

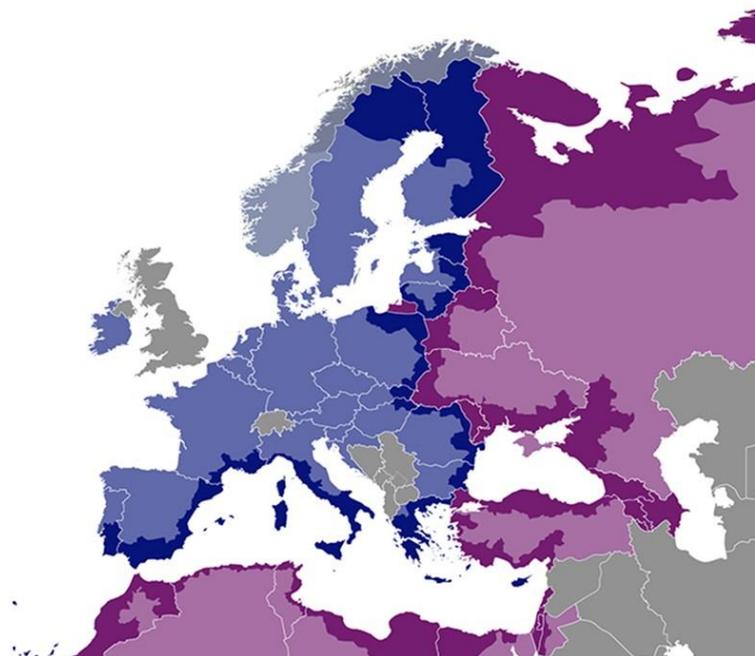


Technical support to the implementation
and management of ENI CBC programmes

Network meeting of ENI CBC communication managers

(Online – 12 May 2021)

Proceedings



Introduction to the event

Over 700 projects are currently ongoing in all ENI CBC programmes, many of them in a mature implementation phase, ready to demonstrate their final results. At this stage, the communication challenge for the programmes lies in the timely and effective dissemination of the project results, thus enhancing the programmes' own visibility. This year the communication network meeting was dedicated to two tools which can help programmes to amplify the outreach of their projects' achievements: **media relations and video**.

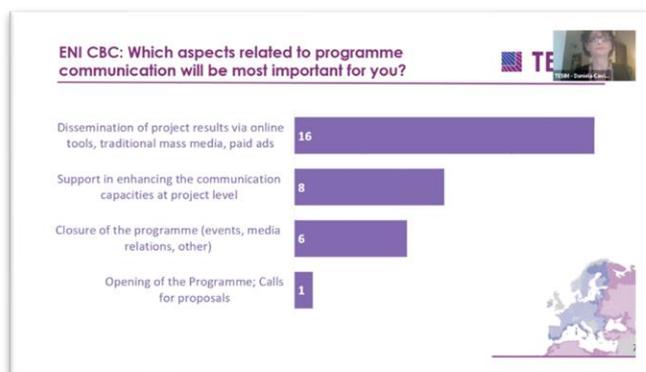
The meeting was attended by 42 participants from 15 ENI CBC programmes, together with one representative of DG REGIO and one from Interact.

The webinar started with welcoming words by TESIM Team Leader - **Carlos Bolaños** - who provided an overview of the objectives of the meeting: exchanging about how to best promote the stories delivered by projects on the ground, through dwelling on the importance of media in the promotion of projects' results (**session 1**) and highlighting the importance of the use of audio-visuals in the communication efforts (**session 2**). To do so, the event counted on the testimonials of programmes representatives through **three interview-format presentations** and a **training** by an expert on creative ways to promote a programme through videos. Ultimately, the event provided a good balance between peer-to-peer exchanges, networking and capacity building for the programmes' representatives.

Findings from the survey

Before starting with the main sessions of the event, **Daniela Cavini** presented the main findings from the survey launched on 9 April. The objective of this survey was to assess the programmes' communication needs until the end of the current period and for the beginning of the 2021-2027 programming period.

Ten programmes out of 15 provided answers to the survey, with a total of 14 replies from representatives of the JTS, the MA and the BO. The survey showed that, even if not yet mandatory, the AICP template is being widely used by programmes (9/15) and that defining indicators remains still the most challenging part. The survey results also indicated that the dissemination of projects' results is the most pressing need for programmes.



Daniela Cavini informed that the CommNet agenda had been built to precisely tackle this matter and reminded about the capacity building modules that TESIM provides to projects' beneficiaries. An additional, highlighted tool was the [GO for ENI CBC platform](#). The respondents also expressed their concern in resuming physical events, and more than half of the respondents

confirmed being in contact with the EU Delegations in Partner Countries. In this regard, Daniela informed about the line of TESIM work in pursuing the intensification of relations with

EU Delegations, in order to increase project and programmes reach in Partner Countries. As for the next programming period, three were highlighted as the most pressing needs, in decreasing order: results capitalisation, building a new branding/identity for future programmes and building capacity for current communication staff. In this regard, TESIM is providing support through the [online library](#).

Daniela Cavini gave the floor to **Linda Talve (Interact)** who shared with the audience the resources which Interact has in place and that can respond to the needs of programmes, namely the "[Capitalisation management guide](#)", [Keep.eu partners' section](#) – which will be further developed and could be useful to find potential partners – and [Interact online learning platform](#). Lastly, Daniela assured that TESIM and Interact have taken notice of the programmes' feedback and will keep liaising to better profile and give response to all needs expressed by them.

Daniela Cavini presented the overall context of the core sessions of the event, namely promoting programmes through projects' results by using two powerful communication tools: media and videos. The format chosen was **interviews** to selected programmes representatives dealing with communication activities: **Martin Heibel** from the ENI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme, **Andrej Slodki** and **Agnieszka Zvikla**, both from the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine ENI CBC Programme.

Session 1 – Promotion of project results through media activities

The first session related to the use of media and the relation between programmes and media representatives. A Mentipoll was launched and revealed that, in general, **projects are more directly engaged with media than programmes themselves**. Precisely because of that, the event aimed at presenting how programmes can logically benefit from their projects' work with media, with the final aim to increase the overall visibility and recognition of projects and programmes.

Daniela Cavini introduced the first interviewee - **Martin Heibel** (Mediterranean Sea Basin ENI CBC Programme communication officer) – and briefly explained that the programme is carrying out an extraordinary work with media, enhancing the visibility of the projects through a number of media actions that start from the very beginning of the project implementation phase. Martin shared the key characteristics of their media communication strategy. First, he highlighted how **communication and working with media creates accountability for the projects**: while the project is being presented through very different means, not only it gets visibility but also compromises to deliver certain results for the community. This enhanced positioning translates into an extra responsibility towards beneficiaries. Communication through media can therefore act as an accelerator of project implementation.



Secondly, Martin explained that their media strategy is **project-centred**, based on very concrete actions. They encourage the dissemination of **press releases** coinciding with the kicking-off of activities: press materials are **translated into all local languages and disseminated by all project partners**, who are also requested to include the project description on their websites. Project partners are also requested to disseminate press releases from their **central media office**, increasing chances of getting journalists' attraction. At the beginning of activities projects organise **press points or conferences**. More press materials are disseminated during project's implementation. A specific characteristic of Mediterranean Sea Basin strategy is the **promotion of sub-grants**, small amounts of funds awarded by the projects directly to small entrepreneurs, mostly to support local pilot actions on the ground. Here the communication focus is on the people, highlighting the stories of the very final beneficiaries.

Content-wise, project partners are supported by the programme throughout the whole communication process, from redaction of materials to distribution. The programme checks, edits and approves the content in order to be more effective in the delivery of important messages. The focus is on **key words** to showcase what the project is really doing for the community. An **impact-based narrative** has been developed for projects to communicate more about end-results rather than about themselves. The structure of the communication materials follows the logic explained by TESIM Communication team during the different capacity building sessions held for MSB project beneficiaries since October 2019: to place the most important information at the very beginning of each text.

Regarding the outcomes and benefits of the strategy, Martin assured that the efforts put in communication pay off. The **press release coverage is centralised** on the [programme website](#) which is constantly updated, showing the force of multiple media coverage at a glance. The programme is more and more approached directly by journalists, building up on its reputation. The return is not only **positive for the image and credibility** of the programme, but also for the projects, which take pride in what they do and keep engaging with more emphasis, in a sort of virtuous circle. The return is quite positive also for the European Union: the importance of mentioning the origin of funds – even in the titles - is reiterated constantly by the programme, becoming a habit for the projects. Given the positive results, projects are advised to **invest in communication** and to hire professional people for this purpose, or specific staff that will assume communication positions and professionalize, instead of leaving communication matters for spare time at the end of the working day.

A **Q&A section** completed the first session, with questions coming from the different programmes concerning the use of paid advertising or paid ads on social media. Martin pointed out that both paid and organic communication are important in a strategy, and he highlighted their positive experience using sponsored campaigns on social media.

Daniela Cavini thanked the first guest and introduced the second interviewee – **Andrzej Słodki**, head of the JTS of the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine ENI CBC Programme, who was invited to present their experience in organising the “**Forum of journalists**”. This activity, which started eleven years ago and has celebrated five editions, gathers media representatives from the three countries of the programme implementation area.



Andrzej explained that, initially, the purpose of the event was to **raise awareness about the programme**, its objectives and the funding opportunities for potential applicants. Journalists from the three countries gathered in a two-days event and created a space for collaboration and future relationships between the programme and the media. As the programme evolved, there was not so much need to raise awareness about calls anymore:



at that point, there was a large portfolio of ongoing projects, and the demands had changed. The following fora involved both journalists and project beneficiaries, with the objective of **professionalising media relations with the projects** and increasing their capacity to reach media. The “*Forum of journalists*” has evolved in a way to support projects in their communication. Journalists got acquainted with the regions where activities were implemented, the people behind the projects and the changes/results obtained for the

communities. A **platform of journalists** was developed, shortening the distances between media and the projects. The media target has also evolved: at the beginning they were mostly local and working for public networks, whereas now they are regional and even national journalists, also working in the private sector.

Andrzej added that today the “*Forum of journalists*” format includes two nights and two full days, **press field visits** to take a look at activities on the ground, a photo-contest with jury and award ceremony, and evening **workshops** where project representatives present their actions and journalists explain their interest and expectations, and the best ways to finetune communication materials. These events have made clear that **what is important for the project, is also important for the journalists**. The use of social media within projects was started in this way, like a sort of “capacity building” event, led by media.

In terms of results, **the Forum is today a platform for cross-border journalists**: as Andrzej stressed, “*we have created a cross-border media community*”. The organisation of the “Forum” has enabled the programme to build a strong **contact database**, to which press materials can be distributed whenever needed. In fact, eleven years ago the event gathered 30 media representatives: in the last edition they were 80. The interest in the programme has been constantly increasing, with media appearances more than doubling (media outputs have gone up 153 to 482 items in five editions). Andrzej pointed out that the

programme has managed to become a point of reference and a **constant source of interesting information for the journalists**, building on the foundations of the event and capitalising on the community media relations. The Forum has also contributed to increase the media reach for individual projects, which are now more successful in contacting journalists in their region.

Session 2- Promotion of project results through videos

After a short break, **Volha Prokharava** introduced the second session, devoted to the promotion of programmes through projects' video-making. VP highlighted the growing importance of videos in the online space, especially on social media, and presented the next guest - **Agnieszka Ćwikła**, communication manager of the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine ENI CBC Programme and responsible for the production of two series of videos – one based on a thematic approach, the other based on a geographical approach - to show projects' results from two different angles.



Agnieszka explained that the idea of producing videos came when the pandemic prevented the realisation of the planned promotional activities. The programme was approaching a stage suitable for capitalisation, so the team identified **six topics in which projects were reaching results** and decided to make six thematic videos covering them: historical heritage, natural heritage, accessibility, health, security and borders. Six videos were produced in English and, later on, also in Polish, Russian and Ukrainian, amounting to **a total of 24 movies**. They target mainly beneficiaries and inhabitants of the area. The programme was responsible for the idea and for the selection of the showcased projects; the technical production of the video was procured to an external contractor. The [thematic video "Borders"](#) was played for two minutes for the audience.

The second series of videos represent **three virtual tours around projects' locations**, each covering one of three countries encompassing the programme area: Poland, Belarus and



Ukraine. The choice was to connect with the younger public, so the tours were **led by bloggers, dynamic and encouraging people similar to the defined target**. The idea of this format for the Belarusian virtual tour was a joint effort between the JTS communication team and the Brest Branch Office, while an external contractor provided the scenario, the actors and the narrative. A two minutes clip of the video ["Virtual Tour on the Belarusian side of the border"](#)

was played to the audience of the Comm Net.

As for the **promotion**, the premier of the thematic movies has taken place in the programme annual online event in 2020 and has received positive feedback. The thematic movies and the virtual tours have been uploaded to the [programme YouTube channel](#) and will be shared in numerous external events as well as in internal ones such as six thematic events for project beneficiaries. The virtual tours will also be shown to students from the schools participating in a new promotional campaign “**Virtual Lessons on Historical Heritage**”. Finally, videos are shared periodically on the programme’s social media channels; project partners are also keen to promote them.

So far, results are encouraging, considering that they have only been published recently. Promotional efforts will increase the views and enlarge the reach.

Creative ways to promote a programme through videos

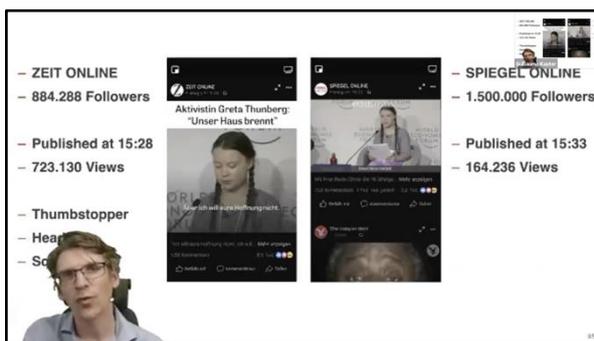
Daniela Cavini introduced **Guillaume Kuster** – a journalist and trainer on content producing and video-making – and invited him to provide the audience with tips **on the best techniques to make videos and to use them in social media**. The complete presentation of the expert’s video can be consulted here:



The following key messages can be highlighted from his intervention:

- ❖ Today social media audience groups are much narrower than the traditional audiences of old tools: these are small sub-communities that must be reached with tailor-made content;

- ❖ Nowadays it is the users, not the content-makers, who make a video successful: the focus should be on the audience, because they are the ones sharing and enlarging the reach of the communication material;
- ❖ Distributor-audiences should be well identified, and their habits researched and understood through the use of specific tools designed to find out what works and what doesn't on each social platform where a video is posted;
- ❖ Good practices for video-making include: adding subtitles, placing the best facts and pictures at the beginning, using short sentences and big text sizes, and using descriptive thumbnails to engage the audience.



Guillaume Kuster prepared a document with the main take-aways of his intervention which can be consulted in **Annex 1**.

Daniela Cavini thanked the video expert and the rest of the speakers for their contribution. **Carlos Bolaños** closed the meeting and encouraged the participants to share with TESIM any other good practice or experience that could be discussed with the rest of the community, providing the basis for more networking services in future events.