



Council of Ministers of
Bosnia and Herzegovina

COMMUNICATION
STRATEGY OF THE
INSTITUTIONS OF BIH
ON THE ACCESSION
PROCESS OF BOSNIA
AND HERZEGOVINA TO
THE EUROPEAN UNION
FROM THE CANDIDATE
STATUS TO MEMBERSHIP

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Publisher:

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Editor in chief:
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Translation into English: Division for Translation in the Field of
European Integration

Design and DTP: Triptih d.o.o.
Printing: O.R. Agencija Aligo
Print run: 100
Sarajevo, 2020.

Note:
The document was adopted on 21 March 2019 at the 169 session of
the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina and published in
the Official Gazette of BiH, 37/19.

Published with the financial assistance of the Embassy of Sweden
in Bosnia and Herzegovina



ABBREVIATIONS

ACQUIS	the body of the EU law, a set of rights and obligations that are mandatory and link all Member States within the European Union
EUD	Delegation of the European Union to BiH
DCO	diplomatic and consular offices
EI	European integration / EU integration
EU	European Union
EUSR	European Union Special Representative IPA – EU Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance CSO – civil society organisations
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement

INTRODUCTION

The accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Union, as a foreign policy priority, has been a subject of discussions, writings and communication for more than two decades now. Accession process comes as a product of undivided will of all political stakeholders in the country, but also the generally accepted goal across the board in society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It implies a transformation of the country and society as a whole for it includes a comprehensive approximation of both policies and the institutional, legal and economic system to the European standards.

From the adoption of the *Decision on launching the initiative for Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession into the European Union* in 1999 to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) entry into force in 2015, Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession has enjoyed a steady public support and countrywide recognition as the single most important precondition to achieve security and prosperity of BiH.

Along these lines, the 2009 *Communication Strategy for Informing Public about Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Union* had outlined the fundamentals in outreach and communication on the European integration process in BiH to facilitate a full understanding of all requirements and challenges faced by BiH on this path. The Directorate for European Integration (hereinafter: DEI) is recognised as the champion of this outreach process, with necessary engagement of other stakeholders and partners (important opinion multipliers in particular) who, apart from the institutions of BiH, also play a role in the accession process outreach.

Progress in the country's accession, new momentum in the process, coupled with the expected candidate status for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which comes with new requirements, all demand a change in outreach approach with specific target groups, so as to improve the public knowledge and understanding of implications in the accession on day-to-day life and society in whole. Qualitative and quantitative research, as well as consultations with institutions in BiH and other interested publics, all show an unsatisfactory degree of awareness on the process, but also a rise in Euroscepticism.

Lessons learned suggest a need for a different classification of targeted publics in the outreach on the process, that they should be communicated with by using specific messages, customised to the interests of every targeted public and that the outreach activity holders should be all institutions across all levels of governments. According to the Strategy, being a strategy of the Council of Ministers of BiH, communicators in institutions of BiH are understood as activity holders for outreach,¹ with institutions of other levels as partners.

Communication Strategy of the Institutions of BiH on the Accession Process of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Union – from the Candidate Status to Membership (the Strategy), unlike the previous one, shifts the communication focus from a **general approach** (to all target groups mostly with identical/generic messages, in different scope) to **varying topic-based approaches for every target group** (which are not a subject of interest of all target groups).

The previous strategy had recognised DEI as the main communicator on the process, with partial engagement of institutions, in the role of opinion multipliers. **The new approach is about the involvement of all institutions of BiH as champions in the communication process within their scope of work and purview, and DEI as focal point.** A successful outreach on emerging obligations, processes and implications demand synergy in communication with other communication partners (institutions at all levels, non-governmental organisations, EUD, EUSR and diplomatic and consular offices of Member States).

1 Council of Ministers of BiH, agencies, directorates and other administrative bodies, that is, institutions of executive authority, irrespective of the source of funding

The Strategy outlines a communication approach, target publics, main messages, channels and tools in line with the challenges of the European integration process for a better understanding of the process.

Annual action plans will set out in detail the objectives, deadlines, funds needed, indicators and holders for every concrete activity, in line with priorities for the timeframe as specified.

SITUATION ANALYSIS



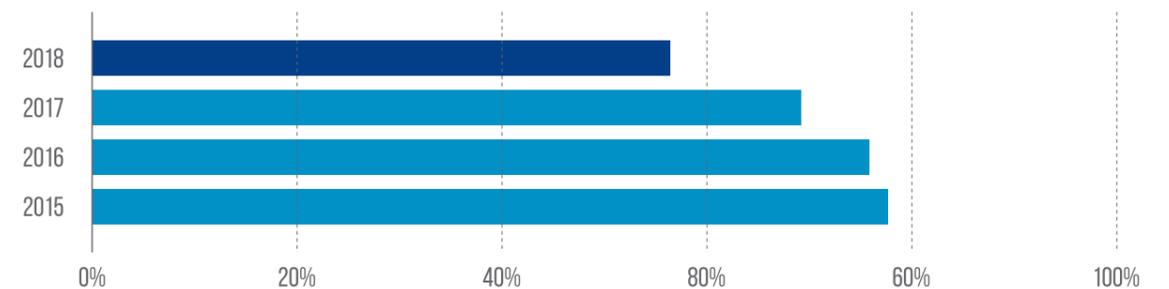
The 2009 *Communication Strategy for Informing Public about Accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Union* was used as a baseline for preparation of the Strategy.

Additionally, analyses of micro and macro settings have been used for a more in-depth situation analysis, S.W.O.T.² analysis of outreach on the European integration process and position in external setting in BiH and P.E.S.T.³ analysis of external setting, analysis of individual publics (civil servants, academia, media) conducted through quantitative research and an online survey, including a press clipping analysis through DEI's permanent media monitoring. The analysis also relied on the implementation reports for previous annual action plans for the implementation of the Communication Strategy for Informing Public about Accession of BiH to the EU.

Multiplication of general information on the process of the European integration through outreach and promotional activities as well as the distribution of adequate promotional and informational materials underpins these plans with implementation rate in previous years at 80%. As such, it was conditioned by the absence of interinstitutional cooperation in the implementation of communication activities (2009-2016), and lacking material and human capacities. Such implementation rate was also affected by inadequate communication towards decision-makers and enforcers.

Annual public opinion polls conducted by DEI, through commissioned external agencies, confirm the support for the EU accession at between 56 % and 78 % (2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018), that is, further corroborate the general public's commitment to the EU accession.

Figure 1. Percentage of public support in BiH 2015-2018



Poll results in the last four years (Figure 1) show a significant decline in public support from 78% in 2015 to 56.5% in 2018. Comparison of the results of several multi-annual polls shows that citizens feel they do not have sufficient information about the European integration process.

In this regard, the majority notes that the most interesting topics in the media are on the impacts of the European integration process on everyday life. TV and Internet are the most common sources of information for citizens on the European integration issues. Possibilities of using the EU financial assistance are the first on the list of topics that interest citizens, but very few respondents consider themselves well-informed on the topic. Annual public opinion polls are available at http://www.dei.gov.ba/dei/media_servis/istrazivanje/default.aspx?id=1905&langTag=bs-BA&template_id=120&pageIndex=1

DEI's continuous media monitoring shows that the reporting on the European integration is scarce, general and in the context of day-to-day developments, by putting an emphasis on statements by BiH and EU officials. Printed, online and electronic media miss analytical texts and thematic stories where journalists would illustrate to ordinary citizens

² S.W.O.T. is an acronym in English for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

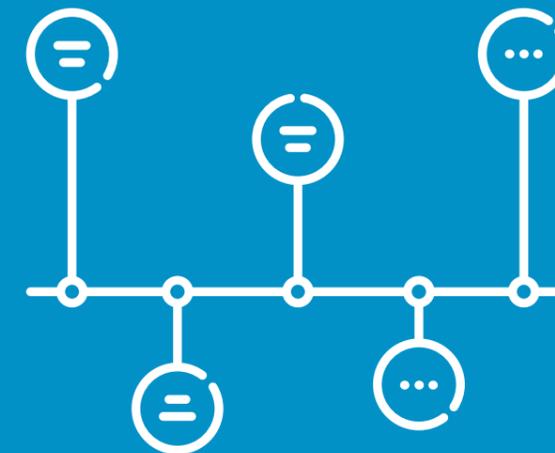
³ P.E.S.T. is an acronym in English for Political, Economic, Social and Technological.

the extent to which the EU accession process will have an impact on the quality of life in BiH, which reforms must be conducted and what will be the expected impact, and also information on the eligible structures and modalities to absorb financial assistance from the EU funds. Reports on the EU accession are not broadcast in primetime, not even in programmes of public broadcasters. Such media reporting demands a change in approach to the media too. To this end, it is necessary to organise workshops where journalists would be informed and educated on specific topics, supported in writing research and analytical texts, and be encouraged to expand the scope of themes, but with topics of interest for citizens in focus.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of outreach



Academia, too, can make a significant contribution to continuous and constructive critical debate on the European integration. With this aim, DEI launched the scientific and professional journal *Sui generis*, to provide a platform and channel for the analysis and implications of accession on different segments of society.



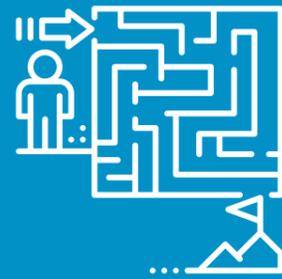
TIMEFRAME

Application of the Communication Strategy kicks off with the candidate status granted to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the new strategic approach will be valid until the membership in the EU.

Communication activities will be detailed out in annual action plans to be adopted by the Council of Ministers of BiH, at the proposal of DEI, to be developed and implemented in cooperation with the institutions of BiH and other partners in outreach on the European integration process in BiH. Annual action plans for implementation of the Strategy are prepared by DEI based on inputs received from delegated civil servants of the institutions of BiH competent for their implementation.

The Strategy will be evaluated and revised in compliance with the needs of the EU accession, while specific topics that necessitate a more detailed communication will be described in special communication and operational documents, compatible with this Strategy.

GOALS



The Strategy aims at facilitating better understanding of the European integration process allowing the public to form positions on the BiH's accession to the EU, based on verified and timely information.

The goal of the new approach introduced by the Strategy is to achieve the following:⁴

- Openness and transparency of institutions/holders of communication activities in the European integration process and their continuous mutual information exchange;
- Synchronised communication of stakeholders /partners on BiH's accession process;
- Involvement and interest of targeted publics;
- Understanding of the European integration process;
- Understanding of reform activities.

⁴ Responses of interested individuals to an online survey aimed at gathering information on priority topics, communication channels, needs and suggestions in the field of communication on the European integration (EI) process of BiH have highlighted the need to expand on communication goals.

New way of outreach, which is to commence with BiH being granted the candidate status, implies an active involvement of institutions in BiH **in synergy with partners and other stakeholders**, who have a major role in the European integration process.

In order to achieve the goal of a new approach, it is necessary to:

- Improve the institutional capacities of holders of communication activities,⁵
- Change the understanding of communication about the process and positioning of these activities within the institutions involved in the communication process,
- Support and participation of partners and opinion multipliers in communication process.

⁵ A weakness of institutions participating in communication on the European integration process has been observed, aside a need for appointing a communication/public relations officer who will primarily be focusing on these tasks.

The Strategy should ensure that different publics in BiH are:⁶

- Actively participating in the European integration process;
- Understanding the European integration process in areas of their own interest;
- Familiar with benefits and shortcomings of the European integration process;
- Familiar with obligations and challenges faced by BiH institutions in the European integration process;
- Communication on procedures and possibilities of using IPA funds in BiH;
- Dialogue and critical discussion with civil society, business community and academia.

Specific objectives of this Strategy will be tailored to the needs of the specific target group as well communication channels and means.

⁶ Responses of interested individuals to an online survey aimed at gathering information on priority topics, communication channels, needs and suggestions in the field of communication on the European integration (EI) process of BiH have been used in elaboration of goals.

LANGUAGE, CHANNELS AND MESSAGES



Communication language on the process should be balanced, appropriate and understandable to the public, with consistent use of uniform terminology. Communication is to be corroborated by specific examples of the impact of the European integration on day-to-day life.

The main message in communication about the European integration process is:

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA'S INTEGRATION IN
THE EUROPEAN UNION IS A CHANCE TO IMPROVE
QUALITY OF LIFE IN BIH.

This message should be incorporated in every communication activity in the accession process regardless of the communication activity holder.

Messages intended for specific target publics will be customised and elaborated in annual action plans, depending on the accession stages and needs for communication on this process, and oriented via multipliers or direct communication channels towards key groups as identified.

It is necessary to be mindful of communication channels for persons with disabilities, and to adjust communication channels, tools and forms to specific needs.

IMPLEMENTING BODIES



The application of communication activities so far is indicative of insufficient and inadequate communication between communicators in BiH institutions. Therefore, improvement of internal communication within the identified group is needed, that is, focusing on civil servants in charge of communications, relations with the public and the European integration, a precondition for solid implementation of the Strategy. A change of strategic approach to communication, with focus on **networking and joint communication of appointed civil servants in BiH institutions** (especially in charge of communications, public relations and the European integration), will enable participation of other target publics in the role of partners.

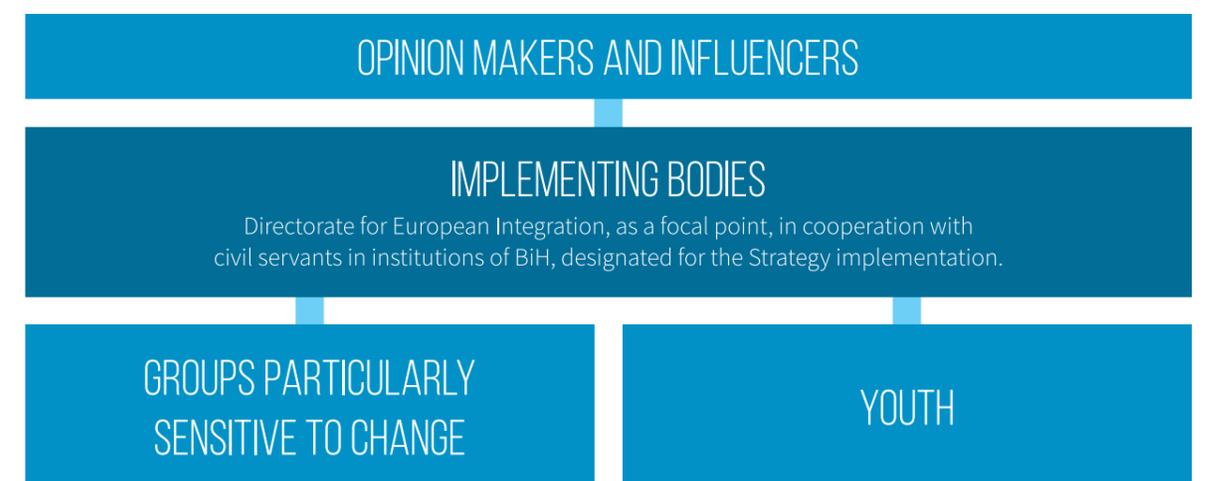
Strategic communication on the European integration process by those who are in charge of implementation of tasks (civil servants) in this process allows for a better quality access to target publics, improved implementation of the Strategy and participatory approach to the accession process, with the use of the following special messages:

- Success of the BiH's integration in the EU is dependent on all segments of the society and is a chance for a better life of citizens in BiH.
- Communication on the EU accession is by no means an easy task and cannot be successful without cooperation among the institutions.
- Institutions in BiH need to deliver on their part of the deal and meet formal requirements of the EU integration, for the sake of further progress and advancement in quality of life in BiH.

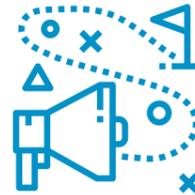
Implementation of the Strategy would require to:

- improve internal communication within institutions of BiH,
- improve institutional capacities and competencies of communication activity holders,
- use synchronised messages in communications with target publics.

Figure 2. IMPLEMENTING BODIES AND TARGET PUBLICS



TARGET PUBLICS, CHANNELS AND TOOLS



The Strategy defines the following three target publics:

1. Opinion makers and influencers
 - a) media, civil society organisations, academia, business community, EU info centres ...
 - b) decision-makers and enforcers, EUD, EUSR, diplomatic and consular offices ...
2. youth (primary and secondary school students, university students)
3. groups particularly sensitive to change (pensioners, unemployed, farmers, housewives, persons with disabilities, refugees, persons without their opinion on the process ...)

Opinion makers and influencers have a **partnership role** in communication on the process - their influence on the public opinion shaping is equally important, but perspective, focus and priorities can differ. Therefore, best results can be expected in the synergy of all listed stakeholders in communication activities.

1. OPINION MAKERS AND INFLUENCERS

Opinion makers and influencers are a target group whose activity contributes to the improvement of information and knowledge of interested citizens. They have a significant impact on the public perception and acceptance of communication messages of the Strategy's implementing bodies. This target public often communicates with citizens without intermediaries. The strength of message in communication by certain members of this key public is the largest, but at the same time most susceptible to distortion.

This target public encompasses the following groups:

- a) **decision-makers and enforcers** (political representatives and appointed officials, leadership of BiH institutions, members of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, legislative and executive authorities, and civil servants in Entities, cantons, municipalities and the Brčko District of BiH, EUD, EUSR, diplomatic and culture offices of the EU MS in BiH),
- b) **multipliers** (media, CSOs, academia, business community, EU info centres ...)

Functional dialogue with representatives of civil society and academia as well as citizen participation in creation and implementation of public policy is an important element of the European integration, contributes to better understanding of necessary reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and is therefore exceptionally important that this important task also includes other interested publics in BiH, in addition to competent institutions involved in the process of creating and implementing the Strategy.

During the organisation of public consultations, representatives of civil society organisations and academia in BiH have expressed interest in topics related to sectoral policies in health, social protection, education, environment, human rights, agriculture and rural development, youth, with a note that the focus of their actions changes with time, as do their needs for specific information. There is also an expressed need for additional information on pre-accession assistance available for BiH, the coverage of these funds and eligibility criteria to access the funds.

The suggestion is to use civil society organisations in BiH as a verified communication channel, as well as the media (electronic, printed and online), and websites of competent institutions.

In the context of the implementation of the Strategy, business community includes public and private companies, chambers of commerce, business associations – associations of manufacturers, employers' associations as well as trade unions.

Given that meeting the membership criteria is to bring about significant changes in business operations, key communication topics imply information on requirements to adjust business operations and production to the European standards, and benefits and opportunities presented to businesses in the EU accession process, and in particular the possibilities of using aid instruments, which include direct aid to agricultural producers. In addition, separate communication processes need to point to the need for continuous improvement of two-way communication process between the government and business community, and the need to facilitate "four freedoms", (free movement of people, goods, capital and services).

Civil servants should adjust messages to facts concerning the EU accession and rights and obligations arising from the process, but also resources available through the EU programmes and other financial EU assistance. In addition, special attention is needed to eliminate prejudices and myths characteristic of this process.

Special messages concerning opinion makers and influencers are as follows:⁷

▶ BIH'S INTEGRATION IN THE EU IS A CHANCE TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN BIH.

▶ YOU ARE THE KEY PARTNER IN COMMUNICATING THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS IN BIH.

▶ ONLY ACCURATE, OBJECTIVE AND TIMELY INFORMATION ON BIH'S ACCESSION PROCESS IS USEFUL.

▶ LET US COMMUNICATE ON BENEFITS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS IN BIH AND OUR OBLIGATIONS ON THE EU PATH.

▶ THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS IS OUR COMMON TASK – TAKE YOUR SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY.

⁷ Agreed with representatives of civil society organisations, academia and business community in public consultations held in Dobož, on 12 December 2017.

▶ YOUR CRITICAL OBSERVATION, ANALYSING AND REPORTING ON THE PROCESS IS CRUCIAL TO PUBLIC PERCEPTION.

▶ THE EU IS THE LARGEST DONOR IN BIH.

▶ BIH AS A POTENTIAL CANDIDATE FOR EU MEMBERSHIP USES IPA FUNDS, WHILE THE EU STRUCTURED FUNDS WILL BECOME AVAILABLE AFTER THE ACCESSION.

▶ IPA FUNDS ASSIST IN REFORMS NECESSARY FOR THE EU ACCESSION.

▶ BUSINESS COMMUNITY SHOULD CLEARLY ARTICULATE ITS NEEDS THROUGH THE PROCESS OF ACCESSION AND ADJUSTMENTS.

▶ PRESERVING/GAINING MARKET COMPETITIVENESS IN BIH AND THE EU.

▶ BUSINESSES ARE THE ENGINES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WHICH IS A CHANCE TO IMPROVE THE LIFE OF CITIZENS IN BIH.

▶ STRENGTHEN PRODUCTION IN THE COUNTRY IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN/BECOME COMPETITIVE ON DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN MARKET.

▶ LET'S TAKE PART IN THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS TO BENEFIT SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.

2. YOUTH

This target public includes students of primary and secondary schools and university students. Communication channels and tools need to be adjusted to usage patterns of young people, while messages should be short and customisable for digital formats. Annual opinion polls show that young people see greatest benefit of the EU integration in freedom of movement and education opportunities in the EU and continuously support integration of BiH into the EU.

Specific messages intended for this target public are as follows:

▶ BIH'S INTEGRATION IN THE EU IS A CHANCE TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN BIH.

▶ TAKING OVER THE VALUES OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF THE EU BRINGS GREATER OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN BIH.

▶ EU EDUCATION POLICIES PROVIDE LIFELONG LEARNING AND HIGHER QUALITY EDUCATION.

▶ EU MEMBER STATES EARMARK SIGNIFICANT AMOUNTS FOR SCIENCE AND RESEARCH.

▶ YOUTH HAVE THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION SYSTEM REFORM AND ADJUSTMENT OF EDUCATION POLICY TO LABOUR MARKET.

3. GROUPS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO CHANGE

This target public includes pensioners, unemployed, farmers, housewives, persons with disabilities, refugees, persons without their opinion on the process. Special attention should be paid to this target public especially in the selection of communication means. Groups within this public see the least of direct links to the integration process, so communication needs to be introduced in the context of specific benefit to them and eliminate prejudices and myths about the EU accession.

Specific messages for groups that are particularly sensitive to change are:

- ▶ BIH'S INTEGRATION IN THE EU IS A CHANCE TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN BIH.
- ▶ EU MEMBERSHIP DOES NOT DENY THE IDENTITY, CUSTOMS AND CULTURAL PRACTICES OF THE ACCEDING COUNTRY.
- ▶ EU MEMBERSHIP INVOLVES A CONSISTENT RESPECT OF EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL.
- ▶ EU PROMOTES COMPETITIVENESS, QUALITY AND AUTHENTIC ORIGIN OF PRODUCTS.
- ▶ EU ACCESSION OPENS UP OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW JOBS.
- ▶ WITH THE ADOPTION OF EU LEGISLATION, THE COUNTRY BECOMES MORE ORGANISED, MORE STABLE, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE MORE CERTAIN.
- ▶ BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA HAS THE POSSIBILITY TO USE PRE-ACCESSION FUNDS WHICH SUPPORT THE REFORMS NECESSARY FOR A BETTER LIFE OF ALL CITIZENS.

Previous polls show that TV is the primary channel for receiving information about the European integration process in BiH. In that sense, the use of media space for messaging through TV outlets is one of the key communication channels. Considering that public polls show an increase in the use of Internet as communication channel, websites and social media accounts of BiH institutions and online media will be used as new communication channels, now sharing the same spot with traditional channels and tools in the context of progress in the EU accession process.

Table 2. Most frequently used communication channels and tools

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS	COMMUNICATION TOOLS
 FACE-TO-FACE (F2F)	Meetings, presentations, seminars, workshops, panel discussion, focus groups, workshops, trainings, consultations
 MEDIA	TV and radio programmes, newspaper articles, press releases, interviews, feature stories, local stories, renting TV and radio slots
 ONLINE	Websites, social media accounts, European integrations portal, online advertising, e-consultation
 PUBLISHING	Monographic and serial publications, posters, brochures, leaflets, billboards (outdoors advertising), shelves in EU info centres
 PUBLIC EVENTS	Marking of the Europe Day, European Day of Languages, sports and cultural events, content for different target groups, educational workshops, journalists brunches, receptions, direct communication with citizens, info campaigns
 SURVEYS AND POLLS	Public opinion polls, focus groups, customer satisfaction surveys, online surveys

Communications tools and channels tailored to target publics will be defined under annual action plans for the implementation of this Strategy, in line with the activities.

Dynamic changes in the setting generate the need to create an additional channel for communication on European integration – a **web portal on European integrations**, to serve as an interactive platform for all communicators in institutions Bosnia and Herzegovina, and incorporated in DEI's webpages.

Communicators would access European integration portal at any time of the day, to upload content from within the competence of their respective institution. With this web portal, interested target publics could find all information on the European integration process in one place, and communicate on the process through online forms. The EU integration portal should also feature special web sections intended for information on IPA funds and categorised content.

VISUAL IDENTITY



DEI conducted a competitive procedure for selection of the visual identity of the European integration process, with the aim to somewhat brand the process, including through a selection of a unique and recognisable visual identity that, when coupled with appropriate communication activities, every individual will associate with BiH and its aspiration for membership in the union of European states.

The European integration process is unique, dynamic, and one of its main message is “Unity in Diversity”, and therefore the basic idea was to select a visual identity that could adequately convey this message.

From among 102 applications, the expert commission comprising prominent professionals has chosen the logo and slogan “Embrace Diversity” for the process, based on the criteria (on-topic, aesthetics, creativity and uniqueness, simplicity, graphic quality and applicability).

This visual in its essence contains a typographic solution, created by using the form and antiform of letters in acronyms BiH and the EU. Letters “I” (AND), “E” and “U” are of the same colour, so that the visual could be read as BiH and the EU. Differences between the forms symbolically represent differences of population of BiH and the EU.

With a view to brand the process in all communication activities on the European integration process, and in line with the conclusions of the Council of Ministers of BiH,⁶ institutions of BiH are tasked to use the visual identity of the European integration process in the format sought, exclusively on promotional materials and documents with topics under the European integration process. The use of the logo and slogan of the process will be made possible to other interested stakeholders who communicate the process of European integration, including the obligation of targeted and correct use of visual identity, exclusively for non-commercial purposes.

Criteria for applying logos and slogans to documents, public advertising media, promotional material, in print, digital environment and space, and examples of authorised and unauthorised application, colours and typography are described in the Book of Graphic Standards available upon request to interested parties in electronic format.



BUDGET/RESOURCES



Planned activities are funded from the budget of institution of BiH (in line with three-year framework budget documents), bilateral projects, EU assistance projects in BiH, international donations and partner resources in implementation of the Strategy.

Budget and resources (human and material) are planned as an integral part of annual action plans, adopted by the Council of Ministers of BiH at the end of the calendar year with supporting conclusions on the actual implementation, responsible institutions, as well as monitoring and reporting.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION



Implementation of annual action plans related to the Strategy will be monitored by DEI, with annually reporting to the Council of Ministers of BiH.

The following methods and measurable indicators will be used when monitoring and evaluating the implementation of annual action plans:

- Annual CATI research on the European integration process in BiH,
- Focus groups as a qualitative research method with target publics,
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of media reports on the European integration process in BiH,
- User interaction statistics and activities on the official website of the institutions of BiH,
- User interaction statistics and activities on official online sites and social accounts of institutions of BiH,
- Customer satisfaction surveys with services offered by institutions of BiH,
- Number of printed and distributed promotional material,
- Number of subscriptions to the newsletter of institution of BiH and the number of clicks,
- Number of communication events held – workshops, seminars, conferences, number of participants and their interest measured through interaction or filled-out evaluation form,
- Analysis of key research findings to be used to review and improve the planned activities but also identify priority targets groups.

