



**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND WATER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

**Communication Plan
for Operational Programme
“Environment 2007-2013”**

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1. BASIC DEFINITIONS

Beneficiary – an operator, body or firm, whether public or private, responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations.

Beneficiary (defined for the purposes of TG3 of the present Communication Plan) – an operator, body or firm, whether public or private, whose project is already approved for financing under Operational Programme "Environment 2007-2013".

Cohesion Fund – EU financial instrument, directed to Member States of which the gross national income per capita is less than 90% of the Community average. The CF supports projects in the field of transport and environment infrastructures.

Contract with Beneficiary – a detailed contract signed between MA and IB (in case that this function is delegated to IB from MA) and the Beneficiary, describing the conditions in which the financial assistance is allocated from ERDF or CF for the implementation of given operation under OPE, and also the rights and the obligations of parties in the contract.

European Regional Development Fund - one of the Structural Funds, with the objective to support the implementation of EU and the Cohesion policy priorities. The fund contributes for decreasing the regional disparities, and except that provides support also for cross-border, cross-national and inter-regional cooperation. The fund supports activities in the field of promoting the competitiveness and the innovations, creation and maintenance of sustainable work places and ensuring of sustainable development.

Indicator – measurable value, which defines the implementation of the objectives of the Plan regarding the resources mobilized, the effect achieved and the impact.

Intermediate body – any public or private body or service which acts under the responsibility of a MA, or which carry out duties on behalf of MA vis-à-vis beneficiaries implementing operations.

Managing Authority – national, regional or local public authority designated by the Member State to manage the operational programme concerned

Measure – set of activities/operations with common objective, with which is realized a given OP priority axis.

Monitoring Committee – authority which monitors the effectiveness and quality of the implementation of the OPE. Its members are defined from the Member State in cooperation with the MA. Under the initiative of EC or in cases of request from the MC, a representative from the can take part EC in its secessions with advisory functions.

National Co-financing – co-financing of OP, its priorities and operations with resources, provided from the national sources of financing, e.g. from the state budget, municipal budgets, national private sources.

Operation – a project or group of projects selected by the MA of the OP concerned or under its responsibility according to criteria laid down by the Monitoring Committee and implemented by one or more beneficiaries allowing the achievement of the goals of the priority axis to which it relates.

Operational Programme – a document submitted by the Member State and adopted by the Commission setting out a development strategy with a coherent set of priorities to be carried out with the aid of a Fund, or, in the case of the Convergence objective, with the aid of the CF and the ERDF.

Potential Beneficiary (defined for the purposes of TG2 of the present Communication Plan) – an operator, body or firm, whether public or private, identified as eligible recipient of assistance under each priority axis of Operational Programme "Environment 2007-2013".

Structural funds – EU financial instruments for restructuring and modernization of the economics of the Member States, through interventions in key sectors and regions. The Structural funds are three: ERDF, ESF and CF.

2. GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

CF	Cohesion Fund
CP	Communication Plan
CPED	Cohesion Policy for Environment Directorate
EC	European Commission
EC	European Community
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EUFED	EU Funds for Environment Directorate
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National product
IB	Intermediate Body
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
MCOP	Monitoring Committee of Operational Programme
MRPP	Monthly Report of Project Progress
MOEW	Ministry of Environment and Water
NGO	Non-governmental Organizations
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
OP	Operational Programme
OPE	Operational Programme “Environment”
SF	Structural Funds
WSSC	Water Supply and Sewerage Companies

3. INTRODUCTION

During the new programming period 2007-2013 within the framework of the Convergence objective the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) will co-finance physical investments concentrated on the poorest regions in terms of GDP per head and the Cohesion Fund (CF) will support mainly transport and environment projects in Member States whose GNP is less than 90% of the EU average. Based on the above-mentioned priorities of the ERDF and CF and on the recommendations made by the European Commission and due to the necessity for improving the basic environmental infrastructure within the country, Operational Programme "Environment 2007-2013" (OPE) was established. It represents a strategic document, which is based on the priorities defined within the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and is an instrument for the absorption of funds from ERDF and CF for the period 2007-2013.

The Cohesion Policy for Environment Directorate (CPED) within the Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW) is designated for Managing Authority (MA) of the programme. According to art. 69 of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006 of 8 December 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund the managing authority for the operational programme shall provide information on and publicize operations financed by the operational programme. The information shall be addressed to the European Union citizens and the beneficiaries of the programme. The information and publicity measures aim at highlighting the role of the Community and ensuring that assistance from the Funds is transparent. The specific details for information and publicity measures are contained in Regulation (EC) 1828/2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006. The Communication Plan (CP) of OPE is prepared in accordance with all of the abovementioned regulations.

The Communication Plan is also consistent with the guidelines, set within the National Communication Strategy of NSRF – strategic national document, defining the activities, which should be done in order to popularize the aims and the priorities of NSRF and OPE and ensuring a coordinated communication policy. Its aims are underlined in the current Communication Plan – through proactive communication and transparency to acquaint and motivate the community as well as the target groups, aiming for an efficient and effective absorption of the SF and CF, stimulating the public acknowledgement of the role of EU in the regional development and in particular achieving the goals of NSRF, i.e. Bulgaria to be a competitive member state of EU in 2015, with higher quality of life, income and social sensitivity.

Giving an account of the fact that the Communication Plans of all the Operational Programmes are the main instrument of achieving the aims of the National Communication Strategy of NSRF, the OPE Communication Plan and the measures defined within it are based on the principles of the National Communication Strategy of NSRF – being informative, being positive, being flexible, being adaptive, being in unity and coordination, being synchronized with the overall policy of the government, regarding the EU policy, requirements and regulations.

According to Regulation (EC) 1828/2006, the MA is the main body responsible for preparing, implementing, monitoring and subsequently reporting the Communication Plan. Furthermore, the MA has to present the CP for approval by the European Commission within 4 months after the adoption of the OPE. In all the activities concerning the implementation of the CP, especially in the direct work with the beneficiaries of OPE, the MA will be actively supported by the Intermediate Body (IB).

The successful promotion of the Operational Programme will guarantee the preparation and submission of project proposals of high quality and in turn will lead to the creation of an effective system of projects for all priority axes of OPE. This is important for the successful implementation of the OPE operations co-financed by the ERDF and the CF leading to high absorption of

European funds in Bulgaria as a whole. The information and publicity measures of OPE, presented in the CP, will guarantee transparency during the process of management and implementation of the programme and will contribute to the increase of the overall trust of the general public in the state administration. Through the present Communication Plan information regarding OPE will be presented to the media, the citizens, national and local bodies and other stakeholders. For these purposes a variety of communication channels shall be used, which are appropriate for informing the main target groups identified within the present plan.

This Communication Plan is drawn up outlining how information and publicity measures will be undertaken for Operational Programme "Environment 2007-2013", including aims, target groups, communication strategy, tools and timetable, indicative budget, bodies responsible for implementation of the CP, the monitoring and evaluation (including indicators) of the CP.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

During the process of preparation of the Republic of Bulgaria for accession to the European Union the Bulgarian government and the European Commission through its permanent delegation in the country undertook a widespread information campaigns with the aim of introducing to the Bulgarian citizens the European Union, its policies, institutions, as well as clarifying the positive and negative aspects of being part of the Community. In 2002 the Bulgarian Government adopted the *Communication Strategy for the Preparation of Bulgaria for Membership in the European Union*. Until now a large range of projects have been implemented using a wide variety of communication methods. In addition to these national efforts, the Delegation of the European Commission in Bulgaria implemented a communication and information programme on a national level.

During the last few years the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released three reports, which assess the municipal, district, NGOs and business capacities for participation in EU Structural and Cohesion Fund absorption under the overall title "*Are We Ready for the EU Funds?*". According to these reports, there is a paradox that in 2006 the municipalities declare a lower preparation for the Structural Funds in comparison to 2004. In 2006 there is a better understanding of the Structural and Cohesion Funds due to the use of new channels – the Internet and seminars. 39% of the municipalities have a specialized unit for work with the funds in 2006. In comparison with 2004, 80% of the municipalities are able to co-finance projects. There is a discrepancy, however, between the desired and the offered trainings: according to 70% of the municipalities and 80% of the district administrations they receive mainly introductory training.

As for the non-governmental sector, all NGOs want to participate in Structural Funds absorption and 74 % of them want to be very active in this. The level of willingness among businesses is more modest – 37 % of them expect to have a very active participation. Against the background of this strong desire, the non-governmental and private sector are only partially ready to participate in the structural funds. In terms of the country's regions, capacity is the lowest in the least developed parts of the country which need development support the most. Businesses' and NGOs' weak capacity in those regions is coupled with weak capacity in local authorities, the survey reveals.

According to another survey carried out by *the Institute for Market and Social Surveys MBMD* during March 2007 for the readiness for absorbing the Structural and the Cohesion Fund, the NGOs as well as the local authorities declare intentions to apply for financing from the EU funds. 82% of the NGOs and 67% of the local authorities included in the study intent to do that. The study was prepared as part of the information campaign of the Ministry of Finance "Be Active". According to the study, 65% of the local authorities and 61% of the NGOs in Bulgaria are ready for absorbing EU funds. At the same time the potential beneficiaries list as the most important difficulties in absorbing European assistance the lack of practical information (62%), the heavy bureaucratic procedures (48%) and the lack of experience in developing projects (26%).

The follow-up survey made again by MBMD after the end of the campaign "Be Active" during June 2007 the expected effect of the EU funds on the Bulgarian economy as perceived by the business and the NGOs have increased. The study shows that 33% of the local authorities and the NGOs show a preference for the OPE.

Information and publicity activities implemented by the Managing Authority of OPE at national level started in 2006. On 2-3 November 2006 two seminars were carried out for strengthening the capacity of municipalities as beneficiaries of ISPA and OPE. In total 66 representatives from 41 municipalities attended these two seminars. Other two seminars were carried out on 23-24 November 2006. In total 66 representatives from 39 municipalities participated in the training. In addition, on the 24th of July 2007 a conference regarding the main aspects of the management of

Operational Programme "Environment 2007-2013" was carried out on which municipalities, representatives of the media and the associations of the builders were present.

On 25 September 2007 was carried out a conference regarding the Programmes for construction of WWTP in the Black Sea region with participants of municipalities, Black Sea resorts, National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria.

At the launch of the OPE, in November, the MA carried out 10 local trainings for municipal administrations, as they are the main beneficiaries of OPE, where they will be trained how to manage projects financed by EU and mainly from OPE. During these trainings they will be inquired for their awareness and readiness for preparation and management of projects funded under OPE. Trainings were directed to bigger municipalities (over 10 000 equivalent inhabitants) and representatives of 130 municipalities participated in the trainings. Trainings for smaller municipalities (between 2000 and 10 000 equivalent inhabitants) will be held in the beginning of 2008.

The survey shows that according to 67% of the experts from municipal administration the training contributed to a great extent to introduction of OPE. 40% of them consider that the training contributed to introduction to the possibilities to apply under the different priority axes of the program to a great extent, and 46% consider it contributed to a certain extent.

The requirements to the project proposals, to the project management, to filling up application forms and to the application procedure were presented during the trainings. About 44% of the experts consider that the requirements were introduced to a great extent, approximately 40% to a certain extent, and about 13% to a little extent. 97% plans to develop project proposals to apply for financing under OPE. In 70% of the municipal administrations there is an independent department or team working on project development. About 43% of the experts who participated in the training had experience in development and implementation of projects financed by donor programs.

The main difficulties that municipal administrations meet in the development of project proposals are: ensuring the relevant team (30%); filling up the application forms (24%); short terms (24%); lack of information (17%); other (5%).

According to the survey 52% of the experts need access to information, while the most preferable sources of information are: seminars and trainings (37%); MOEW or OPE website (32%); meetings with experts from MA or IB (32%); television (29%); radio stations (28%); colleagues who have already applied with projects (29%); printing media (6%); brochures and other information materials (5%).

The survey held during the trainings clearly demonstrates that there is enough general information regarding OPE. More purposeful and actual information is needed on the practical aspects of absorption of funds under OPE and more concretely – on the application procedures, on the possibilities for financing, on project preparation, on filling up application forms etc.

The Managing Authority shall continue the information and training campaigns which will be implemented under the provisions of the present CP and will be directed to the target groups of CP. The planned trainings will focus on filling the gaps in information and knowledge of the beneficiaries regarding the possibilities for application with project proposals under OPE.

5. AIMS

The following aims have been defined for the purposes of the present Communication Plan of OPE. They are in full compliance with the publicity aims set out in Regulation (EC) 1828/2006, with the specific aims, outlined below, providing more detailed information about the overall aims of the Plan.

5.1 OVERALL AIMS

- To raise awareness among the public at large about OP "Environment 2007-2013" and the contribution of EU Structural and Cohesion Fund in Bulgaria;
- To ensure transparency and relevant information for all target groups identified within the present plan.

5.2 SPECIFIC AIMS

- To raise awareness among the general public and to promote greater understanding of the scope, objectives and results of OPE and the Structural and Cohesion Funds (SCF) in Bulgaria;
- To ensure that potential beneficiaries are aware of and understand fully the opportunities for receiving financing from OPE and to encourage them to prepare and submit project proposals;
- To provide actual beneficiaries with knowledge about their responsibilities in implementing operations under OPE, including their responsibilities related to information and publicity;

6. TARGET GROUPS

The target groups of the Communication Plan have been established so as to accomplish the abovementioned aims of the CP in the most cost-effective way. Four major groups have been identified:

6.1 GENERAL PUBLIC (CITIZENS) – TG1

The general public will be targeted mostly with the idea to raise awareness about the content of the Operational Programme "Environment 2007-2013", its implementation and results as part of the larger framework of the Structural and Cohesion Funds in improving the environment. The main aim will be to provide information about the opportunities that OPE financing provides, as well as to improve the visibility and transparency of EU assistance as a whole.

6.2 POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES OF OPE – TG2

OPE beneficiaries will be targeted due to their considerable importance for the successful absorption of EU funds, provided in the framework of OPE. The group comprises of all potential beneficiaries identified within priority axes of the operational programme itself, who face specific information needs and require comprehensive knowledge about the details of project applications, cycle management, evaluation, reporting etc. Supplying the potential beneficiaries with relevant information on project opportunities, requirements, and management procedures will ensure a steady flow of quality project proposals and will greatly facilitate OPE implementation. The potential beneficiaries are:

- Municipal administrations;
- Regional association/associations of municipalities;
- Water Supply and Sewerage Companies (WSSC);
- River Basin management Directorates;
- Directorates within the Ministry of Environment and Water and within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Supply that are responsible for managing national and natural parks respectively, as well as other units within these two ministries that are involved in/responsible for the management of NATURA 2000 sites and protected areas;
- NATURA 2000 management administrations;
- Non-governmental organizations.

6.3 BENEFICIARIES OF OPE – TG3

Actual beneficiaries will be targeted mainly with the aim of clarifying their responsibilities during the implementation of operations under OPE, including their obligations related to information and publicity. Providing specific information to the beneficiaries of the programme, which have already received financing for their projects, will lead to a timelier implementation of the operations and in turn of the programme itself by abiding all relevant laws and regulations.

7. STRATEGY AND INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY MEASURES

7.1 STRATEGY

The content and future implementation of the present CP is in accordance with and will abide by the following three main principles:

- ▣ **Transparency** – the implementation of all activities under the current CP will be largely promoted in order to ensure full transparency for the wider public, the identified target groups and all stakeholders of the programme.
- ▣ **Partnership** – the CP will be implemented in close partnership with the main stakeholders and potential partners of OPE.
- ▣ **Going local** – disseminating information by matching local concerns in an easy to understand language. All measures implemented under the CP will be carried out as close as possible to the beneficiaries of OPE throughout the country by taking into account their specific information needs.

By observing the abovementioned principles and in order to achieve the communication aims set out in the present Communication Plan, the MA publicity measures will be carried out on two main levels – OP level and measure level. The introduction of two levels will increase both the cost-efficiency of the publicity campaigns and the communication impact of the envisaged measures, thus guaranteeing the effectiveness of the CP.

Information and communication activities will be undertaken by or on behalf of the MA at the level of the OPE. The primary role of OP-level publicity will be to highlight the role of OPE as a means of managing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting the implementation of the priority axes of the OPE. Therefore, the publicity campaign undertaken at the level of the programme will focus on achieving one of the overall aims of the CP (i.e. to raise awareness among the public at large about OP "Environment 2007-2013" and the contribution of EU Structural and Cohesion Fund in Bulgaria). The Managing Authority will also coordinate and ensure that EU Structural Funds publicity and information requirements are followed during the elaboration of the OPE Communication Plan.

The communication activities at measure level will contain more detailed and comprehensive information about the funding opportunities and requirements regarding the specific priority axes and measures that will be targeted at potential and actual beneficiaries. At this level and mainly in the day-to-day work with the beneficiaries, the Intermediate Body will be involved in on-the-ground programme implementation and will have direct contacts with the potential and actual beneficiaries.

A special feature of the CP is the utilization of communication partners (multipliers). The rationale behind it is that communication partners will enable the MA to reach a wider number of members of the first (general public), second (potential beneficiaries) and third (beneficiaries) target groups in a very cost-effective way by using their already established networks and channels. To ensure effective communication and publicity, the communication activities shall focus on organizations and bodies that have their own dissemination networks and are able to relay successfully the information to their members and audiences. Some of these communication partners include:

- The electronic and printed media – TV, radio, newspapers, Internet-based media;
- Trade organizations and business circles;
- Economic and social partners, etc.

This method was selected due to the existing successful cooperation between the MA and the IB, on the one hand, and between the MA and most of the actors identified as potential communication partners and the IB and the beneficiaries, on the other hand. As an example of such an intensifier could be indicated the National Association of Municipalities in Republic of Bulgaria. The fact that this organization includes all municipalities in the country, allows the MA to use the created network to transmit information to all municipalities - potential beneficiaries of the OPE. At the same time the National Association of Municipalities in Republic of Bulgaria shall support any training of the municipality press officers, which are multipliers of OPE information to the media themselves. Promoting the opportunities offered by the European Union's SF and CF to business representatives in their capacity as executors of activities under OPE as well as associated potential partners of OPE beneficiaries, the networks of various business organizations may be used, such as Bulgarian Industrial Association, the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and others. Similarly, as potential communication partner can be pointed out the Bulgarian Association of Municipal Ecological Experts (BAMEE). Ecological experts from all Bulgarian municipalities are members of BAMEE. The established information system ECONET may serve successfully in the exchange of good practices, information and documentation related to application under OPE.

Last but not least the EUROPE DIRECT info points shall be taken in consideration. This Network offers information to the wide public in relation to all EU issues. Information on OP current calls and procedures, that potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries may use are published on the websites of the different info points. The Network shall be used in the implementation of the information and publicity activities by the MA of OPE as a main partner and information spreader.

Table 1: Expected results

Specific aims	Target Group	Expected results
To raise awareness among the general public and to promote greater understanding of the scope, objectives and results of OPE and the SCF in Bulgaria	TG1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Increased awareness about OPE and the activities it finances – their successful implementation and contribution to the improved quality of life in the country; × Improved awareness about the role of the EU, in particular the CF and the ERDF, and its contribution to Bulgaria's development; × Increased confidence in EU financial instruments.
To ensure that potential beneficiaries are aware of the opportunities for receiving financing from OPE and to encourage them to prepare and submit project proposals	TG2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Better understanding of procedures for application for financing under OPE; × Increased number of applications of a better quality for financing under OPE.
To provide actual beneficiaries with knowledge about their responsibilities in implementing operations under OPE, including their responsibilities related to information and publicity	TG3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Better compliance of the projects that are being implemented with all requirements of the European Commission

7.2 INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY MEASURES

The activities which will be performed in order to reach the aims identified within the present CP can be grouped into the following publicity and information measures, which will be implemented via different communication tools and will aim at reaching different target groups as identified within the present plan:

Table 2: Information and Publicity Measures

Information and Publicity Measure	Target Group
Campaigns and publications in the printed and electronic media	TG1 and TG2
Printed and audiovisual materials	TG1 and TG2
Information events – trainings, seminars, discussions, press conferences etc.	TG2 and TG3

- ▣ *Campaigns and publications in the printed and electronic media*
- ▣ Communication tool to be used: TV, Radio and printed media (including local internet).

Both electronic and printed media can play an important role in the awareness campaign among the wider public and, in a later stage, on the results and impacts of OPE. All types of media are relevant in this respect: TV and radio stations on national, regional and local level as well as publications in the printed media. Examples of these publications can be:

- Calls for proposals
- Press conferences and interviews
- Specialized political /business/ TV programs
- Publishing press releases in newspapers and magazines with business and analytical orientation (daily/weekly/monthly)
- Publishing analytical articles/editorials on OPE/ EU Funds.

A website for the OPE – www.ope.moew.government.bg, is to be developed due to the fact that one of the most convenient, widespread and therefore important means of communication in modern society is the internet. This website forms the most important source of up-to-date information related to the implementation of the programme. All relevant documentation has to be available as downloads, such as the application package and programme documents. It will also contain links to the other relevant EU and national websites. In this way visitors can obtain relevant information in an easy and well-organized way. The website will also provide an opportunity for asking questions and will contain a section with an overview of frequently asked questions and their respective answers (FAQs).

The website should be widely promoted with initial presentation made on special event organized for this purpose. Access to the website will be granted from the Ministry of Environment and Water website, the information portal for managing the Structural Funds and Cohesion Funds in Bulgaria – www.eufunds.bg, the websites of various stakeholders, and the INFOREGIO website in DG Regional Policy, EUROPE DIRECT info points, etc.

The website will also contain a publicly available list of the beneficiaries whose projects are approved for financing under the OPE. This list will provide information in accordance with the mandatory elements laid down in Art. 7, section 2 of Regulation (EC) 1828/2006 (the name of the beneficiary, the name of the operation and the amount of public funds allocated to finance these operations). The information in this list will be updated every 6 (six) months for the European Transparency Initiative. At the same time information on the project will be provided, including information for the priority axis, the procedure, the place of execution of the project, the EU funds, co-financing the project, the implementation period, the partner(s) on the project (if any), the project objectives and main activities set to implement the project. The MA will also maintain a database of beneficiaries that have already submitted project proposals, containing the registration number of the project, date of submission of the projects to the evaluation committee, a decision of approval / disapproval of the project, date of the contract with the beneficiary. This database will complement the mandatory list of beneficiaries under Art. 7, section 2 of Regulation (EC) 1828/2006.

To the implementation and launch of the OPE website the information regarding beneficiaries, potential beneficiaries, the public and other stakeholders will be published on the MOEW website (www.moew.government.bg) in the OP "Environment" section.

Another opportunity provided by Internet is the OPE e-mail address: ope@moew.government.bg which the MA uses to organize and coordinate the entire process of providing consultations and clarifications related to OPE management and implementation and to current project selection procedures. The e-mail address is imprinted and published on all printed materials, documents and templates. All questions on project development and application under OPE given by experts from the MA, IB and the specialized MOEW directorates are published on OPE website in order to keep the equality of the candidates during project proposals preparation. The MA departments answer the questions coming from the wide public and potential beneficiaries under their competences.

▣ *Printed and audiovisual materials*

▣ Communication tool to be used: printed materials

To support the promotional and information events, it is important to develop standard presentation (lay outs). In addition to this, promotion videos, flyers, brochures and so on could play a supporting role for the promotion of the funds.

- **Flyers or leaflets** are the business cards of the OP or of individual priorities and measures. They contain general information on a programme, priority or measure level. The target group of the flyers could be the general public and potential beneficiaries.
- **Brochures** are the product catalogues of the programme. Depending on the stage of the programme, the brochures contain general information on possibilities for project financing, eligible beneficiaries etc. The target groups for such a brochure would be potential beneficiaries and the wider public. In a later stage, brochures could contain an overview of first results and examples of projects.
- **Standard presentations** can be used at any training, conference etc. where the programme is promoted. The target group and the content of the presentation depend on the type of visitors and scale (local, regional, national) of the event. In all printed materials and presentations the possibility to communicate with the MA/IB is indicated, including address, telephone/fax number, OPE website: www.ope.moew.government.bg and email address: ope@moew.government.bg.

▣ *Information events – trainings, seminars, discussions, press conferences etc.*

▣ Communication tools to be used: Information events

The information events will be targeted mainly to the potential beneficiaries, to the beneficiaries and the communication partners. The events such as seminars and other training activities will provide more specific and detailed information on all aspects of the implementation of the priority axes of the operational programme. In addition to that, events such as press-conferences will mark important milestones in the lifecycle of the programme such as its approval by the European Commission and official launching. The official opening of OPE was held on December 5th 2007 immediately after the signing of the document on November 27th 2007 in Brussels. The event was held in the form of a conference, on which official guests by the European Commission and the Representation of the European Commission to Bulgaria, representatives of the central administration - Ministry of Finance, the Managing Authorities of the other operational programmes, representatives of the local authorities - National Association of Municipalities in Republic of Bulgaria, mayors of municipalities (in their capacity as main beneficiaries of the OPE), as well as socio-economic partners, NGOs, and print and electronic media as a communication partner under this Communication Plan (see section 7.1 .) The operational programme and the basic keystones in the development, evaluation, approval of projects and signing a contract for grants were presented at the conference.

Within this information and publicity measure is envisaged to be carried out at least one major information activity per year, which will present the achievements of the OPE. This activity will be specified according to the conditions and specific needs and requirements of the operational programme. At the beginning of each calendar year, the MA develops an annual working programme for implementation of the Communication Plan, where this information event is set out. The indicative format set up in the annual working programme is a conference, attended by representatives of central and local authorities, socio-economic partners, businesses, NGOs as well as representatives of the European Commission, including information and publicity officers from INFORM network from both the headquarters in Brussels and other Member States. Broad media presence and subsequent coverage in the national and local print and electronic media is foreseen. On every event representatives of EUROPE DIRECT info point shall be invited, as well as representatives of the EC Representation in Bulgaria. The Managing Authority of OPE is planning to organize at least one annual major information event, according to EC Regulation 1828/2006, in the Representation of the European Commission to Bulgaria.

Other information events that the MA will hold for the implementation of the OPE are:

- Press-conferences, briefings
- Seminars and other training activities
- Discussions, round tables etc
- The European flag to be flied in front of the premises of the MA for one week starting from 9th of May.

For the purposes of all measures and information and publicity activities a design format will be developed including logo, specific colors etc. to be used by the MA, the IB and the beneficiaries when they implement publicity measures. By having one unified style, the general public will easily recognize the materials and publications related to the OPE.

7.3 TIMING

The implementation of the Communication Plan of the OPE will be accomplished in the following three stages:

▣ First stage: 2007-2008

The first stage of the Communication Plan will aim mainly at dissemination information related to the general provisions of the Operational programme, the eligibility criteria and the procedures for application for financing under the OPE. This will aim at generating interest and awareness among the general public and mainly at the potential beneficiaries in order to receive more project proposals.

▣ Second stage: 2009-2013

During the second stage it is necessary to provide the potential beneficiaries with concrete information about the use of Structural Funds and the implementation of the OPE specifically. During that stage the beneficiaries whose projects have already been approved for financing will receive detailed information regarding all of their obligations in order to ensure the successful implementation of the projects and of the OPE itself.

▣ Third stage: 2014 - 2015

During the last stage, the accent will be given to the closure of the Programme and the preparation for the next programming period. The main information and publicity goals will be to present to the wider public the results achieved under the OPE, their efficiency, the transparency about the spent financing resources provided by the European Union.

These stages are indicative and do not limit the information and publicity measures in time, i.e. throughout the programming period the Managing Authority will implement the planned activities in order to fulfill the main objectives - to provide information and to provide transparency regarding the grant funding and the role of the European Community.

The implementation of information and publicity measures will follow the project cycle - from the submission of project proposals, in the period of implementation of the project until the completion of all project activities and the most appropriate information channels to the respective target groups, according to the stages of this cycle will be selected.

The Managing Authority is planning to organize at least one annual major information event per year according to the requirements of Commission Regulation (EC) 1828/2006, and information days for every call for proposals opened by the Managing Authority, and "Open Doors of OPE" at least once a year.

8. FUNDING AND INDICATIVE BUDGET

The expenditures connected to the present Communication Plan will be covered from the budgeted for technical assistance within the scope of Priority axis 4 "Technical Assistance" of OPE. The planned indicative budget for the Communication Plan is 11 177 541.00 Euro, of which the national co-financing represents 15% and the contribution from the ERDF is 85 %.

The Budget of the CP includes the allocation of financial resources per year for the programming period 2007 – 2013 for the implementation of the envisaged publicity measures.

Table 3: Indicative budget per year (in euro)

Stage	Total Budget for Stage	Year	Breakdown by type of funding	Sum
First Stage	1 832 633.00	2007	Total	743 802.00
			EU	632 231.70
			National	111 570.30
		2008	Total	1 088 831.00
			EU	925 506.35
			National	163 324.65
Second Stage	8 397 865.00	2009	Total	1 653 576.74
			EU	1 405 540.23
			National	248 036.51
		2010	Total	1 742 750.17
			EU	1 481 337.64
			National	261 412.53
		2011	Total	1 862 540.60
			EU	1 583 159.51
			National	279 381.09
		2012	Total	1 982 945.03
			EU	1 685 503.28
			National	297 441.75
		2013	Total	1 156 052.46
			EU	982 644.59
			National	173 407.87
Third Stage	947 043.00	2014	Total	568 226.00
			EU	482 992.10
			National	85 233.90
		2015	Total	378 817.00
			EU	321 994.45
			National	56 822.55
TOTAL	11 177 541.00			

Table 4. Indicative budget per indicative activities (in euro)

Information on Publicity Activities	Indicative budget
OPE website	30 941.00
Information events – annual major event; conferences, open days, info-days; workshops for media, press-conferences etc.	3 520 000.00
Audiovisual products – OPE audio and video clip; Publications – calls for proposals etc.	5 000 000.00
Printed materials – leaflets, booklets, guidelines, manuals etc.	2 051 600.00
Monitoring and evaluation	500 000.00
Sociological surveys	75 000.00
Total	11 177 541,00

9. IMPLEMENTATION

The CP will be implemented through more detailed annual communication plans, which will be elaborated by the MA. Each annual communication plan will reflect the lessons learned from the previous years and will modify the provisions envisaged in the present plan in order to improve the information and publicity activities so as to achieve the identified aims.

Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 requires that the administrative departments or bodies responsible for the implementation of information and publicity activities must be identified. As operational programmes are based on the principle of partnership, the responsibility for publicity and communication is distributed between the bodies involved in the process of management and implementation of OPE. Within the Communication Plan of OP "Technical Assistance" (OPTA) the establishment of Information networks on national and local level is provided. On national level the Networks includes the communication officers from OP MAs. This network will establish communication and coordination of communication activities planned for all OPs and will avoid overlapping and duplication between the activities planned for all operational programs. Its aim is to provide interconnection and coordination of communication activities in the communication plans for all operational programmes, including the OPE Communication plan, and in particular between the CP of OPE and the CP of OP "Technical Assistance". This Information network on local level includes 28 regional centers. 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. In addition, they will ensure a wide range of opportunities to receive information about the scope of OPs, their mechanisms, the implementation of EU funding, the European and national legislation in this sphere. The establishment of the 28 info points will be funded under OPTA. The Communication officers for the relevant operational programmes will be responsible for the interaction with the national and local network of centers.

The responsible OPE information and publicity bodies within the MOEW are:

MA of OPE:

Programming, Partnership, Information and
Publicity Department
Cohesion Policy for Environment
Directorate, MOEW
22 Maria Luisa Blvd., Sofia

IB of the OPE:

Publicity Officer in Monitoring and Control
Department
EU Funds for Environment Directorate,
MOEW
22 Maria Luisa Blvd., Sofia

The implementation of all activities related to information and publicity measures, which experts at the "Programming, partnership, information and publicity" (PPIP) department within the Managing authority have no capacity to carry out or the performance of which requires special knowledge and experience that the experts at "PPIP" do not have, or where the activity is not included as a liability in their job characteristics, an external contractors in accordance with local legislation will be hired. For the implementation of any activity carried out by external contractors, the procedures for selection of the contractor will be carried out under the provisions of the Public Procurement Law and Ordinance for Assigning of Small Public Procurements, as the costs for these activities will come in ahead of the set up in this CP indicative budget within Priority Axis 4 "Technical Assistance" under OPE.

The responsible bodies on local level are the beneficiaries that have contracts signed on awarding a grant under OPE. The MA develops and updates a data base on the contact persons nominated on behalf of the beneficiary. They can provide detailed information on the project implementation including information on the project communication activities to the wide public and all interested parties on local level. The beneficiaries provide to the IB copies and examples of these measures (articles, interviews in the local press, TV, radio, booklets, photos, press conferences etc.) together with the project progress reports.

9.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGING AUTHORITY

The main task of the MA is to raise awareness about the OPE interventions at the national level, especially by providing information to the specific target groups, and to ensure that the whole system of OPE information and promotion works properly.

The MA shall ensure the existence of appropriate effective channels for circulating information in order to guarantee transparency for the various potential beneficiaries. This information will include a clear outline of the administrative procedures to be followed, a description of the procedures for examining applications for financing, information on the criteria used in selection procedures and on the mechanisms for evaluation of the operations to be financed and names of persons or contact points at national and local level who can explain the way OPE works and how the assistance package operates.

The MA shall inform all stakeholders about: the adoption of the OPE by the European Commission; the main achievements in the implementation of the OPE; its closure at the end of the programming period.

In order to implement the information measures:

- ✓ The Managing Authority shall prepare the Communication Plan for the OPE in accordance to Art.2 of Regulation No 1828/2006, shall acting in accordance to Art. 3 of Regulation 1828/2006 present it to the European Commission, and shall apply to it the proposed recommendations of the Commission and shall implement the Communication Plan for the OPE.
- ✓ The Managing Authority shall assign a civil servant responsible for the publicity measures and to ensure the information about the OPE implementation and shall inform the Commission about it.
- ✓ The Managing Authority shall report the current, the ongoing and the implemented measures for publicity and information and shall act in accordance with Art 4 (1) of Regulation 1828/2006.
- ✓ The Managing Authority shall ensure the dissemination of the OPE in accordance with Art. 5 of Regulation 1828/2006 as well as the detailed rules for the implementation of the OPE General Implementation Manual.
- ✓ The Managing Authority shall organize and carry out opening conferences on OPE, conferences, seminars and information meetings for the general public and interested entities.
- ✓ The Managing Authority shall prepare, publish calls for proposals and disseminate booklets and information materials.
- ✓ The Managing Authority shall organize information days, open days and conduct trainings and seminars for the IB and the beneficiaries.
- ✓ The Managing Authority shall develop and maintain internet page for the OPE.
- ✓ The Managing Authority shall cooperate with the mass media.
- ✓ The Managing Authority shall organize and coordinate the entire process of providing consultations and clarifications related to OPE management and implementation and to

current project selection procedures and in practice shall act as an information center for the OPE.

- ✓ The Managing Authority shall undertake measures on information and publicity for beneficiaries in accordance with Art. 6 of Regulation 1828/2006
- ✓ The Managing Authority shall monitor the implementation of the information and publicity measures in accordance to the Communication Plan and Art. 7 (1) of Regulation 1828/2006
- ✓ The Managing Authority shall monitor the implementation of the publicity measures at all levels of the OPE implementation in accordance to the Communication Plan and shall carry out the necessary consultations for the IB in relation to all aspects of the information and publicity requirements at the measure level.
- ✓ The Managing Authority shall organize the activities provided in Article 7 (2) of Regulation No 1828/2006.

Obligations in the field of communication and publicity for all administrative bodies have to be included in OPE General Implementation Manual, concerning the implementation of OPE. The MA will also provide technical support and advice to the IB and the IB in turn will provide advice to the beneficiaries. More concretely, in the manual will be provided the specifications regarding the visibility of EU, i.e. on billboards, posters, permanent explanatory plaques, publications, electronic media, the correct use of the EU flag and the slogans, etc. The MA will supervise, support and guide the IB and the beneficiaries who have the obligation to inform the potential recipients (people benefiting from the action or operation which is to be implemented by the beneficiary). All initiatives undertaken by IB and the beneficiaries will be coordinated by the MA, so as they may be complementary and harmonized.

9.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INTERMEDIATE BODY

The general responsibility of IB is to carry out publicity tasks regarding the measure level information. The IB would be responsible for the implementation of the different measures including organization of all necessary information and publicity activities that are needed to make the OPE and relevant Funds known among the applicants and potential beneficiaries, to increase the existing absorption capacity, and to deliver information about the results of the implementation activities and their impact on the society and especially on the social and economic development.

In the implementation of the Communication Plan:

- ✓ The Intermediate Body shall assist the MA in the implementation of the publicity measures, including in the preparation and maintenance of OPE website for the activities for which it has been delegated certain tasks.
- ✓ The Intermediate Body shall provide advice and consultation to the beneficiaries in relation to ensuring publicity and information at project level.
- ✓ The Intermediate Body shall designate a civil servant(s) to be responsible for the publicity measures and to provide information about OPE implementation within the scope of the competencies of each institution.
- ✓ The Intermediate Body shall report the current, the on-going and the implemented measures for publicity and information as part of the progress reports.

- ✓ The Intermediate Body shall include in the contract for awarding grant for projects, approved under OPE the requirements for the publicity and information measures to be implemented by the beneficiary.
- ✓ The Intermediate Body shall participate and assist the carrying out of conferences and seminars.
- ✓ The Intermediate Body shall organize information meetings with the beneficiaries.
- ✓ The Intermediate Body shall prepare and disseminate information materials.
- ✓ The Intermediate Body shall organize and carry out trainings and seminars for the beneficiaries.
- ✓ The Intermediate Body shall collaborate with the media.

The IB would also ensure accessibility of information materials and application forms. IB will deliver, when needed, to the MA necessary background documents for their priorities.

9.3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BENEFICIARIES

All Beneficiaries who obtain support from ERDF and CF are obliged to implement certain information and publicity measures. These will depend on the type of the project being carried out. The Beneficiaries are responsible for all information and publicity measures at project level included in the EU grant award contract.

The beneficiaries will disseminate the relevant information about the project to the general public from the respective region in compliance with the instructions from the MA and the respective requirements on billboards, posters, permanent explanatory plaques, publications, electronic media, the correct use of the EU flag and slogans, etc.

The beneficiaries of ERDF and CF will erect billboards on site of the project, which will be replaced after conclusion of the works by a permanent explanatory plaque, whose graphic standards are set up by article 8 of the Regulation (EC) 1828/2006.

9.4 RESPONSIBLE PERSONS

The Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 requires that each MA shall designate persons to be responsible for information and publicity and shall inform the Commission about that. These specific persons shall be designated for providing information on OPE implementation within the scope of the competencies of each institution. Information on the possibility to contact such persons shall be included in the publicity and information materials.

The main responsibilities of the designated persons shall include the coordination and management of:

- ✓ Implementation of the Communication Plan of OPE and the annual communication plans;
- ✓ Drafting reports to the Monitoring Committee regarding the progress of information and communication activities implemented by the MA, communication means used and presentation to the Monitoring Committee of examples of these measures;
- ✓ Summary of reports submitted by the IB and beneficiaries describing their information and publicity activities;

- ✓ Maintenance of the web site of OPE and regular update of its content;
- ✓ Drafting and dissemination of information materials of the OPE and European Structural Funds (such as brochures, newsletters etc.);
- ✓ Organization of briefings, information meetings, seminars and conferences for media representatives, other communication partners and beneficiaries;
- ✓ Drafting information on the progress of OPE implementation, new projects, calls for proposals etc.;
- ✓ Development and update of database with information about:
 - Beneficiaries – contact persons lists
 - Trainings for MA, IB and beneficiaries officers;
 - Journalists and media to cover the OPE
 - Examples of successful projects to be published on different occasions;
 - Frequently asked questions and their answers – to be published on the OPE web site, to be presented at trainings and on other occasions;
- ✓ Maintaining regular contacts with the media.

The designated persons responsible for communication shall be part of the information officer's network INFORM, coordinated by "Regional Policy" General Directorate.

The persons will work together with a selected through a public procurement tender PR agency. This PR Agency will cooperate with the MA in the planning, preparation and implementation of the Communication Plan and annual communication plans.

Information and publicity officers in the MA:

Marta Tsvetkova – senior expert
m.tsvetkova@moew.government.bg

Dimitrinka Marinova – senior expert
didi@moew.government.bg

Information and publicity officers in the IB:

Nikolay Hristov – junior expert
n.hristov@moew.government.bg

Leyla Uzun – junior expert
leyla@moew.government.bg

Since the responsibility for implementation of information and publicity measures at project level lies on the beneficiary, by the municipal administrations that may be employees of the unit for management and implementation, and may be persons from the contractor as those persons can be specifically assigned to those specific measures. The MA allows beneficiaries to nominate persons who will be responsible for communication, as in the provision of the contract only the obligatory measures for information and publicity that these persons must perform are included.

10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Information and publicity measures envisaged to be implemented under the present CP are revised and evaluated regularly – before, during and after their implementation in order to check and improve their effectiveness, efficiency and relevance in achieving certain goals. The Monitoring Committee, as part of its activity, follows the progress in implementation of the CP of OPE during the whole programming period. The Communication Plan is approved by the MC in order to check if the aims have been achieved.

The MA of OPE proposes for approval the annual reports and the final report to the Monitoring Committee. One chapter regarding the implemented information and publicity measures is part of these reports.

The monitoring of CP is a process of systematic and constant collection, analysis and use of information. The evaluation is periodic and refers to effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact in the context of the set goals.

Under Article 4 of Regulation 1828/2006 MA is obliged to:

- ▣ Inform the MC regarding CP and the progress in its implementation, information and publicity measures carried out (submits examples regarding these measures) and the means of communication used;
- ▣ Include in the annual report and in the final report on the implementation of OPE examples of information and publicity measures, the publication of the list of beneficiaries (according to article 7, paragraph 2, (d) of Regulation 1828/2006) and the contents of the basic amendments to the CP. The reports on OPE implementation shall be submitted to the EC.
- ▣ Includes in the annual report for 2010 and in the final report a separate chapter on evaluation of the results from the information and publicity measures in relation to transparency and information on OPE and the role of the Community.

The responsible information and publicity officers observe the process of implementation of CP and prepare periodic reports. In addition, the evaluation of the communication measures implemented by the MA of OPE for inclusion in the reports in 2010 and 2015 shall be assigned to external firm to evaluate the impact of the activities for increasing the information and transparency regarding OPE under чрез quantitative and qualitative surveys. The evaluation shall be performed by independent firm in order to guarantee its detachment and effectiveness. These valuations shall be part of the whole evaluation of the process of implementation of OPE. Therefore, in 2010 a midterm evaluation shall be performed and in 2015 – final evaluation.

The MA of OPE shall assign to the external evaluator to perform evaluation on two basic aspects:

- ▣ Effectiveness of the implementation of CP – if the goals and results have been achieved and at adequate use of resources;
- ▣ Effectiveness of the implementation of CP – if a maximum result has been achieved towards the invested resources.

MA of OPE shall use the midterm evaluation results to improve the quality of the information and communication measures set in CP of OPE.

For the purposes of evaluation of the publicity and information activities the following evaluation criteria shall be used:

Table 5 : Evaluation indicators

Communication tools	Output Indicators	Target Values ¹	Results Indicators	Target Values	Information Source
TV and radio (national/local)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Number of information and publicity video spots, created for the purposes of OPE ✗ Number of information and publicity audio spots, created for the purposes of OPE ✗ Number of broadcasts arranged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ 2 video spots ✗ 2 audio spots ✗ 20 broadcasts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Number of information and publicity video spots, presented on TV for the purposes of OPE ✗ Number of information and publicity audio spots, presented on the radio for the purposes of OPE ✗ Number of broadcasts performed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ 2 video spots ✗ 2 audio spots ✗ 20 broadcasts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ contracts with TV/radio media – national and regional ✗ media monitoring;
Printed media (national/local)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Number of arranged articles in national/ local newspapers/ magazines, focused on OPE; ✗ Number of interviews arranged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ 1 500 articles; ✗ 200 interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Number of published articles in national/ local newspapers/ magazines, focused on OPE; ✗ Number of interviews published 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ 1 200 articles; ✗ 150 interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ media monitoring
Printed materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Number of printed materials disseminated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ 3 000 printed materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Number of people acquainted with printed materials during the information events, seminars, etc.; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ 3 000 people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Registration list
OPE web-site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Number of sections created; ✗ Number of pages created; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ 15 sections; ✗ 500 pages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Number of visitors; ✗ Number of pages visited; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ 450 000 visitors ✗ 1 000 000 pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Google Analytics; ✗ Website of OPE;
Information events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Number of the events carried out; ✗ Number of invitations sent; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ 30 events; ✗ 3 000 invitations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Number of participants compared to the people invited (%); ✗ Number of articles published as a result of the event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ 90%; ✗ 300 articles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Registration list; ✗ media monitoring of national/regional media

¹ Refer the target value for 2015. The baseline value is accepted 0.

11. REVISIONS AND MODIFICATIONS OF THE CP

The MA of OPE will send the CP to the European Commission not later than four months after the date of approval of the Operational Programme.

In case of receiving any comments by the EC, the MA shall have two months to revise the plan and to send the revised Communication Plan back. The Commission shall review the revised plan within two months and providing there are no more comments, the plan shall be deemed approved. Providing that the EC sends no comments on the plan within two months following its receipt, the plan shall be deemed compliant with the requirements.

If it is necessary, the content of the CP may be changed by the MA. Any changes to the Plan shall be published on the web site of OPE. The Monitoring Committee of OPE will be notified about the changes to the Plan's content and information and publicity measures envisaged.

The MA of the OPE is responsible for the revision of the CP. The present CP is a flexible and dynamic document. The received feedback on the activities performed will be useful to consistently adjust the present CP. In addition, unexpected events always may occur and this will require a relevant revision and re-planning in initially envisaged communication activities and in the indicative budget in the Plan.