Communication and Dissemination Plan

of the ECoC-SME project

2019-2022

Actions for inducing SME growth and innovation via the ECoC event and legacy

Interreg Europe

University of Eastern Finland (Advisory Lead Partner)

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INTRODUCTION

This document proposes a strategic approach to the communication and dissemination of the project titled "*ECoC-SME – Actions for inducing SME growth and innovation via the ECoC event and legacy*" – funded by the European Union under the Interreg Europe Programme from 1.8.2019 to 31.7.2022.

It defines the methodology Project Partners will use to communicate about project activities and its results and impacts. Most importantly, it defines the target groups to which communication and dissemination actions will be aiming, and the tools that the Project Partnership will use in order to implement the present Plan. In order to serve these purposes best, this is a 'living document' that develops with the project and its emergent needs and opportunities.

The ECoC-SME project

The ECoC-SME project recognizes the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) Programme as a yet under-utilised opportunity for cities and regions to develop existing and prospective local small- and medium enterprises (SMEs) via their early engagement in the event. The project therefore focusses on the mega-event's potentials to trigger, strengthen and diversify local entrepreneurship by encouraging their creative, 'unconventional' cross-sectoral cooperations, clustering and networking, as well as their internationalisation.

The project will bring together seven partners from across six EU member states to **jointly create**, **implement** and **communicate** good practices *to trigger, strengthen and diversify local entrepreneurship both utilising and contributing to the energy and collaborative atmosphere catalysed in the regions by the ECoC title during event preparation, the actual event year and in the course of the legacy years*.

- *Co-creation*

In the first two years of the project, co-creation happens via an iterative process of interregional and local-participatory learning. Project Partners explore and develop approaches and practices to invigorate their local-regional SME sectors and align them with the special contexts (phases, scope and themes) of the mega-event in their regions. Interregional exchanges will take place between these 'past/present' and 'prospective' ECoCs – Leeuwarden, Matera, and Rijeka, Timisoara, Kaunas, while 'Local Learning Labs' ensure continuous engagement of local/regional Stakeholder Groups. These activities together result in the development of new practices and projects tailored to the five territorial contexts and their local/regional policy instruments (the (Regional) Operational

Programmes of North Netherlands, of Basilicata Region in Italy, of the West Region of Romania, and the local development strategies of the Municipalities of Rijeka (Croatia) and Kaunas (Lithuania)). By the end of the second year (31.7.2021), five Action Plans will be prepared to enrich each one of these instruments. Measures and good practices will be selected for implementation during the third year.

- *Implementation*

The chosen good practices will be implemented in the five participating regions, and their deployment will be closely monitored and reported on by the Project Partners during the third year of the project (1.8.2021-31.7.2022).

- *Communication*

Communication, the focus of this Plan, will occur throughout the whole project deployment on various levels, and via diverse media and tools. Details of these are provided in this Plan. Communication and dissemination activities belong to the responsibilities of all Partners in the ECoC-SME project, yet it is coordinated, monitored and encouraged by the Advisory Lead Partner (UEF) team.

The purpose of Communication

The purposes of communication include:

- *raising awareness* and interest in the Project's aims;
- *gathering local support* for the successful endorsement of the developed practices;
- *engaging* a broad circle of relevant stakeholder groups to benefit from their knowledge,
- and also in order to *discuss, test and validate new ideas* with them;
- *ensure sustainability* of project results and enhance their impact on the five regions;
- *share widely* the experience and good practices emerging from the project for a wider impact;
- to *demonstrate* the added value of interregional exchanges in Europe,
- and to *promote the role of EU* in the development of cities and regions.

In broad terms, <u>local and regional stakeholders and relevant national authorities</u> are planned to be included as communication and dissemination targets by the Project Partners via

- local events (LLLs),
- local and national media presence
- materials produced and circulated in the national languages.

The main <u>channels and sites that also include wider, e.g. European-level communication</u> are

- the Project Website, including the Project's news, events, good practices, reports, multimedia etc.
- the Project Poster;
- Project Newsletters (to be circulated to a list of targets, provided for download at the Website, printed for hand-outs at events, etc.)
- Social media (Twitter, Facebook),
- two Open Seminars organised by ECoC-SME, and a policy event at the end of the Project,
- as well as information and communication events held by the Interreg Europe Programme attended by the ALP and other Project Partners.

Beyond the above, since there is growing interest both from the part of the EU Commission and the participating cities in achieving an efficient use of local and EU resources and maximizing benefits from the ECoC, the Project seeks opportunities to share its results with the ECoC Programme to contribute to the improvement of its guidelines for future applicant cities.

The following documents were considered when developing this Communication Plan:

- the approved Application Form and the Subsidy Contract
- the Project Partnership Agreement
- Interreg Europe Programme Manual (12.2018), esp. Section 8 on Communication
- Interreg Europe Webinars and support materials

1 TARGETS OF COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION ACTIONS

1.1 Defining targets: various stakeholder groups and the wider public

This Communication and Dissemination paves the way primarily for securing long-term positive impact on policy practices in the participating five regions, and especially for the creation and endorsement of regionally fitting, 'place-based' action plans for improving policies in these regions. Therefore, the main target groups are stakeholder groups that are in charge of, and those who are the key beneficiaries of, policies that aim at promoting entrepreneurship in the five regions participating in the ECoC-SME project.

Also, it is an ambition of the ECoC-SME project to benefit a wider circle of regions. Thus, besides contributing to constructive policy discussions on the Policy Learning Platform and to Interreg Europe's good practice 'database', the project will seek opportunities to engage relevant European-level organisations and initiatives in its activities. Furthermore, ECoC-SME will use the international networks of its project partners to reach out to other countries, regions in Europe, including those hosting the ECoC event in the past, present and future.

Thirdly, the project will also strive to have an impact on the wider public, especially with awareness raising concerning potential positive legacies of the ECoC and opportunities for promoting entrepreneurship, as well as sensitising citizens about the value of interregional exchange and learning supported by the EU via the Interreg Europe programme in the concerned regions. Among others, maintaining media presence and effective branding of activities will serve this purpose specifically.

1.2 Stakeholder groups

Project target groups to which the communication and dissemination activities will aim are:

Participant Region	Organisations/authorities in charge of the Policy Instrument	Other local/regional Stakeholder Groups	National Stakeholders	European-level SGs: EU institutions and SGs from international network
PP1 – ALP	-	Regional Councils in Eastern Finland (North Karelia, North Savo, South Savo); the Cities and various organisations in of Savonlinna, Joensuu and Kuopio (linked to Savonlinna/Eastern Finland application for the ECoC title)	Interreg Europe national contact point, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (TEM)	URBACT network Creative Europe DG Regio ECoC programme coordination/boards; other professional and academic networks
PP2-PP3, Leeuwarden	Samenwerkingsverband Noord Nederland (SNN)	Province of Fryslân, other municipalities in the region, Innovation Pact Fryslân	Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Culture	ECoC Cities Network ECoC Programme Coordination Creative Cities Network (UNESCO) Eurocities

PP4, Matera				
PP5, Rijeka	City of Rijeka	Primorje-Gorski kotar County, municipalities in the vicinity (also municipailities taking part in the ECOC event)	Ministry of economy, entrepreneurship and crafts	ECoC Cities Network ECoC Programme Coordination

PP6, Timisoara	West Regional Development Agency	TM2021 ECoC Association; Cultural organizations; Start-ups from the cultural and creative, IT&C, social and tourism sectors; Local and regional authorities/organisms (Timis County Chamber of Commerce, West Regional Development Agency, Timis County Agency for Employment, Regional Office for SMEs, Association for the Promotion and Development of Tourism in Timis County); Educational institutions/organizations (universities, County Inspectorate for Education); Youth organizations	-	-
PP7, Kaunas				

2 COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND ACTIVITIES

Dissemination of products will be secured by ECoC-SME through active, targeted and timely passing on information on results and outcomes, as well as on all events and actions taken in the course of the project implementation. The project will be disseminated by several means at local, regional, national and European levels. Each partner will take responsibility for communication and dissemination actions within their respective countries, and will inform the communication manager at PP1 on a regular basis on their results. Dissemination will follow project's actions and be tailored according to the different target groups the project will work with, searching for the best channels to reach them and the best tools to involve them.

The Project will develop activities of the following three types:
- online communication (website and social media),
- media relations,
- and public relations.

2.1 Online Communication

2.1.1 The ECoC-SME Project Website

The Project Website, at https://www.interregeurope.eu/ecoc-sme/, will be used as the main communication platform. This standardised communication tool provided by the Interreg Europe Programme, will be regularly up-dated by the ECoC- SME Partnership, under the direct administration of the communication manager from PP1 (UEF) with content designed to attract visitors during the whole course of the project (i.e. Phases 1-2). Since the average number of sessions at its pages per reporting period is one of the pre-set indicators for the programme to monitor the Project's success in communication and dissemination (an average of 1500 visits per semester required), it is important to concentrate here all information about work in ECoC-SME. The programme sends monthly Google Analytics reports with online traffic highlights, and the communication manager will keep track of and analyse these reports in order to adjust the communication activities if necessary.

A QR (Quick Response) code is generated (in three designs), a scannable image pointing to the Project Website. It will be added on dissemination outputs.

Regarding the Project Website, the communication manager at PP1, assisted by all project partners, will:

- edit the *project summary* and *description of policy instruments*;
- publish *news* about the project's implementation and achievements;
- publish information about main project *events*;
- publish pictures, videos, relevant documents/publications about ECoC-SME, own digital project outputs (e.g. six-monthly Newsletters, good practice descriptions, Action Plans) (*Library*)
- create and continuously update an "ECoC-SME Book" that informs the wider interested public about the learning processes and results of the interregional exchange.

The **ECoC-SME Newsletter**, edited by the communication manager from PP1 (UEF), will give a six-month (in Phase 2, twelve-month) summary of the most interesting news, project activities advancements. It will also inform about major up-coming events in the life of the project as well as potentially those issues and happenings in Europe that are thematically relevant to ECoC-SME. The five issues of the Newsletter will be part of the Project Website (deposited in pdf format at the Library pages), and disseminated to an e-mail list and even in printed form at relevant events. Online dissemination will be subject to voluntary and confirmed ('double opt-in') subscription by the recipients. The purpose of the ECoC-SME Newsletter is to provide the basic story of project development, directing readers to the Project Website (News, Events, and Library) for more detail.

2.1.2 Online social networks, social media

The commination manager will, using contributions from all partners, and with assistance especially by PP4 (Matera team), manage the project's social media (Facebook, Twitter). A key purpose of having the project present at so many social media sites is to attract more visitors to the Project Website offering 'teaser information'; so the Project Website should remain the platform concentrating all important and detailed information on ECoC-SME.
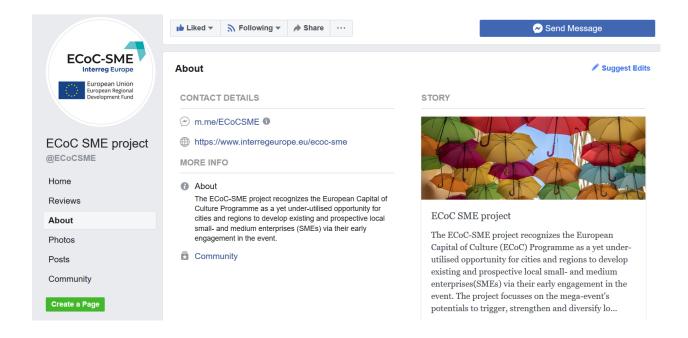
Twitter

The project has a specific Twitter account @ECoC_SME through which all partners will disseminate information and main messages. Some of the partners have their own Twitter accounts and will actively use them to promote the project (also by re-tweeting etc. @ECoC-SME posts).

Facebook

Similarly, the project Facebook profile https://www.facebook.com/ECoCSME/ is set up and is maintained to promote and network the project activities.

YouTube and video production

The Partnership will develop videos to promote the project. PP3 (Inqubator Leeuwarden) will be in charge of editing videos to publish from short clips recorded at policy learning events (interregional project workshops and study visits, open seminars, as well as 'local learning labs') and about good practices by the partners. The videos will be uploaded to YouTube, and their links will be deposited at the Project Website (e.g. in News, in the Library pages).

2.2 Media relations

All partners in ECoC-SME will participate in maintaining media relations. The project will inform the general public about their activities and achievements, using especially online and printed press. Articles published will not be paid but "earned" ones, so such which actually imply media presence triggered by a successful project and communication strategy. Partners will communicate about ECoC-SME results with their respective national points of contact in the Programme and will use them as relays to disseminate more widely about an event or achievement.

The project foresees to generate at least 15 instances of media appearence during the three years. For reporting purposes, the communication manager will keep track of media presence by continuously updating with partners' contributions a list of media appearance and a copy of articles published. The most interesting appearances will also be uploaded to the Project Website's Library page.

2.3 Public relations

2.3.1 Face-to-face meetings, workshops and events

Project Partners will inform their stakeholder groups and local partners about the ECoC-SME objectives and outcomes during personal meetings with them, including

- thematic 'local learning labs' (LLLs) organised in the framework of ECoC-SME,
- interregional exchanges (ECoC-SME Project Workshops with study visits) where not only project partners but representatives of their local/regional stakeholder groups participate
- ECoC-SME Open Seminars 1 and 2 organised by the Project: in Matera in 10.2019 (Sem. 1) by PP4 (MateraHub) and in Kaunas in spring 2021 (Sem. 4) by PP7 (VDU).
- other events attended by the Partners that are held by other organisations, part of other initiatives that offer the possibility for Partners to give a speech or make presentations about ECoC-SME and/or display the Project Poster, disseminate fliers at a dedicated information desk/stand, etc.

LLLs and PWs will be more than just good possibilities for face-to-face dissemination: these events will mean active involvement of these target groups, resulting in co-creation, validation and smoother endorsement of Action Plans.

2.3.2 Project Poster/Roll-up

The Project Poster will be a standardised communication tool provided by the Interreg Europe Programme (see also 3.3) to serve two main purposes:

- Each project partner will place at least one poster with information about the project (minimum size A3), at a location readily visible to the public, such as the entrance area of a building, and will stay visible for the whole duration of the project (see more below in section 3.3). These will be printed by the individual Partners.
- The Project Poster will also be produced in a format portable (possibly a roll-up) for the purpose of displaying those at own or external professional or public events, e.g. those organised linked to the European Capitals of Culture. Costs of producing these will mainly be covered centrally from a dedicated budget of PP5 (Rijeka).

2.3.3 Project flier/brochure

A project flier will be produced in the first semester and a new one (or a brochure) at the end of Phase 1 for the purposes mentioned above. The design of the flier will utilise the basic elements of the Project Poster and will contain fundamental information on ECoC-SME and the Partnership, displaying the Project Logo, the website address/QR code. Printing costs will mainly be covered centrally from a dedicated budget of PP5 (Rijeka), however, Partners will have the possibility to produce variants of the flier in smaller numbers fitted to suit emergent needs using their own budget. (Partial) translations to national languages is possible.

3 VISUAL IDENTITY, PROJECT BRANDING AND VISIBILITY

3.1 Project Logo

The project logo and branding for ECoC-SME has been provided by the Programme and has to be used on all the materials related to the project.

3.2 Information on EU support

All partners shall acknowledge the grant support received under the Interreg Europe Programme in any document disseminated or published, in any product or material produced with the grant support, and in any statement or interviews given. All electronic or printed material, such as booklets, leaflets, newsletters, studies, good practice guides, or power-point presentations must display the Interreg Europe project logo set. This includes a clear reference to the ERDF funding in each publication. This is important because if the visibility and publicity requirements are not (or only partly) observed, the related costs incurred may be considered ineligible for ERDF funding

The Interreg Europe programme does not require a disclaimer to be put on any publication that presents information already present in the Project's application form (e.g. a flyer presenting the Partnership and topic of cooperation). However, any publication in relation to the project presenting *new content* (e.g. policy recommendations, good practice guides, case studies etc.) must state that it only reflects the authors' views and that the programme authorities are not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

All project partners will follow the requirements laid down in the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 (Annex XII Article 2.2 paragraph 2.a) and publish information about the project on their institutional website. Project partners will provide a short description of the project, its aims and results, partnership, and highlight the financial support from the European Union (Interreg Europe/ ERDF). The information about the project will include the programme logo set in a visible place, meeting the general visibility and publicity requirements of the programme. A link to the project website will be added for more information about the project activities.

3.3 Project poster

The Interreg Europe programme provides a downloadable template for the production of the poster, which is slightly modified by the Partnership.

Each project partner will, before the end Semester 1, place at least one poster with information about the project (minimum size A3), including the financial support from the ERDF, at a location readily visible to the public, such as the entrance area of a building, and will stay visible for the whole duration of the project. First level controllers will check this.

4 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION – LIST OF TOOLS

Project Workshops

Steering Group Meetings

Email

An email contact list is established for and each partner has access to contact email of the partnership members. Email is used for general communication between partners, either bilaterally, in small groups or all-consortium.

Skype/Skype for Business or an equivalent

Skype can be used to facilitate bilateral, small group or all–consortium spoken communication. The Partnership will hold regular communication meetings scheduled between face-to-face Project Workshops by the lead partner.

OneDrive Shared Folders

The Partnership will use a project OneDrive Shared Folder established by PP1 (UEF) as a repository for project documents that all partners can access and when required, edit.

Doodle

Doodle (www.doodle.com) is an online tool that can be used to vote on meeting dates and other issues that can be solved by voting.

5 MONITORING COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION BY PARTNERS

Communication and dissemination activities belong to the responsibilities of all Partners in the ECoC-SME project, yet it is coordinated, monitored and encouraged by the Advisory Lead Partner (UEF) team.

The monitoring of communication and dissemination is continuous in the ECoC-SME project. Partners are filling in and updating the information on their communication activities in the report form stored in the OneDrive Shared Folder of the Project. This report also serves the regular, 6-month reporting for the Interreg Europe Programme on the communication and dissemination activities. The following information is planned to be collected from each Partner:

- number of people engaged in 'local learning labs' (participant lists)
- distribution of flyers (event, place, date, number, target group);
- presentation of the ECoC-SME at events outside the Project (event, place, date, audience);
- press release (printed and online, complying with the template provided by the Programme);
- other media appearance (interview, etc.).

By listing dissemination activities performed, each partner will also provide evidence of the activities undertaken (list of attendants, pictures, screenshots, links, etc.) whenever it is possible.