and increase the visibility of Interreg, in particular towards policy makers and multipliers at the EU level. The Monitoring Committee has decided that the Interreg branding should not replace the programme branding, but that it should be used in combination where relevant.
  - Besides the harmonised branding, a number of transnational programmes has identified opportunities to join forces on communication trainings for projects, joint promotion of thematic objectives, etc. As a small transnational programme, the NPA will seek to join such initiatives where it leads to synergies and more efficiency.

5. Communication measures

The programme will use a wide range of tools and channels for communicating its messages. The programme will customise its communication efforts for each target audience identified.

In order to consider the relevant communication measures, an analysis of the information needs has been carried out (Table 2).

Table 2 - Analysis of information needs

Information needs	Applicants	Funded projects	Programme bodies	External audience
Basic information about the NPA 2014-2020 (priorities, area, context, contact details)	X	X	X	X
Funding opportunities	X		X	
Guidance and templates for applying	X		X	
Guidance and templates for claiming funding and promotion		X	X	
Funded projects	X		X	X
Project outputs and programme results	X	X	X	X
Programme news & events	X	X	X	X
Social networking	X	X	X	X
Meeting documents			X	

Below is a list of the main communication measures identified.

1) **Visual identity:** the purpose of the visual identity is to provide visibility and recognisability of the programme throughout all its communication efforts.
   - A programme logo has been developed and will be used in combination with the EU emblem in accordance with regulatory requirements. Where appropriate, the Interreg logo will be combined with the programme logo.
   - Graphical elements and templates for branding the programme/projects will be developed (e.g. MS Office templates, posters, giveaways).
   - Visual guidelines and templates will be made available for use by beneficiaries and RCPs to ensure compliance with publicity requirements.
   - A press kit will be developed to facilitate media coverage. The main access to regional and national media will be through Regional Contact Points, national and regional representatives and NPA projects.

2) **Printed/digital publications:** the programme will produce different types of publications, which will be printed in small numbers on demand with sustainability in mind. All documents will also be made available in electronic format.
   a) The Cooperation Programme document will be made available in a reader-friendly format.
   b) Factsheets/flyers with basic programme information will be used for wide dissemination.
   c) Annual reports or a summary of the main conclusions will be published at least in the years 2017, 2019, 2023.

d) A Programme Manual will be developed with guidance and instructions for applicants and project managers at each stage of the project implementation. This document also contains the eligibility and selection criteria, as well as the NPA eligibility rules for expenditure.

e) Evaluation reports about the progress towards the programme results (result indicators) will be published after each evaluation has taken place.

f) Towards the end of the programme period, a publication about the programme achievements/results will be published[3].

g) Other (on demand): press releases, thematic publications, targeted articles/publications e.g. for OPEN DAYS, for Arctic cooperation, etc.

3) **Online and social media platforms:** online communication will be the main channel for communicating with target audiences, because it offers the opportunity to reach the widest audience.

a) Programme website: main information platform to communicate about the funding opportunities (regulatory requirement), projects funded, project outputs, etc.

   i) List of funded projects to be updated at least every 3 months (regulatory requirement)

   ii) Project websites: the programme will provide projects with their own mini website as part of the programme website to ensure compliance with publicity requirements and the availability of information after project closure.

b) Social media platforms: these platforms will provide news on demand, building an NPA community. These platforms also allow the programme's stakeholders to network with each other.

c) Newsflashes/newsletters: the programme will periodically provide up-to-date information about the programme to the relevant NPA target audiences.

4) **Conferences and seminars:**

a) Annual conferences: the programme will organise one major information event per year to present the visions and achievements of the programme. Each year, the Monitoring Committee will select a theme, and key actors will be invited. Due to budget limitations, a bigger conference will be held every other year.

b) Project development events will be organised, such as training events for applicants, project managers, partner search events.

c) Regional events will be organised by Regional Contact Points on a yearly basis.

d) Communication training for beneficiaries and RCPs will be organised (potentially in cooperation with other programmes).

5) **Monitoring system:** reliable and aggregated financial information, project information and indicators will be gathered in an online monitoring system.

a) The monitoring system will facilitate data exchange and formal communication with (potential) beneficiaries and authorities, such as the European Commission.

b) The monitoring system will allow internal communication and coordination between programme bodies.

6) **Other communication measures**

a) Other exposure is expected, for example through interviews/articles for websites and magazines, presentations at joint Interreg or third party events, RegioStars Awards, etc.

b) Displaying the EU emblem at the premises of the Managing Authority

Guiding principles for all communication measures will be:

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[3] At the request of the MC, the Joint Secretariat will endeavour to publish smaller stories on results when they become available during the programme period.

- User-friendliness: the programme has a reputation for being approachable and proactive. It is essential that the programmes makes an effort to develop user-friendly and easy-to-understand communication measures, in order to communicate a complex topic such as transnational cooperation to non-experts, in order to reduce the administrative burden for beneficiaries, and to increase the capacity for high quality applications.
- The NPA horizontal principles as defined in the Cooperation Programme document are guiding principles, in particular the principle of inclusion and diversity. This means that the programme will consider for its communication measures if all can participate or if the measures inadvertently create barriers for individuals or specific groups. Within the scope of the limited resources, proportional adaptations for people with disabilities will be considered, e.g. developing the NPA website with accessibility for the visually impaired in mind.

6. Annual Communication Plans (Information Action Plans)

The communication strategy will adapt to each stage of the programme implementation, in the short, medium, and long term. The Monitoring Committee has chosen a strategy to front-load the programme, which means that most of the programme funds will be allocated during the first years of the programme period. In addition, programme routines and systems will be developed and fine-tuned during this period. For this reason, the communication strategy will mostly focus on attracting high quality applications and good governance during the first few years. At the same time, it is important to coordinate with other programmes, to promote synergies and avoid duplications. When the programme reaches the peak of its implementation, the communication strategy will promote good project management, project communication skills and dissemination of the first results. In the final years of the programme implementation, the communication strategy will shift focus to communicating the project and programme results and optimising the use of the remaining funds.

The table below provides a simplified overview of the planned measures for the entire programme period.

Detailed information action plans will be presented to the Monitoring Committee once a year. In addition, a review of the year's information action plan activities will be presented to the MC.

Communication measures	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021-23
Programme Launch Event	X							
Major information activity (annual conference)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Visual identity setup	X	X						
Programme website setup		X						
Publications	X	X		X		X		X
• Cooperation Programme document	X	X						
• Formatted Annual Report				X		X		X
• Results publication					X			X
Engagement through online & social media	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Information exchange monitoring system		X	X	X	X	X	X	X

7. Budget

Communication measure	Description	Amount (EUR)
Visual identity		**15.000,00**
• Development of complete visual identity and templates	Visual identity guidelines and press kit, MS Office templates for Word and PPT, envelopes, post-its, including printing costs	10.000,00
• Development of communication toolkits for beneficiaries (and RCPs)	Guidelines for meeting the publicity requirements, templates for posters and plaques, other electronic templates, stickers	5.000,00
Website and other online platforms[4]		**45.000,00**
• Technical solution	Programming, implementing existing solutions, including an adaptation to retrieve data from the monitoring system	25.000,00
• Graphical design for programme website and other online platforms	Note: the design of the website may be integrated in the price of the technical solution.	7.500,00
• Content management	Adding/updating content, development plan	-
• Maintenance, hosting and updates	Development and technical updates	12.500,00
Publications		**70.000,00**
• Programme documents	Programme Manual, Cooperation Programme, etc.	15.000,00
• Promotional publications	Factsheets, flyers, formatted annual reports, other reports and publications. Note: it is envisaged that printing costs will mainly apply to factsheets and flyers, and only to a limited degree to reports and publications.	30.000,00
• Promotional materials	Banners/roll-ups, posters, giveaways and some conference materials	25.000,00
Grand total		**130.000,00**

Please note that the budget for organising events, such as the annual conferences, project development events and seminars, and programme meetings has been earmarked in a separate budget line in the Technical Assistance budget, because these events are viewed as more than communication measures only. The total budget for Seminars & Networking is EUR 335.000.

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[4] Please note that as a result of the website tender held in December 2014, some amounts have to be moved around to be able to afford the contract. The basic contract was just approx. 34 500 EUR excluding additional adaptations and hosting.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Monitoring Committee will monitor the progress of the delivery of the communication strategy. A communication plan will be presented to the Monitoring Committee every year together with the progress made on the indicators. In addition, progress on the communication plan will be reported to the European Commission in Annual Reports and the Final Report. If deemed necessary, the Monitoring Committee can decide on a review of the communication strategy.

In order to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication strategy, the following indicators will be tracked during the programme implementation.

- **Output indicators**:
    - Website statistics
    - Number of news articles (NPA website + articles developed for other media)
    - Number of events + participants
    - Number of social media posts (Facebook posts + reach, likes, Twitter posts + retweets, followers)
    - Number of publications (if possible how many downloaded)
- **Result indicators** (baseline is surveys in 2015, repeated in 2017, 2019, 2023):
    - Raised awareness about the NPA 2014-2020 and its funding opportunities
    - Raised awareness about project outputs and programme results
    - Improved knowledge about procedures for applying for/claiming funding
    - Increased capacity for effective project implementation (e.g. LP seminars, guidance, RCPs).
    - Raised satisfaction with information/guidance provided to applicants and funded projects
- **Baseline and measurement methodology**: surveys with applicants, projects, RCPs/RAGs, website survey.