

Communication Strategy for Malta European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development 2014-2020

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Version 1.2

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Acronyms

ACP	Annual Communication Plan
CPR	Common Provisions 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
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC	Employment & Training Corporation
EU	European Union
FDP	Funds and Programme Division
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
MFEA	Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs
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

Disclaimer:

Although Malta has already adopted a common Communication Strategy for the 2014-2020 programming period covering the five European Structural and Investment Funds, the Managing Authority for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development will be complementing the common Strategy with this EAFRD Communications Strategy, in line with Article 66(1)(i) and Article 66 (5) of Regulation (EU) No. 1305/2013 and Article 13 of Regulation (EU) No. 808/2014. The provisions stipulated in both Strategies shall apply for EAFRD, unless otherwise indicated.

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 adopted a common plan to cover information and communication activities related to Malta's ESIF, and a separate, yet complementary plan covering activities related to EAFRD. 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 responsibility of the Managing Authority, 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 Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) Communication Strategy has been developed in accordance with Article 66(1)(i) and 66(5) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 and Article 13 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014. Articles 115-117 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and the respective Implementing Regulation (EU) 821/2014 also apply in cases where provisions of this strategy will be carried out not solely under EAFRD, but across all ESIF. Article 66 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 states that the Managing Authority shall be responsible for "ensuring publicity for the programme, including through the national rural network, by informing potential beneficiaries, professional organisations, the economic and social partners, bodies involved in promoting equality between men and women, and the non-governmental organisations, of the possibilities offered by the programme and the rules for gaining access to programme funding as well as by informing beneficiaries of the Union contribution and the general public on the role played by the Union in the programme"; thus, the Maltese Managing Authority has drawn up this strategy which will cover, as a minimum, the responsibilities outlined by Article 66." Accordingly, the EAFRD Monitoring Committee has been provided with a draft of this strategy for comments, prior to its adoption. The approved Communication Strategy and subsequent amendments will be presented at other EAFRD Monitoring Committee meetings. Indeed, given the dynamic nature of this Strategy, a number of changes might be

required throughout the years.

The Managing Authority for the EAFRD, also referred to as the Funds and Programme Division (FPD), shall inform the Monitoring Committee 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 provide its opinion on these planned activities in order to further strengthen the communication measures as proposed by the Managing Authority. 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 III of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, which stipulates that the Strategy should contain at least:

- a. the aims of the strategy and its target groups;
- b. a description of the content of the information and publicity actions;
- c. the indicative budget of the strategy;
- d. a description of the administrative bodies, including the staff resources, responsible for implementing the information and publicity actions;
- e. a description of the role played by the NRN and how its communication plan referred to in Article 54(3)(vi) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 will contribute to the implementation of the strategy;
- f. a description of how the information and publicity actions shall be assessed in terms of visibility and awareness of the policy framework, programmes and operations, and of the role played by the EAFRD and the Union;
- g. an annual update setting out the information and publicity activities to be carried out in the following year.

1.2 Communication Strategy 2014-2020: Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives of the ESIF Communication Strategy 2014-2020, on the basis of Article 115 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, will also be applied to the EAFRD Strategy:

- **Promoting the role of the ESIF:** 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. Thus, it is important to transmit clear messages on the role played by the European Union and how the actions being co-financed through the ESIF have an effect on the citizens' daily life. This is crucial in order for the general public to understand the benefits of EU funding by providing tangible examples thereof; for instance by highlighting the amelioration of the educational system, and the emphasises placed on social inclusion through ESF, the investment placed on transport and road infrastructure, climate change, and urban regeneration, as well as aid provided to SMEs and the private sector at large through ERDF and ESF, together with other investments in the fisheries and agricultural sectors through EMFF and EAFRD respectively. This will therefore involve a close collaboration between the respective Managing Authorities and also with other stakeholders in order to order joint communication activities as well as strengthening the existing communication tools.

- **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. Thus, the operational objectives of the ESIF and EAFRD 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**

Over the years, the Managing Authority has participated in various fairs and events with the aim of carrying out publicity actions and providing information to potential beneficiaries and sector stakeholders. In 2014, A stand was set up at 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. In previous years the Managing Authority participated in the Mnarja Festival, the Strawberry Fest, Lejl f'Casal Fornaro, among others.

- **Information and Briefing Sessions**

During the 2007-2013, information sessions were 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, every year, prior to the launch of the Payment Claims Campaign, information sessions were organised to promote Axis 2 measures and to inform farmers on the procedures they need to follow in claiming their payments.

- **Leaflets and Publications**

A number of informative leaflets, booklets and posters specifically targeted to the relevant target groups, were published throughout the 2007-2013 period. These publications were distributed/displayed at a number of fairs, events, information sessions and seminars

- **Articles and Newsletter**

The Managing Authority has contributed towards various articles and press releases such as *Biedja u Sajd* (Agriculture and Fisheries) magazine, MEUSAC News and Funding 360.

Moreover, the Managing Authority 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 regularly 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.

- **TV and Radio Programmes**

The Managing Authority participated in local TV and radio shows to provide information about the programme to the general public. For instance, projects which have been co-financed under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, were showcased together with promotional features upon the launch of measures in a weekly TV programme called *Malta u lil hinn Minnha* (Malta and Beyond). The MA also sponsored a weekly feature during the TV series *Mad-Daqqqa 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**

During the 2007-2013 programming period, the Managing Authorities' website was continuously being updated with news about the upcoming calls for applications, any other information related to the Programme's implementation, press releases and news items, etc. Although prior to 2014, the EAFRD Managing Authority had its 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 website, www.eufunds.gov.mt, was officially launched in March 2014, with the new website, www.eufundsmalta.gov.mt, officially launched in April 2018.

- **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) was 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.

The setup of the National Rural Network will be retained throughout the 2014-2020 programming period, in a manner stipulated by Malta's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

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

2.2.1 Beneficiaries

A considerable number of publicity actions were implemented by the Beneficiaries of funding. 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 infrastructure 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 beneficiaries 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 the ESIF 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. In order to build on previous expertise, the lessons learnt were taken into consideration in the writing of the EAFRD Strategy.

On a general note, it was noted that:

- The mandatory requirements for visual and publicity adhered to the respective mandatory requirements stipulated in Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005.
- Information was made readily available to the general public, beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries via the Managing Authority website, www.eufunds.gov.mt, and also through the Paying Agency Front Office.
- 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 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.

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

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

The Visual Identity/Publicity 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.

- **Communication with stakeholders and potential beneficiaries:** This was done through information sessions organised by the Managing Authority from time to time, the provision of guidance and also through continuous support provided from the respective Communication Officers within the Managing Authority.

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.
- **Communication tools are not static but are fast evolving:** Experience from the 2007-2013 programming period has shown that the field of communication is going through a fast evolving pace. Various different electronic and social media have become more widely used and thus the Managing Authority needs to continuously adapt accordingly in a timely manner in order to reach the wider audience. Furthermore, instead of having a single message for a wide audience, it is more useful to have specific messages targeted to different audiences in smaller and more frequent fragments. This is important in order for the Managing Authority to focus its communication and publicity activities and measures that benefit the programme cycle.
- **Limited interactive communication measures with the media:** In hindsight, the Managing Authority noted that during the 2007-2013 programming period there was limited interactive communication activities with the media. This is important as the journalists, editors, presenters, etc. possess more knowledge on how to approach the general public and they may have a more

adequate role in translating the results and impacts of EU funding to their different target groups.

- **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:

- **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.

3. Communication Strategy Framework

3.1 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 on 29th October 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 Rural Development Programme (EAFRD) will contribute towards achieving these priorities.

▪ European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

The Rural Development Programme, co-funded through EAFRD, as stipulated by Article 4 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 shall contribute to achieving the following objectives: (i) fostering the competitiveness of agriculture; (ii) ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources, and climate action; and (iii) achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment.

Moreover, in line with Article 12(1) of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 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 NRN 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) of the Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 “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 Authority and Beneficiaries

Annex III of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 specifies that the Member State and the Managing Authority for the Rural Development Programme is responsible for providing information and publicising operations and co-financed projects. This section provides an overview of the responsibilities and actions taken by the Managing Authority and the Beneficiaries in relation to publicity and information in order to achieve the main objectives of this EAFRD Communication Strategy.

3.2.1 Responsibilities of the Managing Authority

The Managing Authority is responsible for the drawing up and implementation of the Communication Strategy which should contain at least the information stipulated under section 1.1. of this document. It is also responsible for developing guidelines at both Programme and project level to ensure that all activities are consistent and coordinated, thereby avoiding duplication of information where possible.

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/Publicity 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/Publicity Guidelines to ensure correct adherence.

The main responsibilities of the Managing Authorities in line with Article 1 of Annex III of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 will be as follows:

3.2.1.1. Information for the potential beneficiaries

The Managing Authority shall ensure that potential beneficiaries have access to the relevant information, including updated information where necessary, taking into account the accessibility of electronic or other communication services for certain potential beneficiaries, on at least the following:

- a. the funding opportunities and the launching of calls under the RDPs;
- b. the administrative procedures to be followed in order to qualify for financing under a RDP;
- c. the procedures for examining applications for financing;
- d. the eligibility conditions and/or criteria for selecting and evaluating the projects to be financed;
- e. the names of persons or contacts at national, regional or local level who can explain the way RDPs work and the criteria for selecting and evaluating the operations;
- f. the responsibility of beneficiaries to inform the public about the aim of the operation and the support from the EAFRD to the operation in accordance with section 2 of Part 1. The Managing Authority may request potential beneficiaries to propose indicative communication activities, proportional to the size of the operation, in the applications;
- g. the procedures for the examination of complaints under Article 74(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

3.2.1.2. Information for the general public

The Managing Authority shall inform the public of the content of the RDP, its adoption by the Commission and its updates, the main achievements in the implementation of the programme and its closure, as well as its contribution to the achievement of the Union priorities as set out in the Partnership Agreement.

The Managing Authority shall ensure the establishment of a single website or single website portal

providing the information referred to in points 1.1 and 1.2, and the first paragraph of this point. The establishment of the single website shall not disrupt smooth implementation of the EAFRD and not restrict access for potential beneficiaries and stakeholders to the information.

3.2.1.3. Involvement of bodies acting as relays

The Managing Authority shall ensure, including through the NRN, that bodies that can act as relays are involved in the information actions for potential beneficiaries, and in particular:

- a. partners as referred to in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013;
- b. information centers on Europe, as well as Commission representation offices, and Information offices of the European Parliament in Member States;
- c. educational and research institutions.

3.2.1.4. Role played by the National Rural Network (NRN)

The structure of the National Rural Network will serve the purpose of carrying out publicity and information actions to a broader public. In this respect a communication plan outlining the planned communication activities will be developed, in agreement with the Managing Authority, and in a manner which is complementary to, and contributes to the achievement of the aims set by this Communication Strategy.

3.2.1.5. Notification of the award of support

The Managing Authority shall ensure that the notification of award of the support informs beneficiaries that the action is being financed under a programme part-financed by the EAFRD and of the measure and priority of the RDP concerned.

3.2.2 Responsibilities of the Beneficiaries

In accordance with Point 2 of Annex III of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 the main responsibilities of the key beneficiaries include:

3.2.2.1. All information and communication actions of the beneficiary shall acknowledge support from the EAFRD to the operation by displaying:

- a. the Union emblem;
- b. a reference to the support from the EAFRD.

Where an information or publicity action relates to an operation or to several operations co-financed by more than one Fund, the reference provided for in point (b) may be replaced by a reference to the ESI Funds.

3.2.2.2. During the implementation of an operation, the beneficiary shall inform the public about the support obtained from the EAFRD by:

- a. providing on the beneficiary's website for professional use, where such a website exists, a short description of the operation where a link between the purpose of the website and the support provided to the operation can be established, proportionate to the level of support, including its aims and results, and highlighting the financial support from the Union;
- b. for operations not falling under point (c) the total public support of which exceeds EUR 10 000 and depending on the operation funded (for example for operations under Article 20 on village renewal or LEADER operations), at least one poster with information about the operation (minimum size A3), highlighting the financial support from the Union, at a location readily visible to the public, such as the entrance area of a building. Where an operation under a RDP results in an investment (for example, on a farm or on food enterprise) the total public support of which exceeds EUR 50 000, the beneficiary shall place an explanatory plaque with information about the project, highlighting the financial support from the Union. An explanatory plaque shall also be installed in the premises of the local action groups financed by LEADER;
- c. putting up, at a location readily visible to the public, a temporary billboard of a significant size for each operation consisting of the financing of infrastructure or construction operations for which the total public support to the operation exceeds EUR 500 000.

No later than three months after completion of an operation, the beneficiary shall put up a permanent plaque or billboard of significant size at a location readily visible to the public for each operation that fulfils the following criteria:

- i. the total public support to the operation exceeds EUR 500 000;
- ii. the operation consists of the purchase of a physical object or of the financing of infrastructure or of construction operations.

This billboard shall state the name and the main objective of the operation and highlight the financial support provided from the Union.

The billboards, posters, plaques and websites shall carry a description of the project/operation and the elements referred to further on in this document. That information shall take up at least 25% of the billboard, plaque or webpage.

3.2.3 Technical characteristics of information and publicity actions

For more detailed information on technical characteristics, kindly consult the accompanying Visual Identity/Publicity Guidelines.

3.2.3.1. Logo and slogan

- a. Annex III of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 stipulates that each action of information and publicity shall display the following elements: The Union emblem in accordance with the graphic standards as presented on http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/emblem/download_en.htm, together with an explanation of the Union's role, by means of the following statement:
'The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas'.
- b. For the actions and measures financed by LEADER, the LEADER logo.

3.2.3.2. Information and communication material

Publications, such as booklets, leaflets, newsletters and posters about measures and actions co-financed by the EAFRD shall contain a clear indication on the title page of the Union's participation, as well as the Union's emblem if a national or regional emblem is also used. Publications shall include references to the body responsible for the content and to the Managing Authority designated to implement the EAFRD and/or national assistance in question.

In the case of information made available by electronic means (websites, databases for potential beneficiaries) or as audio-visual material, the first paragraph shall apply by analogy.

Websites concerning EAFRD funding shall:

- a. mention the contribution of the EAFRD at least on the home page
- b. include a hyperlink to the Commission website concerning EAFRD

3.3 Collaboration with National administrative bodies and information centers in Malta

There are various bodies responsible for the administration and/or promotion of EU funds in Malta. Throughout the development of this, and the common ESIF Communication Strategy, it was noted that these bodies do not always work with the appropriate level of synergy which might lead to unnecessary overlaps resulting in duplication of efforts and resources. 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 Authority to consult and coordinate with the other stakeholders that may have a direct interest in that particular area of discussion. The Managing Authority shall consult with both beneficiaries and multipliers (such as MEUSAC in the case of initiatives related to NGOs or Local Councils, etc.).

- **Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs**

The Ministry is responsible in ensuring that Malta's foreign policy objectives on European Union, bilateral, regional and global issues are pursued. This Ministry also coordinates the negotiation and conclusion of bilateral agreements.

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 European Funds**

The role of the Parliamentary Secretariat is to ensure transparency in the utilisation of European funds. In fulfilling such function, the Parliamentary Secretariat also provides visibility to the activities within the framework of the 2014-2020 Programmes and the formulation of the 2021-2027 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 guide the Maltese 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 (EU) 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 III of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, all information and publicity measures will be acknowledged by displaying the Union Emblem in accordance with the technical characteristics laid down in the the same Annex (or in the Visual Identity/Publicity Guidelines), 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. Key Message Content

The Managing Authority will develop one or two simple overarching messages to reach all the target audiences. When developing such messages, the Managing Authority 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 Rural Development Programme namely:

‘European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas’.

Such statements refer to the objective and results of the EAFRD 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 EAFRD.

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 Rural Development Programme and its financial contribution;
- The conditions of eligibility to be met in order to qualify for financing 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 Rural Development Programme.

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

- The aims and objectives of EAFRD, as well as underlying principles and relation with other EU policies and national objectives;
- The role of the European Union and the EAFRD;
- The aims, objectives, achievements and results of the Rural Development Programme (including major projects where relevant);
- The list of selected applicants, 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.

4.2. Style and Approach

The Managing Authority 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 Authority 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.

4.3. 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.

4.4 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 Authority 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 Rural Development Programme will be comprehensively presented and the Managing Authority will ensure a clear understanding of the areas of aid falling within the remit of this Programme.
- **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 Authority 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 EAFRD. 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 EAFRD 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 implementation of the Partnership Agreement, Operational Programmes and Rural Development Programme 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 EAFRD Managing Authority, together with the Managing Authorities responsible for the other ESIF, is 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 relevant Regulations, that

is Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, as well as all other relevant ESIF Regulations.

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 EAFRD and the other 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.



▪ 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 relevant 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 Managing Authorities through training

sessions on the various steps of project implementation, including the publicity requirements.

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 Managing Authorities 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.

▪ **Launch of the Rural Development Programme**

This launch event satisfies the requirement stipulated by Annex III point 1.3 of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, which states that MAs shall ensure that the public is informed of the adoption of the programme, together with its content.

In view of the different timing of the approval obtained by the European Commission for the different ESIF, the respective Managing Authorities opted to hold different events to launch the programmes. The launch of the Rural Development Programme was held on the 18th of December, 2015. The EAFRD programme, together with the other ESIF programmes are available online from the website portals www.eufunds.gov.mt and www.eufundsmalta.gov.mt

As the programmes are the core of policy, the respective Managing Authorities 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 programmes 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.

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/RDP versions are immediately uploaded on the MA's website for ease of reference upon approval of changes.

▪ **Organisation and implementation of common information campaign and activities/events**

In line with Annex XII, point 2.1(2)(b) of the CPR all Managing Authorities 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/RDP including large projects and examples of other projects as deemed appropriate by the respective Managing Authorities in consultation with the necessary stakeholders. Such activities/events will be targeted mainly to beneficiaries, stakeholders, and the general public which will be combined with an effective media outreach. In this regard, the Managing Authorities 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 Managing Authorities after taking into account the respective implementation and progress achieved of the Ops/RDP. 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, and 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.

Furthermore, 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 promoting the specific benefits achieved through the implementation of the programmes among the target groups.

- **Participation in related events and activities**

Apart from the annual information events, the respective Managing Authorities will also participate in various events and activities organised by institutional stakeholders and potential multipliers. On such occasions, the Managing Authorities 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) of the CPR 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.

- **Participation in European Networks**

The Communication officers within the respective Managing Authorities 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 Managing Authorities 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 Managing Authorities' key events. Items vary from folders, pen-drives, sticky-notes² 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 RDP 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 measures such as audio-visual products like documentaries can be applied at specific milestones such as 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

² These are all Indicative

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 Annex III of the EAFRD Implementing Regulation, the MA will ensure that the beneficiary will place **at least** one poster with information about the project (minimum size A3), including the financial support from the Union, at a location readily visible to the public. Where an operation under the RDP results in an investment (for example, on a farm or on food enterprise) the total public support of which exceeds €50,000, the beneficiary shall place an explanatory plaque with information about the project, highlighting the financial support from the Union. An explanatory plaque shall also be installed in the premises of the local action groups financed by LEADER.

Projects which exceed the total public support amounting to €500,000, in line with the above-mentioned Annex, are required to have in place a billboard at a visible site of each operation during the implementation of the said 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 while highlighting the financial support provided from the Union.

- **Communication with Media and Public Relations**

It is important that citizens are kept informed about EAFRD and the other ESIF, their impact at a national level and on people's daily life. The respective Managing Authorities 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 Agreement, Operational Programmes and the Rural Development Programme. Specific actions in this regard will include: press releases; In-depth print; press conferences As experienced during the 2007-2013 programming period, the Managing Authorities 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/RDP or to promote activities such as the Annual Events and other key events.

- **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 EAFRD and the other 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.

Specific product in relation to audio-visual could include promotion of videos/spots and TV/DVD documentaries. In this regard, the Managing Authorities 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. The relevant Managing Authorities 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 Managing Authorities 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 communication which the Commission makes available to all Member States for ease of dissemination through the EU 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/RDP and/or to other Managing Authorities 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 Managing Authorities 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 as 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 users³. 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 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%)⁴.

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 each operation, start/end date of each operation and the amount of total eligible expenditure and co-financing 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 EU No 1303/2013. Furthermore, downloadable versions of all relevant documentation are available on the site, including information required by the applicable Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013, and Annex III of the Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014. The EAFRD Managing Authority will regularly update the information regarding the implementation of the RDP on the common website. Furthermore, though it is not an EAFRD requirement, the MA will ensure that it is in line with the CPR Implementing Regulation (EU) No 821/2014 Article 4(3)(a), 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 Managing Authorities 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,

³ Accessed on 23rd April 2015: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/>

presentation and usability.

The website has a link to the EAFRD MA's generic address rdd.mfea@gov.mt which functions as an email Helpdesk. The Funds & Programmes Division generic email address is fpd.mfea@gov.mt. The website will also be 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. These Helpdesks shall be heavily publicised on all promotional and informative material produced by the MA. They will mainly target 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.

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

A number of training/courses seminars will be organised with a capacity building purpose in line with Structural and Investment Funds Training Strategy⁴. 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, will guide 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

⁴ Training Plan for ESIF Stakeholders – February 2015

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 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.

- **Other information and communication measures**

During the Programme period, unforeseen information and publicity requirements may arise whereby the Managing Authority will need to make an allowance for. These activities will depend on an invitation received from the relevant stakeholders.

This measure will also cater for other information and publicity requirement such as the purchase of self-adhesive stickers with the co-financing statements which will be affixed to items procured through EU funding.

- **Annual Communication Plan**

On a yearly basis, the Managing Authorities will prepare a common Annual Communication Plan (ACP) for all funds, in line with Point 4(i) of Annex XII of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 and Point 1.1(g) of Annex III of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014. 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, including the EAFRD Monitoring Committee. 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 Managing Authorities 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 fulfilment of indicators.

6. Monitoring & Evaluation

The effectiveness of communication interventions carried out by the five ESI Funds 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 measures 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 Point 4(g) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, and Annex III Point 1.1(f) of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, the information and communication will be evaluated in terms of visibility and awareness of the policy, the respective 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 carried out under all ESIF 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 Policy* 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 Malta⁵</i>	35% ⁶	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	Target⁷
Number of publicity measures undertaken	60
Number of studies/research activities carried out	6

The information and communication officers will engage themselves in ongoing 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 for certain measures, the respective Managing Authorities 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

⁵ This indicator concerns projects under all 5 ESI Funds, not just EAFRD

⁶ Extracted from the Flash Eurobarometer Report Number 384 entitled "Citizens Awareness and Perceptions of EU Regional Policy" published in December 2013.

⁷ Targets will be achieved through implementation of actions carried out under all five ESI Funds.

carried out over a particular reporting period. The respective Managing Authorities 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 Managing Authority.

7. Budget

7.1 Communication Activities Budget

In line with the elements of the Communication Strategy as listed in Annex III Point 1.1(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 – for information on budgetary allocation of other ESIF funds refer to ESIF Communication Strategy. The hereunder financial table represents the fund allocation of Technical Assistance under the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme together with information and publicity share:

Rural Development Programme - Technical Assistance: Information and Publicity Allocation

EAFRD Technical Assistance	EAFRD Information and Publicity Allocation
€3,893,076	€389,303

7.2 Budgetary Allocation 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 25% 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%
Launch of RDP and Annual Events, including Information Campaigns	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 Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, Article 13, “The Managing Authority shall submit an information and publicity strategy as well as any amendments thereof to the Monitoring Committee for information. The strategy shall be submitted no later than six months after the adoption of the rural development programme. The Managing Authority shall inform the Monitoring Committee at least once a year on the progress in the implementation of the information and publicity strategy and on its analysis of the results as well as on the planned information and publicity to be carried out in the following year..”

On a regular basis, the Managing Authority 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 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 RDP 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 EAFRD and other 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 Managing Authority, Intermediary Bodies and beneficiaries.

Annex I: Communication Measures

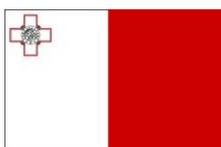
Measures	Potential Tools	Target Groups	Fund Specific / Common for all Funds
Development of an ESIF logo	To be used on all communication tools and measures, together with the co-financing banner and flags	All target groups	ESIF Fund Specific
Development of the Communication and Visual Identity Guidelines	A single Communication and Visual Identity Guidelines available on the MAs' website		
	Training sessions One-to-one consultation sessions provided through the helpdesk and telecom conversation	All target groups, particularly beneficiaries, profession public and horizontal stakeholders	ESIF
Launching of the Operational Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Print advertorials ▪ Social media ▪ MA's website ▪ Information Seminars 	All target groups	ERDF, CF & ESF EMFF EAFRD

Annual Events	Annual Information Events, such as national conferences, road shows, site open days / onsite talks, exhibitions, seminars, etc.	All target groups, particularly beneficiaries, media and general public	ESIF Fund Specific
Informative Publicity Campaigns			
Other related National Events and Activities			
Networks and Exchange of Experiences	National Rural Network	Managing Authority, Beneficiaries and Stakeholders	EAFRD
	Participation in European Networks	Managing Authorities	Fund Specific
Promotional Material	A series of branded items will be developed as free promotional materials to be distributed at the Managing Authorities' key events	All target groups	ESIF Fund Specific
	Media advertising:		ESIF

Media Campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TV and radio advertorials ▪ Advertisements in magazine, newspapers and other targeted publications 	All target groups	Fund Specific
	Outdoor advertising: Billboards		
	Audio-visual products- short features		
Media Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Articles, fact sheets and advertorials ▪ Press conference ▪ Participation of the Managing Authority, Intermediate Bodies and Beneficiaries in popular radio and/or TV shows 	General and professional public, and potential beneficiaries	ESIF Fund Specific
Informative Publications and Collateral Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Posters ▪ Flyers, leaflets and brochures ▪ Short Message System (SMS) 	All target groups	ESIF Fund Specific
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mail shots 	All target groups	ESIF

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Official website: www.eufunds.gov.mt ▪ www.eufunds.gov.mt ▪ Helpdesk (rdd.mfea@gov.mt) 		Fund Specific
Training and Information Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training seminars ▪ Information sessions 	All target groups, particularly the potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries	Fund Specific

Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020



Part financed by the European Union
 Co-financing Rate:
 75% European Union; 25% Government of Malta



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