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**MONTENEGRO**

**Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management**

**Directorate for Rural Development**

**IPARD Managing Authority**

**PLAN OF VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES FOR IPARD III PROGRAMME**

**May, 2023**

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1. LEGAL BASIS

Article 23 and 24 of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA);

Article 31 and 32 of the Sectoral Agreement (SA).

2. BACKGROUND

The Plan of visibility and communication activities (hereafter – Plan) is a strategic document, covering the whole period of the IPARD III programme implementation.

The objective of the Plan is to ensure that public is informed about assistance under the IPARD III programme, to identify the information and publicity measures, to carry out information and publicity campaigns regarding the IPARD assistance, and to plan the implementation of visibility and to emphasize the contribution of the European Union. Visibility and communication activities shall demonstrate how the particular action contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the accession process and shall be aimed at strengthening general public awareness as well as support of actions financed and of the objectives pursued. The visibility and communication activities shall aim at highlighting to the relevant target audiences the added value and impact of the Union programmes and actions. Visibility activities shall also promote transparency and accountability on the use of the funds.

One of the prerequisites for a quality implementation of the IPARD III programme is informing all of the stakeholders – from state administration bodies (who will be in contact with recipients) to the recipients themselves.

After it is drafted and agreed with the European Commission (EC), the members of the IPARD III monitoring committee (IMC) will approve the Plan. Any modifications to the Plan will be approved by the IMC at their first subsequent session. On the basis of this Plan, Annual List of Actions will be prepared every year. Draft of the detailed Annual List of Actions will be submitted to the European Commission every year before autumn session of the IMC. The IMC shall each year approve the Annual List of Actions for next year. If modifications of the Annual List of Actions are necessary, the IPARD Managing Authority (hereinafter referred to as: IPARD MA) should notify EC, and present modifications to members of the IMC at spring session, or any time in written procedure.

3. THE AIMS OF THE INFORMATION CAMPAIGN FOR THE IPARD III PROGRAMME MEASURES

In general, the aims of the information and publicity measures shall be:

* To inform recipients about the opportunities offered by joint assistance from the European Union and Montenegro to ensure the transparency of such assistance;
* To inform the general public about the role played by the European Union in co-operation with Montenegro in the assistance concerned and its results;
* Promoting greater public understanding of the objectives and achievements of the IPARD III programme in Montenegro.

In order to reach these objectives, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (hereafter – Ministry) has appointed the IPARD Managing Authority, which will, in cooperation with the IPARD Agency, be responsible for the quality of implementation of the aforementioned steps and for keeping to time schedule, as well as for planning the indicative budget for information and publicity measures.

In providing information, the Ministry with their Extension services will have a main role, but other bodies (Municipalities, NGOs, etc.) will be in charge of disseminating the information and raising the awareness on the programme amongst rural population, too. The Ministry must ensure transparency of the objectives.

Target groups, communication channels, communication tools and the IPARD Monitoring system have to be defined in order to achieve all the objectives of the information system for IPARD III programme.

4. TARGET GROUPS

Five main target groups have been identified as essential in communication campaign on IPARD III programme:

* Potential recipients and recipients;
* Economic and social partners and other relevant stakeholders;
* Local and public authorities;
* Media;
* The general public.

## **4.1. *Potential recipients and recipients***

Potential recipients and recipients are the target group which needs a detailed information related to the IPARD III programme. The approach and activities of this target group will have an essential impact on the success of the entire programme. Later, the recipients will become the “ambassadors” of the programme – based on their experience, other target groups will make their own decisions about the quality of the programme implementation and benefits. This target group will be provided with clear and detailed information about the calls for applications for support, administrative procedures, the progress in the assessment and selection of applications, as well as obligations of the recipients.

This target group must be detailed informed about each of the IPARD III measures, their eligibilities and other conditions. The definitions of recipients for each measure are provided in the descriptions of IPARD III programme.

The broadest range of communication tools will be used aiming to access this target group. Communication tools will include information in mass media (national and local press, specialized press, national and regional TV channels, social media channels), direct and face-to-face communication tools such as events, workshops, promotional tools (leaflets, bulletins, roll-ups, brochures), etc.

## **4.2. *Economic and social partners and other relevant stakeholders***

This target group will play an important intermediary role between the institutions implementing the programme and potential applicants. Representing potential applicants and recipients, the partners are important opinion leaders and potential promoters of the whole process. Aiming to ensure their inclusion in the public awareness campaign, special meetings and events, round table discussions will be organised. There are few hundred NGOs dealing with agriculture and rural areas-related issues in Montenegro, some of them being very active and others less, but their role will be significant.

## **4.3. *Local and public authorities***

Local authorities are an important source of information about the support for the potential applicants, so it is important to ensure that this group should obtain detailed and clear information on time. Special training will be organized improving their knowledge of IPARD, the rules and the procedures for gaining the support. There are 25 municipalities in the country (all of them having a secretariat for agriculture or agriculture is a part of some secretariat), 7 regional extension services for livestock selection and 6 regional extension services in plant production, and also one regional office of Directorate for payments/IPARD Agency in Bijelo Polje.

## **4.4. *Media***

Considering the fact that this target group will have a huge impact on all other target groups, the efforts will be put from the very beginning of the programme implementation aiming to develop a positive attitude of media towards support. Special tools of direct communication, such as press conferences, meetings, will be applied. There are possibilities to provide information using 24 television channels; radio – there are possibilities to provide information using 50 radio stations; newspapers – there are possibilities to provide information using 3 daily newspapers, 1 weekly newspaper and 1 monthly newspaper regarding bees production, and 105 Internet portals.

## **4.5. *The general public***

All target groups are part of the general public. In Montenegro, 36,8% of total population live in rural areas (in Coastal region – 41.7%; in Central region – 20.4%; in Northern region – 59.7%). The public will be informed about the benefits of the support, transparent administration, effective implementation and achieved results. The public awareness campaign will aim to convince the general public about the benefits of the support which has an influence not only in rural but also in urban areas. Additionally, the success stories will be promoted. Mainly the national media will be used aiming to access this target group.

The IPARD MA has published the IPARD III programme after its adoption by the Commission on the IPARD website (portal): [www.gov.me/ipard](http://www.gov.me/ipard). The IPARD MA will publish regularly the IPARD III programme updates, main achievements in the implementation process and results, using all media at appropriate national and local level. A special emphasis will be placed on the information about the contribution of the EU to the IPARD III programme. The IPARD MA shall highlight the role of the European Union and ensure the transparency of EU assistance and more specifically the IPARD III programme. This information is significant to increase the visibility of the programme and raise awareness amongst population. The IPARD MA will plan and implement Annual list of actions. A range of publicity measures will be applied using different tools – press conferences, media, information seminars, regular publications on the MAFWM official platforms*.*

5. ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENTS OR BODIES RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The information and promotional activities will be jointly prepared and implemented by the IPARD MA, the PR office of the MAFWM and IPARD Agency. Within the IPARD MA, Division for monitoring, evaluation of IPARD, coordination and public relations is responsible for communication activities. It is composed of the Head of the Division, and 4 advisers. Within the IPARD Agency (IA), Unit for Publicity and Authorization of Projects is responsible for communication activities. It is composed of the Head of the Unit and 18 advisers. The PR office of the MAFWM is composed of head and 3 advisers.

The IPARD Managing Authority is responsible for implementing the Plan of visibility and communication activities.

Secondary source of information about the programme will be municipalities and extension services, media, social and economic partners.

* The IPARD Managing Authority shall inform all target groups in cooperation with the IPARD Agency and the PR office of the MAFWM. Additionally, following consultations with the IPARD III monitoring committee on the activities of informing the general public on the IPARD III programme, it shall draft annual reports on the achieved results of the Plan and information campaign.
* The IPARD Managing Authority and IPARD Agency will work together on documentation (manuals, flyers, leaflets, websites, printed media, clear messages on TV and radio, but also information that can be found in application forms or annexed to them), which will connect all the involved entities in the information process and other entities working for the target groups in question.
* A Help-desk in the form of on-line Q&A service is established on the ministerial website, supported by the IPARD Managing Authority and IPARD Agency to provide timely answers and relevant information to all interested parties.
* Municipalities and extension services will organise seminars and trainings in municipalities in cooperation with the IPARD Managing Authority.
* Extension services will be well informed and will need to have all the documentation (informational publications, manuals, flyers, leaflets, etc.) that will be available for recipients of all the measures and potential recipients.
* NGO members will attend the meetings, conferences, seminars and trainings, and then they will be able to provide further dissemination of information, through their own websites, meetings, etc.

IPARD MA will regularly send all information about IPARD III programme related to public and media to the municipalities, extension services and NGOs.

The distinction of the tasks between the IPARD MA and IA with regard to publicity and information, the Operational agreement for the implementation of IPARD III programme on the basis of indirect management by the Commission will be defined.

6. COMMUNICATION TOOLS/measures

Various types of communication tools will be used during the public awareness campaign on implementing IPARD III programme.

The *Annual action list of actions* will define in which period each of the communication channels and communication tools will be used.

All material regarding the next communication tools will be available in electronic version on the websites and on the social media of the MAFWM. Also, material in electronic version will be sent to the interested parties and to the media.

## ***6.1. Cooperation with the Delegation of the EU in Montenegro - the Europe House***

The IPARD Managing Authority will closely cooperate with the EU Delegation in Montenegro - the Europe House. Various joint activities will be organized, among other things, exchanging and recording success stories, as well as other promotional materials, which will find their place both on the website of the Europe House and on the IPARD website. The mentioned close cooperation will contribute to a more significant dissemination of information and promotion of EU support.

## ***6.2. Leaflets, brochures***

Leaflets and brochures represent a simple method of providing information to potential recipients of the IPARD III programme as well to the general public about the role and contribution of the European Union. They provide basic information about the IPARD III programme (what is IPARD, timeframe, envisaged measures, recipients, amount of support, contact details of the institution in charge of its implementation – the IA, and all other relevant information).

The IPARD MA in cooperation with the IA is in charge of preparing the leaflets and brochures, and their distribution (e.g. fairs, events) is conducted through the IPARD MA, IA, municipalities, extension services, etc.

## ***6.3. Bulletins***

In order to promote the IPARD III programme and the support of the European Union as much as possible, the Ministry will publish the newsletter/bulletins „IPARD ZA TEBE” (Eng. IPARD FOR YOU). Initially, the newsletter will be published quarterly. It will present the activities that were realized in the given quarter (workshops held, public calls published, some part of the procedures explained), and each number will have one successful story of an IPARD III recipients, through which they will present to the readers their experience in using European support funds. In order to contribute to the preservation of the environment, the distribution of the newsletter is planned in an online edition, a minimum number of copies will be printed. In addition to being posted on all official platforms of the Ministry, the Delegation of the European Union in Montenegro will post the bulletin on its website and social networks.

## ***6.4. Press releases***

The press release is the most important form of written communication that needs to be sent to journalists in written media, radio and TV. It is used for sharing regular information (e.g. issuing a call for applications, announcing the results, etc.), but also in the situations when recipients need to be urgently informed about a piece of information (e.g. extending the deadline for the call for proposals), when there is no time for sharing this information through other channels.

Press releases are used to inform potential recipients and the general public about the IPARD III programme, and the role of the European Union.

The IPARD MA (Division for monitoring, evaluation of IPARD, coordination and public relations), in cooperation with the IA, and the PR Office of the MAFWM is in charge of preparation of the press releases related to IPARD III programme. Head of the IPARD MA will approve press releases and the PR Office of the MAFWM and IPARD MA will assure the technical tasks (e.g. upload press releases on the IPARD website/portal, social networks and send it to the media and interested parties).

## ***6.5. Press conferences***

Press conferences are designed for the representatives of printed media, radio and TV. Their main function is to provide information to journalists on important information in regard to the IPARD III programme (what is IPARD III, timeframe, foreseen measures, recipients, publishing of acquiring national entrustment for implementation of the IPARD III programme, reaching decisions on requests for entrustment of budget implementation tasks, launching of public calls, results of the public calls etc.). Apart from the regular ones (related to important dates and events), it is also possible to organize extraordinary press conferences.

The objective of press conferences is to inform potential recipients, but also the general public about the role and contributions of the European Union, particularly from the point of the IPARD III programme.

On the occasion of the publication of each IPARD III public call, a conference will be organized to announce the publication of the call itself.

The preparation and organization of press conferences remains the responsibility of the IPARD MA (Division for monitoring, evaluation of IPARD, coordination and public relations), in cooperation with the PR Office of the MAFWM and the IA.

## ***6.6. TV and radio***

The promotion of IPARD III programme on TV will be conducted through advertisements and reports. Reports could be issued before or after specialized broadcasts for farmers. Apart from the examples from the field, reports would be assembled from the interviews with recipients and employees of the IPARD MA and IA. The reports would also provide information on places (e.g., offices, webpages etc.) where all detailed information about programme, application procedures and others can be obtained. In addition to reports, calls for applications for IPARD III programme measures, could be announced in paid advertisements on television channel. The radio spot would provide detailed information on the programme itself, its timeframe and the deadlines of the call for applications, as well as the information on contact details and addresses, where more information about the programme can be obtained.

During the announcement of a new public call or any activity where the target group is the general public, it is a common practice to host a representative of the IPARD MA or IA in some tv and radio show, competent on a given topic, in order to inform the public about the publication of a public call or some other activity.

The purpose of radio and TV promotion is to inform the general public, but also potential recipients about the IPARD III programme.

The IPARD MA (Division for monitoring, evaluation of IPARD, coordination and public relations) is in charge of implementation of this activity in cooperation with the PR Office of the MAFWM and the IA.

## ***6.7. Articles in newspapers (daily, weekly, regional and specialised for farmers)***

Information on IPARD III (recipients, measures, eligible investments) will be published regularly in Montenegrin daily newspapers, and depending on the need in specialized publications for farmers. Pre-paid pages will be used for publishing examples of successful project funded by EU pre-accession programs, interviews with the employers responsible for implementing IPARD III programme (the IPARD MA and IA), calls for applications for particular measures of IPARD III programme, etc. The newspaper ads will thoroughly explain all the measures and all eligible investments that are available for potential recipients through IPARD III programme. Daily newspapers represent a good media for reaching a wide audience. Furthermore, unlike the specialized publications for farmers, these newspapers are distributed to all places in Montenegro and have a large circulation.

Each of the announcements will provide information on contact details (addresses, phones, fax, e-mail and other), where additional information on the IPARD III programme, calls for application, etc. will be available.

The IPARD MA (Division for monitoring, evaluation of IPARD, coordination and public relations) is responsible for implementation of this activity in cooperation with the PR Office of the MAFWM and the IA.

## ***6.8. Website(s)***

A website can be taken as the most efficient communication tool for achieving the aims of the programme. They are designed to provide general information on the IPARD III programme in Montenegro and include detailed information on the legal basis for the implementation of the IPARD III programme, as well as the information on all measures foreseen ([www.gov.me/ipard](http://www.gov.me/ipard)). They will also contain detailed information on allowed investments, necessary documentation, application procedure, approvals, payments and control for all measures, which are accredited at that moment. They will also include information on the approved projects from IPARD III. Apart from being useful to recipients, they will also be valuable source of information to individuals and institutions included in the implementation of the IPARD III programme (e.g., NGOs, Extension services, Chamber of Economy). The website will also contain questions and answers posed by the recipients by e-mail, phone, in writing, as well as the responses to those. On the website the list of operations and recipients will be post and updated at least every six months.

The website is regularly updated and include the latest information. It is part of the website of the MAFWM, and is accessible through the link posed on the websites of the Extension services, (and other institutions/organisations).

The websites like seljak.me, etc. provides complete information primarily to agricultural producers, who are the most frequent visitors of this website, but also to the general public. They will be regularly provided with information that they will publish.

The IPARD MA (Division for monitoring, evaluation of IPARD, coordination and public relations) is responsible for implementation of this activity in cooperation with the PR Office of the MAFWM and the IA.

***6.9. Social media***

Social networks are an increasingly popular communication tool for successful communication, and they represent an excellent way of communicating with target audiences, fully controlling the content that you are putting by harmonizing information by content, or adapting it in the form of shorter information, pictograms, visuals, etc.

MAFWM already has its own Facebook and Instagram page. It will be used also to promote the IPARD III programme. Also, IPARD has its own account on Facebook and Instagram with the name “IPARD ZA TEBE”. There is a possibility to open Twitter and other social media account if it turns out the use of these.

## ***6.10. Direct “face-to-face” communication***

On the basis of the previous experience (through implementation of the Agrobudget measures, MIDAS project - Montenegro Institutional Development and Agriculture Strengthening, IPARD *like* and IPARD II projects), this type of communication tool has proved to be best one. Recipients and potential recipients could come to the offices of the MAFWM, Extension services and/or Municipalities services and could get all information and advice about IPARD III programme. Also, it was practiced that during the information campaign regarding the announcement of a public call or other activity, all participants were invited to meetings in smaller groups (5-6 people categorized by type of production or investment), where representatives of IPARD MA and IA gave clarifications about doubts during the application for the public calls.

## ***6.11. IPARD open days***

Open days will be held during the public call, so that all potential applicants have the opportunity to communicate directly with IPARD MA and IA employees before the official submission of documentation, all with the aim of avoiding subsequent additions to documentation and shortening the time period until the approval of support funds.

## ***6.12. Seminars and workshops for the employees of the extension services and municipalities services for agriculture***

Employees of the extension services and municipalities (Secretariat for agriculture) are in everyday contact with farmers – potential recipients of the IPARD III programme. The goal of these seminars is to prepare all of these employees in all segments of the pre-accession IPARD III programme (measures, recipients, types of eligible investments, etc.), after which they will be trained to provide potential recipients with more detailed information, and inform them about further procedure. Furthermore, in all the extension and municipality offices potential recipients will have available all promotional material, application forms, etc. Employees of the extensions services and municipalities will gather information from potential recipients (extent to which they are informed about the programme etc.) all for purpose of enhancing of promotion campaign.

The IPARD MA (Department for coordination and public relations) is in charge of implementing this activity, in cooperation with the IA.

## ***6.13. Presentations at fairs, events, etc.***

The presentation of the IPARD III programme and its measures at national and regional fairs, events and conferences also represents an important element of the public campaign. It is destined for target groups – potential recipients (farmers attending agricultural fair, processing industry, fishery and similar), but also the general public. Topic of presentation as well as its form (general or detailed information) is determinate depending on the type of event, participants, etc. Presentations are held at the invitation of interested parties (financial institutions, various interest groups such as farmers association, etc.), and at the events that are under the auspices of the MAFWM. In such a way, by means of questionnaires and surveys it is possible to get an insight into the awareness of potential recipients of possible co-financing from the IPARD III programme. The presentations would also be held at the request of other institutions – Chamber of Economy, Employers Association, commercial banks that operate in the Montenegro, etc., and would be used to inform the employees of these institutions about the implementation of the IPARD III programme in Montenegro.

Employees of the IPARD MA and IA, are responsible for implementing this activity.

## ***6.14. Organising one major information activity a year which promotes the funding opportunities and the strategies pursued and presents the achievements of the programme or programmes, including project examples***

Every year, one major information activity, which promotes the funding opportunities and the strategies pursued and presents the achievements of the programme or programmes, including project examples will be organised. It could also be organised on the holding of some of the recipients of the EU support.

Employees of the IPARD MA and IA, are responsible for implementing this activity in cooperation with the PR Office of the MAFWM.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES OF RECIPIENTS

In accordance with Article 32 and Annex 8 of the Sectoral Agreement the recipients are responsible for implementing measures to ensure the ‘visibility’ of their projects, as a major contribution to informing the general public about the role played by the Union in the IPARD III programme and its results.

Depending of the budget of the project obligations are different. For projects with public support < EUR 20.000: placing a poster of a minimum size A3, with the information on the financial support from the Union, at a location readily visible to the public; For projects with public support > EUR 20.000: an explanatory plaque of a minimum size of A3, with the information on the financial support from the Union, located readily visible to the public; For projects with public support > EUR 100.000: a temporary billboard of a significant size at a location readily visible to the public until the moment of the final payment.

The billboards, posters, (explanatory) plaques and websites shall carry a description of the project/operation and indicating that the project has been supported by IPARD III and including the Union emblem. That information shall take up at least 25% of the billboard, plaque or webpage. It shall be prepared in accordance with technical characteristics laid down in the relevant implementing act adopted by the Commission (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 821/2014). The display of the EU emblem and IPARD visual element must be done in accordance with the rules on EU visual identity.

Recipients will be supported in their communication activities through the separate part of the Contract of support (part of the procedures of the IA), through which they will get detailed information about their responsibilities regarding the visibility and communication. This part of their responsibilities will be presented and explained on the workshops, which will be organised in order to promote the EU support (promoting public calls, different measures for support). Also, when the recipients will sign the contract, all of them will get all information that they need.

8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE PLAN OF VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

The IPARD MA will regularly perform the monitoring and evaluation of the publicity activities in close cooperation with IPARD Agency. The implementation of the Plan will be monitored by input, output and result indicators.

* Input indicators of the publicity activities are identified in the Annual list of actions, considering the planned aims for the exact period. The input indicators will be: number of press realises, number of articles, number of printed materials, number of workshops/seminars/conferences, number of TV/radio spots.
* Output indicators are measured every year, and they are: number of the participants in the events (workshops/seminars/conferences), number of visitors of the website (part of website for IPARD), number of received applications for public calls.
* Result indicators measure the level of recipients satisfaction with information gained (such aspects as awareness on the IPARD III programme, availability and sufficiency of information, effectiveness of used communication tools will be estimated) and its relevance and effect on the number and quality of applications. The measurement could be performed during the special survey (disseminating special question).

The IPARD MA will prepare a questionnaire, which will contain questions about the level of awareness of the general public and potential recipients about the IPARD III programme. Employers of the IPARD MA, IA (presenters/lecturers), extension and municipality services will be involved in the distribution of questionnaires.

9. FUNDING OF PLAN OF VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

The budget for the implementation of the Plan will be provided by resources from the measure “Technical assistance”, but also by National budget of Montenegro or different financing sources.

**Provisional budget for the period of programme implementation**

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The publicity of individual projects funded in the framework of IPARD III programme shall be carried out by recipients with the funds of the project allocated specifically for that purpose.