

Communication Strategy

INDEX

1) Background, needs and opportunities.....	3
2) Implementation and responsibility	3
3) Visual identity	4
4) Target groups.....	4
5) Communication tools.....	5
a) Website	5
b) Social Media	6
c) Publications	6
d) Promotional material.....	6
e) Events.....	7
f) Newsletter.....	7
6) Monitoring and evaluation.....	8
ANNEXES	9
ANNEX I - OFFICIAL LOGO.....	9
ANNEX II - OFFICIAL MAP	10
TABLE OF AMENDMENTS	11

1) Background, needs and opportunities

Danube:Future has been a flagship project of the EU strategy for the Danube Region, priority Area 7 - *Knowledge society* since September 2013. The project contributes to EUSDR by developing interdisciplinary research and education in the Danube River Basin, in particular by strengthening a long-term humanities perspective. Danube:Future contributes to solutions for addressing environmental issues, and works towards a sustainable future of the region. The “Danube:Future White Paper¹” recommends to establish national contact points to ensure national participation in international sustainability networks. Furthermore, the tools offered by the project’s team (such as the Danube:Future Knowledge Base and WIKI) are useful for the research community, as well as for citizens, local authorities and other stakeholders.

Since Danube:Future is a huge networking project, the Communication Strategy is needed for its implementation and its success. It is a strategic framework and a basis for the communication of Danube:Future during the whole project. The Communication Strategy is based on the following aspects:

- communication is an essential instrument to clarify the project’s goals and objectives, to raise general awareness towards its actions and achievements;
- the Strategy ensures the project team is reaching out to the target groups effectively;
- targeted communication linking the appropriate messages and tools to the relevant target audiences ensures that the project is visible, accessible and accountable to the public;
- community involvement in the project’s process and integration of participants’ opinions brings a sense of ownership;
- attracting potential members to join the Danube:Future community.

Danube:Future starts its second phase in 2016: an adequate strategy will ensure visibility of the new actions. As the project evolves, so do the communication needs and activities. The annual communication plans will focus on specific activities while they will maintain a high degree of flexibility and will allow necessary adjustments.

2) Implementation and responsibility

The Communication Strategy is implemented through annual Communication Plans. The Project Administrator issues the document annually by January 31st, according to the project’s needs and the available budget. The Management Committee approves the Annual Plan.

The **Annual Communication Plan** shall define:

- the target groups (identified in § 3) according to the planned actions;
- the revision of the communication tools (identified in § 5);

¹ Winiwarter V. & Haidvogel G. (2015): *Danube:Future White Paper on Integrated Sustainable Development of the Danube River Basin. A research community-based White Paper on research and capacity building needs, challenges and opportunities for the development of the sustainability-oriented knowledge society of the Danube River Basin.* Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt Wien Graz & University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (ISBN 978-3-900932-27-5), available on www.danubefuture.eu

- the use of the communication tools, in particular the updating of the website and the use of the official social media accounts;
- specific activities, i.e. new tools, services or projects;
- the result indicators;
- the necessary budget to perform the actions.

During the year, on the base of new activities or budget, the Annual Plan can be updated.

Although communication is a shared responsibility of the community, the main party for carrying out the Communication Strategy is the Project Administrator. The key success factor for the Strategy is the ability of different parts of the system to work together and share information. Contact points facilitate contact among potential members and partners. More specifically, their mission is to:

- provide easily accessible advice to potential members or partners;
- act as ambassadors of the project in their own country;
- organize national/local information activities.

3) Visual identity

In order to ensure that publications and other printed and online material of the Danube:Future project keep a consistent format, a corporate visual identity has been developed. The corporate identity and the visual presence are very important to transmit a professional and quality image of the project during its implementation.

The Danube:Future **official logo** has been available since December 2013. It represents the Danube river basin, with Blue and Orange colors. The logo is used in the official communication of the project, in the official documents and in its communication tools. Where possible, it should be used with a clear visual reference to the EUSDR PA7, DRC and AARC logos. For each of the three Modules (Core, Research and Capacity Building) there a specific logo. It must be used only for activities linked to Danube:Future as certified by the Management Committee. Annex I shows all the official logos of the project and its details.

The **map** of Danube:Future is composed of several circles which represent the collaborations in the macro-region. Annex II shows the map and its details.

The **slogan** of the Danube:Future project are:

- Research module: “Interdisciplinary Research Community for the sustainable development of the Danube region”
- Core module, Capacity Building module: “Natural and Cultural Heritage for the sustainable development of the Danube region”.

The slogan is recommended to be used in all the communication activities.

4) Target groups

Target audiences of the project have been broken down into different groups. Diverse target groups are addressed by different specific communication objectives and through different activities. The target groups can be divided into the three following main groups according to their nature within the project implementation.

The **principal and internal target groups** consist of the Danube and Alps Adriatic Rectors' Conferences and its members. This scientific basin is the main actor for the implementation of the project's activities and its tools.

The **Connected target groups** consist of those organization/decision makers/networks which are already interested in the project's context and in reaching its main goals. Organizations that could implement actions are:

- EUSDR, in particular PA3 (culture and tourism), PA6 (biodiversity), PA7 (knowledge society) and PA9 (people and skills);
- Ministries of research, science and education;
- Danube:Future supporting partners², such as ICPDR, IDM, IAD and CEI;
- Research networks.

Furthermore, other stakeholders could be interested in the project's activities, they represent the **external target groups**:

- Local/regional decision makers;
- NGOs;
- SMEs;
- Civil society.

Each type of target group needs specific key messages to be transmitted, ie: clear information on the project's activities; how to benefit from the opportunities provided by the project; how to use own project's outputs; etc.

5) Communication tools

The tools for the implementation of the Communication Strategy are a means to achieve the aimed objectives during the different phases of the project life. The information tools are interactive character and assure accessibility of information to various target groups.

a) Website

The Danube:Future portal (www.danubefuture.eu, since February 2013) is the main information source. According to Art. 9 of the Project Regulations, the website is used:

- to give general information on Danube:Future;
- to disseminate information connected with the Danube:Future;
- to link the projects connected with Danube:Future;
- by the people working for the Danube:Future;
- as a reference point for the International Schools;
- as a point of information for/about the Danube:Future partners,

The website is built on a DRUPAL CMS structure. Members are enabled to implement and share contents, ie training school pages, WIKI contents, forums, etc.

In order to achieve its objectives, the website is constantly updated with relevant information.

Because it has become essential nowadays to facilitate navigation in portable devices, most

² According to Art. 3,3 of the Project Regulations. A complete list is available on www.danubefuture.eu >> project >> partners >> supporting partners

website contents are readable on tablets and mobiles. APPs could be developed to facilitate navigation and interaction with the website database.

b) Social Media

In today's communication, the information given by an European project cannot only come via a website. Given media platform changes and the strong progression of social media platforms in professional working environments, it is clear that project communication needs a more community oriented approach. Social media is part of the media mix in our society and would be expected to be part of any current communication strategy.

The presence of Danube:Future in the main social media must be thus ensured considering its relevance and adequacy regarding the different target groups. Relevant social media platforms should be used to complement and reinforce project news and messaging, to have relevant conversations with stakeholders and to make the project results more accessible.

- **LINKEDIN** (Danube:Future project) since November 2013. LinkedIn is the largest business-oriented social network service, where members can discuss opportunities. This social site is used for discussions among members.
- **FACEBOOK** (/DanubeFuture) since February 2014. This social site allows the creation of posts, albums, events. Danube:Future profile includes all these features. In particular photos of the events are published in separate albums.
- **TWITTER** (@DanubeFuture) since November 2014. This instrument is very useful to disseminate quick messages or to link webpages. Participation in events (including images) should be promoted via Twitter. The Twitter account is directly connected to the Facebook account.
- **YOUTUBE** (DanubeFuture) since November 2015. 15 minute videos can be uploaded into the channel. Short video messages, parts of longer videos (ie lectures), videos with photos are available.

c) Publications

The publications are targeted to media and the general public but some specialized publications (targeted to the stakeholders and the project partners) can be contemplated according to the project needs. The publications should be simple, concise, illustrated with photos and graphics and show the practical implications of the project for the stakeholders in the Danube region.

Since the working language of the project is English, the majority of publications is produced in this language. However, to ensure that information is accessible to all potential stakeholders and to the larger public, it can produce some publications in national languages.

Publications and articles about Danube:Future are available in a specific section of the website, ordered by date.

d) Promotional material

All the designed material must include the following elements:

- Official logos;
- Logos of endorsing organizations, such as EUSDR PA7, DRC, AARC;
- Logos of the Core partners;

- Details about the general focus of Danube:Future and its main activities;
- Indications about the website and mail addresses.

The official material is composed of:

- roll up (200 * 85)
- poster (100*70)
- leaflet (A4)
- letter (A4)
- flyer (A5)
- visiting card
- presentation

The Project Administrator is responsible for the coordination of the official material.

e) Events

Events are an extremely important communication tool, due to their interactive character and the potential for networking and media opportunities. The events to be organized are diverse and serve the needs of specific target groups according to the different actions of the project implementation.

- At university level. Events for disseminating and capitalising of project results; for reaching new members.
- At local level. Events for the dissemination and capitalization of project results.
- At national level. Participation in general information events with the purpose of providing information to the general public and potential beneficiaries.
- At European Union level. Participation in EUSDR forums, EUSDR steering group meetings, European commission events.

In all the events, project material (flyers, leaflets, etc) should be provided. As for all communication activities, the timing and content of events are carried out in close coordination to ensure coherency in the information given out about the project.

f) Newsletter

Newsletters are a key tool to inform the relevant target audiences about the evolution of the project implementation. Newsletters with updated content will be sent on a regular basis in electronic format via email or published on the website. Newsletters will be issued when specified in the annual communication plan.

Each version should include:

- relevant events;
- state of projects linked to Danube:Future;
- new contribution to the Knowledge Base and WIKI.

6) Monitoring and evaluation

The annual planning allows for the implementation of the Strategy through coordinated milestones where evaluation of the communication offers possibilities for adjustment and improving when needed.

Monitoring and evaluation of implementation and results are an important aspect of this Strategy. They are aimed at measuring implementation success and efficiency as per the defined objectives, and at ensuring better management of budgetary resources. Consequently, it serves to improve the communication tools and activities used.

Evaluation means assessing quality and quantity of activities, as well as harmonizing of activities with the annual communication plans. In the process of monitoring and evaluating the communication activities set in the Communication Strategy, both quantitative and qualitative indicators are used. The evaluation is carried on an annual basis, in order to allow possible corrections of the Strategy in due time.

The Project Administrator reports on the implementation in the annual reports, according to art 10,2 of the Project Regulations.

The Communication Strategy works correctly if the Danube:Future Community grows and the number of members contribution increases.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I - OFFICIAL LOGO

OFFICIAL



CORE



RESEARCH



CAPACITY BUILDING



The official colors are the following:

		CMYK set				RGB set		
	ID	C	M	Y	K	R	G	B
DF BLUE	19476e	100	80	40	10	27	63	103
DF ORANGE	f3702b	0	70	94	0	237	103	28

ANNEX II - OFFICIAL MAP

The Map represents the collaboration between countries in the Danube Region.

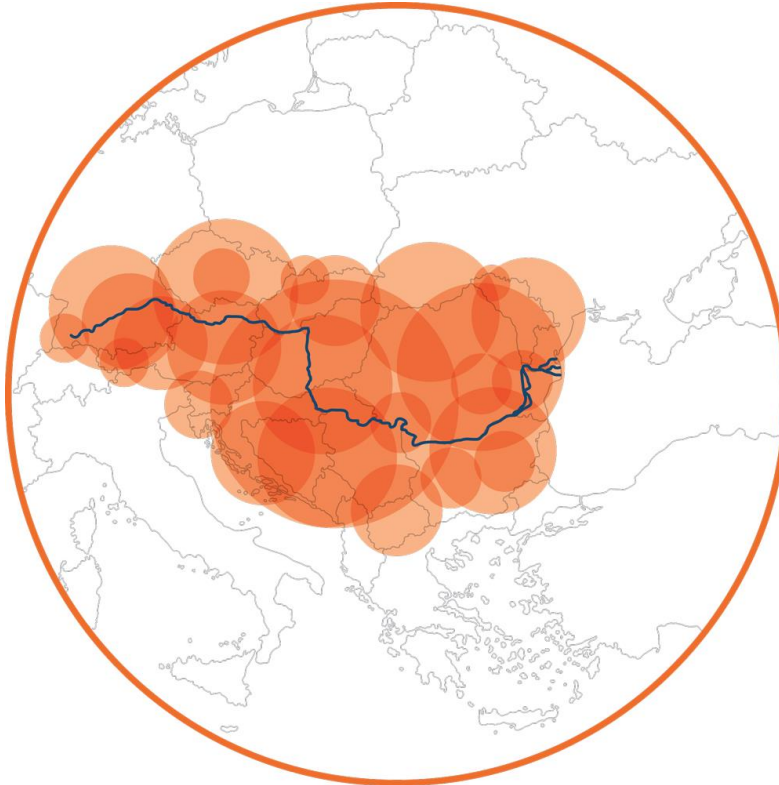


TABLE OF AMENDMENTS

Approval of the Communication Plan	February 4 th , 2016
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