

Communication Strategy for Malta: European Structural and Investment Funds (2014-2020)

Acronyms

ACP	Annual Communication plan
CF	Cohesion Fund
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CPR	Common Procedures Regulation
DG	Directorate-General
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
EFF	European Fisheries Fund
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
EPIO	European Parliament Information Office
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC	Employment & Training Corporation
EU	European Union
FDP	Funds and Programme Division
IB	Intermediary Body
IMP	Integrated Maritime Policy
INIO	Informal Network of ESF Information Officer
LIIP	Local Information and Publicity Network
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
MEUSAC	Malta-EU Steering Action Committee
MNRN	Maltese National Rural Network
NCPD	National Commission Persons with Disability
NCPE	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRN	National Rural Network
OP	Operational Programme
PPCD	Planning and Priorities Coordination Division
SFD	Structural Funds Database
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise

1. Introduction

Europe 2020 is the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade. In a changing world, the EU commits itself to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. These three important priorities will be addressed through the effective use of the European Structural and Investment Funds' (ESIF) 2014-2020 in order to deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.

In this light, the Government of Malta has decided to adopt a common plan to cover information and communication activities related to Malta's ESIF. This Communication Strategy outlines the following topics: (a) the legal framework (b) objectives of the Communication Strategy (c) Malta's experience in communicating EU Funds throughout 2007-2013 programming period (d) communication strategy framework, including the responsibilities of the Managing Authorities, beneficiaries, Intermediate Bodies and collaboration with other stakeholders (e) target groups (f) key communication messages (g) information and publicity measures including the necessary tools and annual communication plan (h) monitoring and evaluation of this strategy (i) budgetary allocation (j) timeframes.

1.1 Legal Framework

The European Structural and Investment Funds' (ESIF) Communication Strategy has been developed in accordance with Articles 115-117 and Annex XII of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17th December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. The said Regulation recommends the provision of a strategic, coordinated long-term approach to communication and publicity, addressing the need to enhance transparency and awareness and ensuring wide dissemination of information. This is complemented by the Commission Implementing Regulations (EU) No 761/2013, which lays down rules for applying Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of EMFF, 808/2014, which lays down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of EAFRD, and 821/2014 which lays down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, which specifies the technical characteristics of information and publicity measures.

Article 116(1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 states that a common Communication Strategy may be drawn up for several Programmes in accordance with the principle of proportionality. Thus, Malta opted to adopt one Communication Strategy to cover the five ESIF in order to ensure consistency, synergies and synchronisation. In light of this, Article 116(2) also states that "where a common Communication Strategy

is drawn up for several Programmes and concerns several Monitoring Committees, the Member State may designate one Monitoring Committee to be responsible, in consultation with the other relevant Monitoring Committees, for the approval of the common Communication Strategy and for the approval of any subsequent amendments of that strategy.” Accordingly, the Monitoring Committee for the ERDF and CF will be responsible for the approval of this Strategy and any subsequent amendments. The approved Communication Strategy and subsequent amendments will be presented at the other ESIF Monitoring Committees for information purposes only. Indeed, given the dynamic nature of this Strategy, a number of changes might be required throughout the years.

In line with Article 116(3), both the Managing Authority for the ESF, ERDF and CF, herewith referred to as the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division (PPCD), and the Managing Authority for the EAFRD and EMFF, herewith referred to as the Funds and Programme Division (FPD), shall inform the respective Monitoring Committees at least once a year on the progress in the implementation of the Communication Strategy and on its analysis of the results as well as on the planned information and communication activities to be carried out in the following year. If necessary, the Monitoring Committees may give an opinion on the planned activities of the following year. The Annual Plans will help to fulfil the objectives presented in this Strategy as they will include specific information regarding the planned communication measures and promotional activities, as well as an indicative budgetary allocation and time plan for that given year.

The Communication Strategy is based on the elements outlined in Annex XII of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, which stipulates that the Strategy should contain at least:

- a. a description of the approach taken, including the main information and communication measures to be taken by the Managing Authority and aimed at potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, multipliers and the wider public, having regard to the aims described in Article 115;
- b. a description of materials that will be made available in formats accessible for people with disabilities;
- c. a description of how beneficiaries will be supported in their communication activities;
- d. the indicative budget for implementation of the strategy;
- e. a description of the administrative bodies, including the staff resources, responsible for implementing the information and communication measures;
- f. the arrangements for the information and communication measures, including the website or website portal at which such data may be found;
- g. an indication of how the information and communication measures shall be assessed in terms of visibility and awareness of policy, Programmes and operations, and of the role played by the Funds and the Union;

- h. where appropriate, a description of the use of the main results of the previous Operational Programme; and
- i. an annual update setting out the information and communication activities to be carried out in the following year.

Annex III of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 also states that the Communication Strategy should also include “a description of the role played by the National Rural Network and how its Communication Plan will contribute to the implementation of the strategy”.

1.2 Communication Strategy 2014-2020: Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives of the Communication Strategy 2014-2020 are as follows, based on Article 115 of Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013:

- **Promoting the role of the European Union and European funding:** In line with Article 115(1)(c) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, the Managing Authorities shall inform potential beneficiaries about any funding opportunities under the ESIF programmes. Moreover, Article 115(1)(d) states that the role and achievements of the funds should be publicised through information and communication measures on the results and impacts of the Programmes.
- **Ensure transparency:** Communication activities should ensure that assistance from the Funds is transparent and accessible. Article 115(2) emphasises that Managing Authorities shall “maintain a list of operations by Operational Programme and by Fund in a spreadsheet data format, which allows data to be sorted, searched, extracted, compared and easily published on the internet, for instance in CSV or XML format.” This will also be presented in line with Article 1 of Annex XII of the same regulation whereby the required fields which should be included, such as operation name, summary, beneficiary’s name, etc. are listed. This will further ensure transparency concerning support from the Funds.
- **Increase visibility and awareness:** Communication activities should highlight the role of ESIF and the European Union, thereby increasing awareness and knowledge of the benefits and results of ESIF for the socio-economic development of the territory.

1.3 Communication Strategy 2014-2020: Operational Objectives

This Communication Strategy will seek to pave the way for different measures which will help to inform the Maltese public about the role and impacts of ESIF in an efficient and cost-effective way. In accordance with Article 2 of Annex XII, “the Member State, the Managing Authority and the beneficiary shall take steps necessary to provide information to, and communicate with, the public on operations supported by an Operational Programme in accordance with this Regulation.” Thus, the operational objective of the Communication Strategy 2014-2020 are as follows:

- Provide transparent information on the opportunities provided by ESIF assistance to potential project proponents;
- Devise a system that provides information about ESIF interventions to the general public;
- Promote the effective implementation of the priorities as set out in the Operational Programmes and the Rural Development Programme;
- Inform the media, the general public and interested stakeholders about the role played by the EU in implementing the assistance;
- Make visible results achieved through the assistance given by the funds;
- Assist all beneficiaries in understanding publicity requirements and undertake appropriate measures to meet them;
- Create more visible unity through consistency of messages and branding;
- Promote an understanding of the role of each ESIF and the EU’s contribution to the overall socio-economic development of Malta and Gozo.

2. Communicating EU Funding: 2007-2013 Programming Period

2.1 Malta's Experience throughout the 2007-2013 Programming Period

During the 2007-2013 programming period, the Managing Authorities ensured a steady flow of information on the implementation of the respective Programme in order to guarantee that sufficient information is made available to all interested parties on how European funds are being used in Malta. Several activities have been undertaken to get the message through to potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries and the general public in line with the obligations emanating from the respective Commission Regulations and Communication Plans. Such measures included:

- **Fairs and Events**

In line with Article 7(2)(b) of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006, the Managing Authority for Cohesion and Structural Funds was responsible for organising one major annual information activity to present the achievement of the Operational Programmes. These annual activities included the organisation of events such as the 'mE&U fest' which was an Information Festival which consisted of a family-oriented activity where visitors received information purposely set up to show-case projects implemented through Cohesion Policy 2007-2013. Participants were able to see examples of projects that were being implemented, all set against a back-ground of local talent.

On another occasion, the Managing Authority organised 'Rotta: EU07-13' wherein twelve bus tours were organised to visit various projects around Malta and Gozo and participants were given a firsthand experience and the possibility to learn more about the EU-funded projects. During other years, the Managing Authority decided to explore the potential of the 'Notte Bianca' which is a well-known and well-attended activity in the Maltese cultural calendar to promote the achievements of the various funds during the 2007-2013 programming period.

Further to these annual events, the respective Managing Authorities participated in a series of fairs and events organised by various entities including, but not limited to, the European Commission Representation in Malta, the Employment Training Corporation, University of Malta, and the Local Councils. For instance, the Managing Authority for the EFF has participated in the LampukiFest organised by the then Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs, Fish Fest organized by the Marsaxlokk Local Council, Għall Kenn Tal-Port fil-Menqa tal-Marsa organized by the Marsa Local Council, etc. Such events always

attracted substantial interest by the general public and consequently served as an opportunity for the Managing Authorities to publicise their measures and ensured that the general public increases its awareness and knowledge on the benefits of EU funding. Several information brochures and promotional items were also distributed to people visiting the Managing Authority's stand during such events.

- **Information and Briefing Sessions**

During the 2007-2013, briefing sessions were held following the publication of pre-announcement calls. This practice enabled potential beneficiaries to prepare their project applications and become familiar with the processes involved in EU funded projects. Moreover, information sessions were also organised once the calls for project proposals were launched in order to guide the potential beneficiaries in preparing their applications accordingly. These sessions gave potential beneficiaries the opportunity to meet the Managing Authorities representatives, ask questions and give feedback. Moreover, in the case of the Managing Authority of EAFRD, every year, prior to the launch of the Payment Claims Campaign, information sessions were held to promote Axis 2 measures and to inform farmers on the procedures they need to follow to claim their payments.

- **Leaflets and Publications**

The Managing Authorities published a number of informative leaflets, booklets and posters specifically targeted to their target groups. For instance, the Managing Authority for EFF created an information/activity book filled with educational exercises for children. The main subject of this booklet was the importance of sustainability of fisheries.

- **Articles and Newsletter**

The Managing Authorities have contributed towards various articles and press releases. For example, the Managing Authority for EAFRD has contributed various articles towards several newsletters and publications, including *Biedja u Sajd* (Agriculture and Fisheries), MEUSAC News and Funding 360.

Moreover, the Managing Authority for EAFRD issued the National Rural Network (NRN) newsletter which reached out to stakeholders and the general public via an additional channel of communication. This newsletter is published every four months and stakeholders are periodically invited to suggest important topics, contribute articles and promote forthcoming activities. This newsletter is distributed by e-mail to all NRN members and Public Service employees. It is also available for download from the Managing Authority's website. Eleven editions have been published so far.

- **TV and Radio Programmes**

The Managing Authorities participated in local TV and radio shows to provide information about the programmes to the general public. For instance, the Managing Authority for EAFRD showcased projects which have been co-financed under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, together with promotional features upon the launch of measures, in a weekly TV programme called *Malta u lil hinn Minnha* (Malta and Beyond). It also sponsored a weekly feature during the TV series *Mad-Daqqa t'Għajn* (At a Glimpse) whereby over 21 projects from various sectors were showcased on this programme.

- **Setting up the general E-mail Helpdesk**

A specialised e-mail and telephone helpdesk has been set up at the Managing Authorities' Communication Unit with the aim of facilitating the communication process with the general public, stakeholders and potential beneficiaries.

- **Website and Social Network Page**

During the 2007-2013 programming period, the Managing Authorities' website was continuously being updated with news about the pre-announcement of the upcoming calls for project, any other information related to the Programmes' implementation, press releases and news items, etc. Although prior to 2014, the Managing Authorities had their own website, a new website, encompassing all EU funds, and providing a 'one-stop-shop' approach to information for the public was set up by the Ministry responsible for European Funds. The new website, eufunds.gov.mt, officially started being used in March 2014.

The Managing Authority's page on a popular social networking site was also continuously updated to further supplement the website. Every call for project proposal (or pre-announcement thereof) was uploaded on the Managing Authority's Facebook page, through the notes function, thereby increasing the outreach and targeting a wider audience. Moreover, status updates over the year, have reflected ongoing EU-related events such as Europe Day (9th May) and the award of the Nobel Prize for Peace to the European Union.

- **National Rural Network**

National Rural Networks have been set up in each Member State of the EU in order to bring together rural stakeholders involved in rural development. Although they may have different structures, the objective of these Networks is to support the implementation and evaluation of rural development policy through communication and exchange of knowledge, information and good practices at regional, national and EU level.

The Maltese National Rural Network (MNRN) is a key component of the Rural Development Programme for Malta 2007-2013 and is managed by the Managing Authority of EAFRD. The main objectives of the Maltese network are to:

- Bring together rural stakeholders;
- Develop and enhance channels of communication through information activities;
- Exchange experiences and good practices;
- Stimulate dialogue between rural stakeholders;
- Improve the overall performance and success of the Rural Development Programme and its evaluation;
- Enhance the bottom-up approach; and
- Assist Local Action Groups through training programmes and inter-territorial and trans-national cooperation initiatives.

- **Local Information and Publicity Network (LIIP)**

In the case of the ERDF, ESF and CF, the LIIP was set up in 2011 with the aim of discussing and co-ordinating various methods to promote and provide information about Cohesion Policy to the general public. It also fostered the exchange of best practices and further reinforced cooperation between the Managing Authority, Beneficiaries, and other stakeholders involved in communicating Cohesion Policy objectives and achievements.

- **Participation in EU Communication Networks**

The Managing Authority's Communications Unit is kept updated on examples of best practice and new tools developed by other Managing Authorities and is prepared to share its own research and experiences through participation in the INFORM Network and the Informal Network of ESF Information Officers (INIO) established by the European Commission, and participates in fora, meetings and conferences organised dealing with information and publicity on Structural Funds.

2.2 Publicity Measures used by the Intermediate Bodies and Beneficiaries during the 2007-2013 Programming Period

2.2.1 Intermediate Bodies

The Intermediate Bodies have complemented the actions carried out by the Managing Authorities through a series of activities to promote and further disseminate information on the Aid Schemes they manage. These measures included publicity in the media, websites as well as marketing and information measures with potential Beneficiaries.

In the case of Operational Programme I, there were three Intermediate Bodies during the 2007-2013 programming period. These were the Department for Social Welfare Standards, Malta Enterprise and the Tourism Sustainable Development Unit. They were responsible for mainly issuing pre-announcement calls, calls for proposals, organising information sessions, and updating their respective website with information related to the Aid Schemes.

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) was the only Intermediate Body of Operational Programme II and it managed two Aid Schemes namely the Training Aid Framework (TAF) and the Employment Aid Programme (EAP). Both schemes were demand driven so no calls for projects were published, however, both schemes received extensive publicity and there were various information events involving also the business community which were held.

On the other hand, the EU Affairs Directorate within the then MRRA, acted as the Intermediate Body for schemes issued under the EFF. The Intermediate Body was responsible for issuing calls for proposals, organising information sessions, and updating their respective website with information related to the Aid Schemes. The Intermediate Body also acted as national contact point for information.

2.2.2 Beneficiaries

A considerable number of publicity actions were also implemented by the Beneficiaries. Such publicity measures included a good mix of publicity actions which were transmitted through various channels such as print media, audio-visual media, online presence, promotional material, signage, information sessions, etc. in order to promote their respective projects, increase visibility as well as attracting prospective bidders to tender. Indeed, a fair share of targeted visibility was achieved across all levels especially in the case of non-infrastructure projects given that such projects are not directly visible. Budgets allocated for

publicity measures vary greatly since infrastructural projects may appear to publicise themselves physically, hence publicity actions for such projects tend to be lower and less intensive. On the other hand, as can be noted, publicity actions for non-physical projects are more intensive because they need to attract participants and promote various types of awareness in line with Programmes' objectives.

Thus during the 2007-2013 programming period both beneficiaries and Intermediary Bodies are proving to be successful information multipliers in their own right.

2.3 Analysis of the implementation of the Communication Strategy during the 2007-2013 Programming Period

Throughout the development of this Communication Strategy, feedback was sought from media experts, beneficiaries as well as representatives from the Managing Authorities and other EU administrative bodies and information centres¹. This provided an understanding of the current state of EU-fund promotion and the lessons learnt from the previous programming period.

On a general note, it was noted that:

- The mandatory requirements for visual and publicity adhered to the respective mandatory requirements stipulated in Regulations (EC) 1826/2006, 1698/2005, and 498/2007.
- Information was made readily available to the general public, beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries via the Managing Authorities' website, www.eufunds.gov.mt, and also through the Managing Authorities' helpdesk.
- A substantial amount of press and publicity was generated from most major EU funded projects. Moreover, projects which had a total public contribution of over €500,000 and which involved construction/infrastructural works were required to set up a prominent billboard, together with a permanent explanatory plaque at the work site/s.

In addition, a number of measures were considered as good practices during the 2007-2013 and will be eventually carried forward during the 2014-2020 programming period. These included:

- **Development and maintenance of a regularly updated web portal:** As highlighted earlier on, the Managing Authorities have set up a single web portal in 2014 which includes pages dedicated to EU funding during the 2004-2006 and 2007-2013 programming period, the Operational

¹ Meetings were held with KNPD, MEUSAC, EPIO, Europe Direct Centre, European Commission Representative in Malta.

Programmes / Rural Development Programme and their Priority Axes, and links and downloadable documentation on the Operational Programmes / Rural Development Programme together with more general information required for the implementation of the programmes.

In the case of the Managing Authority for ESF, ERDF and CF it also included the publication and updating of the list of beneficiaries. Moreover, the latter has launched the 'Investing in your Future' website (<https://investinginyourfuture.gov.mt/default.aspx>) in 2012 which aims to complement the official Managing Authority's website. The IYF website is envisaged to remain updated and 'live' until the end of the programming period. The site avoids the use of technical jargon and is broken down according to themes which are more representative of the Programmes' priorities. The themes under which the projects are grouped are: heritage and tourism; equal opportunities; health; research, science and technology; education; life-long learning and employment; environment, climate change and renewable energy sources; waste management and risk prevention; public infrastructure; public administration and the private sector.

- **Published Manuals of Procedures together with the Visual Identity Guidelines to inform beneficiaries of the necessary requirements from the outset:** These documents were easily accessible online via the Managing Authorities' website.

The Manuals of Procedure included a chapter specifically on the EU funds information and publicity requirements to ensure that the results and achievements of the Programmes and projects are communicated as widely and effectively as possible. It also highlighted the role of the Managing Authorities and the beneficiaries in relation to information and publicity and the importance of complying with the Visual Identity Guidelines.

The Visual Identity Guidelines supported the Manuals of Procedures and ensured that the publicity and information measures related to EU funding in Malta are immediately recognisable by all target audiences in Malta and Gozo over the entire programming period 2007-2013. These guidelines provided technical specifications and information on the appropriate use of the logos in relation to the EU Emblem and the National Flag of Malta in different media.

- **Training for beneficiaries on publicity requirements:** Training was provided to the beneficiaries on a regular basis and included sessions on the various information and publicity requirements which are set out in the Regulations. This was done through technical presentations as well as

through a show of best practice examples and discussion on innovative ways of how to reach out and deliver the right message to the desired audience.

- **Communication with stakeholders and potential beneficiaries:** This was done through information sessions organised by the Managing Authorities from time to time and the provision of guidance and also through continuous support provided from the respective Communication Officers within the Managing Authorities.
- **Communicating through social media:** The huge popularity of social networking sites made it attractive for the Managing Authorities to include such new media among the means used to put across its message. Indeed, the Managing Authority's presence on social networking sites such as Facebook and YouTube also allowed it to keep track of the page's popularity and traffic, and monitored which news items would generate most interest. Moreover, postings on such websites allowed viewers to share the information uploaded by the Managing Authorities and hence create a multiplier effect, generating more interest and awareness.

Nonetheless, there were a number of important lessons learnt which the Managing Authorities will be taking into consideration during the 2014-2020 programming period. These include:

- **Lack of regular public opinion surveys or other studies prevented the evaluation of the effectiveness of communication measures:** During the 2014-2020 programming period, this will be mitigated through the use of regular public opinion surveys after a major event in order to analyse public perception and awareness of EU funding.
- **Limited expert resources to implement the Communication Plan by the end of the programming period.**

A number of mitigating actions are being put forward and these include:

- **Centralised body to implement the Communication Strategy 2014-2020:** In the 2007-2013 programming period, an approach was adopted to implement separate Communication Strategies for the Cohesion Policy, EAFRD and EFF. However, given that during the 2014-2020 programming period there will be a common Communication Strategy covering the five ESIF, the PPCD will act as the centralised body to implement the Strategy and will be coordinating major annual events, media relations, evaluation and monitoring, website management, etc. Nonetheless, PPCD will be liaise continuously with the FPD in order to ensure compliance with

the information and publicity regulations and requirements at programme and project level. Further to this, targeted efforts will be made for the promotion of programmes and specific funding opportunities/measures.

- **Training for information experts on all aspects of communication activities:** The Communication Team will undertake periodic training in communications and public relations. Experts and service providers will be contracted where necessary.

- **Strengthening the Communications Team to coordinate all information and communication activities for all Managing Authorities:** The Communication Team will build expertise both in EU funding and communications and public relations in order to ensure the full implementation of this Communication Strategy, together with providing guidelines to the potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries and increasing awareness on EU funding and the benefits thereof amongst the general public. Moreover, in line with Article 117(2), “the information and Communication Officer shall be responsible for the coordination of the national network of Fund communicators, where such a network exists, the creation and maintenance of the website or website portal... and the provision of an overview of communication measures undertaken at Member State level.” In addition to the appointment of a Communication Officer within PPCD, FPD will also nominate Communication Officer(s) in order to organise the specific communication and information activities/measures which fall under the remit of these funds.

3. Communication Strategy Framework

3.1 Operational Programmes/Rural Development Programme for the 2014-2020 Programming Period

Under the new regulatory framework for 2014-2020, Member States, in dialogue with the European Commission, were required to prepare a Partnership Agreement that will set out their development objectives and how these will be addressed through investments from the ESIF. Therefore, the Partnership Agreement is the strategic document which will contribute towards the EU 2020 targets and also paved the way for the preparation of the Operational Programmes related to the ERDF, CF, ESF, EMFF and the EAFRD Rural Development Fund. Malta's Partnership Agreement, which was adopted in November 2014, sets out an assessment of the national development needs and defines the priorities for the use of the ESIF, that will help Malta achieve its socio-economic goals as well as contribute towards the agreed EU 2020 targets over the programme cycle. Within this context, three funding priorities have been identified, namely:

- i. Fostering competitiveness through innovation and the creation of a business-friendly environment;
- ii. Sustaining an environmentally-friendly and resource-efficient economy; and
- iii. Creating opportunities through investment in human capital and improving health and wellbeing.

Thus, the following sections will highlight how the Operational Programmes/Rural Development Programme will contribute towards achieving these priorities.

- **European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund**

Operational Programme I titled *Fostering a competitive and sustainable economy to meet our challenges* will be financed through the ERDF and CF which aims to strengthen the productivity of enterprises, boost research and innovation, enable the shift towards a more low-carbon and environmentally-friendly society, foster health and social development and increase education attainment. It will therefore contribute towards the achievement of all three funding priorities that have been identified in the Partnership Agreement and outlines Government's strategy for the implementation of measures which will enable Malta to move closer towards Europe's ambition to shift towards smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The objectives of the Programme will be achieved through the following Priority Axes namely:

- Priority Axis 1: Investing in research, technological development and innovation
 - Priority Axis 2: Consolidating investment within the ICT sector
 - Priority Axis 3: Enhancing Malta's competitiveness through investment in SMEs
 - Priority Axis 4: Shifting towards a low-carbon economy
 - Priority Axis 5: Protecting our environment - investing in natural and cultural assets
 - Priority Axis 6: Sustainable Urban Development
 - Priority Axis 7: Shifting towards a more low-carbon transport sector
 - Priority Axis 8: Investing towards a more socially-inclusive society
 - Priority Axis 9: Developing our future through education, training and lifelong learning
 - Priority Axis 10: Investing in a more environmentally-friendly society
 - Priority Axis 11: Investing in TEN-T Infrastructure
 - Priority Axis 12: Technical Assistance
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- **European Social Fund**

Operational Programme II titled *Investing in human capital to create more opportunities and promote the wellbeing of society* will be financed through ESF which aims to achieve inclusive growth by fostering an economy which is conducive to economic, social and territorial cohesion. The objective of the Programme, in line with Malta's targets under the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, focuses on employment, social inclusion, education and capacity building and will directly contribute towards the achievement of Funding Priority 3 outlined in the Partnership Agreement.

The Operational Programme places particular emphasis on employability and adaptability of job seekers and workers including women, older workers and youth. The Programme will assist specific target groups to enter and remain in the labour market as well as to improve their skills. Moreover, specific attention will be directed towards creating a more inclusive society, whereby interventions will focus on addressing poverty and social exclusion through the promotion of equal opportunities, active participation and improved employability. In addition, interventions will also be directed towards the promotion of healthier lifestyles and the enhancement of the health care service delivery.

The focus on education will contribute towards reducing and preventing early school-leaving, enhancing participation in tertiary education, improving the labour-market relevance of vocational education and training, as well as ensuring equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups.

The objectives of the Programme will be achieved through the following priority axes namely:

- Priority Axis 1: Investing in the employability and adaptability of human capital
- Priority Axis 2: Towards a more inclusive society
- Priority Axis 3: Investing in people through education, training and lifelong learning
- Priority Axis 4: Building the institutional administrative capacity
- Priority Axis 5: Technical Assistance

- **European Maritime and Fisheries Fund**

The EMFF for the period 2014-2020 provides funding to the fishing industry and coastal communities to help them adapt to changing conditions in the sector and become economically resilient and ecologically sustainable. Moreover, the EMFF is the financial instrument that will help deliver the objectives of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and that will support the implementation of the EU Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP). It focuses on the long-term strategic objectives of the two policies: for the Common Fisheries Policy, contributing to sustainable and competitive fisheries and aquaculture; for the Integrated Maritime Policy, ensuring a consistent policy framework for the policy and contributing to a balanced and inclusive territorial development of fisheries areas. The investment package will therefore support smart and green fisheries and aquaculture, while strengthening the economic viability of the sector.

In line with the Europe 2020 strategy, these broad objectives for 2014 – 2020 are structured around six priorities within the EMFF:

- Union Priority 1: Promoting environmentally sustainable, resource-efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based fisheries
- Union Priority 2: Fostering environmentally sustainable, resource-efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based aquaculture
- Union Priority 3: Fostering the implementation of the CFP
- Union Priority 4: Increasing employment and territorial cohesion
- Union Priority 5: Fostering marketing and processing
- Union Priority 6: Fostering the implementation of the IMP

- **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development**

The Rural Development Programme funded through EAFRD will aim to improve: (i) competitiveness of agriculture; (ii) environment and the countryside; and (iii) the quality of life and the management of economic activity in rural areas.

Moreover, in line with Article 12(1) of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EC) 808/2014, the Managing Authority for EAFRD will ensure the “establishment and operation of the National Rural Network and the start of its action plan at the latest 12 months after the approval by the Commission of the rural development programme.” In accordance with Article 54(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, the National Rural Network shall aim to:

- i. increase the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of rural development;
- ii. improve the quality of implementation of rural development programmes;
- iii. inform the broader public and potential beneficiaries on rural development policy and funding opportunities;
- iv. foster innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas.

Moreover, in accordance with Article 12(2) “the structure needed for running the National Rural Network shall be established either within the national or regional competent authorities or externally, by selection through tendering procedures or as a combination of both. That structure must be able to perform at least the activities referred to in Article 54(3)(b) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013.”

3.2 Responsibilities of the Managing Authorities and Beneficiaries

Article 115 of Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013 specifies that the Member State and the Managing Authority for each Operational Programme is responsible for providing information and publicising operations and co-financed programmes. The section provides an overview of the responsibilities and actions taken by the Managing Authority, Beneficiaries and Intermediate Bodies in relation to publicity and information in order to achieve the main objectives of this Communication Strategy. Furthermore this section provides information on other stakeholders who are also actively involved in information, communication and publicity events. These entities include the European Commission Representation in Malta, the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC), the Department of Information (DOI), National Commission of the Promotion of Equality (NCPE), National Commission for Persons with a Disability (NCPD), European Parliament Information Office (EPIO), Europe Direct Information Centres and Line Ministries under whose remits projects are implemented.

3.2.1 Responsibilities of the Managing Authorities

The Managing Authority is responsible for the drawing up and implementation of the Communication Strategy in accordance with Article 116 of Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013. It is also responsible for ensuring the Communication Strategy and guidelines at both Programme and project level to ensure that all activities are consistent and coordinated, thereby avoiding duplication of information where possible.

Complementary to this, some information and publicity functions will be designated to Intermediate Bodies. These functions are specified in the guidelines on the implementation system and defined in the covenants between the Managing Authorities and the designated Intermediate Bodies.

In order to ensure an effective implementation of this Strategy, Managing Authorities will further strengthen their Communication Team and ensure that there is an element of overseeing that the day-to-day management, coordination and execution of actions as stipulated in this Strategy. Moreover, in line with Article 117 of Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013, the common national information and communication officer who will act as: (a) co-ordinator of the communication activities for ESIF and of the Local Informal Information and Publicity Network; (b) the person responsible for the maintenance of the ESIF website/portal; (c) the one responsible for providing an overview of communication measures at national level.

In the execution of this strategy, the respective officers working on information and communication will undertake periodic training in the fields of marketing, communications and public relations, as well as participation in communication networks and exchanges of best practice.

In order to ensure the correct and effective use of communication measures by the Beneficiaries, the Managing Authorities will issue the Communication and Visual Identity Guidelines, which will incorporate both the information and publicity requirements to ensure that the results and achievements of the Programmes and projects are communicated as widely and effectively as possible and technical specifications and information on the appropriate use of the logos in relation to the EU Emblem and the National Flag of Malta on different media, co-financing statements, etc. This document will be available to download from the website. Also, Project Leaders will be consulting the Communication Team on a regular basis, in their application of the guidelines set out in the Communication and Visual Identity Guidelines to ensure correct adherence.

The main responsibilities of the Managing Authorities in line with Article 2.1 of Annex XII of Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013 will be as follows:

- a. Information and communication measures are implemented in line with the Communication Strategy;
- b. A programme launch event/annual major information activity is organized;
- c. The EU Flag is displayed at the Managing Authorities' premises;
- d. The list of operations is published and updated at least every six months;
- e. Examples of projects are posted on the web both in English and Maltese;

- f. Updated information about programme implementation is published, including main achievements;
- g. Involve the other stakeholders, listed under Section 3.3, in information and communication measures; and
- h. Provide information and publicity kits (including templates in electronic format) to beneficiaries (Annex XII, 3.2.2).

3.2.2 Responsibilities of the Beneficiaries

In accordance with Article 2.2 of Annex XII of Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013 the main responsibilities of the key beneficiaries include:

- a. All information and communication measures provided by the beneficiary shall acknowledge support from the Funds to the operation by displaying the EU emblem, with a reference to the EU and the specific Fund(s)²²;
- b. Information about the project has to be provided on the beneficiary's website, including a short description of the main aims and results and highlighting the support received from EU;
- c. Upon request of the Managing Authority, communication activities have to be described already at the project application stage (Annex XII, 3.1.2(e));
- d. Placing at least one poster with information about the project "at a location readily visible to the public";
- e. For ESF Operational Programme and other education projects supported by the ERDF or the CF, the beneficiary shall inform the participants of this funding; and
- f. A billboard or permanent plaque shall be displayed for infrastructure/construction operation receiving about €500,000 of public funding.

3.2.3 Responsibilities of the Intermediate Bodies

Intermediate Bodies are mandated by the Managing Authority to act as contact points for state aid schemes. The basis of this mandate lies in Clause 106 of Regulation (EC) 1303/2013. In fulfilling their role, the Intermediate Bodies are responsible to adopt information measures primarily in order to ensure the wide dissemination and take-up of the aid schemes among potential Beneficiaries. During the 2007-2013 programming period some Intermediate Bodies have issued guidelines for specific schemes in order to

²² Where the information or communication measures relates to an operation or several operations co-financed by more than one Fund, the reference for the different funds may be replaced by a reference to ESI Funds.

assist their respective Beneficiaries to carry out publicity. This will be further encouraged during the new programming period however the Managing Authorities' documents remain the main reference source for this purpose.

3.3 Collaboration with EU administrative bodies and information centres in Malta

There are various bodies responsible for the administration and/or promotion of EU funds in Malta. Throughout the development of this Communication Strategy it was noted that these bodies do not always work with the appropriate level of synergy. This results in unnecessary overlap which results in waste of resources, mixed messages to the public and the threat of publicity overkill. It is therefore important to note at the outset all the bodies directly responsible for promoting EU funds and highlight the importance of working in conjunction with one another.

When promoting EU-funded Programmes, it is essential for the Managing Authorities to consult and coordinate with the other stakeholder that may have a direct interest in that particular area of discussion. The Managing Authorities should consult with both beneficiaries and multipliers (such as MEUSAC in the case of initiatives related to NGOs or Local Councils, etc.).

- **Ministry for European Affairs and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto**

The Ministry is responsible for relations with the European Union in their wider sense, EU internal coordination and Malta's Presidency of the European Union in 2017. It also aims to strengthen the efficiency and transparency in the way European funds are used, and tackle any shortcomings which could result in the loss of funds.

- **Parliamentary Secretariat for the EU Presidency 2017 and EU Funds**

The role of the Parliamentary Secretariat is to organise and prepare for Malta's Presidency of the EU in 2017 and ensure transparency in the utilisation of European funds. In fulfilling such function, the Parliamentary Secretariat also provides visibility to the closure of the 2007-2013 Programmes and the activities within the framework of the 2014-2020 Programmes.

- **Planning and Priorities Coordination Division**

PPCD aims to ensure the efficient absorption and management of European assistance, both EU and bilateral, through effective coordination across Government Departments, Authorities, Agencies and other stakeholders. PPCD also ensures maximum transparency and information in relation to the funds which fall under its responsibility. In fulfilling its function, PPCD will organise training sessions on

communication, information activities and communication with the media, potential applicants for funding and the general public.

- **Funds and Programmes Division**

FPD handles the management of a number of EU and other funds (with the exception of mainstream Cohesion Policy Programmes) implemented by Malta. The FPD aims at ensuring the efficient absorption and management of European assistance, both EU and bilateral, through effective coordination across Government Departments, Authorities, Agencies and other stakeholders. Apart from providing the above-mentioned services, FPD also ensures maximum visibility, awareness and transparency in relation to the management of the funds which fall under its responsibility. This function is carried out through the organisation of information and publicity activities targeting potential applicants for funding and also the general public, together with communication with the media.

- **Line Ministries**

Communication Offices within the various Line Ministries under which remit projects are implemented, play a fundamental role in the dissemination of information on the projects being implemented and co-financed under the Programmes. The involvement of Ministries in the promotion of interventions being implemented through EU funds is crucial since media coverage is practically guaranteed across all sources. Moreover, these often organise or help in the organisation of project inaugurations, press conference and press releases, all of which are financed through national resources and simultaneously generate a lot of free publicity through media coverage.

- **Department of Information**

DOI is the government's own centralized information hub which provides the public with up-to-date and comprehensive information on Government policies, services and activities as well as on matters of public interest. Thus, it keeps a record of all press releases, press conferences and project visits which would have involved the Ministry in charge of the project. Close coordination and cooperation with these offices, whether by the Beneficiary, the Intermediate Body or the Managing Authority is required in order to ensure the correct and widespread dissemination of the information on EU funds.

- **Malta-EU Steering Action Committee**

MEUSAC is a government agency providing information and consultation on EU policies and laws, as well as personalised assistance to NGOs and local councils looking to tap into and make use of EU funds.

- **European Parliament Information Office**

EPIO is part of a network of offices set up in the capital of each Member State. Its role is to answer citizens' questions about the role and work of the European Parliament while working closely with the media.

- **European Commission Representation in Malta**

The European Commission Representation in Malta is responsible for informing the media and the public about EU policies. In turn, it reports any significant development in Malta to the European Commission.

- **Europe Direct Information Centres**

A network of non-governmental information centres in every EU Member State. Through their expert staff such centres manage and provide replies to citizens' questions related to EU rights, funding, etc. They are also responsible for organising information and networking events.

- **National Commission for the Promotion of Equality**

NCPE is an independent, government funded body set up by virtue of Chapter 456 of the Laws of Malta in January 2004. The primary task of NCPE is to monitor the implementation of the: (a) Cap 456 – Equality of Men and Women Act; (b) Legal Notice 85 of 2007 – Equal Treatment; (c) Legal Notice 181 of 2008 – Access to Goods and Services and their Supply (Equal Treatment) Regulations; and (d) Legal Notice 316 of 2011 – Procedure for Investigation Regulations. The Commission also works to ensure that Maltese society is free from any form of discrimination based on:

- i. sex/gender and family responsibilities, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, racial or ethnic origin, and gender identity in employment; banks and financial institutions, as well as education; and
- ii. racial/ethnic origin and gender in the provision of goods and services and their supply.

- **National Commission for Persons with Disability**

In February 2000, NCPD was officially founded in accordance with Act No. 1 of the year 2000, the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act. The Commission is committed to rendering Maltese society an inclusive one, in such a way that persons with disability reach their full potential in all aspects of life, enjoying a high quality of life thanks to equal opportunities. In fulfilling this mission, NCPD works in order to eliminate any form of direct or indirect social discrimination against persons with disability and their families while providing them with the necessary assistance and support.

3.4 Target Recipients of the Communication Actions

Measures and activities in communication and information of the programmes require planning, implementation and evaluation at the level of the following three main target groups:

- The **Public** can be further sub-divided into the following two main groups:
 - The Professional Public and Potential Multipliers of Information, including the media, information agencies, research or academic institutions, local councils, social partners and NGOs, trade and professional groups, potential contractors and economic operators, lobby group and other organisations.
 - The General Public, including both the population as a whole, and specific sub-groups which particular programmes or measures are designed to benefit, including but not limited to, the inactive, unemployed, employed, students, disadvantaged persons, farmers, and fishermen.
- **Beneficiaries**, that is, organisations responsible for implementing projects selected for funding as defined under Article 2 of Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013. Therefore, these include “a public or private body and, for the purposes of the EAFRD Regulation and of the EMFF Regulation only, a natural person, responsible for initiating or both initiating and implementing operations; and in the context of State Aid Schemes, as defined in point 13 of this Article, the body which receives the aid; and in the context of financial instruments under Title IV of Part Two of this Regulation, it means the body that implements the financial instrument or the fund of funds as appropriate.”
- **Potential Beneficiaries** as defined in the broad target groups identified under the respective Operational Programmes/Rural Development Programme. These include public sector organisations, Ministries, departments, entities, authorities, public commissions, public sector foundations, local councils, other organisations such as social partners, business organisations, NGOs and voluntary organisations who conform to the eligibility criteria as well as public or private firms which may be eligible for funding through Aid Schemes.

4. Key Communication Messages

Communication activities will be delivered in a consistent and targeted manner during the entire implementation period hence key communication messages need to be given continuous exposure.

According to Annex XII of Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013, all information and communication measures will be acknowledged by displaying the Union Emblem in accordance with the technical characteristics laid down in the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 821/2014, together with a reference to the Union and a reference to the fund or funds supporting the operation. Where an information or communication measure relates to an operation or several operations co-financed by more than one fund, references to the funds may be replaced by the ESIF. In line with this principle, the statement covering the ESIF will be: *European Union: European Structural and Investment Funds*.

4.1.1 Key Message Content

The Managing Authorities will develop one or two simple overarching messages to reach all the target audiences. When developing such messages, the Managing Authorities recognise that the simpler the message, the more memorable and recognisable it becomes, particularly any overarching messages which are targeted mainly to the general public. The main issue will be to generate interest amongst the target groups i.e. convey a human story to the general public as stories are able to give messages a human face potentially allowing people to connect more easily. Furthermore, it is being envisaged that a number of messages will be tailor-made to specific target groups e.g. a key message to young people could be “EU Funding helps to create jobs and other opportunities”. Effective messages may also take the form of short bites which are not able to tell the whole story. In this regard, the Managing Authority will develop a message(s) based on a unifying element which captures the essence of what EU funding is actually doing.

Additionally such statements will be also complemented by the messages conveyed through the titles of the Malta’s Operational Programmes / Rural Development Programme namely:

- i. European Regional Development Fund: Fostering a competitive and sustainable economy to meet our challenges;
- ii. European Social Fund: Investing in human capital to create more opportunities and promote the wellbeing of society;
- iii. European Maritime and Fisheries Funds: Investing in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture;

- iv. European Agricultural Fund for Regional Development: Europe investing in rural areas.

Such statements refer to the objective and results of the ESIF 2014-2020 and can be used for both Programme and project level initiatives. Furthermore it is envisaged that short-term messages relating to specific goals and successes may be promoted during specific stages of the Programme cycle whilst long-term messages will feature throughout the whole Programming cycle in a consistent manner for the public to absorb and understand.

The key messages will be adapted to the needs and experience of the related target groups. They must be backed up by clear, consistent message content. Clear and timely messages will be delivered to all the key target groups including the related sub-groups. All information and communication activities need to deliver a consistent message that provides visibility and transparency for all the actions financed through ESIF.

The Communication Strategy's key message content can be divided into two broad categories:

1. Ensuring Transparency: Technical and Procedural Information

- The content of the ESIF Operational Programmes / Rural Development Programme and their financial contribution;
- The conditions of eligibility to be met in order to qualify for financing under the respective funds and the application process;
- Timeframes relating to each call for proposals;
- The criteria for selecting the operations to be financed;
- The contact details of individuals who can provide information on the Operational Programmes Rural Development Programme.

2. Information related to strategy, aims and results to increase visibility and awareness

- The aims and objectives of ESIF, as well as their underlying principles and relation with other EU policies and national objectives;
- The role of the European Community and the ESIF;
- The aims, objectives, achievements and results of the five Operational Programmes (including major projects where relevant) being supported under ESIF;
- The list of beneficiaries, names of operations and amount of public funding allocated to each;
- The ESIF 2014-2020 visual identity and branding – mainly through the single use of a logo for ESIF to create more consistency and better recognition.

4.1.2 Style and Approach

The Managing Authorities will adopt an informative style and tone when delivering their message, to ensure that communication activities are perceived as being neutral, unbiased and factual. It is being foreseen that through the use of the widespread media opportunities available across Malta and Gozo, efforts will be made to ensure the widest outreach amongst the general public.

The Managing Authorities will take an educational approach to certain communication activities where the target audience requires training as well as the delivery of information. This may be particularly necessary for beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries in order to equip them with the necessary knowledge to implement their respective projects successfully. In the case of annual events, a less technical approach will be adopted in order to target the wider public. This will ensure better understanding of the subject.

4.1.3 Language

Since Malta has two official languages: Maltese and English, the language used in the planned activities would be either Maltese or English or both, depending on the target audience and the nature of the publicity action. The use of the Maltese language will be encouraged to ensure the widest audience possible. Interactivity will be encouraged at all levels and where possible all communication measures must involve the use of simple terms and avoid jargon or acronyms as much as possible.

4.2 Timing

During the 2014-2020 programming period, the communication process will be divided in a number of phases. These phases, as indicated in the hereunder diagram, are designed in a manner that they can be extended or shortened by the Managing Authorities in order for communication measures to respond to the actual programme implementation and its communication needs.

Communication's Phases	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Information of the results of the previous programming period									
Building knowledge and information									
Attracting potential beneficiaries to apply for EU funds									
Assistance to Beneficiaries									
Building awareness of results and benefits									

- **Information of the results of the previous programming period:** During this initial phase all the target groups will be informed of benefits and results achieved in the previous programming period in order to set the way forward of the new opportunities provided under the 2014-2020 programming period.
- **Building knowledge and information:** During this phase, the provision of information related to the new programming period will be provided in terms of the Programmes, their objectives, structures, contents, etc. It is of extreme importance that during this phase the general public, potential applicants and beneficiaries are well informed. The content of the Operational Programmes/Rural Development Programme will be comprehensively presented and the Managing Authorities will ensure a clear understanding of the areas of aid falling within the remit of these Programmes.
- **Attracting potential beneficiaries to apply for EU funds:** This consists of attracting the attention of potential applicants to specific opportunities for their involvement in EU funding through understandable and simple language. This will ensure awareness of the process of compiling and submitting the EU funds application form. Such phase will be promoting an open and communicative

approach by the Managing Authorities through clear information interfaces and through the involvement of partners in order to ensure the maximum information distribution.

- **Assistance:** The necessary assistance will be provided through an increased effort in the information sessions to improve the quality level of the applications filed. During this phase, Beneficiaries will be also provided with the necessary assistance in relation to the administration and successful completion of projects.

- **Building awareness of results and benefits:** Such phase will be active through the whole programming period in terms of providing continuous information and building general awareness of the results and benefits provided through ESIF. Supported projects will be presented through the expected/achieved benefits for the development and improvement of the society's wellbeing. The main objective is to emphasis on the presentation of the benefits of ESIF on the quality of lives of people. This phase will also trigger off the activation of interest in future programme period.

5. Information and Publicity Measures

The communication activities of this Strategy will support the implementation of the ESIF by ensuring that the key elements of these funds are understood by all the actors involved in the preparation of the Partnership Agreement and Operational Programmes covering the 2014-2020 programming period. In line with the reinforced focus on results for the 2014-2020 programming period, the respective Managing Authorities will further strengthen the way data is published concerning the impact and results of Programmes.

In view of the growing access to information provided by the fast developing communication environment and by taking into account the country specific context, the respective Managing Authorities will aim to increase the knowledge and understanding of EU policies related to ESIF. Thus, the Managing Authorities, in conjunction with other stakeholders, will provide joint effort to bring the EU closer to its citizens.

Communication on the key achievements of the EU projects is essential to attract multipliers and other target groups for example through the dissemination of information about the related outcomes through digital, written information and via a variety of communication tools. The communication objectives and target audiences, as outlined in Section 3.4, can be achieved by identifying the most suitable and effective communication tools and methods to be used.

On the basis of the 2007-2013 programming period, the Managing Authorities are considering the shift from a 'push' to a 'pull' mentality in communication, by better identifying and responding to the real needs of the respective target audience. This shift in mentality can only be achieved by defining messages and using a combination of different measures to reach the target groups. This will be also achieved by conducting better research analysis regarding the needs of stakeholders, general public, media, etc.

A priori there is no preference for any specific communication tool or activity, but the respective Managing Authorities will opt for an integrated communication approach, i.e. combining different communication tools to reach the objectives of the strategy. In this regard, a number of activities will be common for the five ESIF, such as major annual events and a common logo, while other activities will be fund specific, such as information sessions, call for applications adverts, etc. On the same principle, the respective Managing Authorities would benefit from utilizing better the full-potential of electronic and web-based communication tools.

The following section provides an indicative list of communication measures, potential tools, target groups and relevant fund/s complete with the compulsory measures stipulated by the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 821/2014 and any other fund-specific Regulation.

5.1 Communication Measures

- **Development of a Visual Identity**

In order for communication activities to be successful and fruitful, it is imperative that measures related to the ESIF are immediately recognizable to all target audiences in Malta and Gozo over the entire programming period. To this effect, the Managing Authorities have drawn up a common logo in order to promote a coherent image of EU funding. The ESIF logo, as shown hereunder, was locally designed around the plus sign which represents a symbol for growth, value added and a positive experience to reflect the role of the EU Community, together with the national contribution in the implementation of the ESIF 2014-2020. Moreover, the main ESIF logo incorporates the colours of the EU palette.



On the basis of the main ESIF logo, additional six sub-logos have been created. These will be used for the different funds (ERDF, CF, ESF, EAFRD, EMFF and SME initiative). The development of one logo adapted for ESIF and a unique logo for all the other respective funds will help in defining a clear and holistic identity for the ESIF, thus reflecting the role played by both the EU and Malta. The logos shall be used on all communication tools and measures, together with the co-financing banner and flags.

- **Communication and Visual Identity Guidelines**

The finalization of such logo will pave the way for the development of the communication and visual identity guidelines, including graphical specification created on the mandatory use of the logo(s) and their incorporation in relation with the Maltese Flag and the EU Emblem and other technical specifications. The MA shall ensure that the correct use of the communication and visual identity requirements is done even on the less traditional means of communication and promotion of EU funds.

Such guidelines will also assist the beneficiaries in drawing up their communication and publicity activities and ensure that they carry out the responsibilities and requirements set by the Implementing Regulation. Furthermore, the MA will issue guidelines on the obligatory text to be used on common

communication tools which are issued in relation to projects part-financed by ESIF or by the respective funds. These texts, together with the necessary templates will be easily downloadable from the MA's website.

The various guidelines will be available online to all persons involved in carrying out communications actions such as project leaders, horizontal stakeholders etc. These guidelines will be reinforced by regular communication between the Project Leaders and the respective MAs through training sessions on the various steps of project implementation, including the publicity requirements. Furthermore, in this regard both PPCD and FPD will join forces to ensure the continuation of the LIIP in order to promote, discuss and update the necessary guidelines.

Given the dynamic nature and constant innovation in the field of media and online communication, both PPCD and FPD shall ensure the necessary updates of its guidelines to reflect current trends, amongst them social networks and websites. The MAs shall inform potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries about the Communication and Visual Identity Guidelines by organizing training sessions and by providing guidance through e-mails and telecom consultation.

- **The use of the EU flag and the EU anthem**

As required by the Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013 Annex XIII Article 2.1 (c), the MA shall ensure that the EU flag is hoisted at the MA's premises. Furthermore the EU flag will be also shown outside the MA premises on Europe Day (9th May). Further to this, the EU flag, together with the Maltese flag, will be displayed during events and information sessions. These will always form part of the specifications of items to be provided by the venues procured to hold training seminars, information sessions, conferences etc.

The EU emblem, together with the Maltese flag, shall be displayed on all publicity and information materials as per Article 4 of Commission Implementing Regulation 1303/2013. This will ensure that all MA information tools serve the purpose of linking European public sphere and the national sphere. The MA shall ensure that the role of the European Union is highlighted in ESIF actions, as required by Articles 115-117 of the CPR.

- **Launching of the respective Operational Programmes/Rural Development Programme**

This event is required by Annex XII Article 2.1(2)(a) of the CPR which describes the responsibilities the Managing Authorities have in the dissemination of information and publicity measures to the public:

The Member State or Managing Authority shall be responsible for the following information and communication measures:

(a) Organising a major information activity publicising the launch the operational programme or programmes, even prior to the approval of the relevant communication strategies.

In view of the different timing of the approval obtained by the European Commission for the different OPs, the respective MAs opted to hold different events to launch the OPs. The launch of Operational Programme I (ERDF/CF) and Operational Programme II (ESF) was held on 11th March and the launch of the EMFF Operational Programme was held on the 26th March 2015. The Deputy Prime Minister, The Parliamentary Secretary [MEAIM], key officials from the European Commission and representatives of the Managing Authority participated in both events. The audience included amongst others representatives from the various Line Ministries, potential beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The event was covered by the local media. In addition, representative from the MA participated in a popular TV programme to further promote the launch of the OPs. It is being envisaged that the Rural Development Programme launch event will be held in Q4 2015 pending approval from the European Commission

Both launch events presented the various priorities identified for the Operational Programmes. The conferences also gave space to questions from the floor and discussions. The ESIF brand image was drawn up and used to link the conferences with the artwork used on all main information material, including backdrop sign, PowerPoint presentation and printed documents. This branding will be used through the whole programming period. Copies of the Operational Programmes were distributed to all the participants present and to all interested parties in Malta and Gozo. The Operational Programmes for ERDF/CF, ESF, EMFF were made available online where they are still retrievable today from the website portal www.eufunds.gov.mt.

As the programmes are the core of policy, the respective MAs will ensure that their effective and efficient promotion is a priority which will aim mainly at reaching the widest media coverage and targeting specific multipliers and stakeholders. The launch of the OPs will also be accompanied by a series of actions which will be based on the principle that all communication effort (press releases, publications etc) should include clear and coherent messages that reflect emphasis on investment and results. Further to this all the stakeholders (including MA, Commission Representatives, European Direct Information Centres) will be equipped to communicate on the Programmes e.g. priorities, objectives, investment areas of ESIF. A series of information sessions and events targeted to the different target groups will be held in relation to the different thematic areas under the different Programmes.

In this regard, PPCD issued a tender in Q1 2015 to develop a multi-faceted Action Plan to publicise Malta's ESIF Programmes during the first year after the launch of the OPs. The main scope is to develop

an Action Plan encompassing all the necessary events, activities and promotional measures. Such strategy is to capture the different targeted audiences (including actual/potential beneficiaries, such as Local Councils, NGOs and enterprises and the wider public including children, youths, vulnerable persons, older people, persons with disability, etc.) and the different messages to be delivered through the best possible mix of communication and distribution channels. The Action Plan should also increase awareness of the OPs and their respective thematic areas (Priority Axis) among the general public, stakeholders, the media and beneficiaries, and highlight also the achievements obtained in the 2007-2013 programming period.

In this regard PPCD issued a tender in Q1 2015 to develop a multi-faceted Action Plan to publicize Malta's ESIF Programmes during the first year after their launch. The main scope is to develop an Action Plan encompassing all the necessary events, activities and promotional measures/tools to address the different targeted audiences (including actual/potential beneficiaries, such as Local Councils, NGOs and enterprises and the wider public including children, youths, vulnerable persons, older people, persons with disability, etc.) and the different messages to be delivered through the best possible mix of communication and distribution channels. The Action Plan should also increase awareness of the OPs and their respective thematic areas (Priority Axis) and highlight also the achievements obtained in the 2007-2013 programming period. Additional actions in view of the campaign relation to the launch of the Operational Programmes will be related to the development/improved content of the website, in order to align it with other communication actions.

Should any changes to the Programmes be effected at any time during the programming period, these will be communicated to the stakeholders on a regular basis or as required through presentations at the Monitoring Committees which will be made available online. Furthermore, the updated relevant OP versions are immediately uploaded on the MA's website for ease of reference upon approval of changes.

- **Organisation and conduction of common information campaign and activities/events**

At the start of the programming period, in accordance with Annex XII, Article 2(A) of Regulation 1303/2013 a common information activity publicizing the launch of the operational programmes will be held with main objective of informing each of the targets and sub-groups of the new programmes and opportunities for financing. From 2018 onwards a common information campaign will be held to inform target groups and related sub-groups of the best examples for the implementation of the programme, the progress made and future funding opportunities. Another campaign will be held at the end of the programming period whereby the objective will be the promoting the specific benefits achieved through the implementation of the programmes among the target groups.

Further to this in line with Annex XII, Article 2(b) all MAs will organise a common major information activity/event on a yearly basis which will aim to increase the public confidence of the PA and the programmes. The aim of the information activity/event will promote the opportunities of financing and the strategy pursued and success of the OPs including large projects and examples of other projects as deemed appropriate by the respective MAs in consultation with the necessary stakeholders. Such activities/events will be targeted mainly to beneficiaries, stakeholders, the general public which will be combined with an effective media outreach. In this regard, the MAs will mobilise and promote exchanges of experience between the core stakeholders and other target audiences directly reaching several during the course of the year.

An indicative list of annual information events includes: information seminars, trade fair participation, exhibitions, national conferences, road shows, intervention site open days and site visits. The selection of annual information events will be decided following further discussion and consultation between the respective MAs after taking into account the respective implementation and progress achieved of the OPs. The participation of horizontal stakeholders, project leaders will further enhance such events. It is envisaged that during such events talks and activities are held to communicate on a direct and face to face level. The promotion of such events/activities in order to attract all the related target groups will be supported by a communication campaign, which will comprise press releases, advertising, distribution of promotional material and display of relevant signage such as backdrops, posters and audio-visual material. The publicity campaign will be spread over a number of weeks prior to such events. Notwithstanding, such campaign will be proportional to the scale of the respective annual event being implemented.

- **Participation in related events and activities**

Apart from the annual information events, the respective MAs will also participate in various events and activities organised by institutional stakeholders and potential multipliers. On such occasions, the MAs will also participate by staffing their own exhibition stand, giving talks and participating in relevant discussions, distributing promotional material, displaying posters and audio visual materials etc.

- **Network and Exchange of experiences**

Article 117 (2) makes reference to the coordination of a national network to ensure exchanges of good practice in the field of information and publicity, including the results of implementation and exchanges of experiences in implementing such measures.

- **Local Informal Information and Publicity Network**

The function and scope of the LIIP will be to discuss the way forward on providing information on ESIF, foster the exchange of best practice and further reinforce cooperation amongst the stakeholders. The participation of designated entities³ will be strongly recommended to support the necessary efforts in order to ensure: (a) a better understanding and application of publicity requirements of EU projects; (b) the best measures are being used to increase the awareness amongst the target groups in view of the EU projects and their benefits. Such network will be steered by the centralized coordinating body and will meet at least once a year.

- **Participation in European Networks**

The Communication officers within the respective MAs will be kept updated on examples of best practice, tools and measures developed by other MS, EC and share their own experience through participation in the European networks. Additionally the designated officer(s) will also participate in meetings, conferences dealing with information and publicity related to ESIF. Following participation in such meetings and conferences the respective communication officers with both MAs will exchange their learning and experience obtained.

- **Promotional Material**

With the main aim of boosting promotional measures in a creative way, a series of branded items will be developed as free promotional material to be distributed at the MAs' key events. Items vary from folders, pen-drives, sticky-notes⁴ and more. Procurement is made through competitive tendering or requests for quotations, depending on the cost. Where possible, and according to availability, use of environmentally friendly items and materials is applied. Unless it is agreed to procure specific items for specific campaigns or events, promotional items will carry the ESIF visual identity symbol as to maximize their utilisation over the related funds.

- **Media Campaign**

The media campaign includes measures that can be used at different points during the Programme life cycle. While print adverts will be a constant feature throughout the programming period due to their use in promoting calls for project proposals and events, other more measures such as audio visual products

³³ Such entities include: beneficiaries, representatives from Line Ministries, MEUSAC, European Commission Representation in Malta.

⁴ These are all indicative

like documentaries can be applied at specific milestones like project/programme launch, closure or throughout the actual implementation of the project especially if the project itself is based on raising awareness on a particular policy or initiative and so on.

- **Media Advertising**

Media Advertising will mainly consist of the paid advertising on television, radio, national newspapers and internet sites which play a key role in message delivery. These will include advertorials and adverts (both printed and audio visual) on national media and publications. In this regard design and audio visual agencies could be needed to assist in the production of these media materials. The MA will ensure that when considering media buying advertising it is important that the latest audience patterns are reviewed and utilised to ensure that the medium selected has the maximum coverage and the budget allocated is being spent on the most cost effective measure. Furthermore, such option will be timed to coincide with the key stages in the programming cycle so as to maximise their utility e.g. audio-visual advertising would require a certain amount of advancement in the projects.

- **Outdoor Advertising**

Outdoor advertising will be used to complement the rest of publicity and information measures. During the 2007-2013, a number of average-sized posters were created and distributed to various government departments, local authorities and beneficiary organisations to attach on their notice-boards and were also utilised during the MA's information events. In line with the Commission Regulation Annex XII Article 2.2 (2b) the MA will ensure that the beneficiary will place at least one poster with information about the project (minimum A3), including the financial support from the Union, at a location readily visible to the public.

Projects which exceed the total public support amounting to €500.000, in line with Art.2.2(4) of the Commission Regulation EC 1303/2013 need to put a billboard at a visible site of each operation during the implementation of the operation. This is then replaced by a permanent plaque which is affixed no later than three months following the completion of the operation. This applies to projects which consist in the purchase of a physical object or in the financing of infrastructure or of construction operations. The plaque or billboard shall state the name and the main objective of the operation.

- **Communication with Media and Public Relations**

It is important that citizens are kept informed about ESIF, its impact at a national level and on people's daily life. The respective MAs will work to keep the media informed on key developments and main achievements. This will involve the necessary collaboration with stakeholders to ensure the provision of timely responses to press enquiries, draft releases and so on. In 2015, a number of press activities were organized to mark the adoption of the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes (ERDF/CF/ESF/EMFF). Specific actions in this regard will include: press releases; In-depth print; press conferences; and participation of the MA in popular radio and TV shows.

- **Audio-Visual Products**

The production and distribution of audio-visual items facilitates the dissemination of information to the public and media. Thus, audio-visual products, including video testimonials and photos of projects that have received funding, can be an effective tool to communicate the results of ESIF. These measures will be used to explain the objectives, sharing best practices and disseminating information about ESIF. In order to achieve maximum impact, greater attention will be devoted to the dissemination of video and photo materials which will be mainly distributed to EU information agencies, the media, local authorities and stakeholders and also feature during events and broadcast. The effectiveness of such measures will be further increased by uploading audio-visuals on the website and the social networking page. As experienced during the 2007-2013 programming period, the MAs or any stakeholder/s identified in this strategy will continue to accept invitations to participate in radio/TV talk shows in order to illustrate specific themes in relation to the OPs or to promote activities such as the Annual Events and other key events.

Specific product in relation to audio-visual could include promotion of videos/spots and TV/DVD documentaries. In this regard, the MAs will produce promotional videos and spots that can be broadcasted on radio or TV. The concept used will be formulated in a way that the audience can grasp quickly and easily the message being conveyed. Such spots can potentially reach a substantial number of viewers (albeit at a significant cost).

- **Informative Publications & Collateral Materials**

Information materials are imperative to ensure successful message dissemination since these play a key communicative role. Such measure is taken into consideration in the light of the general trend leading to a reduction in the amount of printed publication, as this trend is driven by a number of factors including

changing reading habits, cost effectiveness and environmental impact. Both MAs shall consider having such material primarily in an electronic format in order to respect Green initiatives; nonetheless an amount of printed material shall continue as computerised communication techniques are not accessible to everyone.

In terms of longer term availability, the MAs shall consider creating online publications which can be accessed at any time and remain available long after the printed publications run out. Publication produced by the MA shall also be complemented by more generic publication which the Commission makes available to all Member States for ease of dissemination through its bookshop.

The basic publications, such as flyers, leaflets and brochures, shall aim to deliver general information without entering into too much depth. On the other hand booklets, reports and other documents shall highlight or deliver in-depth overviews linked to the OPs and/or to other MAs initiatives. These publications shall have a particular target audience set and thus the kind of language will be taken into consideration, with the inclusion of a glossary of terms and limited use of jargon.

All MAs will, therefore, continue during the 2014-2020 programming period to produce a limited number of printed products with a clear link to the communication strategy objective and targeted audiences. An indicative list of products includes: general leaflets, key publications such as e-books. In this regard the MA will ensure that such informative publications and collateral material will act a medium by which the general public shares understanding and ownership of the final benefits which are received through the intervention.

- **Maintenance of a Single Portal on EU Funds**

Online tools continue to represent one of the most efficient and cost effective ways of disseminating information. Internet penetration figures for Malta clearly indicate that many individuals have become accustomed to referring to the Internet as their primary source of information. In December 2013, half of the Maltese population was internet users⁵. From 2007 till 2014 broadband access in the EU has increased by thirty-six percentage points (from 42% to 78%) and almost all countries have experienced a

⁵ Accessed on 23rd April 2015: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/>

significant increase. Malta was one of the countries with the sharpest increase in broadband internet access by thirty-six percentage points (from 44% to 80%)⁶.

The single web-based portal for general information on ESIF funds in Malta provides detailed information about documents related to funds, current issues, news regular events, forthcoming and open calls for proposals and tender procedures. The website contains information on all Programmes and initiatives managed by PPCD and FPD. The lists of beneficiaries, including the name, a short description of the each operation and the amount of public funding allocated to each operation shall be included on the website. Such list of operations will be published and updated every 6 months, whereby the data will be published in a spreadsheet format (for instance CSV or XML: open data format) according to Article 115(2) of Regulation 1303/2013. Furthermore, downloadable versions of all relevant documentation are available on the site, including information required by the Commission Regulation, Annex XII Article 2.1 (e)(f). Each Managing Authority will regularly update the information regarding the implementation of the Programmes on the website. Furthermore, the MA will ensure that it is in line with Implementing Act 821/2014 Article 4, whereby the Union Emblem and the reference to the Union shall be visible, when landing on the website, inside the viewing area of a digital device, without requiring the user to scroll the down the page.

The respective MAs acknowledge that there is still room for improvement with regard to its structuring. Several improvements are planned such as improving the presentation of the content related to 2014-2020 funding period; upgrading general sections of the website; improving navigation, presentation and usability. The MA's presence on social networks shall continue to be promoted.

The website has a link to the MA's generic address info.ppcd@gov.mt which functions as an email Helpdesk. The website will also appropriately publicised on all promotional and advertising material. This provides for a direct contact with all stakeholders and enables the MA to gather opinions and suggestion. On the other hand the Helpdesk service will include a specific helpdesk telephone whereby any queries will be answered by the respective information and communication officers. Both Helpdesks shall be heavily publicised on all promotional and informative material produced by the MA. The

Helpdesk is mainly targeted for potential beneficiaries and the general public who require more in-depth information. The MA shall also continue to refer certain queries to other information points.

- **Mail shots**

Through its website, the MA will provide the possibility for interested parties to register to an electronic mailing list whereby they can receive update alerts and information related to events and calls being organised and issued. This e-distribution tool offers the possibility of sending information and promotional material promptly and directly to interested parties.

- **Social Media**

Social media refer to online technologies and practices that are used to share opinions and information, promote discussion, and build relationships. They use a variety of different formats, including text, pictures, audio and video. Social media plays an increasingly prominent role in social interaction in fact nowadays more citizens are active on social networks. To this effect both PPCD and FPD will use these platforms to reach out and connect with citizens and stakeholders. During the recent years, social media have proved to be an increasingly effective tool for cooperation and exchanges with stakeholders and other target audiences including journalists. As noted earlier on, this allows for images from events to be uploaded, sharing of media as well as a secondary outlet for the dissemination of information related notification, event announcements etc.

The social media presence will be further strengthened during the 2014+ programming period whereby the respective MAs will use such measures mainly for the following purposes: communication on the priorities and achievement of ESIF and stakeholder and campaign communication. In terms of communicating the priorities and achievement of ESIF, the purpose of this type of communication is relaying official announcements, press releases and statements in a consistent and coherent way. The main priorities during the initial phases of the 2014+ programming period will include the further support for the enhancement of the social media presence. This communication will be done on behalf of the respective MAs by a designated communication and information officer. In view of the stakeholder and campaign communication, the purposes of this type of communication vary from: informing citizens; sharing experiences; promoting campaigns and engaging with stakeholders.

- **Training Seminars/Courses on Information and Communication and Publicity Measures**

A number of information seminars will be organised with a capacity building purpose in line with Structural and Investment Funds Training Strategy⁷. The aim of such seminars/courses will deal specifically with the development of skills and competences in order to upgrade the capability of stakeholders. In view of the information and publicity measures during such training there will be specific sessions on the various information and publicity requirements set out in the Regulation. This will be done through a technical presentation as well as through a demonstration of best practice examples and discussion on innovative ways on how to reach out and deliver the right message to the desired audience.

- **Information Events and Sessions**

Information sessions are seen as a critical tool when a call for project proposals is launched. Information sessions are usually held both in Malta and in Gozo in order to ensure the widest outreach to potential project proponents. During these sessions, Senior Management and Project Managers from the Managing Authorities, walk the participants through the various steps which are involved in the application process and the eventual project selection and implementation. In this way, project proponents would be in a better position to submit well written applications which are supported by the required time and human resources, as well as any required documentation (depending on the nature of the project). The sessions also include a Question and Answer session whereby participants can request further clarifications and information on the subject of the open call. Such questions and answers are then collated and uploaded on the MA's website.

The various IBs and Beneficiaries, particularly those with projects of a less tangible nature such as schemes, training initiatives and similar, also hold a number of meetings with potential applicants in order to explain the necessary publicity and communication requirement. In this regard, specific training will be also provided to the IBs in order to ensure they are aware of the necessary requirements and can guide there applicants accordingly.

- **Other information and communication measures**

During the Programme period, unforeseen information and publicity requirements may arise which the MAs need to make an allowance for. Such participation is not pre-planned and depends on an invitation received by the MA. Furthermore, this measure also provides for the purchase of self-adhesive stickers

⁷ Training Plan for ESIF Stakeholders – February 2015

with the co-financing statement which are affixed to items procured through Technical Assistance by the Managing Authority.

- **Communication activities for persons with disabilities**

In line with Annex XII of the Regulation 1303/2014, the MAs will prepare information material that will be accessible to persons with disability. It is important to inform this type of specific sub-target group of any possibilities and opportunities offered by the implementation of projects aimed at people with disabilities. It is necessary to adapt the form of communication and medium to the specific types of disabilities and constantly remove barriers for the access to the information presented through the Internet, multimedia instruments and so on. At the same time it will be necessary to cooperate with expert organisations such as NCPE and KNPD in order to further enable the distribution of information.

- **Annual Communication Plan**

On a yearly basis, the MA will prepare an Annual Communication Plan (ACP) in line with Article 4(i) of Annex XII of Regulation (EC) 1303/2013. The Annual Communication will be subject to the approval by the Monitoring Committee of the ERDF and CF and to reporting to the respective Monitoring Committees of the related Programmes. Furthermore the implementation of the ACP is reported at least once a year at the meeting of the MC of the Programme. In case of change in the ACP, the same order of approval should be followed. The information and communication measures planned and implemented by the respective MAs must comply with the principles of sound management; they must be effective, efficient and relevant to the needs of the target groups. Such Annual Communication Plan will mainly contain:

- Summary of the communication measures/activities for the given year
- Setting of objectives for the given year
- Description of communication activities in relation to the target groups
- Indicative schedule of activities and budget
- Description of the entities involved including human resources responsible for the implementation of information and promotion measures
- Schedule of evaluation and reporting of the fulfillment of indicators.

6. Monitoring & Evaluation

The effectiveness of communication interventions needs to be measured on a regular basis to ascertain that the desired level of message penetration is being achieved. It is therefore essential to take a sustained, systematic approach to evaluation and monitoring. The results of evaluation and monitoring exercises are used to adapt or strengthen the Strategy where necessary. The means used for monitoring and evaluating the Communication Plan shall be proportional to the information and publicity measured identified in this Strategy. This section outlines the approach with regard to the evaluation of the Communication Plan setting out the output and result indicators. It includes an outline of the data collection measures and assessment exercises to be followed to support the evaluation of the Plan. Furthermore, this chapter concludes with the reporting procedure to be conducted with regard to the Communication Plan.

In line with the Annex XII Article 4(G) the information and communication will be evaluated in terms of visibility and awareness of the policy, operational programmes and operations, and of the role played by the Funds and the Union through measurement of the: (a) achievement obtained in terms of the physical performance/progress (outputs); (b) effect/result through surveys/questionnaires.

Evaluation and monitoring of the implementation related to information and communication activities will be performed through:

- Conducting national representative surveys/questionnaires following major communication campaigns and the annual events in order to assess the awareness and visibility of in relation to the Programmes and operations;
- Regular media monitoring and content analysis of publications and broadcasts in the media related to ESIF topics;
- The reporting system for monitoring the data of programmes for reporting of activities they perform;
- An evaluation analysis of the overall implementation of the annual plans for information and communication on the programmes.

Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of communication activities is performed through indicators at the level of outputs and results of implemented measures of awareness and publicity. The strategic objectives set by the Communication Strategy namely ensuring transparency and increasing visibility and awareness are measured and assessed in Malta through the following result indicator: *Percentage of people aware of EU financed projects in Malta.*

According to the Flash Euro Barometer 384 which assessed the *Citizens awareness and perceptions of EU Regional* in 2013, around 35% of the Maltese have heard about EU co-financed projects. The result indicator in relation to the operational objectives is listed in the here under table:

Operational Objective	Result Indicator	Baseline	Target
Promote the role of the EU and European Funding Ensure Transparency Increase visibility and awareness	<i>Percentage of people aware of EU financed projects in Malta</i>	35% ⁸	40%

On the other hand the output indicators aim to quantify the tools created through the activities involved in implementing the Communication Plan at programme and project level. The output indicators are as follows:

Indicator	Target
Number of publicity measures undertaken	60
Number of studies/research activities carried out	6

The information and communication officers will engage themselves in on going and constant monitoring in order to keep track record of all the publicity measures being implemented at programme level, also closely liaising with other entities which promote EU funds and policies as well as Project Leaders to ensure that the best approaches are implemented.

Following the practice carried out during the 2007-2013 programming period, the respective MAs will extend their monitoring to project-level actions forming a specific section to the Project Progress Report (PPR). Such section within the PPR requests Project Leaders to specifically quantify the publicity measures implemented with a view to keep a track record of actions carried out over a particular reporting period. The respective MAs will ensure that the proposed information and publicity actions are in line with Grant Agreement and subsequent addenda, on the basis of the guidelines issued by the MA.

⁸ Extracted from the Flash Eurobarometer Report Number 384 entitled "Citizens Awareness and Perceptions of EU Regional Policy" published in December 2013.

7. Budget

7.1 Communication Activities Budget

In line with the elements of the Communication Strategy as listed in Annex XII Article 4(c), an indicative budget for the implementation of the strategy is to be provided. The Programmes under ESIF envisage a total expenditure of €2.6 million (inclusive only of the contribution of the Community) on communication and publicity respectively as follows:

Table 1: Operational Programme I – Technical Assistance: Information and Publicity Allocation

Total	ERDF/CF
€12,798,989.00	€1,279,899

Table 2: Operational Programme II – Technical Assistance: Information and Publicity Allocation

Total	ESF
€6,353,600	€714,780

Table 3: Rural Development Programme - Technical Assistance: Information and Publicity Allocation

Total	EAFRD
€3,893,076	€519,077

Table 4:–EMFF Operational Programme – Technical Assistance: Information and Publicity Allocation

Total	EMFF
€1,300,455	€87,000

Since both MAs recognise the advantages of pooling resources when communicating about ESIF policy, during the 2014-2020 programming period, as per Article 119 of EU Regulation 1303/2013, each of the funds may finance technical assistance operations eligible under any of the other Funds in order to have greater financial flexibility.

7.2 Budget Spilt according to the Information and Communication Measures

On the basis of previous experience, the MA is recommending that 67% of the total budget will be allocated to Informative Measures mostly related to the transparency, procedural and technical information, while 15% will be allotted to Publicity Measures related to the creation of visibility and awareness, that is, particularly

information relating to strategy, aims and results. Approximately 8% of the Funds will be allocated to ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation. The table below demonstrates the tentative percentage split for the actions identified in this Plan:

Table 5: Indicative Budget split for Informative Measures

Technical and Procedural Information	% of Budget
Publications and collateral material	8%
Annual Events and Launch of OPs	32%
Information sessions and training seminar/courses	7%
Local and other communication networks	5%
Website and multi-media support (including social media)	15%

Table 6: Indicative Budget split for measures related to visibility and awareness

Visibility and Awareness	% of Budget
Media Campaign	15%
Promotional Items	10%

Table 7: Indicative Budget split for Support measures

Support Measures	% of Budget
Ad hoc measures including monitoring and evaluation	8%

8. Reporting on the Communication Plan

As specified by the Council and European Parliament Regulation (EU) 1303/13, article 116 (3) states that, “the managing authority shall inform the monitoring committee or committees responsible at least once a year on the progress in the implementation of the communication strategy and on its analysis of the results as well as on the planned information and communication activities to be carried out in the following year. The monitoring committee shall, if it considers it to be appropriate, give an opinion on the planned activities for the following year.”

On a daily basis, the MAs will continue to be informed of any publicity actions being implemented at project level both through the Project Leaders themselves. A record of publicity measures implemented by the MA will continue to be kept at the Communication Unit. The Annual Implementation Report in 2017 and 2019 will continue to consist of a chapter assessing the results of the information and publicity measures in terms of visibility and awareness of the OP’s and EU funds to all target groups. This requirement emerges from the Regulation (EU) 1303/2013, article 111 (4b).

9. Conclusion

This Communication Strategy is intended to increase the visibility of all EU funded projects and programmes implemented under the ESIF 2014-2020. As technology and media evolve rapidly throughout time it is important that the strategy is updated as necessary in order to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Thus as highlighted earlier on the strategy should be closely monitoring to ensure the objectives of this strategy are achieved through various measures and tools which will be implemented by the MA, IBs and beneficiaries.