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**IPA 2022 Multi-beneficiary statistical cooperation programme**

**State Statistical Office of North Macedonia**

**Communication and Social Media Strategy**

**Prepared with Assistance of IPA2022 SP 6.3 project**

**Skopje, December 2024**

**Introduction and background**

The State Statistical Office of North Macedonia (MAKSTAT) plays a vital role in producing accurate and timely statistical data to inform policymaking, guide research, and support the public's understanding of national development. This Communication Strategy aims to enhance the institution's visibility, ensure the accessibility of its data, and build public trust in its processes and outputs.

It contains the main principles of communication with the public and describes the purposes and priorities of communication, as well as the channels of communication.

The content of the Communication Strategy is aligned with the strategic goals of the SSO, which are:

• Strengthening the institutional environment and statistical infrastructure

• Integration of the Macedonian national statistical system into the ESS

• Creating strategic partnerships

• Quality management

**Purpose of the Communication Strategy**

This Strategy sets the overall frames of the external communication. The purpose of the Strategy is to serve as a tool for and support to strategically define communication towards different target groups. The Strategy declares the Office’s determinations to the strategic value of external communication, which is complemented with action plans within specific campaigns or activities.

**Vision**

Our vision is to achieve a higher level of public awareness about the importance of official statistics and increased number of users of official statistics.

**Mission**

For the vision to be realised, our mission is to offer the public statistical products that will be easily accessible, quality, timely and internationally comparable and that will meet users’ needs.

**Objectives of the Communication Strategy**

The achievement of the priorities of this Strategy will have short-term effects, but in the long term it will contribute to change the perception of the State Statistical Office as a professional, independent and reliable institution, where the interest of the users is put first. That will be achieved by:

* Proactive cooperation, dialogue and interaction with our users in order to learn about their needs and how to meet them.
* Creating a clear and transparent image of the State Statistical Office and the National Statistical System by constant promotion of the importance of official statistics by regular presence in the public, drawing attention to both regular and potential users, offering interesting statistical products that are in line with the new trends and living conditions, which meet the needs and expectations of multiple target audiences.
* Strengthen trust building credibility through transparency, impartiality, and adherence to international statistical standards.
* Improving data dissemination by using modern digital tools and communication of statistical products “packed” in accordance with the needs of the different target groups.
* Foster the general statistical awareness.

**Target groups and channels**

**1.Government Institutions and Policymakers**

**Characteristics**:

* Focused on actionable, policy-relevant information.
* Interested in evidence-based data to support decision making.

**Key Channels**:

* **Formal Channels**: Releases, database, specific analysis and consultations.
* **Events**: Roundtables, high-level meetings, and conferences.
* **Digital Tools**: Email, secure government platforms, and LinkedIn.
* **Personal Engagement**: One-on-one meetings, stakeholder workshops, and networking events.

**2.Researchers, Academics, and Analysts**

**Characteristics**:

* Value in-depth, peer-reviewed data and insights.
* Prefer access to datasets, detailed reports, and case studies.

**Key Channels**:

* **Publications**: Open-access repositories.
* **Events**: Research conferences, webinars, and academic symposia.
* **Platforms**: LinkedIn.
* **Collaborations**: Joint research projects, fellowships, and grant opportunities.

**3.Media and Journalists**

**Characteristics**:

* Seek concise, newsworthy information tailored for public dissemination.
* Interested in clear messaging, visuals, and human-interest angles.

**Key Channels**:

* **Press Releases**: Clear, concise, and timely updates.
* **Media Kits**: Include fact sheets, infographics, and quotes.
* **Digital**: Website, “X” (for breaking news), Facebook, Instagram, email newsletters.

**4.Business Sector**

**Characteristics**:

* Drive economic growth, create jobs and foster innovation based on statistical data. They are one of the biggest users of official statistics, but they are also one of our most important respondents.

**Key Channels**:

* **Networking Events**: Regular meetings and consultations.
* **Digital Tools**: Website, news releases, database.

5.**Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and NGOs**

**Characteristics**:

* Advocacy-oriented, interested in partnerships and grassroots engagement.
* Look for actionable information that aligns with their missions.

**Key Channels**:

* **Workshops and Trainings**: Focus on capacity building.
* **Community Events**: Collaborative initiatives and campaigns.
* **Digital Platforms**: Website, social media.

**6.International Organisations**

**Characteristics**:

* Emphasise global standards, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and sustainable development.
* Value structured and data-driven communication.

**Key Channels**:

* **Formal Reports**: Aligned with international frameworks (e.g., SDGs).
* **Conferences and Forums**: Regional and international multi-stakeholder events.
* **Bilateral Engagement**: Direct consultations and tailored briefings.
* **Digital Channels**: Website, social media and email.

**7.General Public**

**Characteristics**:

* Diverse demographics with varying levels of interest and knowledge.
* Respond well to clear, relatable, and engaging content.

**Key Channels**:

* **Social Media**: Facebook, Instagram.
* **Traditional Media**: TV, radio, and print (for broader reach).
* **Community Engagement**: public campaigns.
* **Visual Content**: Infographics, videos, and animations.

**Implementation Plan for 2025 and following years**

**Timeline**

* **Short-term (0–6 months)**:
	+ Launch a campaign introducing the jubilee of the SSO (80 years anniversary) and the new branding of the Office
	+ Launching and promotion of the new website.
* **Mid-term (6–18 months)**:
	+ Workshops with stakeholders on the use of statistical data.
	+ Develop user-friendly dashboards and interactive data visualisations.
* **Long-term (18–36 months)**:
	+ Institutionalise regular data literacy programmes for journalists, students and businesses.
	+ Collaborate on joint publications with academic institutions and CSOs.
	+ Annual activities to raise general statistical literacy.

**Resources Needed**

* Dedicated communication team
* Budget allocation for digital tools, media, and events
* Training for staff on communication and public relations

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

1. Website traffic and downloads of statistical reports.
2. Social media engagement (likes, shares, comments).
3. Media coverage and citations in policy documents.
4. Feedback scores from user satisfaction surveys, which also include qualitative evaluations to capture more nuanced insights.

**Evaluation Timeline**

1. Quarterly reviews of media and public engagement.
2. Annual evaluation of the Strategy’s overall effectiveness and relevance.

**Risks**

* The successful implementation of the Communication Strategy of the State Statistical Office relies on a strong commitment to communication and the availability of staff with the necessary skills. Limited resources and competing priorities can present challenges to fully engaging stakeholders, delivering clear messages, and achieving the objectives of the Strategy. Addressing these challenges is crucial to maintaining public trust, enhancing data accessibility, and effectively promoting the value of statistical information.

**What we can do**

* Provide regular training for communication staff on effective public engagement, digital communication tools, and crisis communication.
* Establish peer-learning initiatives with other national or international statistical offices.
* Clearly define roles and responsibilities within the communication team to ensure accountability and efficiency.
* Focus on the most impactful communication activities and messages to optimise limited resources.
* Advocate for dedicated budget lines for communication-related activities in annual plans.
* Collaborate with academic institutions, NGOs, and media outlets to amplify communication efforts.
* Develop relationships with key stakeholders, including policymakers, media, and civil society.
* Use tailored communication approaches for different audience groups.
* Use tools and platforms to streamline repetitive tasks (e.g., automated newsletters).
* Strengthening social media and website content to ensure accessibility and visibility.
* Use analytics tools to track the effectiveness of the Communication Strategy.
* Implement performance indicators to track the progress of the Communication Strategy.
* Ensure the Strategy is flexible and can adapt to emerging challenges and priorities.
* Ensure top management actively supports and promotes the Communication Strategy.
* Foster a culture where internal stakeholders understand the value of communication.

**Artificial intelligence**

Artificial intelligence is a relatively new technology, available in practical forms for only a few years, and its opportunities, risks, and implications must be carefully understood. The State Statistical Office aims to explore and adopt feasible AI-driven solutions to enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and accessibility of statistical processes, focusing on cost-effective, ethical, and transparent implementation within existing resource constraints.

**Conclusion**

A robust communication strategy will enable the SSO to enhance its visibility, build trust, and foster a culture of data-driven decision making. Through effective communication, the institution will strengthen its role as a cornerstone of national development.

**Social Media Strategy**

**Introduction and background**

The content of the Social Media Strategy is aligned with the strategic goals of SSO, which are stated in the Communication Strategy.

In North Macedonia, social media are considered as a powerful tool for creation of and influence on the public opinion. Although various social media exist and are used by both individuals, businesses and institutions, some of them are more influential (Facebook, X, Instagram) and some of them less. For example, Facebook is by far the most widely used social media platform in North Macedonia for both private and business purposes. LinkedIn is not widely used by the general public, but rather by the professional one. Therefore, this Social Media Strategy, for the time being, will focus on few of the social media - Facebook, Instagram and X – to address the public, and for branding purposes and building networks, we will focus on LinkedIn.

**Purpose**

There are several different purposes for being on social media. Both to make statistics more accessible, but also for the SSO to become more visible to the public, as a relevant government institution and official producer of statistics.

* **Increase Public Awareness**: Promote the importance of national statistics in shaping policies and public discourse.
* **Enhance Engagement**: Foster meaningful interaction with diverse audiences, including the public, researchers, policymakers, and media.
* **Promote Data Literacy**: Simplify complex data for easy understanding, encouraging informed discussions and decisions.
* **Build Trust**: Establish the SSO as a credible and transparent source of reliable statistical information.

**Goals**

* Provide content that is interesting, relatable and easy to understand
* Contribute to increasing statistical literacy among the public
* Maintain a regular activity and presence on social media

**Channels and target groups**

The social media channels stated below are the main channels for SSO’s external communication. They are chosen based on the most relevant target groups as well as being less resource demanding.

To gain new followers and to increase post reach and engagement it is important to maintain a regular flow of posts.

Plain language should be used in all social media channels. Technical statistical terminology should be avoided.

**Facebook**

Target groups:
General public and/or media, civil society, university students.

The main purpose of the channel is to make statistics more accessible to the public and to increase the general interest in statistics.

Content should be easy to understand and the topics relatable in people’s everyday lives. Examples of topics could be population, salaries, employment, consumer prices, living conditions and names. This content should be extracted from the regular new releases that are published on a daily basis on the website.

Posts on Facebook should have a visual identity by using the same logo, on the same place, with predefined formats and colours.

**Instagram**

Target groups:

Young people, students, public, media, civil society

The main purpose of the channel is to present interesting statistics connected with the everyday life of people celebrating international days, national days, topics in focus. Examples of topics could be consumption of certain products, time use, frequency of names, etc.

Posts on Instagram should have a visual identity by using the same logo, on the same place, with predefined formats and colours.

**LinkedIn**

Target groups:

Civil society, university students, business sector, government agencies, academia/researchers, NSS partners, media, international institutions.

The main purpose of the channel is to inform the target groups about SSO’s current activities. It can be for example international cooperation projects, events/high-level meetings, promoting employees, reports.

Content can differ in complexity. Posts can be simple, with focus on a photo and text summary from a meeting, but can also be of a more advanced character, for example reports.

**X**

Target groups:

General public, media, civil society.

SSO’s presence on X will start soon with automated tweets due to limited resources. No replies will be posted except for when deemed necessary.

Profile information should state that posts are automated, and that questions or comments should be directed to a specific e-mail address.

**Visual guidelines**

Graphics and other visual content should, when possible, be standardised. Colours and font should always be the same, for the public to recognise SSO’s communication.

Visualisations should be as simple as possible, choosing to present for example one number or graph. Text should be limited.

**Engagement rules**

**Respond Promptly**: Address questions and comments to foster dialogue.

**Collaborate**: Partner with influencers, academics, and organisations to amplify messages.

**Hashtag**s: Use relevant and trending hashtags to expand reach.

**Campaigns**: Run thematic campaigns around key dates, like World Statistics Day or International Women’s Day.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

Facebook insights: page likes, post reach

Google analytics

User satisfaction surveys

**Risk Management**

* **Monitor Discussions:** Stay alert to misinformation or misinterpretation of statistics.
* **Crisis Communication Plan:** Prepare responses for contentious issues or misreporting.
* **Fact-Check:** Ensure all shared data are accurate and up to date.

**Resources**

* **Dedicated Team:** Assign roles for content creation, engagement, and monitoring.
* **Training:** Provide staff with training in social media best practices and data visualisation.
* **Budget**: Allocate funds for tools, advertising, and content production.

**Conclusion**

By implementing this Strategy, the SSO can effectively harness social media to educate, engage, and empower its audiences with meaningful and impactful data.