

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY
of the Operational Programme Integrated Infrastructure
2014 - 2020

Operational Programme: Integrated Infrastructure

Managing authority: Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of SR

Intermediary Authority: Ministry of Finance of SR

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1 Introduction

The Operational Programme Integrated Infrastructure (also referred to as “OPII”) is the programme document of the Slovak Republic for drawing from the European Structural and Investment Funds (also referred to as “ESIF”) in the area of transport and information society for the years 2014 – 2020 (Cohesion Fund, European Regional Development Fund). The communication is integral part of the transparent implementation of OPII projects. In the Slovak Republic the area of publication of information is addressed by the Act of NC SR No. 211/2000 Coll. on free access to information and on amendment of certain acts, as amended. This act lays down conditions, procedure and scope of free access to information. The elaboration of the communication strategy is based on and in accordance with CCA Methodical Guideline for information and communication of the European Structural and Investment Funds, model structure of the Communication Strategy, which forms annex No. 1 to the CCA Methodical Guideline and provisions of the System of Management of ESIF in Chapter 5 concerning the Communication Strategy

The elaboration of the OPII communication strategy is the responsibility of the Managing Authority (also referred to as “MA”) of OPII, which is the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of SR (also referred to as “MTCRD SR”); it must be elaborated within 6 months following the approval of OPII. The OPII communication strategy covers among others activities in relation to information society projects (Priority Axis No 7). Their implementation is the responsibility of the Intermediary Body (also referred to as “IB”), which is the Ministry of Finance of SR (also referred to as “MF SR”). The communication strategy is approved by the Monitoring Committee for OP II (also referred to as “MC OPII”).

The communication strategy will be further elaborated on an interim basis in annual communication plans of the implementation of communication and promotion activities, which will contain detailed information about planned information and communication activities, including indicative budgets. The activities related to the implementation of the communication strategy are financed from the Priority Axis No. 8 – Technical assistance, Specific Objective 8.2: Enhancing the public awareness of the EU support provided for OPII through the effective communication of OPII.

2 Analysis of background

2.1 Communication of the Operational Programme Transport 2007-2013

The adjustment of the OPII communication strategy is based on experiences that MTCRD SR acquired as MA of the Operational Programme Transport 2007-2013 (also referred to as “OPT”).

In the years 2007-2015 the communication of OPT was built on two basic pillars:

Unpaid communication with the public – implemented in cooperation and coordination with the Communication Department of MTCRD SR. The communication activities implemented with the aim to achieve positive perception of OPT consisted in the issue of press releases and articles on the progress of implementation of OPT (state of contracting, drawing, approbation of large projects in Brussels etc.), establishment of relations with media (transparent, fast and information rich answers to questions of journalists, off-record meetings with journalists, provision of interviews with management of the Ministry and the Managing Authority, etc.) and the interim communication with the general public (answers to questions provided by e-mail, telephone, effective and fast communication via the social networks). Moreover, MA of OPT organised so-called controlled events to stir up the interest of the press and general public. For example, it organised solemn openings and closings of projects (hammering on the foundation stone, cutting the tape upon completion of the project, presentation drives by new trains, trams...) with participation of the Minister in all regions of Slovakia. Beside of provision of direct information to the public, outputs from these events were outputs published in the press, radio and TV with nation-wide and regional coverage.

Paid communication activities – financed from the Technical Assistance (Priority Axis No. 7 of OPT). In the years 2007-2013, in the area of communication MA of OPT implemented two projects: “Provision of information campaign services for OPT” and “Publicity within OPT and studies”. The media part of the project “Provision of information campaign services” was implemented in two phases – in the period of 2009-2010 and in 2013. The total amount of EUR 8 million was used for the communication activities from these projects. The information campaigns of OPT were aimed to dissemination of information about the support from the European Union funds for transport projects. The campaigns were implemented in nation-wide and selected regional media. The positive impact of prepared and ongoing activities financed from EU funds was presented with the use of a wide range of instruments above-line and below-line communication (operation of the website www.opd.sk, creation of an interactive project map, PR articles in nation-wide and regional media, online PR, billboards in the sites of motorway construction, leaflets, road maps, reportage films, video campaign on buses, TV spots, mobile information stands in more than 20 cities of SR, etc.).

MA of OPT used funds from Technical Assistance in the project “Publicity within OPT and studies” for organisation of so-called main communication activity of the year. In the years 2013-2014 it organised the presentation of OPT during the Days of Railways in Humenné (3-5 thousand visitors, media outputs etc.). Tens of conferences, seminars and presentations with promotion of OPT were supported in the framework of this project during the whole period of implementation of OPT .

Another important instrument of the communication of OPT was observance of the uniform visual identity by introducing information about EU assistance through OPT, displaying the logo of OPT and logo EU.

MA of OPT verified the fulfilment of the obligation by the beneficiary to inform about its project and assistance that it received from the Structural Funds or the Cohesion Fund through OPT. The beneficiaries of assistance were obliged to respect the rules for individual publicity instruments, as regards the form, appearance, size, duration and location of these activities (resulting from the Manual for Informing and Publicity issued by CCA).

Survey of awareness of OPT:

In the end of the media campaign in 2013 a quantitative survey of awareness of OPT was conducted among the population of SR. The data collection was implemented as part of the survey of the agency Median SK on a sample of more than 1000 respondents. From the survey after completion of the campaign (August 2013) the following resulted:

- The Operational Programme Transport achieved the second highest level of awareness among population from all programmes – 27.8%;
- Half of respondents regarded information about the Operational Programme Transport as sufficient and 83% of the respondents did not feel the need to change the promotion campaign of OPT;
- Up to 48% respondents knew that one of main targets of the programme was road and motorway construction;
- As for the spontaneous awareness of programmes, the Operational Programme Transport achieved one of the highest level of awareness among population;
- The most informed group of population were educated men in active age living in big cities. They were more interested in the news and economic developments;
- The most important source of information about OPT was television (80%), daily press (38%) and radio (31%).

2.2 Analysis of the Slovak media market

The use and justification of individual communication instruments in the communication of OPII is based on the analysis of the Slovak media market implemented at the request of the Central Coordinating Authority (also referred to as “CCA”). Recommendations for the communication of operational programmes in the new programme period can be summarised in the following areas:

- Need of continuous monitoring of the content and focus of individual print titles (due to changes in the socio-demographic characteristics of the readers).
- Need to reflect the changes in perception and reception of the content: growing trend of infographics (the more words in the text, the lower perception of the text by ordinary reader; in case of pictorial message – photograph, graph, video – nearly 100% level of understanding of the message).
- Effective communication campaigns are campaigns that maintain the high rate of content and graphic identity and have long-term effects on the target public. Campaigns with a short-term effect will not be effective due to information saturation, apathy and high resistance of the target groups.
- Beside of traditional target groups of segmentation of the target public, the importance of communities characterised by common interest, medium, discussion group, lifestyle, ideology or profession is growing.
- Importance of PR as communication instrument is growing. All forms and means of PR, from press releases to special events and road shows, are very popular and represent the carrying motive of a majority of successful campaigns.

- The most efficient form of communication is a story and personal example. It enables a long-term and trustworthy process of communication. Such delivered message establishes strong links and has a high rate of memorability.
- Authenticity: another attribute which gives value to the communicated message. The present target public expects more than a good slogan or formal perfection. On the contrary, a minor imperfection of authentic manifestation inspires more confidence than a technically and formally sophisticated campaign.
- The choice of means, timing and accents of the campaign are decisive factors of its success. The emotion and vision are of key importance for the creation of high-quality content.

3 Objectives

The global objective of communication of OPII: Through the effective use of communication instruments to enhance the public awareness of the EU support for projects in the area of transport and information society cofinanced from OPII.

In quantitative terms, the global objective is to increase the level of awareness of the support provided for projects in the area of transport and information from ESIF among population of SR from 27.8 % in 2013 to 33 % in 2023.

Indicator	Measuring unit	Start value (2013)	Target value (2023)	Data source	Reporting frequency
Level of awareness of available support from OPII	%	27.8	33	Sociological survey	biennial

Note: the start value was determined on the basis of the quantitative survey of awareness of the Operational Programme Transport, implemented in 2013 (supported awareness)

3.1 Specific objectives

The partial specific objectives of communication activities of OPII that contribute to the attainment of the global communication objective of OPII include:

- Awareness of the general public of benefits of projects implemented through OPII in the area of transport and information society;
- Transparency and accessibility of information for eligible beneficiaries for Priority Axes 1 – 6 of OPII
- Transparency and accessibility of information for potential applicants for non-refundable financial contribution for information society projects (Priority Axis 7 of OPII) and hence provision of interim support and increasing the absorption capacity;
- Building a good reputation of MA and IB OPII;
- Communication support of activities implemented in favour of people with reduced mobility and orientation;
- Establishment of relations with the expert public (professional organisations in the sector, state administration, local self-government, universities as messengers of good news);
- Internal marketing implemented with the aim to make the employees “messengers” of good news on OPII in their neighbourhood.

The basic condition of attainment of the objective of communication is the uniform action and coordination of all entities involved in the process of implementation of OPII projects. It means especially coordination of the communication experts of MA, IB and beneficiaries of assistance, but also cooperation with CCA, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Investments, Audit Authority, etc.

4 Target groups

With regard to the implementation of the global and specific objectives of communication of OPII the activities will be aimed to the following target groups:

- general public (population of the Slovak Republic);
- disadvantaged groups of population - people with reduced mobility and orientation, seniors and others;
- partners and expert public (ministries and other state authorities, European Commission, regional and local self-governments, professional organisations, non-government organisations, universities, media, business sector);
- eligible beneficiaries of assistance from OPII for priority axes 1 - 6 (Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of SR, Národná diaľničná spoločnosť, Slovak Road Administration, Železničná spoločnosť Slovensko, Railways of the Slovak Republic, Dopravný podnik mesta Bratislava, Dopravný podnik mesta Košice, Dopravný podnik mesta Prešov, Dopravný podnik mesta Žilina, Bratislava the Capital City of SR, city of Košice, city of Prešov, city of Žilina, city of Banská Bystrica, Water Transport Development Agency, Verejné prístavy, Financial Directorate of SR);
- potential beneficiaries of Priority Axis 7 aimed to the information society (such as communes, higher territorial units, central government authorities, interest groups, budget and allowance organisations, as well as other entities specified in OPII. Individual entities will be specified at the level of feasibility study).

5 Communication strategy

Communication is an integral part of the cohesion policy of the European Union. The provision of information about assistance from ESIF supports the enhancement of awareness of implemented activities and creates conditions for transparent implementation of individual projects. A targeted and effective communication helps to improve the knowledge of population of the EU Member States of measures, which contribute to the development of economy, removal of regional disparities, decrease of unemployment and implementation of the strategy for growth.

The basis of the communication strategy of OPII is the focus on the **presentation of positive benefits** that are achieved by the implementation of projects in the areas of transport and information society cofinanced from ESIF within OPII. The communication strategy reflects and contributes to the attainment of the global objective of OPII, which is the support of sustainable mobility, economic growth, creation of new jobs and improvement of the business environment through development of transport infrastructure, development of public passenger transport and development of information society.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION OF OPII

- ✓ Open
- ✓ Proactive
- ✓ Continuous
- ✓ Implemented at national and regional level
- ✓ Rich in information
- ✓ Apolitical

While respecting all legislative requirements, the communication strategy of OPII is based on the general principles of communication, builds on the communication strategy of OPT and will rely on the application of good practices from the previous programme period 2007-2013.

FOCUS OF COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES OF OPII

1. Implementation of particular projects under individual priority axes of OPII:

- Railway infrastructure (TEN-T CORE) and renewal of rolling stock;
- Road infrastructure (TEN-T CORE);
- Public passenger transport;
- Water transport infrastructure (TEN-T CORE);
- Railway infrastructure (excluding TEN-T CORE);
- Road infrastructure (excluding TEN-T CORE);
- Information society;
- Technical assistance.

2. Whole operational programme and activities of MA and SORO

3. Progress in contracting, drawing, results of audits, monitoring committees;

- Important milestones in relation to the European Commission;
- Communication of OPII benefits to the public;
- Communication of OPII benefits to groups of persons with reduced mobility and orientation

Each communication activity will accentuate the support provided for OPII projects by the European Union through cofinancing from the European Regional Development Fund or the Cohesion Fund.

6 Implementation of communication strategy

The implementation of the communication strategy and the rate of use of individual communication instruments are determined by the character of the operational programme. OPII (except for some activities of the Priority Axis No. 7) is not a demand-oriented programme. The individual entitled beneficiaries of OPII for priority axes concerning transport are determined in advance. The implementation of projects, especially in the area of transport, respects the indicative list of OPII projects that have a key importance for the removal of individual bottlenecks on the transport network of SR or the support of environmentally acceptable transport modes. Therefore the key target groups are the general public, including groups of persons with reduced mobility and orientation, but also the expert public.

In case of Priority Axis 7 – Information society the beneficiaries will be mostly central government authorities, budget and allowance organisations, interest groups, communes, higher territorial units and other entities that are specified in OPII. With regard to the aforesaid the communication activities will also be aimed to these target groups.

The communication instruments that will be used, in particular in relation to the general public, during the whole implementation of OPII include:

- Internet and online communication
 - operation and interim update of the web portal of OPII that will contain comprehensive information of implemented and prepared projects, conditions of provision of contributions, tasks of individual stakeholders (EU, MA, MC), including impact of the activities on the horizontal principles;
 - Communication relating to the Priority Axis No. 7 - Information society will be implemented also through the website www.informatizacia.sk;
 - Communication with the public through social networks – effort to approach especially the young generation through fast and short reports on ongoing activities.
- Comprehensive information campaign
 - Above-line communication: TV and radio spots, advertising and PR articles in printed media, advertising and PR on the internet, short reportage films on OPII projects, billboards, mobile advertising, advertising in vehicles used for mass public transport (see and go) etc;
 - Below-line communication: road shows in Slovak regions, exhibition of photographs from OPII projects, school contests, events organised on sites of implementation of OPII projects, leaflets, brochures, advertising items, etc.

The expert public and media serve for OPII as important providers of information to the general public. Therefore some communication activities will be aimed to the following target groups with use of a set of different communication instruments, including unpaid direct communication:

- Representatives of media - press releases, press conferences, informal discussions on topical subjects , organisation of media trips to the site of implementation of projects, provision of interviews, answers to questions of journalists;
- National, regional and local organisations of public administration, business and professional associations, economic and social partners, non-government organisations, educational institutions –

support or active participation at specialised conferences, which by their focus allow the provision of information support for OPII projects or the support for issue of specialised publications, newsletter of OPII and newsletter devoted to the Priority Axis No 7 - Information society.

A special group is communication activities implemented by the beneficiaries or in cooperation with them. The beneficiaries of assistance are obliged to observe the rules of publicity of projects cofinanced from OPII, as regards the form, appearance, size and location (activities relating to the minimum measures in the area of information are part of the CCA Methodical Guideline).

Further communication instruments that will be used for the communication of OPII activities and benefits include:

- Application of a uniform visual identity of OPII (Corporate Design Manual) reflecting the mandatory requirements for informing and publicity of projects cofinanced from OPII;
- Large billboard or permanent/memorial plaque for projects with value exceeding EUR 500 000 or a poster with minimum size A3 for projects with value lower than EUR 500 000.

The efficiency of communication activities will be evaluated through marketing and public opinion surveys that will be implemented every two years. Results of the surveys will proved the basis for potential change of the focus and character of communication activities, as well as used communication instruments.

7 Implementation plan

The communication strategy represents a framework document summarising the objectives, groups, budget and set of activities and communication instruments used during the implementation of OPII. The following table shows communication instruments that MA OPII plans to use in individual years of the implementation.

Communication activities	Year of implementation of OP II									
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Web of OPII		x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Communication via social networks	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Above-line communication		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Below-line communication		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Procurement of mobile advertising panels of OPII and EU		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Media trips		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Press conferences, press releases	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Support for conferences, exhibitions and events		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Memorial plaques for OPII projects		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Hanging out the EU flag	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Informing about the approval of AfNFC		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Uniform visual identity		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Road show at schools			x			x			x	
Training for beneficiaries, specialised seminars		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

The communication activities in the years 2015 and 2016 will be aimed to:

- OPII as the means of implementation of investments in transport and information society in Slovakia in the period 2014-2020;
- State of preparation of individual projects and their benefits at regional and national level;
- Large infrastructure projects implemented in this period in the form of so-called phasing (a portion of funds from the previous programme period, a portion of funds from the new programme period).

From 2007 the communication activities will be aimed to provision of information about benefits and partial results of particular projects implemented from OPII.

In 2023 the communication activities will be aimed to provision of information about results of particular projects implemented from OPII.

7.1 Total financial allocation for informing and publicity

Measures related to the communication of OPII are financed from budget of Priority Axis No. 8 (Technical assistance). The amount of EUR 21 916 667 (EU source) is earmarked in OPII for the attainment of objectives of the implementation of the communication strategy. The communication activities in the years 2014 and 2015 relating to the provision of information about the preparation of projects for the programme period 2014-2020 will be financed from TA of OPT 2007-2013.

Total financial allocation (EUR)									
Sources (ERDF)		Public sources			Private sources			Total	
21 916 667		3 867 647			n/a			25 784 314	
Average financial allocation for individual years (EU source)									
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
OPT	OPT	2,7 mil.	2,7 mil.	2,7 mil.	2,7 mil.	2,7 mil.	2,7 mil.	2,7 mil.	2,7 mil.

8 Monitoring and evaluation

The basis for the successful implementation of the communication strategy is interim monitoring and evaluation of implemented communication activities. The activities of monitoring and evaluation of the communication strategy are implemented under responsibility of MA OPII in interaction with MC OPII.

Tasks of MC OPII relating to measures of information and publicity:

- Monitoring of the implementation of OPII;
- Assessment and approbation of the communication strategy of OPII.

MA OPII is obliged to inform MC OPII about the adjusted communication strategy and its potential changes, annual communication plans and progress of their implementation, implemented measures and activities in the area of communication, used communication instruments etc. MA OPII is obliged to inform the Monitoring Committee about drawing of funds and progress of the implementation of the communication strategy in **annual reports on the implementation of OPII** and **final report on the implementation of OPII**. The annual reports on the implementation of OPII (2017 and 2019) as well as the final report on the implementation of OPII will contain a chapter devoted to the evaluation of results of the measures in the area of communication.

In chapters devoted to the evaluation of communication activities, the annual reports and the final report on the implementation of OPII will contain among others:

- Examples of activities in the area of information and communication of OPII carried out as part of the implementation of the communication strategy;
- Plan of steps of the communication strategy, including the reference to the website providing full information on the communication strategy and plans;
- Content of main changes and supplements of the communication strategy.
- Evaluation of results of the measures in the area of information and communication aimed to the enhancement of awareness of OPII and support provided for activities by the European Union.

The evaluation of results of the implementation of the Communication Strategy will be based on the **evaluation of the fulfilment of adjusted indicators in the area of information and publicity at two levels:**

- Indicators at the level of operational programme;
- Indicators at the level of project.

A. Indicators at the level of operational programme

The said indicators are part of indicators of the Priority Axis No. 8, specific objective 8.2 – Enhancement of public awareness on the EU support for OPII through an effective communication of OPII.

Result indicator

- The level of awareness of available support from OP – measuring unit, reporting frequency, start value and target value of the result indicator – is summarised in the following table.

Result indicator	Measuring unit	Start value	Reference year	Target value	Data source	Reporting frequency
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				(2023)		
Level of awareness of available support from OP	%	27,8	2013	33	Sociological survey	biennially

Output indicator

- Number of implemented information activities

Output indicator	Measuring unit	Target value (2023) optional	Data source
Number of implemented information activities	number	N/A	MA OPII/SORO

B. Indicators at the level of project

The project indicators will be set up according to the National dial indicators and CCA methodical guideline.

9 Administrative support

The implementation of the communication strategy is the responsibility of MA OPII. By the Contract on Delegation of Powers MA OPII delegated to the Ministry of Finance of SR as the Intermediary body of the Managing Authority (IB) the obligation to implement the communication strategy in the part of all implementing activities related to the calls in Priority Axis No. 7 – Information society. IB will ensure that each project contains the plan of communication activities of the beneficiary and that they are submitted together with the application for non-refundable contribution. The measures aimed to information and communication of the beneficiary will be implemented in accordance with the aforesaid regulations of EC and SR. The main areas of communication that lie in competence of IB are:

- Calls for submission of projects (applications for NFC, binding project design, list of mandatory annexes, draft contracts on provision of NFC);
- Criteria for selection of projects;
- Guide for the applicants for NFC;
- Conditions of eligibility that must be fulfilled by the beneficiaries to qualify for financing of activities or measures in Priority Axis No. 7 – Information society ;
- Projects and their objectives, benefits and results of implemented projects;
- The communication plan prepared by the applicant as part of the project and guidance of the final beneficiary regarding information and publicity within the scope of Article 7 (d) of the Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006;
- Dissemination of examples of good practice (communication of successful solutions) in Slovakia

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The core activities in the area of information and communication of OPII will be implemented under the responsibility of the manager for information and communication of the Project Management Section of MTCRD SR, who will be responsible for:

- Provision of effective information about availability and use of funds from ESIF using defined communication instruments (activities);
- Provision of information and communication of OPII in SR and other countries toward EC;
- Preparation, coordination and implementation of the communication strategy,
- Preparation, coordination and implementation of annual communication plans;
- Monitoring of information and communication activities, preparation of information for monitoring reports on activities of OP;
- Interim evaluation effectiveness of information and communication measures, preparation of evaluation reports and implementation of public awareness surveys;
- Participation in activities of the Working Group for Information and Communication at CCA as a representative of MA or IB;
- Cooperation on the application of common information instruments, in particular:
 - preparation and updating of information published on the respective website of MA and on the website of CCA;
 - preparation and updating of information published in the magazine (quarterly) on ESIF issued by CCA and in magazines or newsletters of the respective MA;
 - preparation of answers to questions and information about OP;
- In cooperation with CCA and other MAs they ensure the construction of functional communication channels in relation to the applicants, beneficiaries and the public.

In the implementation of information and communication activities requiring a professional approach may be involved professional entities selected in the public procurement process, who will participate in the preparation and implementation of information campaigns, planning and purchase of space in the media, creative and graphic works, electronic, printing and other production, organisation of information events and other activities requiring the professional support in the area of information and communication.

The provision of sufficient administrative capacity in the area of information and communication for the programme period 2014 – 2020 will be achieved by increasing their qualification through the participation in educational or training activities in the area of marketing communication.

MA OPII will create conditions for the development of administrative capacity in the form of training and other educational activities where the manager pre information and communication will participate at least in one educational activity per year (depending on the supply of educational activities and particular needs).