

# Council of Europe COMMUNICATION PLAN GUIDELINES

## Project Management Methodology



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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*Acknowledgements:*

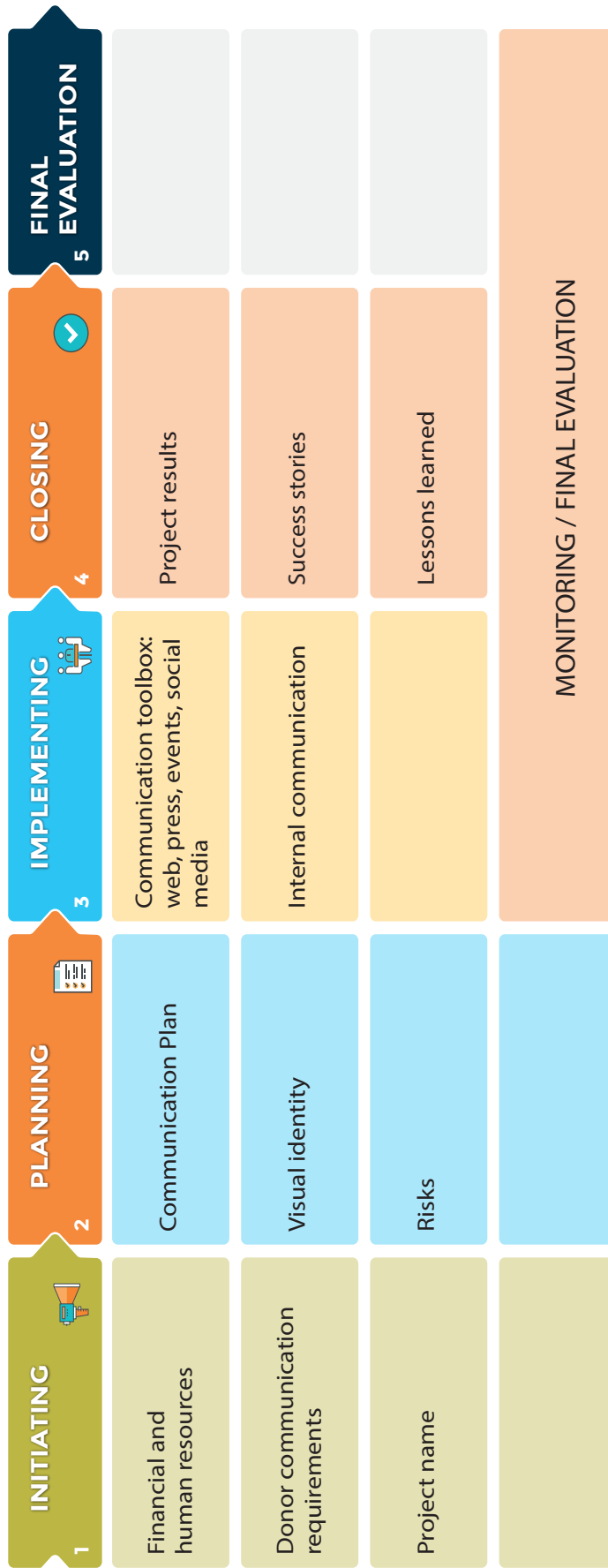
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Council of Europe  
**COMMUNICATION PLAN GUIDELINES**

Project Management Methodology

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*Council of Europe Project Management Methodology for communication*



# INTRODUCTION

These communications guidelines are designed to help Council of Europe project managers communicate effectively throughout the whole project management cycle. They form a part of the Project Management Methodology (PMM).

These guidelines set out project specific guidance for preparing a communication plan. The implementation phase is covered in a separate document 'Communication Toolbox'.

Communication activities are an integral part of a project and contribute to achieving outcomes. These activities should accompany your project from initiation to closure. They should be focused on sustaining the project's outcomes and the long-term impact.

Effective communication on co-operation work will benefit the Organisation as a whole through an increase in its visibility and the development of new partnerships and funding sources.

The guidelines are organised along PMM phases and a project communication plan.





# PROJECT COMMUNICATION IN BRIEF

## **Think communication from the start**

The communication plan should be part of your work plan. As soon as you begin planning the project's activities and results, you should also begin planning ways to communicate them.

## **Assign resources**

Every communication plan should be clear about human and financial resources and responsibilities. High quality communication and targeted visibility actions need planning in advance, with an adequate budgetary and time allocation.

## **Focus on results**

Remember that project communication should promote the issues, not the project itself but the benefits and expected results of the actions. Focus on outcomes rather than outputs and eventually impact (see PMM handbook for more information).

## **Less is more - be strategic**

Effective communication requires a selective and strategic approach focusing on important outcomes, country developments or changes triggered by your project.

## **Go local**

The communication plan should first and foremost target the specific audiences in the country(ies) of your project.

## **Think human rights**

The human rights approach, should be incorporated into all your project's activities as a cross cutting issue, including communication. It is important to ensure that all voices are heard and represented as much as possible in films, photos and all other communication about the project. Remember to use gender-neutral language.





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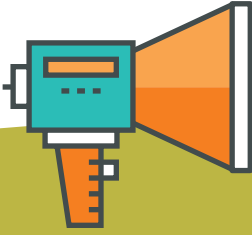
**Gocha KAJAIA**  
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**Strengthening democracy and local governance  
in the Eastern Partnership countries**  
Sharing the vision

Programmatic Cooperation Framework for  
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus  
COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
Funded by the European Union  
Implemented by the Council of Europe







# INITIATING COMMUNICATION

Ideally **communication needs and resources** should be established when the project design and budgetary decisions are made. A draft communication plan and cost estimate should be prepared.

It is important to check **donor requirements** concerning communication and if there are contractual obligations to be fulfilled which should be included in your communication plan.

**Titles of projects** are vital in terms of visibility so it is important to get this right from the very beginning. Too often projects have their names changed or shortened during implementation which causes confusion. It is not necessary to include everything in the project title. Keep it short, relevant and memorable. Abbreviations and jargon in titles should be avoided.

e away from the seminar?

получить от семинара?

\* I'd like to know how my colleagues from other -european countries form their budget?  
\* And about the transparency? How often they meet their electors?

Друзей, опыта, уверенности в себе

Notre me de choses faire

... ..

...

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Будет важен к опыту

...

...

Новые идеи для сотрудничества в жизни в своем городе.

Experiții de a implica cetățenii în luarea deciziilor:  
- capacitate monoorganizare  
- colaborare cu alte țări.

ОПЫТ  
Новые знания

...

...

Преобразование населения в более активное, с целью активизации сотрудничества между и укрепление гражданского общества

information new contacts

...

ОПЫТ

2. Новые навыки и опыт работы

Хотел бы поделиться своим опытом и знаниями в сфере экологии

...

Practicoschit noi, noi, noi

...

Новые друзья, выходящие за пределы и знания.

...





# PLANNING COMMUNICATION

Remember, the communication plan is not set in stone, and it can be adapted to each project's needs and updated/revised at every reporting period along with the overall revision/update of the project's logframe.

The PMM communication plan template has seven sections:

Communication objectives .....	Section I
Target audiences.....	Section II
Key messages .....	Section III
Communication tools.....	Section IV
Communication activities .....	Section V
Communication indicators.....	Section VI
Resources .....	Section VII

Below you will find guidance on how to fill in the sections. **A communication plan should be individual and unique.** It is for each project team to find the best way to communicate their specific message to their specific audience.

Examples of communication plans/strategies can be found on the PMM [Communication guidance page](#).





## WRITING A PROJECT COMMUNICATION PLAN

### SECTION I - DEFINING THE COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

Communication objectives flow from the project objectives. They should remain **realistic and measurable and fit the established budget and timeframe**.

Remember communication about a project should support the changes that the project aims to achieve. It should promote the benefits and expected outcomes of the actions.

You should be clear about what you can reasonably expect to happen as a result of your communication. What is the objective of communicating on certain project actions, for example:

- Raising awareness?
- Changing perceptions?
- Advocating change?
- Showing transparency/accountability?
- Launching an initiative by getting the key stakeholders to endorse it?
- Increasing the number of visitors to a website?
- Starting a dialogue?
- Learning (encouraging them to use a website, download an App, subscribe to a newsletter etc.)?

Ensure that the objectives are **SMART**:

- **Specific** – target a specific area for improvement
- **Measurable** – quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress.
- **Achievable** – within budget and resources available
- **Relevant** – result-based or results-oriented
- **Time-bound** – associated with a target date

## SECTION II – TARGET AUDIENCES

Break down your target audience as much as possible. This is one of the keys to successful project communication.

The Directorate of Communication's analysis of target audiences is based on three 'degrees of proximity' to the Council of Europe.

The **influential '1st circle'** are primarily local stakeholders and potential multipliers with an established relationship to the project, such as:

- Project beneficiaries, partners, government ministries, policy makers in governments and IGOs, experts
- Permanent representations and observers in Strasbourg, Ambassadors and donors in the field
- EUDs and relevant Commission services (DG NEAR, DG JUST, DEVCO), PACE/Congress delegates and NGOs with consultative status, accredited journalists and those acquainted with the Organisation.

They know the work and goals, albeit in part, and need to be involved, kept informed and nurtured, if they are to act as effective message multipliers. Stakeholders can also be your target audience but most often they are considered partners in achieving your project objectives. They can be effective communication multipliers

The **'2nd circle'** includes organisations and individuals with no established relationship to the Council of Europe, but with an interest in the substance of the project work. These include specialised media, institutes, professional associations and training bodies (e.g. for judges, police, prison staff), Ombudsperson institutions, contacts in

other European/international IGOs and NGOs, schools, universities, also teachers that take an interest in human rights, citizenship, culture, democratic education, European issues, etc.

This target audience has the potential to act as a multiplier of messages and visibility, but how your work relates to their interests must be clearly explained in your communication.

The **'3rd circle'** represents the vast majority of the 800 million Europeans. The general public and media have no established relationship to the Council of Europe and limited understanding of the work, except where it can clearly be shown to have an impact on ordinary lives, i.e. European Court of Human Rights judgments, monitoring reports, etc.

The third circle is of interest only on an occasional basis for project communication.

### TIP



It is important to be as specific as possible about the target audience, the more clearly you define your audience, the more effective you will be in reaching them. In other words, it is not enough to target 'stakeholders' in general. What is their demographic (age, gender, location), who are their influences (peers, opinion leaders) and from where do they get their information?



## PLANNING COMMUNICATION

### SECTION III – KEY MESSAGES

**Key messages should be short and simple.** Short and clear messages are easily remembered and help engage with your target audiences

There may be more than one message – for an expert audience the message may be quite technical but for the general public it could be a simplified version of the message.

Avoid abbreviations and jargon as much as possible.

Key messages should be used consistently, on promotional material as well in speeches and interviews. If you consistently target the right people with the right message, your project can exert an influence and ultimately support change.

### SECTION IV – IDENTIFY COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Communication tools are many and varied. The key to selecting the right ones is to **be realistic** depending on the amount of the project’s resources as some of them are very time or resource consuming.

Some possible tools are: web, social media, leaflets, visibility objects, newsletters, professional photos, films, press events. **It is important to find the right communication mix to reach your target audience;** it varies between audiences and countries.

Effective and regular communication is time-consuming. Analyse your target audience and how best to reach them, keeping in mind the key activities over the project lifecycle eg. opening and closing events, points where key outputs and outcomes are produced and what would be the best method of promoting them.

For example:

- Social media: promoting a new publication through website news/twitter/facebook posts
- Newsletter: sending out a regular e-newsletter to update your audience on project progress
- Press release: inviting local press to the opening/closing events or launch of a key publication and providing time for interviews/press conference

See the separate guide ‘Communication Toolbox’ for more information on which communication tools to choose for your project.

#### TIP



Use existing social media accounts and websites where possible as they already have an established audience, eg. a project page on the field office or the administrative entities’ social media accounts.



*Project management communication mix*



SECTION V – COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Identify the **key project outputs and outcomes which should be promoted** over the whole lifecycle of the project. This is the basis for the selection of the communication tools, which is ‘how’ they will be promoted.

It is important that key results are communicated so plan for web news and possibly press releases at key times.

Do not forget to plan communication for the end of the project (not just the launch) so that the project’s achievements are promoted.

For example, identify high-level events which may attract press interest and open part of the event to the press and issue a media advisory. Remember to inform the relevant press officer in the Directorate of Communication in advance.

TIP



Identify any local events where the project’s work and outcomes could be promoted, Open Days or ‘Europe Day’. Take into account any external factors, such as Chairmanship of CoE or EU, European Year of . . . etc.

CHECKLIST FOR PREPARING A COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY

TEMPLATE

MY OBJECTIVE	MY AUDIENCE	MY KEY MESSAGES/ CONTENT	MY ACTIVITY	HOW WILL I SHOW SUCCESS	HOW CAN IT BE EVALUATED
What are your communication objectives?	Who is the audience for this?	What would you like your audience to learn/know/support?	What activity will you undertake to achieve it?	<p>What are the signs of success for this activity?</p> <p>How many people doing/ knowing/ supporting what?</p> <p>What indicators will best show success?</p>	<p>How will you collect data to inform your indicators</p> <p>How will you analyse data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By whom</li> <li>• When</li> </ul>



## PLANNING COMMUNICATION

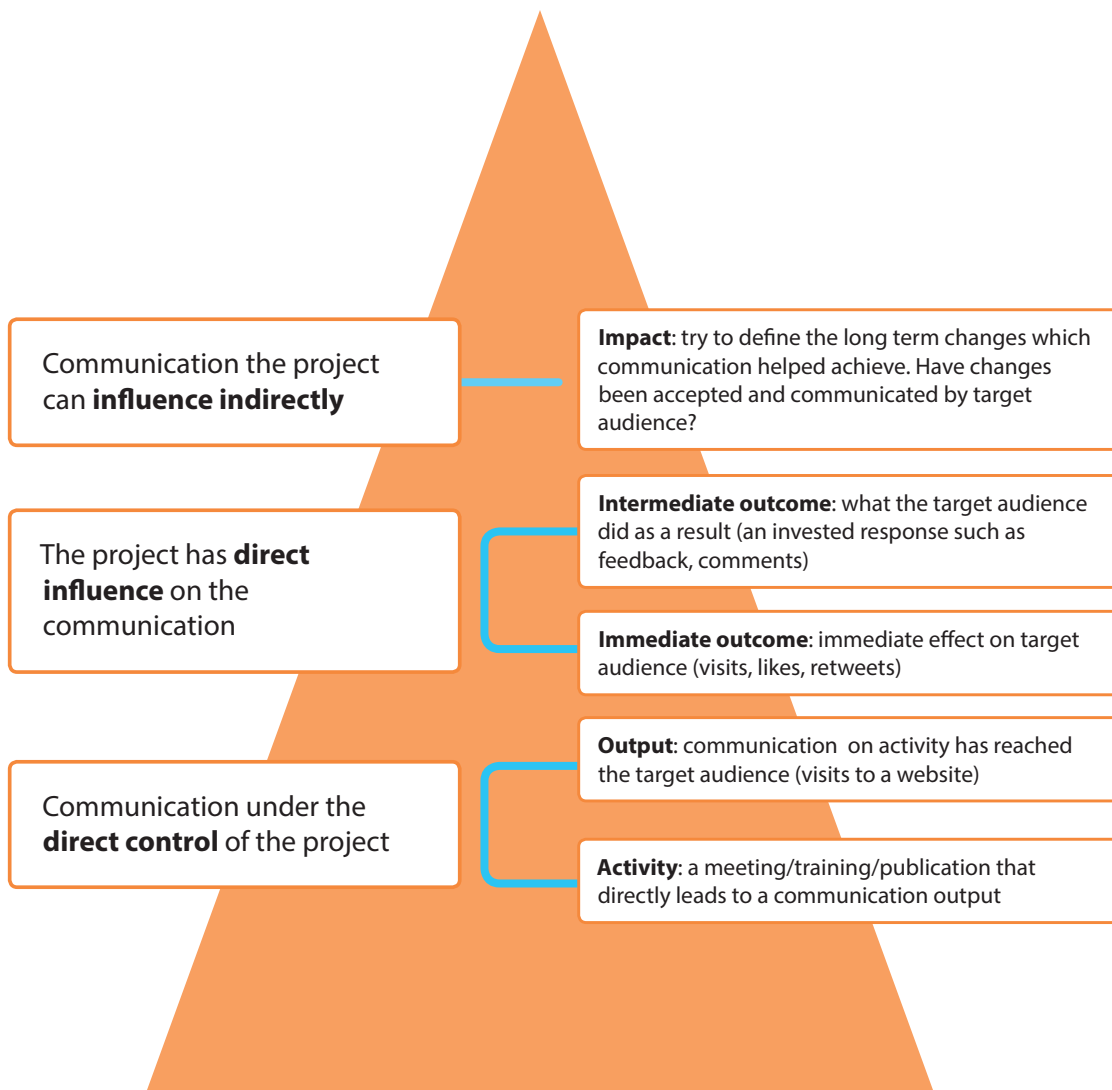
### SECTION VI - IDENTIFY COMMUNICATION INDICATORS

It is important to **monitor and measure** communication work as it is subject to evaluation and potentially even audits. Indicators should be set out before you implement any communication actions.

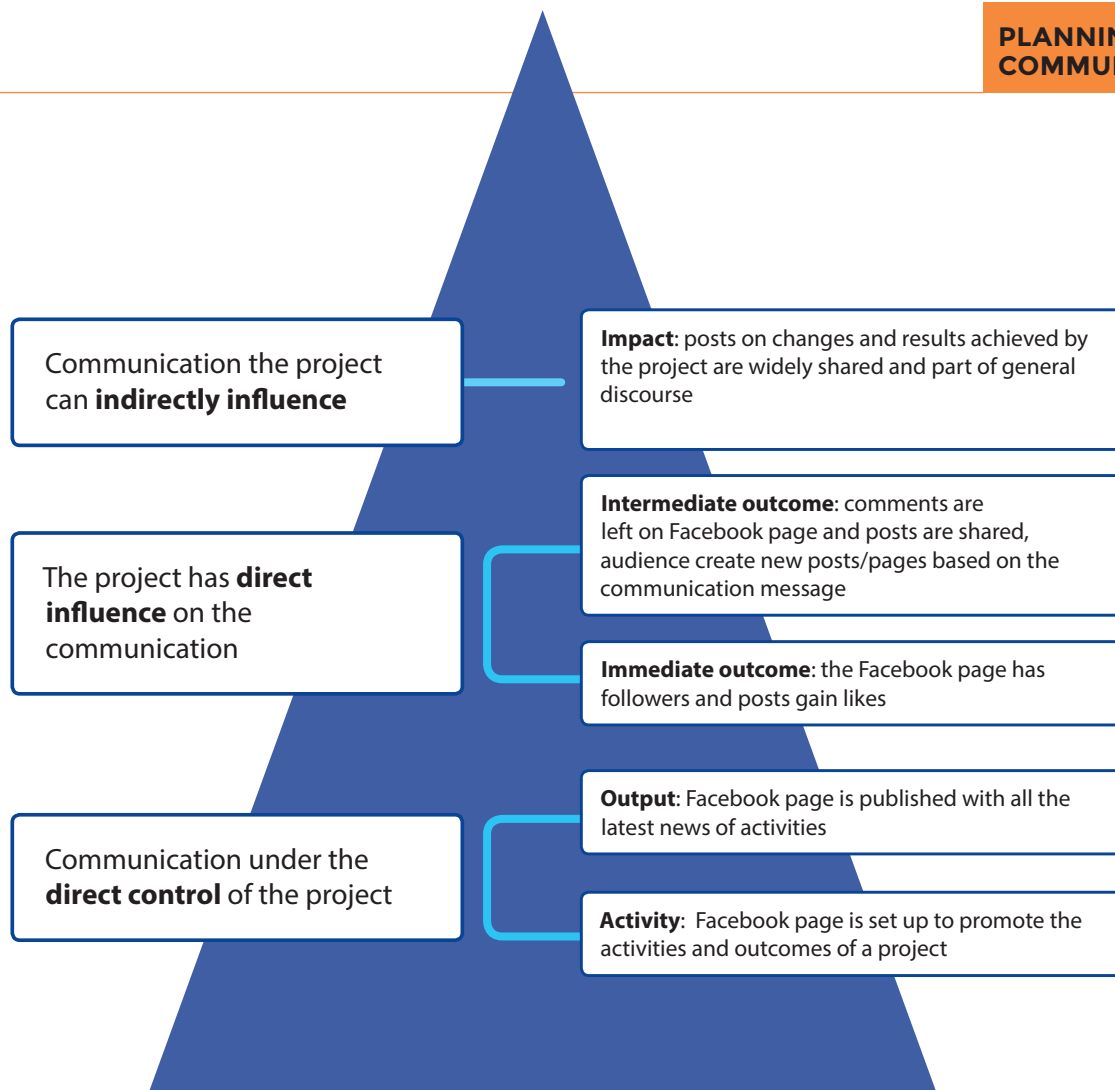
It is important to link the measurement to your specific objectives for communication. You need to think of what success will look like and what would be the best indicator for success.

You should always try to measure the effect of your communication as far as possible towards what actually happened to your audience? What actions did they take as a result?

It is useful to think in terms of the different levels of the PMM results chain when defining indicators:



*Results chain for communication*



Example of a results chain for a Facebook page

Communication indicators have to be realistic in terms of their relative cost and complexity. In some cases communication will go no further than immediate outcome (first effects, such as awareness or understanding).

Consider what would be ideal to measure and then what is practically feasible. Indicators should reflect the type and size of audience targeted and how they are reached.

**Quantitative:** could be number of web news published, number of visitors to a website, number of e-newsletters sent/opened, number of articles in the press (could include audience reach of the media) number of publications disseminated.

**Qualitative:** could be feedback given by participants in the project, comments on Facebook posts, most visited

web pages or feedback from participants in activities gathered through a questionnaire (online forms, questionnaires and surveys can be requested from DIT Multiservice Assistant form 1010).

**TIP**



Take time to monitor and gather statistics on the impact of your communication activities over the lifecycle of the project – keep a press cuttings file, take note of the most popular posts on Facebook, how many people attend an event, amount of leaflets distributed – these statistics will be needed for the communication section of the final project report and possibly for an evaluation. It can also be used as good practice and as a point of comparison for indicators for other projects.



## GUIDANCE FOR PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR WEBSITES <sup>(1)</sup>

**TEMPLATE**

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	GUIDANCE	INDICATORS
<b>Impact</b>	Long term sustainability of the communication activity	Impact indicators should assess whether your website met its overall communication objective, and its effect on the overall change that the project is working for and the effect that this has had	Degree of discourse within target audience
<b>Outputs</b>	Content added to website and reaches target audience		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of visitors to the website</li> <li>• The source of visitor referrals</li> <li>• Average length of time spent on site</li> <li>• Bounce rate</li> <li>• The number of pages visited</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate Outcomes</b>	Reactions and responses	What people think, feel or recall about the website	The number of comments/ feedback on web content
<b>Intermediate Outcomes</b>	Invested reaction Active response	Indicators should be tied back to the objectives (are you expecting people to register, read a particular piece of content, retweet content, etc.). This will enable you to interpret the data appropriately	<p>Level of content and tone of comments and feedback</p> <p>Amount of web content shared on other forums (posted on Facebook/tweeted)</p>
<b>Activity</b>	Website created to meet communication objectives		The cost and time

(1) Adapted from [EC Toolkit for the evaluation of the communication activities](#). It also includes guidance on indicators for press and media, public and stakeholder engagement, campaigns and advertising pp. 42-49

You will find additional guidance on indicators under the assessing and evaluating section p.24.

## SECTION VII - RESOURCES

Projects and programmes suffer from an underestimation of the need for communication resources. There should be a separate communication budget.

Take into account **financial resources** – eg. cost of design, translation and printing of leaflets or cost of a part-time communication officer.

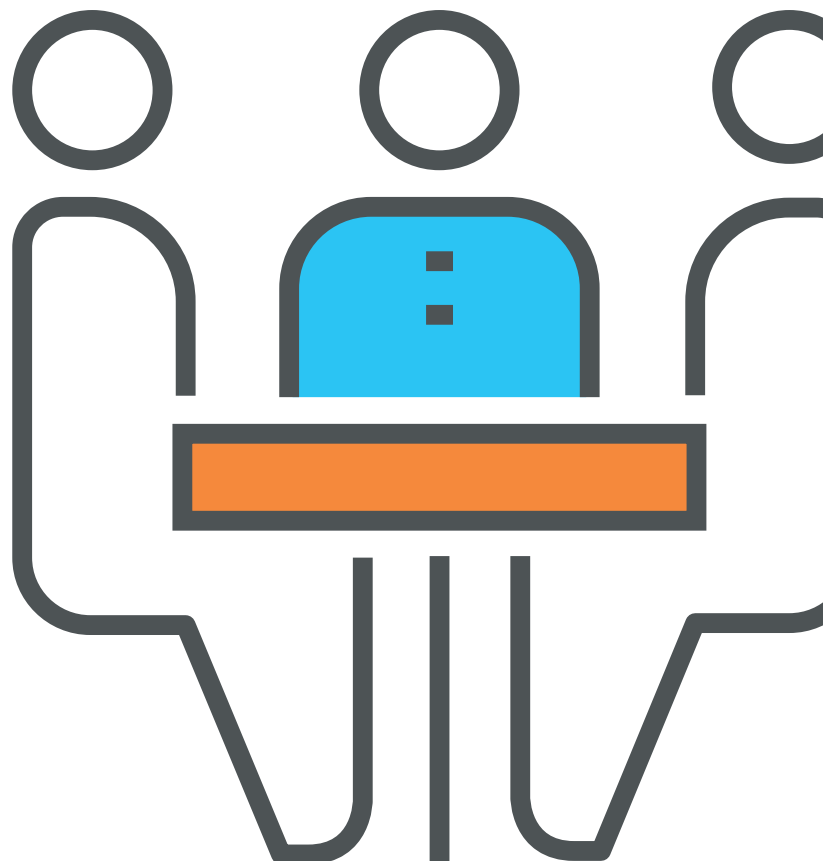
Take into account **how much time project staff** will be expected to spend on communication activities. Effective communication can be time consuming (updating websites and social media). Be cost-efficient wherever possible, you should try to find a balance between outreach and efficient use of resources – your communication is meant to support the fulfilment of the project's objectives and is usually not an objective in itself (except for campaigns).

It can be worthwhile to consider using a large part of the communication resources in one go, for example, to make a short professional film showing success stories/ testimonials.

### TIP



It is worth looking into pooling communication resources internally with other projects and externally with partners and stakeholders, it is cost efficient, raises the profile of the activities, and can increase audience reach and sustainability of the project.



## QUALITY CHECKLIST FOR A COMMUNICATION PLAN <sup>(2)</sup>

### CHECKLIST

#### 1. ASSESSING THE NEEDS - WHAT DOES THE TARGETED AUDIENCE NEED TO KNOW?

- What do the people know about the subject of the plan?
- What do the people think about it?
- What should they need to know?

#### 2. DEFINING THE OBJECTIVES - WHAT ARE WE DOING THIS FOR?

- Are objectives described in a clear, realistic manner?
- Are they coherent with overall communication objectives of the Council of Europe (and EU for joint projects) and with the audience's needs in terms of information?
- Are they SMART? (see page 12 for definition of SMART)

#### 3. DEFINING THE MESSAGES - WHAT ARE WE TRANSMITTING TO THE TARGET AUDIENCE?

- Is/are the message(s) defined in accordance with the objectives?
- Is/are it/they defined in a straightforward, understandable, operational manner?

#### 4. IDENTIFYING THE TARGET AUDIENCE - WHO ARE WE TALKING TO?

- Is/are the target audience (s) clearly defined?
- Are the reasons for identifying this/these target audience(s) well established?

#### 5. IDENTIFYING THE TOOLS - WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- Have the tools been chosen in relation to the message?
- Are the tools accessible for the target public?
- Are the tools adjusted to the project's resources and deadlines?

#### 6. SETTING THE MONITORING TOOLS AND INDICATORS - HOW ARE WE GOING TO KEEP TRACK OF WHAT WE'RE DOING?

- Have the monitoring tools and output indicators been defined in accordance with the objectives?
- Are the indicators relevant?
- Are the indicators easily obtainable?

#### 7. DEFINITION OF THE QUESTIONS AND TIME FOR EVALUATION - HOW AND WHEN ARE WE GOING TO EVALUATE THE PLAN?

- Have the evaluation questions been defined?
- Has the timing for ex-post evaluation been decided?
- Have the impact indicators been outlined?

(2) Based on the European Commission Directorate-General of Communication's check list [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/about/evaluation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/about/evaluation/index_en.htm)

#### **Communication plays a role in managing risks.**

Effective communication towards your stakeholders and in particular beneficiaries is a success factor and a primary tool for reducing/preventing certain type of risks. Clear understanding by your stakeholders of the project's objectives and activities will contribute to get their support, including in the event of a crisis.

**Be proactive, anticipate crisis.** Risk management and mitigation measures are addressed in the PMM handbook. To respond adequately to a situation that poses a threat to your project implementation it is recommended to include communication in the project's risk register. Identifying in advance your best/worst case scenarios can help you prevent crisis by designing possible crisis responses and "exit scenarios".

#### **Identify your crisis communication team/validation channel.**

Establishing in advance your channel of responsibilities in the event of a crisis will help you to mitigate the situation fast and deliver the right response to the right situation.

While the logo is the most visible part of the Organisation's visual identity, it is also based on a whole series of graphic elements (colours, typography, layout) and the way these elements are arranged depending on the medium in question (letterheads, documents, visibility material, banners, posters, leaflets, publications, etc.). All these elements and the rules for their application, collated in the Graphic Charter, convey the image and values of the Council of Europe.

All Council of Europe projects should follow the Council of Europe's Visual Identity and Graphic Charter. This was designed to reinforce our 'corporate image' and increase our visibility as the leading European organisation defending human rights, democracy and rule of law.

The visual identity and graphic charter is established and maintained by the Directorate of Communications.

It includes a joint logo to be used for joint projects with the European Union. For projects funded by **voluntary**

**contributions** only the Council of Europe logo should be used.

The Council of Europe's graphic charter is for all communication products: conference folders, banners, posters, folders, publications etc.

Each project can create its own visual identity using the graphic charter of the Council of Europe (selection of photos and use of colours).

The only time the graphic charter of the Council of Europe is not used is when a project gives a grant to a third party, e.g. to produce a publication, advertising campaign. However, the source of funding should be credited and the appropriate logo should still be used.

The advice of the Directorate of Communications should be sought directly if there is any doubt about how to apply the Council of Europe's visual identity and graphic charter.



STRENGTHENING  
OF EUROPEAN  
STANDARDS  
IN UKRAINE

ПОСИЛЕННЯ  
ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИХ  
ПРАВ ЛЮДИНИ  
В УКРАЇНІ



ПОДАЛЬША ПІДТРИМКА  
ПЕНІТЕНЦІАРНОЇ РЕФОРМИ  
В УКРАЇНІ

FURTHER SUPPORT  
FOR PENITENTIARY REFORM  
IN UKRAINE



Working together:  
from a punitive to  
a rehabilitative approach

Об'єднавши зусилля:  
від карального до  
реабілітаційного підходу

<http://eap-pcf-eu.coe.int>

<http://www.coe.int/web/kyiv>

Programmatic Cooperation Framework for  
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus

Funded  
by the European Union  
and the Council of Europe



Implemented  
by the Council of Europe

ПОДАЛЬША ПІДТРИМКА  
ПЕНІТЕНЦІАРНОЇ РЕФОРМИ  
В УКРАЇНІ



Protecting and promoting human rights  
Ensuring justice  
Combating threats to the rule of law  
Addressing challenges  
of the information society  
Promoting democratic governance

Programmatic Cooperation Framework for  
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus

Funded  
by the European Union  
and the Council of Europe







# CLOSING COMMUNICATION

Although communication efforts should be made throughout all phases of the project, it is particularly important to identify and highlight project results and impact through success stories towards the end of the project, see more about this in the separate document 'Communication Toolbox'.

In the closing phase you will be able to see your project with a more global perspective and be able to identify what results will outlive your project, and how to keep the interest of your partners and stakeholders in your project after it has ended.

It is important to ensure the sustainability of your project and communication activities play a part in this process.

Communication results should be monitored and collated throughout the lifecycle of the project, keep a file on communication (Facebook posts, Tweets, newsletters, links to articles in the media/blogs). If the project produces visibility items and publications, keep a log of to whom and when they were disseminated.

The communication plan itself should be monitored and evaluated along with the monitoring and evaluation of your project.

**Evaluation** should be considered at mid-term and/or after the closure of your project and should bring together the results of all your communication activities (number of newsletters, social media engagements etc.). In the case of an EU funded project it is often commissioned by the EU and performed by external evaluators with a special chapter on “communication”.

**If communication is key to your project achieving its final outcome, and communication activities form a large part of the budget (such as large awareness-raising campaigns, advertising), evaluation of a communication activity should take place before, during and after the activity has finished.**

**Ex-ante assessment (pre-testing)** – carried out before the activity – aims to test the perception of a communication action on a sample of respondents who are representative of the target.

**Immediate (on the spot) assessment**, generally involves a short questionnaire that the audience can fill out at the end of the communication action they were exposed to.

**Ex-post (post-action) assessment** Following the communication activity comes measurement that mostly uses qualitative techniques (such as face-to-face interviews) and more complete range of quantitative indicators (more in-depth questionnaires). It is the activity’s lasting effect on the exposed audience that should be measured: change of opinion, attitude or behaviour, in other words **long-term results (outcome) and impact**<sup>(1)</sup>.

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(1) EC has some examples of small-scale evaluation tools for different types of communication activities

## LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

### COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Contact ODGP for further information on [PMM Communication](#)

- [CoE logo downloads](#)
- [Joint CoE/EU logo downloads](#)
- [Visual identity - Graphic Charter](#)
- [Publications policy](#)
- [Guidelines for use of social media](#)
- [PowerPoint template](#)
- [CoE corporate PowerPoint template](#)
- [Customised visibility items \(production and visa\)](#)
- [Web-resources](#)
- [Gender-neutral language](#)

### EUROPEAN UNION

#### EU NEIGHBOURHOOD INFO CENTRE

Handbooks on communication of EU-funded projects

- [Press releases that grab attention](#)
- [Writing to grab attention](#)
- [A photographer's handbook](#)
- [Using social media](#)

#### EUROPEAN COMMISSION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION

- [Toolkit for the evaluation of the communication activities](#)
- [Small-scale communication evaluation tools](#)

#### EUROPEAN COMMISSION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ENLARGEMENT NEGOTIATIONS

- [10 Golden Rules to ensure visibility of EU funding](#)

#### EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

- [Communication toolkit 2.0](#)

### OTHER RESOURCES

- [The project manager communication toolkit](#)
- [Plain English Campaign](#) – guides on writing



**T**hese guidelines are designed to help Council of Europe project staff communicate effectively throughout the whole project management cycle. They form a part of the new Project Management Methodology .

The key to effective project communication is planning and these guidelines will help project teams develop a communication plan unique to their project, from defining audiences and indicators to monitoring and evaluating the communication.

[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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