**Republika e Kosovës**

**Republika Kosova-Republic of Kosovo *Qeveria –Vlada – Government Ministria e Integrimit Evropian***

***MinistarstvozaEvropskeIntegracije / Ministry of European Integration***

Report on the implementation of “Communication and Information Strategy in support of Kosovo’s European Integration Process 2018 -2021”

The European integration process entails a very complex reform process that is transforming Kosovo's public administration, legislation and institutional landscape. This process will have a significant impact on people's lives, although it benefits the majority, the European accession process may also require adjustments and changes affecting certain groups of society.

The Communication and Information Strategy challenges misconceptions about Kosovo-EU relations and manages public expectations by providing objective information and advancing public knowledge within the context of Kosovo's complex political environment

It is of paramount importance for the public to be guided through this reform process by providing objective, timely and evidence-based information. The challenges, costs and benefits must be communicated clearly and openly, through public consultation and involvement. In order for Kosovo's commitment to EU-inspired reforms to become a reality, public support for the accession process is extremely important.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The strategy was approved on 11 May 2018, since then the Ministry of European Integration in cooperation with the Inter-Ministerial Communication Group, which consists of communication officers from line ministries, as set out in the decision 1301-1-2526.

In order for this inter-ministerial group to operate better, MEI in cooperation with the twinning project has developed a training needs analysis (Objective 2, Action no. 4).

Based on the needs assessment, in spite of lack of Human Resource capacities within the MEI, the Communication Division, in cooperation with the EU and GIZ supported projects, organized training in relation to the following:

* training related to digital media,
* training related to developing social media campaigns,
* training related to use of software for developing promotional videos and
* training related to identifying, developing and communicating success stories

Furthermore, MEI, in cooperation with the GIZ project, in order to implement the first objective, namely Activity 1.5, conducted a survey on awareness and perception of Kosovar society on European Integration, respectively SAA.

*GIZ* - In order to provide the public with accurate information, MEI and GIZ have launched an information campaign on the visa liberalization process, where the first phase of social media information is already being implemented while concrete field activities, i.e. in targeted municipalities, will commence once we have a concrete signal that visa liberalization will occur.

In cooperation with GIZ, we are organizing a Training of Trainers program in the field of communication whereby SAA communication will be the main topic to be addressed during this training. We have finalized the concept; we are pending the final decision by GIZ in order to commence the organization of the training.

Also, in order to better communicate the SAA and the achievements in this regard, colleagues from the Ministry have produced various info graphics and promotional videos which we have been posted on social media and the MEI website.

In recent months, we have marked three years of SAA where we have collected achievements and challenges from all departments, summarized the most important ones and presented some results in info graphic and video and shared them with local media as well as on social media accounts.

Similarly, we have marked the EU week on 6-10 May, where we organized debates with citizens, NGOs, representatives of Business and minority communities whom we have introduced to the SAA, the EI process and other relevant information. We have developed relevant social media products and participated in various shows that were broadcast on national and local TV and Radio.

*EU Office* – The adoption of the strategy by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo has prompted the EU Office to allocate a support project “Supporting the Communication on the European Integration Process” with the primary objective “Increasing the knowledge among Kosovo citizens about the European Integration process and the SAA in general”, which in cooperation with the MEI is continuing the SAA communication campaign, where as a result 4 informative videos were developed for the chapters of the *Acquis Communitaire*, respectively:

* Consumer rights
* Food safety
* Safety at work and
* Agriculture

At the same time these videos are being broadcast on the central media. MEI, in cooperation with the EEO, is organizing public debates in the 10 main municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo, where we are meeting representatives of Businesses, NGOs, Local Media and local government representatives and citizens.

The entire campaign is oriented on the research and concept document for the SAA Communication Campaign, which is designed based on the findings of the Baseline Assessment (BA), expert recommendations, meetings with representatives from the Ministries and the Terms of Reference.

*Twinning* - In co-operation with the Twinning project “Strengthening Kosovo's administration's technical and administrative capacities to effectively implement policies for fulfilment of SAA obligations” a series of activities have been undertaken as part of the 3rd component:

* Drafting a comprehensive report focusing on the SAA communication needs of the target groups set out in the “Communication and Information Strategy in Support of Kosovo’s European Integration Process”. The recommendations are formulated according to the questionnaires and discussed with the beneficiary institutions.
* Workshops on SAA strategic communication planning were held.
* The analytical report on “Improving the involvement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the implementation of the SAA” was drafted along with recommendations and discussed with the beneficiary.
* An awareness-raising event was organized to discuss possible mechanisms to improve the cooperation of CSOs and the public sector in the process of formulating and implementing public policies.

All this has resulted in lessons learned based on analysis and consultation throughout Kosovo, where important roles are played by civil society. Similarly, with the help of supporting projects, we have been able to obtain and utilize the experiences of other countries in communicating about the European integration process. As a result, we have learned some lessons that will help us shape the specific approach as part of further strategy implementation:

* It is often the case that European Integration priorities are not seen as something that should be proactively communicated, and important issues are only dealt with reactively when they surface.
* Government communicators should be more innovative and creative in finding new effective methods for disseminating information on European integration, for example, through better use of social media.
* Providing targeted messages for different target groups as well as adaptation of content to make materials more appropriate to different contexts and audiences.
* The information needs to be fully adapted tothe needs of the audience and presented directly to the citizen through the most appropriate communication channels.
* Communication officers within structures are sometimes distanced from management and decision making within the hierarchy and are insufficiently involved in policy formulation or strategic planning, resulting in ineffectiveness of communication activities within specific policies or reforms and need a very realistic approach and strategic action planning;
* The emphasis given on press releases and information material related to events and meetings between political leaders and counterparts of EU, etc., risks producing information that does not appeal to most target audiences, or fails to adequately explain what impact these events have on them now or in the future.
* Information about the EU is often done in a technical language and is full of jargon and abbreviations known only to people directly dealing with these issues.
* Communication about EU projects has often been insufficiently visible, existing information can be difficult to find, sometimes too technical, and not sufficiently adapting communication materials to meet interests of wider stakeholders.

* Building trust between communicators and journalists is often lacking and there are frequent misunderstandings between journalists and public sector communicators. This can cause confusion, frustration, and inaccurate reporting.
* Information about European integration is often manipulated, or presented with over-simplification or over-complexity of problems. Similarly, presentation of information about the European integration processes sometimes incorporates myths, stereotypes, patterns and value judgments, and different interpretation of the facts can be manipulated through inappropriate use of opinion polls. It is important that media monitoring puts in place effective mechanisms to counter misinformation and provide a ‘myth-busting’ function.

PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBJECTIVES OF STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

# Objective 1: Increasing knowledge and understanding among Kosovo citizens of the European Integration process and the SAA

* During the reporting period, products and information on the SAA and its implementation through the NPISAA were drafted and promoted.
* The aforementioned activities contributed to raising awareness of citizens and businesses on EU issues, in particular, the SAA.
* In order to understand public opinion and take concrete action, we undertook activities to monitor public opinion on their knowledge regarding the SAA and the EU.

# Objective 2: Raising awareness of the importance of communication, and communications’ competencies across all levels of Government

* A number of activities have been undertaken with the aim of raising the awareness of civil servants on the importance of communication within the SAA.
* The training provided contributed to the improvement of better internal communication between the Ministries, the MEI and the OPM.

# Objective 3: Increasing communication delivery capacities, and improving coordination by the Ministry for European Integration and the Office of the Prime Minister, throughout government and among all EU-information providers

* Implementation and progress of the NPISAA was communicated to certain target groups through public debates we organized at the municipal level but also through media appearances.
* Civil servants received communication training in various fields, especially in the field of social media.
* Regular meetings, calendar of meetings and consultations with local and international experts contributed to the strengthening of the planning function for the SAA Coordination and Communication Working Group.

# Objective 4: Institutionalise a partnership approach by actively engaging with key stakeholders and the wider public in communications about the European integration process

* Concrete meetings and training were held to ensure that journalists and civil society were trained on communication issues, though more needs to be done to make the situation more satisfactory.

# Objective 5: Increase awareness in European institutions and member states about Kosovo’s European accession process and learn from the experience of other countries

* Unfortunately, in this objective we did not manage to have many activities, due to the lack of capacities and political situation between the EU and Kosovo.

RISKS AND STEPS FOR ADDRESSING THEM

Regarding the risks for successful implementation of this strategy, it is worth stressing the financial aspect, the will to communicate the integration process, the relations between Kosovo and the EU, the lack and movement of staff across key ministries and the lack of donor support.

Avoiding risks:

* Functionalization of the MEI Communication Office and Line Ministries
* Support from senior leadership
* Financial support from the state budget
* Financial support from various donors

CONCLUSION

Given that during this period of time the Communication Division has been functioning with few officials, all these achievements are thanks to the dedication of the staff and support of the MEI management, as well as the continued support of the donors!

# Gëzim Dushi Prishtina

**Acting Head of Communication and Information Division 22 May 2019**