



COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

SCO Bulgaria

2015-2017

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I. STRATEGIC OUTLINE

1. Introduction

Through the enlargement contribution, Switzerland helps reducing economic and social disparities in the enlarged EU. Since 2007, Switzerland has contributed CHF 1 billion to projects and programmes in the ten states that joined the EU in May 2004. Bulgaria and Romania, which joined the EU in 2007, are supported with additional CHF 257 million. Swiss contribution to Bulgaria amounts to CHF 76 million and will be committed in the period 2009 – 2014. Switzerland is providing support in areas where Bulgaria have claimed great need for catching up, and in which Switzerland can offer know-how and expertise. The focus is on projects that contribute to enhancing bilateral cooperation and mitigating disparities between least and more developed regions of Bulgaria. The end of the commitment period was in December 2014, which also indicates the start of the implementation phase. This significant moment is a perfect opportunity to be used for increasing the visibility of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme (SBCP), which has been relatively low among general audience so far. As one of the objectives of the SBCP is to deepen the friendly relations between Switzerland and Bulgaria, joint efforts on enhancing the visibility measures are essential in order to contribute to strengthening of the bilateral relations between our countries. In order to assure a real impact, the strategy should cover a period of 3 years (2015-17).

In general, the strategy builds and relies on existing communication activities: Some thematic programs and bilateral projects have an awareness component and incorporated communication activities. The strategy wants to streamline the communication on SBCP from all actors and to focus the measures on common objectives, targets, and messages. It uses existing communication and dissemination channels of the involved partners. The purpose of this document is to define the main principles and responsibilities for implementing communication and visibility for the entire SBCP. Since projects have own communication activities, the strategy shall also serve as a platform for reaching consensus on the strategic considerations and approaches with the national counterparts..

Actors and roles sharing:

- Swiss Embassy in Sofia
- Swiss Contribution Office (SCO) at the Swiss Embassy in Sofia representing both SDC and SECO
- National Coordination Unit (NCU) at Bulgarian Council of Ministers
- 6 Swiss Intermediate Bodies (SIBs) selected and mandated by SDC to manage Thematic Funds.

- 2 Intermediate Bodies (IBs) nominated by the Government of Bulgaria to perform certain tasks related to the implementation and reporting of SECO Projects.
- 2 Project Management Units (PMU) established within the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (for Roma Inclusion Fund) and the Ministry of Education and Science (for Dual Education Project).
- Executing Agencies (EA) – more than 110 currently are state or non-state actors directly implementing projects under SBCP.

2. Vision and main goals

Vision: the general public in Bulgaria and opinion-makers in particular are aware and recognize the Swiss Contribution to Bulgaria as an important element of lasting, fruitful bilateral relations and to overcome disparities in Europe. SBCP is perceived as an active Swiss contribution to the European structural and cohesion efforts and as a sign of solidarity in view of strengthening institutional, economic and social development in Bulgaria.

In pursuance of this vision the communication strategy endeavours the following main goals:

- To enhance outreach and awareness on SBCP at national level (general public) and among opinion-makers;
- To leverage visibility on achievements of individual projects and partners;
- To coordinate and streamline all communication activities of involved partners and actors in Bulgaria and Switzerland.

3. Target groups

✓ General audience

We will specifically emphasize on reaching the young, educated, computer literate and active Bulgarian population (20-60) living mostly in the urban areas, who are interested in the development and growth of their country.

✓ Beneficiaries

Experts, specialists, project managers, entrepreneurs, students, researchers, farmers, environmentalists etc.;

✓ Public sector and Opinion makers

Governmental bodies, institutions and agencies linked to the thematic issues and / or programs

✓ Media (as multiplier on a broader scale)

4. Organisation and implementation

The first important step of the implementation of the communication strategy is improving the steering of the strategy as well as the communication and coordination among the main actors SCO, NCU and the (S)IBs. Each partner has to designate a responsible communication person for the implementation of the strategy.

- **Working group on communication (WGC)**

In order to have a better coordination among SCO, NCU and all (S)IBs, a working group on communication (WGC) needs to be established. It will consist of representatives of the above mentioned units therefore each unit should name a person in charge of their communication activities to be a part of the WGC, as well as a contact person on all communication matters. The group will gather every 3 months. The goal of the meetings will be to provide information on all ongoing communication activities of the programme, to plan important events and to take operational decisions. WGC will also create discussions and brainstorming and increase the engagement of the members with the aim to motivate them for more intensive actions to raise awareness and visibility.

- **Financial resources and role of the NCU**

The NCU will play a major role for the successful communication of the programme.. Most of the financial resources foreseen for general communication and information on the SBCP are located in the Technical Assistance Fund (TAF). The NCU should undertake the following steps:

Mandate, through a public tender, a media company – a professional company in media/PR to implement the main elements of the communication concept - event organisation, contacts with the press, publications, etc.

Appoint a NCU communication focal point Elaborate a separate budget for communication - As visibility and awareness are of big importance to both sides, the necessary budget has to be allocated for communication in TAF. The following are the rough estimated resources for the implementation of the communication plan:

- 2015 – 40 000 CHF
- 2016 – 30 000 CHF
- 2017 – 30 000 CHF

- **Communication plans of all projects**

Another step of the implementation of the strategy is to receive an overview of all communication activities of all partners within SBCP.

A database containing detailed lists of all planned events and activities of all thematic funds' projects for the year will be created and incorporated in the yearly activity plans under chapter III. The plans will be communicated and discussed in the WGC in order to reach a consensus on all important aspects/events and share of lead. This way SCO should be able to identify in advance the events where a Swiss participation is desirable in order to consult with the Embassy, SDC, SECO and decide at which level to be represented. In case of a Swiss participation, the programme of the event should be available in an early stage for consultation and possible modification.

The plans will be updated in 6 months. In the end of each year the plans for the next year will be required.

Reporting: After each organised event the respective Partner (SIB, EA provides the WGC with a short summary along with Media review and good quality pictures that can be used for press releases and newsletters.

The media agency will follow the publications, reactions and feedbacks of the communication activities under this strategy. It will prepare annual reports about its implementation and the major events for the WGC.

II. TOOLS

There are various tools that can be used for the successful implementation of the communication strategy. Having said that our main target audience is educated and active people, our most important communication channel should be internet.

1. Website(s)

Improving all websites that we use for the visibility of SBCP is one of our main tasks. The information there should be delivered in a clear and understandable for the audience way. All necessary details about the programme should be provided, structured and easy to access. It should be updated regularly with newest and most important information, accompanied by pictures where possible. The websites are:

www.swiss-contribution.ch/bulgaria - responsible: SCO

SCO's website now, after the so called migration, is a part of the Embassy's website, and there it can be reached through the section "Enlargement contribution". This is not helping our communication purposes as this way the website is not easy to find or remember. Besides this issue, the structure and content are not corresponding to our needs for visibility, easy orientation within the sections, easy search and find of information. That is why a lot of efforts need to be spent there for maintaining and improving the content.

<http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/20> - responsible: NCU

The website, managed by the NCU, is being updated with the most important information, but still there is a lot that can be improved: regular update of news, more pictures, user-friendlier structure, more attention to the detail.

<http://www.swissbgcooperation.bg/en/> - responsible: BILSP

A new website is on the way.

It will be important to use the networks and create the links between the websites, including the ones in Switzerland (SDC, SIB, etc.). The above mentioned problems are a reason to use one more online tool for visibility - another good web based option for expanding the visibility of SBCP is the using of the social media.

2. Social media

In the last years social media has become an integral part of the modern society. As social networking websites developed into an important news, business and communication tool, they help companies or organisations to reach their consumers/target groups directly and also the interaction between all partners and users in a more personal and rapid way. SBCP should use the "electronic word of mouth," meaning the social media, as a strong communication weapon.

The creation of a Facebook or Twitter account of the SBCP would allow quick and easy access to regularly updated information and provision of concise details on the contribution to the audience. It needs to be updated with new interesting posts and to be managed in an interactive way in order to attract attention.

3. Newsletter

In July and October 2014 SCO Sofia issued its first two newsletters, which went out to more than 160 people. The strategy intends to expand the number of recipients with every other publishing in order to reach maximum amount of people. The newsletter will be

published on quarterly basis every year. Its aim is to exchange and coordinate on visibility of the projects, events or news associated with them and future activities/outputs to be followed.

The newsletter is conceived as a simple and direct information tool, open to whoever might be interested in the progress and activities of SBCP. It is based on the template provided by EDA-Info. So far the main difficulty is to get substantial and good quality contributions from the project partners. Ideally, there should be at least one highlight per issue, with a story telling, an interview and/or an article of analysis.

So far we have received positive feedbacks from the readers – stating that the newsletter is colourful, interesting and easy to read.

4. Events and “moments forts”

Each year the implementation of the strategy will use 3-6 common events for broader communication purposes. The activities will be planned according to the developments of single projects and should use the existing communication channels of the partners. These active information measures will use opportunities such as bilateral high-level visits and – if possible - economic or cultural events from other Swiss institutions in BG.

Based on the strategy, certain “moments forts” (conferences, delegations, field visits, workshops etc.) should be enhanced and valorised through focused media activities like press conferences, the invitation of media teams, the distribution of press releases and other materials.

Several thematic events will be organised with the goal to gather experts and institutions, possibly at a high level, in order to present the impact of the Swiss projects in Bulgaria. Each of the events should be used to attract the media and produce information (press releases, articles, interviews, etc.). That is why they can be accompanied by exhibitions of products, pictures and results of the projects. The idea is to present the programme to media and participants in a more “visual” way, not only with words and power point presentations as usually happens in a press-conference.

In 2015 the following thematic events are foreseen:

In 2015, three-four thematic events should take place under the direct lead of SCO the NCU.

- Roma Inclusion Project launching event

- Dual-track Vocational Education and Training launching event
- Environmental protection/sustainable use of resources event
- Direct democracy and Citizen participation event

5. Print

- Postcards

In Summer 2014 HQ required from the SCO high quality pictures of several projects in order to produce postcards and use them as a communication tool. 5 different layouts were created for the SCO in Switzerland so that they can get distributed in Bulgaria at different events. This is a way to spread awareness of how the programme is contributing to its beneficiaries' lives.

- Brochures and other presentation materials

NCU, SCO and the PR company that will be hired, need to decide what kind of print materials to be produced in order to present the programme and what it has achieved so far. The pictures taken for the postcards can be used for producing brochures, fact sheets and other print materials.

The WGC can decide on other complementary materials.

6. Press

If needed and agreed by SCO and NCU, there is the possibility of organising Press campaigns on certain priority issues – publish press releases on concrete events in newspapers, online media, specialised blogs, news portals etc.; post general articles on the Swiss contribution or interviews with the Ambassador and the Head of SCO;

7. Others

- Journalist visits, project
- Production of audio-visual materials (TV reports)
- Co-financing of reportages by selected media and specialised newspapers.

Journalists visit to Bulgaria in September 2015 (in III. Activity plan)

The Headquarters are organising the visit of a team of Swiss reporters in Bulgaria and Romania. The journalists will visit Romania in the spring and Bulgaria probably in September. A list of possible projects to be visited has been required. It will most probably include the Home Care and Linking Nature projects plus some of the projects funded through the thematic funds Partnership and CSP. In addition to the list, we will provide the HQ with a map of Bulgaria showing the geographical location of the projects, a description of each project and some proposed itinerary with estimated timesheets.

- TV & Radio programmes
 - Ambassador and/or Head of SCO attendances at national TVs morning blocks, news programmes etc.
 - Using of local TV and radio channels to raise awareness among elderly and lower educated people, who don't have internet access

III. COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES PLAN

This section will be completed as soon as the communication plan database is created.

Following the objectives, priorities and tools of the longterm Strategy, the activity plans will be prepared, discussed and decided on annual basis. WGC is responsible for the periodic update of the plan.