МРЕЖА ЗА РУРАЛЕН РАЗВОЈ
НА РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА

COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY PLAN

Of the Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia

2019 - 2022

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Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

The Plan for communication and visibility of the Rural Development Network of RM should provide efficient communication and presentation of activities of the Network for successful promotion before defined target groups at national and international level. This plan includes a framework for effective communication of strategic goals and activities of the Network, in order to provide information management, correct dissemination of information to target groups, who and when to communication, who should participate in communication and define the method of communication with the internal and external public.

In order to achieve specific communication goals, the Plan focuses on combination of communication tools with defined target groups. Precisely, this document provides the definition of visual identity, offline and online activities, relations with the media, event management, campaign for social networks and branding.

The Cooperation and Visibility Plan consists of activities for communication and visibility, also including activities related to the media, as well as public events, such as training workshops, workshops, seminars, conferences, round tables, forums and other events.

2. THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The goal of rural development networks is easy distribution of information, communication, due availability of all information to all actors in rural development equally and at the same time, for the purpose of complexity in this area and the different character and type of actors (interested entities) in rural development.

The Union of Civil Associations "Rural Development Network of RM" (RDN of RM) was established in 2010 in Skopje, as a movement organized at national level to provide voice for rural communities in the Republic of Macedonia.

The Rural Development Network of the Republic of Macedonia is an umbrella organization that currently cooperates with 79 civil organizations, its members that directly work in the field of rural development. RDN of RM has estimated that 1500 persons are directly involved in activities and their work reaches about 80 000 persons living in rural areas in Macedonia.

The membership of the RDN of RM has continuously increased and is a leading movement for rural development in the country. RDN of RM represents the needs of its members at local, national and international level. Working at local level, member organizations encourage people by establishing a decision level below local authorities and contribute in improving local democracy. At national level, they provide inputs and recommendations that the RDN of RM addresses before different types of organizations, government bodies involved in the decision making process related to issue of rural development. At international level, member organizations are represented by the Network as a

member of international networks for rural development such as PREPARE, ELARD and BRDN, as well as at participating at debates, forums, round tables and fairs.

Member organizations of the RDN of RM come from throughout the Republic of North Macedonia. They work on various issues, from agriculture as a pillar of rural areas, forestry, economic empowerment of women, environment, and cultural heritage, to diversification in rural areas. Their main role is advocacy and lobbying for solving the challenges of rural communities before rural development policy makers.

The Rural Development Network of RM has been encouraging rural development by sharing information, ideas and good practice. The Network covers entities from the three basic sectors including the civil, the business and the public. The *civil sector*, consisting of civil associations, and their federations, unions, coalitions and other forms of association, has an opportunity to penetrate deep into the communities at local level to identify their needs and to gather ideas for problem solution, on grounds of which specific project may be constructed. In addition, this sector would play a role of a corrective to the public sector in the processes of preparing key legislation and documents deriving thereof. The *business sector* represented by unions, chambers, associations, federations and similar organizations, represents the interests of businesses working or having interest to work in economic activities related to rural development. Businesses in agriculture, forestry, water management, tourism, consulting, as well as small and family business and individual farmers will be represented with this sector. Representation of these entities in the Network is significant, particularly upon drafting strategies, as well as for balancing initiatives and presenting ideas and activities that will contribute to poverty alleviation in rural areas and improving the welfare of the population in these areas. The *public sector* represented by institutions of government at central level, institutions of government at local level, as well as their formal and legal associations, and representatives of research and education institutions, national, regional and local communities, guarantees that rural development is in line with and corresponds to other development strategies and plans of both the state as well as the regional and local authorities. Finally, this will ensure that rural development is part of the overall activities related to local and regional sustainable development, and institutions from this sector support the Network and its work within the available resources.

In this aspect, communication activities of the Network should support and encourage successful implementation of rural development measures, networking of entities involved in development, and exchange of experience and cooperation.

Within this Plan, entities belonging to the three main sectors have been grouped into corresponding target groups the Network will communicate with.

3. BASIC WORK PRINCIPLES OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK OF RM

Rural Development Network operations are based on good European practice and the LEADER approach.

In its work, the Network will be guided by the following principles:

Sustainable rural development based on preserving and development of environmental, human, social and creative/production capital;

Support of the individual features of rural areas which are similar but different, and need to be taken into account when planning future development;

Support for communities within the development processes. Support will be also intended for those who have already started the development processes, as well as for those who have delayed them. The latter will be paid special attention;

Bottom-up approach and intensive inclusion of local communities and the public in the development processes;

Development of local partnerships and culture of cooperation;

Promotion of networking, cooperation, synergy in development processes, exchange of experience and knowledge;

Support of the tradition and promotion of innovation for using traditional values;

Promotion and support of integral actions and linking the sectors when local and national institutions undertake such actions;

Promotion and support of ownership of local projects by local management and implementation.

4. GOALS AND TASKS OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK OF RM

On grounds of the analysis of the environment expected for the organization to act in in the upcoming period, and taking into account the past experience, relations with affected and interested parties, but primarily the needs of end users and capacities and expectations of the member organizations, the RDN will focus on the following general strategic goals for the period 2019-2022:

Vision

The rural population in the Republic of Macedonia lives and works in an inclusive environment that fosters diversification and sustainability, enabling balanced development and improvement of socio-economic living conditions, as well as preservation of natural wealth and cultural heritage.

Mission

The Rural Development Network of the Republic of North Macedonia builds partnerships and realizes strategic cooperation to influence rural development policies locally and nationally, supports and engages the rural community through activities to build and utilize their abilities, skills and knowledge, and promotes and advocates attitudes that promote conditions for equal development and sustainable use of natural resources.

General goal 1: Advocacy for rural people before the decision-makers in terms of policy-making for protecting and promoting rights and interests of the rural population, and contributing to equal and sustainable development of rural areas;

General goal 2: Networking and establishing cooperation with external organizations and stakeholders (including the media) to share experiences and good practices, as well as promoting rights and interests of end users;

General goal 3: Building our own capacities and capacities of our members, and strengthening operation procedures in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness at work.

Tasks of the Network are the following:

- Setting up the priorities for development of agriculture, tourism, and other activities in rural areas and their promotion;
- Following the legislation in the field of rural development at national, regional and EU level;
- Following and informing about public calls and tenders of interest to Network member organizations;
- Promoting and acknowledging the significance of rural development;
- Cooperation with relevant national and local institutions, in particular the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy;
- Cooperation with relevant international institutions, including international organizations in the field of rural development, the European Rural Development Network, as well as the European Union institutions;
- Exchange of experience and knowledge in the field of rural development;
- Consistent guidance and plan for assistance and support to be given as part of the programme activities;
- Support of growth of its own resources in areas it shall be active in and projects it will join;
- Training at different levels and of different groups (adult training and education; technical and vocational education; entrepreneurship, and other), and in particular of expert teams in the Network member organizations for topics related to rural development.

5. COMMUNICATION GOALS

The main purpose of communication with target groups in rural development is to inform them about the Network, its goal and benefits it offers. Communication with member organizations and potential members of the Network should allow for informing them about activities undertaken and future planned activities, encouraging inclusion of all interested parties, and recognizing the needs of local partners that will contribute to development of local entities in particular and the Network in general.

The following goals have been set for the main purpose of communication:

- Informing target groups about the Network and its activities;

- Encouraging and enhancing participation in the Network of different target groups;

- Raising the awareness of different interested parties about the significance and the activities of the Network;

- Providing support for the Network.

In order to achieve the above goals, communication with different target groups will be undertaken and proper communication methods will be used corresponding to each individual target group.

6. TARGET GROUPS

Target groups the plan for communication and visibility is intended for are the following:

1. Full members of the Network;
2. Partial members of the Network;
3. Network partners;
4. Network users;
5. Government institutions at central and local level;
6. The public and potential members of the Network.

A communication matrix is provided below for communication with target groups, containing description of target groups, communication message for each target group and communication channel to be used for each target group. This matrix also contains the outcomes of the communication activities.

7. COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

The Network will create a basic information package to include promotional material such as information sheets and leaflets; public information via the media (print and electronic); specific workshops and seminars; public events and other forms of communication.

Full and partial Network members, as well as Network partners and users will be continuously informed about Network activities, and will be encouraged to exchange information about the Network for the purpose of successful implementation of Network tasks.

Cooperation between the Network and institutions will be achieved through communication packages intended for rural development related government institutions at central and local level, and information coming from Network partners will be available for all their members, users, and associates.

The public and potential members of the Network will be regularly informed about Network activities in order to provide opportunities for a process of continuous joining of new members mobilized as planned in the Statute and other Network acts.

Communication activities imply use of all communication tools described in item 8, in a way to achieve the effects planned in the matrix on communication with target groups. This communication strategy is based on the principle of two-way information exchange **Network-target group**.

8. COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Communication tools are used for better understanding and implementing the communication process. Communication tools are used for encouraging and presenting communication, regardless of whether it is textual, audio or video. They are used for timely, fast and facilitated implementation of communication activities.

Communication tools will be used in the course of implementation of the Communication Plan in line with needs of Network participants and other interested parties.

Communication tools to be used by the Network are the following:

I. Web site

In addition to other tools planned in the Communication Strategy, there is a website to be used for transparency of the Communication Strategy and for distribution of relevant and timely information on different topics as public information. The website is in Macedonian, Albanian and English.

The website is open and transparent for communication among all stakeholders in the Network, and it is expected to contribute to faster, more precise and timely communication.

It contains all relevant data about the Network, as well as information on the Communication Strategy. It will contain all communication policies, tools, plans, and member organizations of the Network, but also other stakeholders.

Also the website will present rural development policies, national legislation, national programmes on agriculture and rural development, information about IPARD, opportunities for bilateral cooperation and other data.

In addition to all that, the website will also present the e-bulletin, and links to municipalities, state institutions, European institutions, private companies, civil organizations, application forms and other relevant links.

Questions and answers sections will be available, as well as space for announcements on different developments and events.

The web-hosting company will provide a server, administrator privileges, undisturbed access to the website, availability of the website, as well as daily update, translation of documents and other contents, visitors count, and other services. In addition to the website, the Communication Strategy will be implemented with other communication tools.

II.   Electronic bulletin

The bulletin is an important tool of the Network in the process of informing the membership and implementing the Communication Strategy. It will usually contain information about the main rural development topics and activities of the Network of interest to the member organizations, and the general public, as well as information about the activities of the Network member organizations. The bulletin will be issued twice a year and will be distributed electronically to the Network members and all relevant stakeholders such as the MAFWE, NEA, AFSARD, PREPARE, ENRD, the European Commission, partners and associates of the Network. The bulletin will be posted on the website of the Network.

The bulletin should provide timely and relevant information as following:

- Appropriate publishing of information on activities of the thematic groups, developments within the Network and its activities;
- Posts on activities completed by Network member organizations;
- Posts on the progress achieved by individuals or by working groups within the Network;
- Reports on conferences and meetings;
- Information about steps taken or achievements;
- Information about events that have taken place;
- Policies of the state and the EU related to agriculture and rural development.

III.   Social networks

A successful development of the rural community may be described as a process of assisting the community to strengthen itself and develop its full potential. Communication is a key component of any

sustainable development. Involving people in the development goals of the community is significant, but members of the community may be involved only when communication is effective. Good communication in the community leads to successful joint efforts and community transformation that in time brings about social changes among the marginalized and vulnerable groups in the community. Successful communication will help people move towards joint model of participation, gratitude and equality in the community.

The world of technology and social networks today plays a great role in the development of rural areas. Social media refer to web-based tools and media that allow users personal and informal communication, creation, getting and sharing information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media include sites on social networking, blogs, micro-blogs, forums, discussions and groups, wikis, social integrated text messages, videos, podcasts and many other forms of communication.

Social media refer to means for interaction between people where they create, share and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. In this Plan, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube will be used. These profiles should be regularly updated, ideally once a day.

Blog – allows for discussions/comments regarding a topic of importance to Network members. A typical blog is a combination of text, digital images and links to other blogs, websites and other thematically related media.

IV. *Thematic groups*

RDN thematic work is actually application of the bottom-up approach in practice, where the RDN builds its positions regarding rural development by fully involving its members and other rural stakeholders in order to achieve its goals.

RDN thematic work consists of establishing thematic work groups of key participants in rural development, by organizing seminars and workshops, drafting thematic publications and other information material. The RDN defined its work in 4 major topics focusing on specific sub-topics defined by the members and the management of the RDN. In the course of the work on each major topic, then number of sub-topics could increase according to the needs of the members:

Competitive rural areas
- Agriculture and food
- Entrepreneurship
- Smart villages
- Rural tourism and cultural heritage

Green rural economy
- Environment and efficient management of natural resources
- Adaptation and mitigation of climate change effects

Social inclusion
- Gender equality and empowerment of rural women
- Rural youth

LEADER/CLLD approach

Thematic work has a purpose to achieve the following goals:
- Identification of key priorities and challenges that could be implemented through the Strategy and the Action Plan of the RDN
- Exchange of experience leading to success, including useful measures, tools and approaches.

V. Events (meetings, campaigns, networking)

Meetings

The purpose of the meetings will be according to the needs. Often they are organized in order to present something, to discuss certain issues or to take a position regarding or to find a solution to a given problem.

Meetings are especially efficient in the direct contact with the other party and should be practiced often for the purpose of informing potential new members about the work and the goals of the Network or in situation when strengthening of communication with existing members is necessary.

Campaigns

Campaigns are a comprehensive tool with several components (exchange of messages, contacts with people, relations with the media and other processes) in order to achieve a given goal. Such events will be organized in order to send messages efficient to a target individual, or local, regional or national public.

Networking

Networking events have a purpose of allowing members to meet each other, to exchange experience and knowledge, and to set up partnerships.

VI. Press release

Press releases are drafted sent following an event in order to increase the coverage in the media. A list of media outlets is drafted to send the press release.

Network leaflet

The leaflet provides a precise overview of the organization. It presents the Network and allows partners, donors and potential contacts to understand what the Network stands for, what are its mission and vision and the focus of operations. It should be visually designed well to present the organization.

VII. Visibility

The Network will continue using the already designed visibility tools including the logo and the banner.

The *logo* should be visible on the following:
- Website,
- Promotional material,
- Administrative documents,
- Presentations for workshops, training events, and other events.

The *banner* should be visible on all events organized by the Network including:
- Workshops,
- Training events
- Meetings
- Gatherings,
- Public events.

Matrix on communication with target groups

No.	Target group (listed according to level significance for the Network)	Target group description	Communication message referring to the target group	Communication channel	Effects from the communication activity
1	Full members of the Network	Civil organizations in the field of rural development that have become members of the Network according to its Statute. They participate in the work of the Network by participation in its bodies and in the process of decision making.	Regular information on current Network activities, news and similar info. Regular information on achievements of the Network, and the operations of Network bodies.	Website, Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Blog), e-bulletin, thematic groups, events	Getting information from the target group and informing the target group about the situation, positions, needs and problems. Information for the target group about activities and functioning of the Network contributing to more efficient Network operations. Transparency in operations.
2	Partial members of the Network	Participate in discussions and debates and contribute to sustainable development of rural areas and to the work of the Network.	Regular information on current Network activities, news and similar info.	Website, Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Blog), e-bulletin, thematic groups, events	Partial members productively contribute with their activities to development of the Network and the area where the Network is active in. Information for the target group about activities and functioning of the Network contributing to more efficient Network operations. Transparency in operations.

3	Partners of the Network	Service providers or associates of the Network.	Regular information on current Network activities, news and similar info.	Website, Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Blog), e-bulletin, thematic groups, events	Information for the target group about activities and functioning of the Network contributing to more efficient Network operations. Getting information from the target group about the situation, positions and problems, for the purpose of efficient implementation of needed activities. Transparency in operations.

| 4 | Network users | Natural or legal entities that use services and benefits from the Network. | Regular information on current Network activities, news and similar info. | Website, Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Blog), e-bulletin, thematic groups, events | Information for the target group about activities and functioning of the Network contributing to more efficient Network operations.

Users efficiently use services and benefits offered by the Network according to its internal acts.

Enhancing the capacities for achieving modern standards of quality for production and services for the purpose of improved competitiveness.

Inclusion of the target group in Network activities.

Transparency in operations. |

| 5 | Rural development related government institutions at central and local level | Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water-economy

Agency for financial support of agriculture and rural development

National Extension Agency

Centers for development of planning regions

Local self-government units (urban units that also cover rural areas) | Active participation of institutions in the development of the Network as sources of direct information coming from rural areas and support for the Network. | Website, Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Blog), e-bulletin, thematic groups, events | Information, data, news and similar info coming from institutions, are duly available for all interested parties in the Network.

Information for institutions about activities of the Rural Development Network, as well as about the situation, positions, needs and problems of entities that participate in the Network.

Transparency in operations. |

| 6 | Public and potential members of the Network | Rural stakeholders
The media | Using all resources in rural areas is a key for rural development.

Achieving efficiency, quality control and certification of products and services of entrepreneurs in rural areas improves their competitiveness at the domestic and international markets.

Networking, exchange of experience, knowledge and information are basis for a competitive business.

Information on sources of funding projects, subsidies and other finance. | Website, Social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Blog),
e-bulletin,
thematic groups,
events
press releases | Getting information from the target group about the situation, positions, needs and problems of potential member entities, partners or users of the Network.

Economy in rural areas is active, flexible and market oriented.

Improved information about modern market trends in the country and internationally.

Enhancing the capacities for achieving modern standards of quality for production and services for the purpose of improved competitiveness.

Inclusion of the target group in Network activities.

Transparency in operations. |

9. EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNICATION PLAN

For the purpose of continuously improving communication with target groups, Plan evaluation will be performed.

Evaluation methods will be the following:

a. Opinion polls,
b. Media monitoring (following articles, news and other info referring to the Network),
c. Number of visits of the website, applications and similar,
d. Focus groups,
e. Interviews,
f. Other methods.

The method to be used will depend on the aspect to be measured, and the indicative choice is presented in the table below.

No.	Goal of the Communication Plan and visibility	Evaluation method
1	Informing the public about the Network and its activities	a; b; c;e, f
2	Encouraging and increasing participation of different target groups in the Network	a; b; c; d; f
3	Raising the awareness of different interested parties about the significance and the activities of the Network	a; e;d; f
4	Providing support to the Network	a; b; c; d; e; f