



**LEGISLATION OFFICE OF THE GOVERNMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF
CROATIA**

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

AND

ACTION PLAN

2012 - 2015

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SECTION 1 PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This Communication Strategy and Action Plan outlines the key messages to be communicated by the Government Legislation Office (GLO). It is suggested this should be a three-year strategy with initiatives and action points, intended to continue the work carried out during the EU Twinning Project *'Development of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) System'*. One of the aims of the twinning project, and therefore the Communication Strategy, is to improve awareness of all stakeholders to the process of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA). During 2011/2012 a series of conferences, seminars and trainings have been held with stakeholders. An RIA leaflet has been produced and circulated widely. The work undertaken during the twinning project will be continued by the GLO. They have the responsibility to carry out activities related to the coordination of the RIA system.

SECTION 2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

The Communication Strategy sets out the background, overall objectives, main stakeholders and audiences and potential risks. The aim is to ensure that the Government Legislation Office delivers a clear and coherent message about the importance and value of better regulation, acknowledges the affect of regulatory impact assessments on stakeholders – particularly the business community – and provide support. The communication strategy is aligned to the Government Legislation Office's overall objectives and has been developed after consultation with stakeholders and audiences. The Action Plan is an integral part of the strategy and defines the tasks to be performed in order to raise awareness to this new way of law making. It is intended to encourage the development of regular communication with stakeholders pre and post legislation. The media, especially, can play a key role in both stages. The strategy works in harmony with the training and consultation strands of the twinning project and is placed on the GLO website.

2.2 Overview of RIA

The aim of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) is to assess the need for, and the impact of, proposed regulations and amendments to existing regulations. They are a tool to help policy-makers consider and understand the possible consequences of Government interventions in the public and private sectors. It helps policy-makers to consider the implications of decisions for business, the public sector and society as a whole. Given that it is difficult to predict if there will be more positive than negative effects, it is necessary to assess the potential or actual benefits and costs of government policies through the evaluation of economic, environmental and social impacts. The result of analysis of regulatory impact assessment is presented in an Impact Assessment Report, enabling the Government to present evidence on the positive and negative effects of interventions and review the impact of policies after they have been implemented. This ensures that stakeholders understand why Government intervention is necessary, the possible impact and to identify any potential unintended consequences. Regulatory impact assessment leads to better coordination of public policies within the public administration. In Croatia the Government Legislation Office (GLO) is the competent body to carry out the activities related to coordination of the regulatory impact assessment system.

The Twinning Project has addressed the identified gaps in the current RIA system by:

- Development of a new system through further amendment and strengthening of the draft RIA law and RIA methodology
- Building the administrative capacities of the Government Legislation Office and key ministries
- The development of knowledge and skills relating to RIA through workshops and pilot projects
- Improving implementation of regulatory impact assessment methodology into the national policy making process - through capacity building of the GLO and regulatory institutions - ensuring awareness of stakeholders and the wider public about the implementation of RIA coordination system
- Communicating the impact assessment policy to relevant state administration bodies, stakeholders and the public.

2.3 The Role of the Croatian Government Public Relations Office

The Public Relations Office of the Croatian Government informs the public on the politics and activities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. Their work also includes informing the Government on the views of the media and the public, carrying out direct communication with the public, coordinating communication activities of Government Offices and Ministries and performing other duties in relation to the Media Act.

The Office is in regular contact with media. Using the media to highlight RIA has not been a high priority during the pre-legislation stage but this will change. They have an important part to play with regard to informing businesses about the RIA process and can encourage consultation.

The Public Relations Office has three departments: the Department for Media, Department for Online Communications and Department for Analytics. Most Ministries also have a communications office. It is understood that the focus of most external communication activity from the Ministries is reactive. It tends to take place once decisions have been made, with a focus on the print media (press activity) and some involvement in broadcast media (radio and events). Digital and social media are less commonly used, likewise engagement through stakeholder focus groups, to test ideas and consult. There are six national newspapers that have, between them, a broad 'reach' and are widely read, plus a business newspaper. Regional and trade publications do not have as much reach or impact. There is one media agency for radio that produces news to be covered by local radio stations.

The GLO needs to have a good working relationship with the Croatian Government PR Office in order to maximize PR and communication opportunities.

2.4 Stakeholders and Audiences

Successful implementation of the strategy and action plan requires engagement with a wide range of partners and stakeholders. This should secure the commitment of a defined group to

the aims of the GLO. Clear communication with Ministries will ensure any misconceptions are addressed and provide reassurance about the introduction of the new RIA process, involving all stakeholders and explaining how they can participate in policy development.

Stakeholder groups and audiences have been identified and consulted and a stakeholder ‘map’ produced to show those groups with the highest priority in terms of communication with GLO and likely to have a stake in the regulatory impact assessment process. In Croatia 99% of businesses are small or medium sized enterprises (SME) and at least 80% are micro businesses (i.e. ten staff and under).

Members of the public should understand how they may get involved in the law-making and consultation process, either individually or as part of a non-governmental organization.

Businesses are key stakeholders, yet research¹ indicates that business interaction to gain information on legislation is low. Those businesses that do seek information tend to use websites or refer to publications. Gaining information through training and seminars is a less popular way of gaining information. The Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts (HOK) has a publication read by a high percentage of craftsmen and many visit the HOK website in search of business information. The Croatian Employers’ Association also has a publication and information available for members on their website. The Association also organizes Seminars and training events for members.

There is evidence that some entrepreneurs would like to be more actively involved and express their views and the establishment of focus groups is one way of overcoming this and to reach a larger audience. For example, a focus group comprised of representatives from the public and private sector, business organisation, NGO and other relevant stakeholders provides a two-way channel of communication and enables Government to gather information about the impact of legislative changes and a platform for feedback and evaluation.

Stakeholder groups and audiences that have been identified include:

- Public sector, e.g. RIA co-coordinators, Ministers, Ministry Officials and Inspectors
- Business and business organisations
- Parliamentarians, e.g. Committees and Ministers
- NGOs and Civil Society; Chamber of Economy, Chamber of Trade and Crafts Croatian Employers’ Association, Banking Association, Trade Unions, members of the public and the academic community

SECTION 3 VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

The Communication Strategy supports the main Twinning Project objective: to create an effective implementation of a sustainable RIA programme and communicate this to all known stakeholders and audiences so that they know and understand the value that impact assessment brings. The implementation of the proposed actions and goals set out in this Strategy and Action Plan will build awareness and lead to good communication. This will raise awareness of impact assessment policy and ensure those involved in the RIA process can play their role effectively.

<p>Vision</p> <p>To raise awareness and understanding of Regulatory Impact Assessment</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>The benefits of Regulatory Impact Assessment are communicated and understood by all known stakeholders</p> <p>Objectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep the public and other stakeholders informed about the value that Regulatory Impact Assessment brings 2. Encourage all stakeholders, including members of the public, to participate in the process 3. Effective use of the media to get the message across

3.1 Specific objectives include:

- Adoption of the Communication Strategy and Action Plan
- Design and implementation of a public awareness campaign for regulatory impact assessment
- Ensuring key stakeholders and other interested parties, including the general public, are kept informed about impact assessment

3.2 Communication Objectives

Communication objectives are intended to increase understanding, educate and create advocacy. There are three priorities that the communication strategy seeks to establish:

- To raise awareness and understanding of RIA so that audiences and stakeholders understand what it is about and the value it brings
- To educate those involved in the RIA process (at every level) so that they can play their role effectively
- To engender advocacy

3.3 Giving the message impact

Statements about RIA are to be clear, simple, honest and unambiguous. Examples are:

- *Better regulation is a tool that helps governments develop better quality regulation*

- *Reduces the burden on business*
- *Improved information for Government to base its decisions on means-effective regulation that is fair and proportionate for business*
- *Boosts economic performance; less red tape*
- *RIA is in harmony with EU law and procedures*
- *The benefits of RIA will outweigh the costs*

SECTION 4

CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

4.1 Stakeholder engagement

- Raise awareness and understanding amongst key business organisations and NGOs
- Raise awareness and understanding amongst Senior Officials and Ministers – telephone calls and face-to-face
- Raise awareness and understanding amongst Parliamentary Committees
- Work with business organisations and other intermediaries to raise awareness and understanding; where possible promote what is being done through their channels, e.g. websites, newsletters, publications and meetings
- Use the member newsletters produced by the Chambers to raise awareness and understanding within business sector
- Set up a government network to run seminars, share best practice, presentations and provide mutual support
- Assess how to engage Inspectors
- Use NGOs to deliver key messages to the public

4.2 Marketing and Website

- Update when necessary the ‘key facts’ information brochure, showing what RIA is about and how it benefits audiences; distribute to all key stakeholders
- Set up a link on the website to the brochure
- Ensure hard copy flyers are taken to all events and conferences
- Develop the GLO website hosting clear, simple and easily accessible information
- Recommend the GLO website link to all business groups and key stakeholders for sign-posting from their own websites and literature
- Ensure all business cards, letter heads and any other outward facing materials show the website link
- Use case studies (stories) developed through training seminars, showing impact on different stakeholders and audiences

4.3 Events

- Establish a forward calendar of key events and conferences that are to be attended by stakeholders and audiences
- Organise public events to raise awareness and understanding of RIA and its benefits

- Keep the media informed about RIA

SECTION 5 RISKS AND MITIGATING STEPS

Risk:

- Increasing stakeholder awareness and communication may unrealistically raise expectations with audiences.

Solution:

Providing comprehensive information on the GLO website will reduce this risk.

Risk:

- There may be inadequate resources to make an impact.

Solution:

Collaborative working with the Croatian Government PR Office will make the best use of human and financial resources.

SECTION 6 MEASURING PROGRESS

An evaluation form is provided on the website for download or to be completed electronically. We appreciate your comments, which remain confidential but will be used to continually improve our service.

The purpose of evaluation is to provide feedback from stakeholders and will be monitored and continually assessed to ensure we communicate with all our audiences effectively. The results will be used to amend the strategy where necessary. It is important to know we have succeeded and met our objectives. If necessary the strategy may be adapted in the future.

Questions to be asked are:

- Have we achieved the objectives, e.g. creating awareness of RIA?
- Was the right audience reached?
- Did they understand what the message was and what had to be done?
- Have we used the right approach?

SECTION 7 RESOURCES

Resources to deliver the communication strategy and action plan include staff within the GLO and line Ministries, although sometimes their other roles may leave insufficient time to undertake PR duties. The Croatian Government PR Office has good contacts with the media and these can be exploited. Joint initiatives between the GLO and PR Office are encouraged.

Additional resources to increase awareness, for example through training and the production of an RIA informative brochure, have been made available from the twinning project carried out during 2011/12.

There are limited resources within the GLO to implement a communication and public awareness campaign or to engage Croatian Communication/PR experts who know and understand the local market. Effective use of the media is therefore essential to encourage stakeholder engagement.

The communication activities of interested stakeholders, especially the business community, are already utilized - for example, the co-operation already established with the Croatian Employers Association that resulted in two RIA articles in the *Business Daily*.

Working with stakeholders will ensure maximum reach and impact. Those involved in the RIA process require good information and effective use of resources. Messaging must be clear, simple, honest, unambiguous and consistent - accompanied where appropriate by a 'key facts about RIA' brochureⁱⁱⁱ that includes a list of the main channels for communicating with stakeholders.

A working group, including representatives from a business organisation, media and Ministries, facilitates the communication process.

SECTION 8 FOOTNOTES

iBINS – Business Information Needs Survey

iiRIA Brochure - Twinning project “Development of Regulatory Impact Assessment system in Croatia”

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