

Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Programme

EVALUATION OF THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION PLAN

June 2007

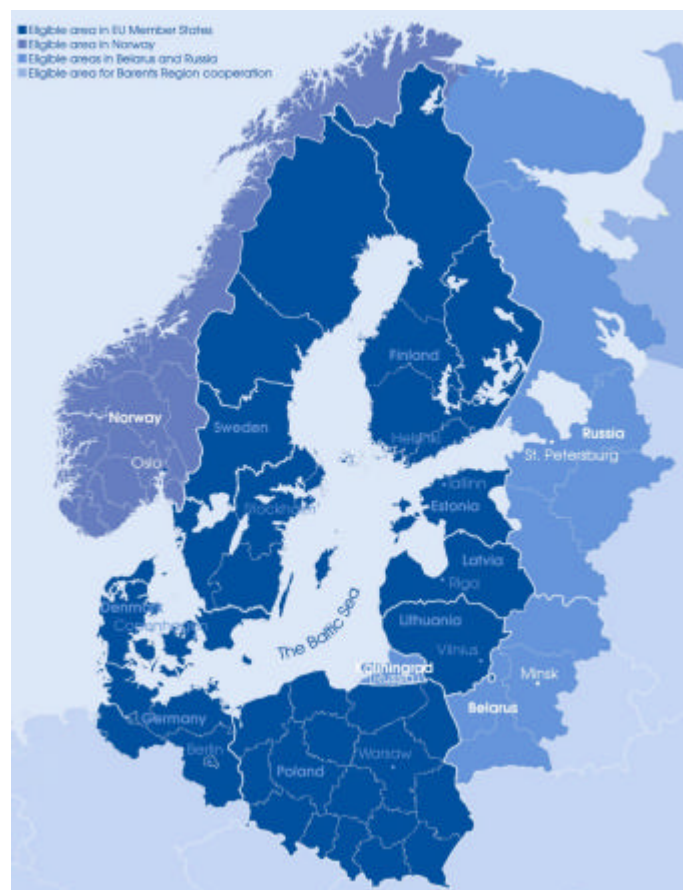


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I. Introduction

According to regulation (EC) 1159/2000 the Information and communication plan for the BSR INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Programme had to be evaluated.

The first evaluation was carried out in December 2004. 424 replies were received that means 14% of the receivers of the questionnaire stated their opinions. Main conclusions were that BSR INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Programme is serving well its purpose e.g. 90 % users know where to find information about the programme; 94% prefer electronic to printed media; 76% would like the information to be sent directly. Future challenges were identified e.g. the focus of the information measures should be shifted in the direction of electronic media (newsletter, website) and spread by direct e-mailings; the language in the information media should be simplified and the information should be made available in good time.

In 2007 an online questionnaire (Annex 1) with more specific questions related to information activities was prepared in order to perform the evaluation. The questionnaire consists of 11 questions.

The online questionnaire was sent on 16 April 2004 to the Monitoring Committee, the Steering Committee & National Subcommittee members, project partners in the approved projects as well as not approved projects¹, pan-Baltic organisations and other INTERREG programmes. Altogether it was sent to approximately 4500 valid e-mail addresses. Deadline for replies was set for 27 April 2007.

530 replies were sent in time. This means that around 12% of the receivers of the questionnaire stated their opinions. See Annex 2 for detailed data from the questionnaires. 65 % of respondents would like to receive the evaluation report of the questionnaire.

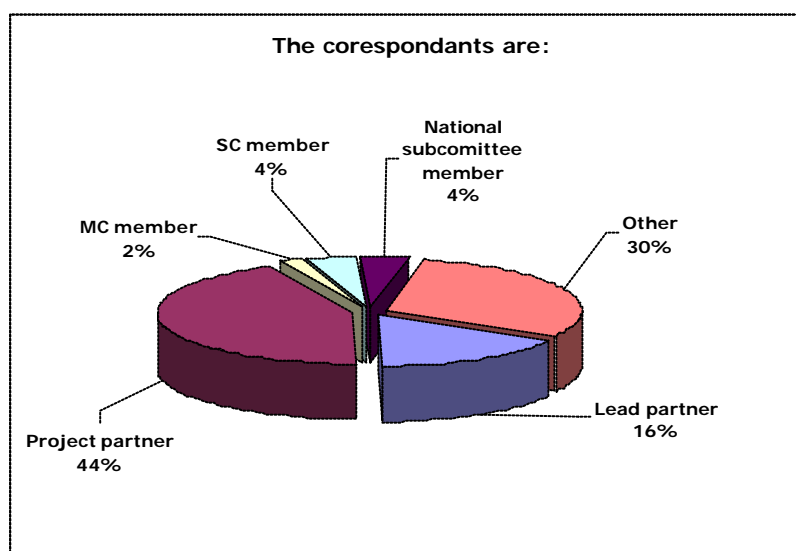
In chapter II the reader will find a short statistical analysis of the replies to the questionnaire. In chapter III conclusions based on statistical analysis are presented. The conclusions are summarised in chapter IV. See Annex 3 for additional comments.

¹ Projects partners in projects that applied for ERDF funds from the BSR INTERREG III B NP programme but were not approved.

II. Short statistical analysis

Who returned the questionnaire?

	No of returned questionnaires
<i>Project partner</i>	244
<i>Other</i>	170
<i>Lead Partner</i>	91
<i>SC member</i>	23
<i>National Subcommittee member</i>	22
<i>MC member</i>	10
Total	560 ²



1. Do you know where to find information about the Baltic Sea INTERREG III B programme?

96% of respondents know where to find information about the BSR INTERREG III B NP programme.

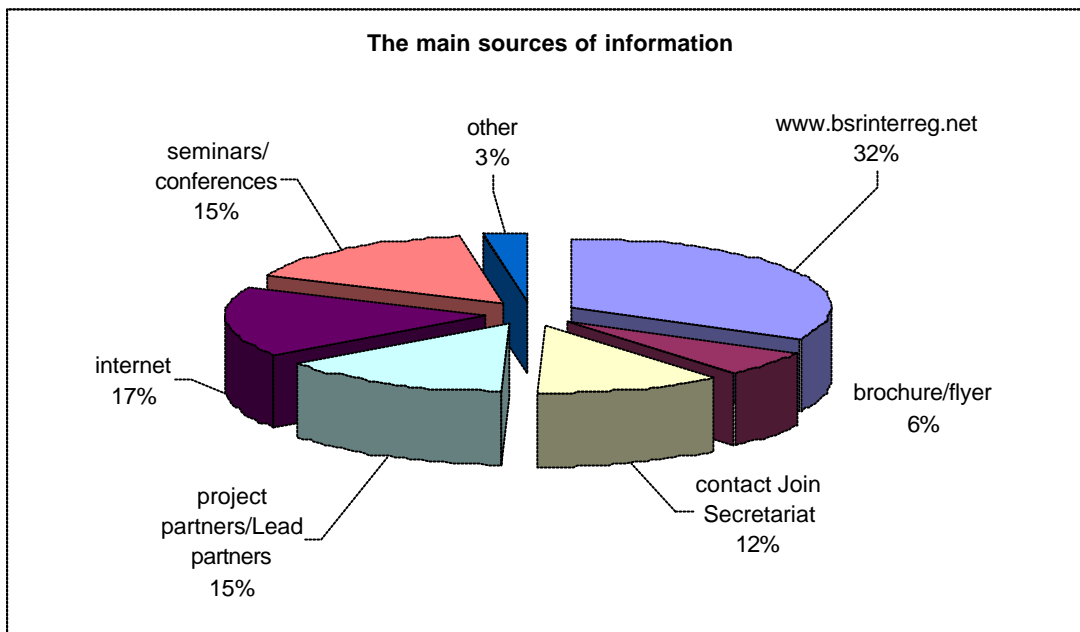
4% do not know where to find information about the programme.

As the main source of information about the programme:

80 % mentioned "www.bsrinterreg.net", 40% "Internet", 37 % "seminars/conferences" and 35% "Project partners/Lead partners".

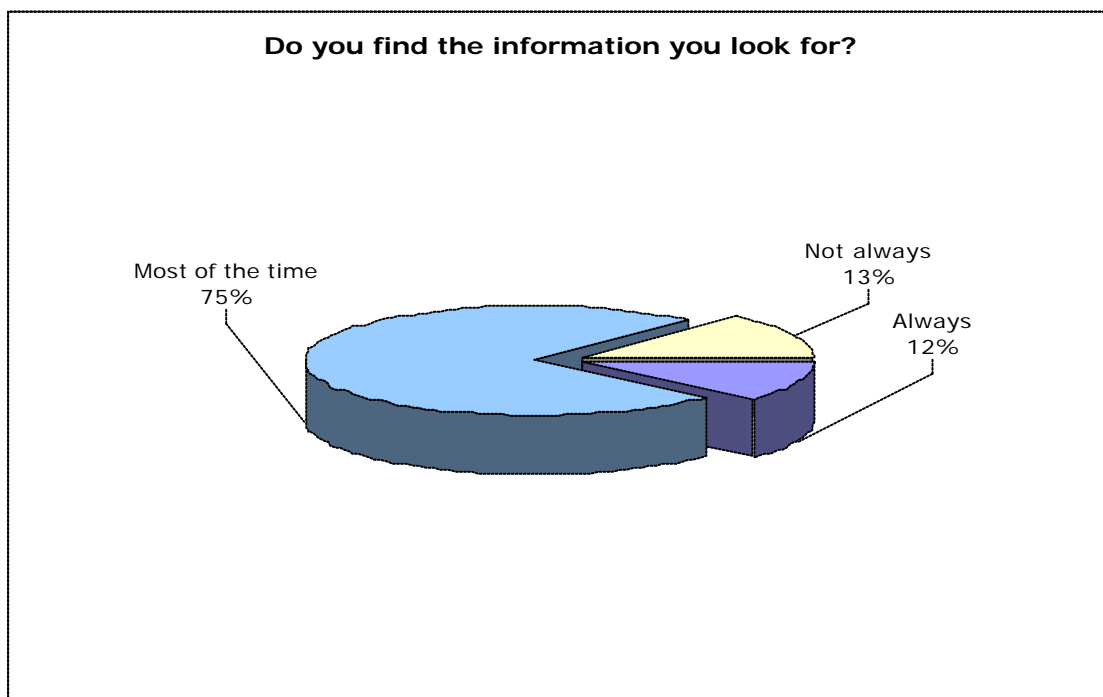
Altogether the biggest majority considers www pages ("Internet" + "www.bsrinterreg.net") as their main source of information. By "other" most often mentioned sources are: newsletter; contacts with national authorities and organisations.

² Some of the respondents indicate two answers e.g. national subcommittee member and MC member etc.



2. Do you find information you look for?

75 % of respondents find information about the BSR INTERREG III B NP programme most of the time, 12 % always, but 13 % not always.



3. How would you describe information about the programme?

64% claim that information is "easy to access"

8% think that information is "difficult to get"

53% claim that it is "easy to understand"

21% claim it is "difficult to understand"

50 % - "on time"

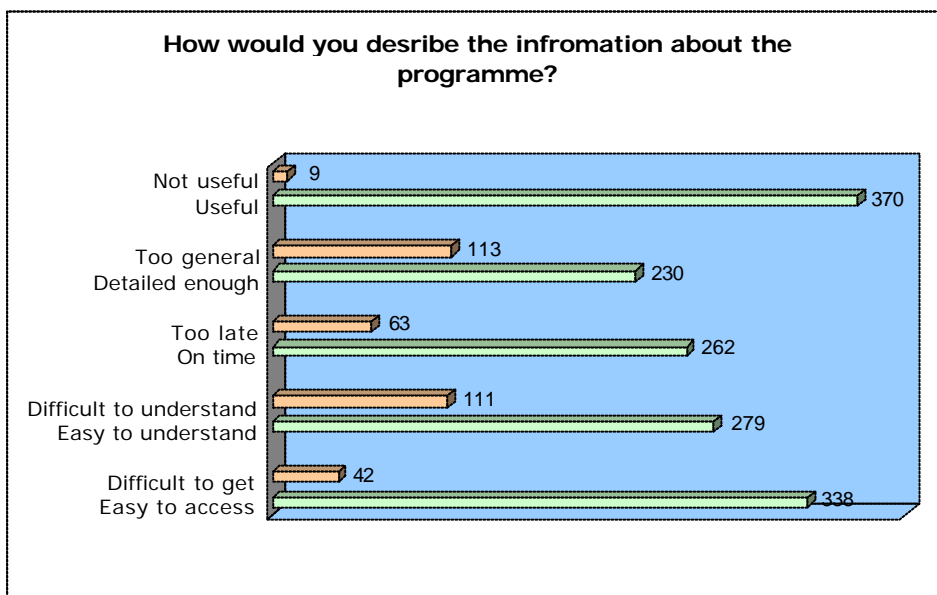
12% - "too late"

44% - "detailed enough"

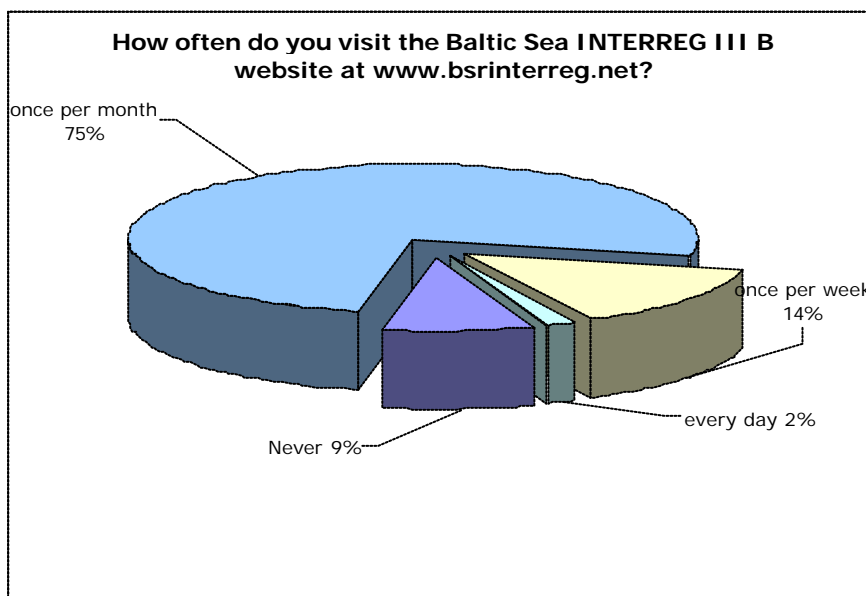
21% - "too general"

70% - "useful"

2% - "not useful"



4. How often do you visit the Baltic Sea INTERREG III B website at www.bsrinterreg.net?



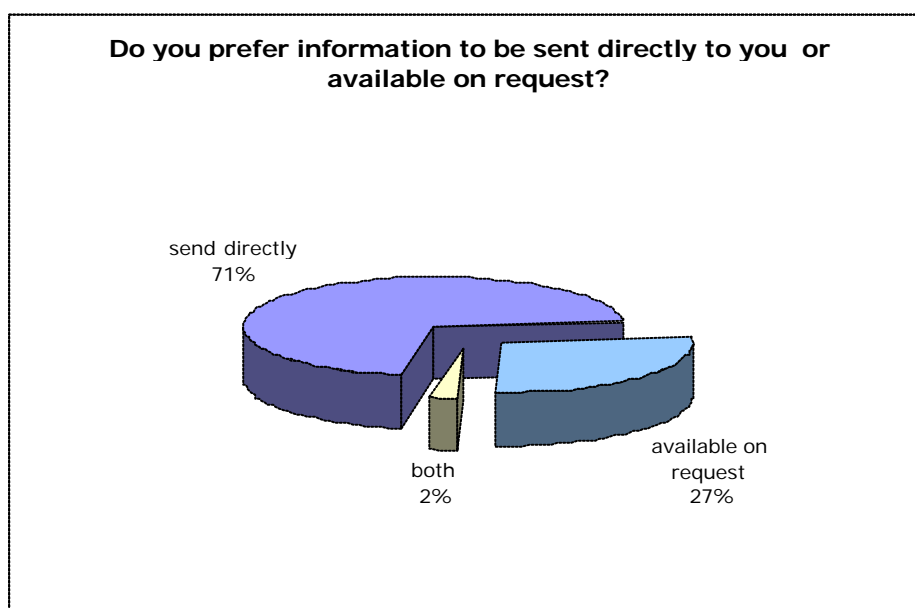
5. Please indicate the type of information media which is the most attractive for you?

	highest	high	medium	low	lowest
flyer	44	55	469	193	90
website	360	128	32	10	1
seminars/ conferences	157	180	132	53	8
direct contact with JS	174	144	107	72	34
brochure	36	84	206	159	46
newsletter	115	149	176	65	26

The rank of interest:

1. *Website* – highest interest by 68%, high by 25 %
2. *Direct contact with JS* – highest interest by 33 %, high by 27%.
3. *Seminars/conferences* – high interest by 34%, highest by 30%
4. *Newsletter* – medium interest by 33 %, high by 22%
6. *Flyer* – medium interest by 88%, low by 36%.
7. *Brochure* – medium interest by 39%, low by 30%.

6. Do you prefer information to be sent directly to you (e.g. directly per e-mail or post) or available on request (e.g. at website, sent per post on request)?



7. Have you attended Baltic Sea INTERREG III B information events (e.g. programme conference, communication seminar etc.)?

Yes	49%
No	51%

From the respondents who have attended Baltic Sea INTERREG III B information events 93% were satisfied with information they received, 7% were not.

Majority of respondents have attended events like programme conference "Setting regions in motion" in Malmö, 16th-17th May 2006; communication seminars; partner search forums; Lead partner seminars; quality workshops etc. See Annex 2 for details.

8. Do you inform others about INTERREG programme? Do you see yourself as source of information about the programme?

Yes	69%
No	31%

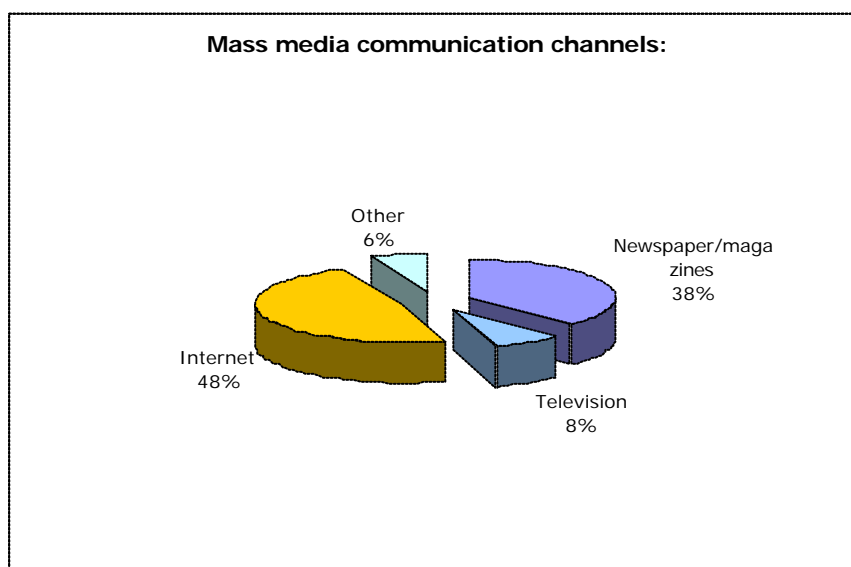
Majority of respondents specified information ways like emails, personal contact, networking, informing in seminars, meetings and conferences, informing on the phone, via web site and through discussions. See Annex 2 for details.

9. Do you think Baltic Sea INTERREG III B programme is recognisable to a wider general public or in the region?

Yes	48%
No	49%

10. Have you heard about Baltic Sea INTERREG III B programme in any of these mass media communication channels (e.g. in general, about project results etc.)?

In total 75 % of respondents have heard about the Baltic Sea INTERREG III B programme in below mentioned mass media communication channels. 25% have not heard. See Annex 2 for details.

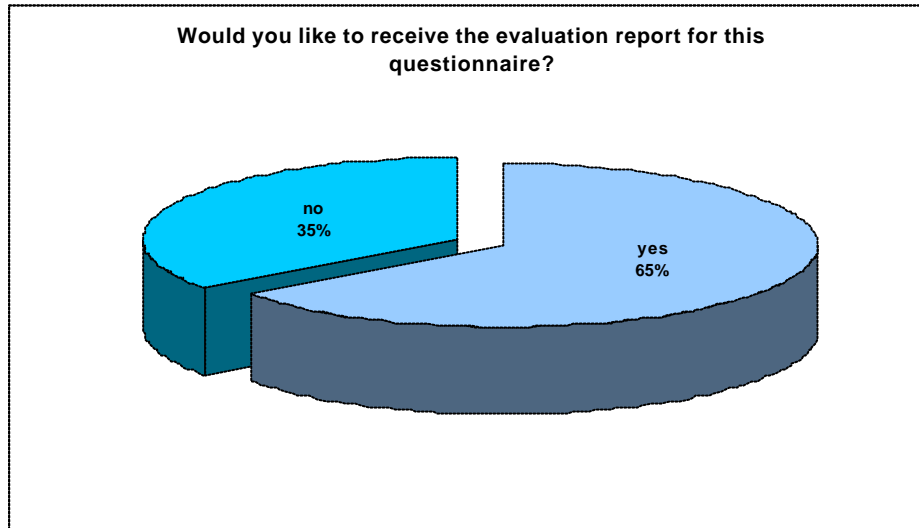


11. Do you have any suggestions how to improve dissemination of information?

See Annex 2 for details.

Would you like to receive the evaluation report for this questionnaire?

Yes	337
No	184



Conclusions

Accessibility and sources of information

Convincing majority of the information-users (96%) know where to find the information about the BSR INTERREG III B NP programme. Most of them look for information on the Internet. www.bsrinterreg.net is seen as the main source of information by 80% of users, 40 % look in internet generally. Also programme seminars and conferences serve as an important platform for dissemination of information about the programme (37%), as well as project partners/ Lead partners (35%) and contact with JS (28%).

In total the division between verbal and nonverbal sources is almost equal: 55% nonverbal sources e.g. web site, internet, brochures/flyers to 45% verbal sources e.g. seminars/conferences, projects partners/Lead partners, contact with JS.

As "other" sources information user mostly mention newsletters; contact with national/local and regional authorities and organisations; SC and MC members; personal contacts e.g. from colleagues, networking, partner search forums. Personal contacts on different levels and support from national/regional and local level are of great importance.

To sum up the expectations of information-users meet intentions of information-owners (Programme's stakeholders & MA/JS), as the programme's website is seen as the main information sources about the programme. During programme's life time www.bsrinterreg.net has acquired high recognition as it is easy accessible information sources and has been having a practical and targeted scope. More programme information in other internet sources is also very important as 40% information-users use internet in general as their source.

However it also seems that more personalized approach or verbal communication is of great importance. On one hand conferences giving more general, target information and on other hand contact with JS or in between project partners for project related specific information are becoming more important information sources for users.

Accessibility of information in the last years has improved. www.bsrinterreg.net is used by 30% information-users more than in 2004. The role of programme seminars and conferences has increased rapidly.

Conclusions:

- the web site should still serve as the main information source: information-owners should keep the website updated and filled in with proper information
- more programme related information should be spread out in the other internet sources
- targeted programme seminars, conferences should be organised more frequently and regularly and serve as important platform for information dissemination

- information-owners should regularly inform national/local and regional authorities and organisations, and SC and MC members as they are information source for information-users

Sufficiency (adequacy) of information

Accessibility of information correlates strongly with sufficiency or adequacy of the information e.g. it is important that users can find the information they look for in the information sources they use. Most of the times most of the users (75 %) find information they look for about the BSR INTERREG III B NP programme, but only small part (12%) always find what they are looking for. Even though the biggest majority knows where to find information about the programme still some users (13 %) not always can find particular information they look for.

Conclusions:

- more targeted information and its dissemination should be practised; wider range of information for different target groups developed
- more clear structure of information sources should be provided e.g. better navigation for the www.bsrinterreg.net
- information-owner should continue to encourage information users to practise verbal communication e.g. contact JS to find out more specific information
- information-owner should continue to have regular targeted seminars e.g. Lead partner, project search forums etc. to provide information users with information they are looking for

Quality of information

Most of the users consider the information useful (73%) and easy to access (64%). It is easy to understand for 53% of users, on time for 50% and detailed enough for 44%. Though some claim (21%) that the information is difficult to understand and too general.

It seems that assessment of information quality varies depending on the information users pre-knowledge about the programme e.g. expert level or general public.

Comparing with 2004 quality of information has improved e.g. the information has become easier to understand and more on time.

Conclusions:

- language in which the information is communicated could be clear and simple e.g. easy to understand for "non-professionals"
- more examples, illustrations and practical solutions financed with the programme funds should be given to show the added value of the programme
- information has to be made available ASAP, to avoid unnecessary delays in informing the public

The website (www.bsrinterreg.net)

Most of the users (73%) visit the programme's website once per month, and 14% once per week. As much as 9% never visit the website, or 2% visit it every day.

The visits of the web site very much depend on the programme developments like coming calls for proposals. In comparison with 2004 the number of users visiting the programme's website once per month has increased for 10%.

Conclusions:

- the www.bsrinterreg.net should be marketed even more and information-users should be encouraged to visit the website more often (e.g. once a week).
- in order to achieve that users should be motivated by quality (proper information, easy to understand, detailed enough) and timing (as soon as info is available – in good time).
- as the programme is closing and will have no more call proposals in www.bsrinterreg.net more emphases should be put on showing the project and programme results; continue to provide a link to upcoming programme updates

Attractiveness of the information media

The website, direct contact with JS and seminars/conferences are the most attractive media. Newsletters are also attractive sources of information media, whereas flyers and brochures were ranked as of medium interest for the information users.

Additionally as the most attractive media for information-users are considered: TV; direct contacts with SC and MC members; consultations in any form; direct emails; project lead partners/partners; networking; good reports; national authorities; personal contacts; national contact points and internet.

Conclusions:

- should continue to put the stress on the website, seminars/conferences, direct contact with JS and the newsletter
- stress should be put on the electronic type of media like website, electronic newsletter and direct e-mailing even more
- printing materials like flyers and brochures should be used as additional media and support information tool e.g. for programme conferences, seminars, content of website
- information-owner should efficiently inform national/regional and local authorities and work more closely with Lead partners/project partners it as they are considered to be an attractive media

Distribution of information

71% recipients prefer information sent directly, 27% available on request. Small minority (2%) prefer both.

Conclusions:

- direct mailings (e.g. electronic newsletters, conference announcements, brochures per post) should be used for distribution of information
- regularly inform and encourage information-users to request latest printing materials to be sent to them per post for their further distributions

Participation in BSR INTERREG III B information events

Half of the respondents (49%) have attended Baltic Sea INTERREG III B information events and half (51%) have not. However the majority (93%) of the participants of INTERREG events have been very satisfied with information they received. Therefore information events are effective tools how to meet the interests of the participants and to disseminate the information to necessary target groups.

Almost half of the correspondents attended programme conference "Setting regions in motion" in Malmö, 16th-17th May 2006, as well as programme events like communication seminars, partner search forums, Lead partner seminars, quality workshops and other seminars. See Annex 2 for details.

Conclusions:

- continue organising regular and targeted programme events and meanwhile encourage more participants to take part, market the programme events on a wider scale
- should continue to organise annual programme conference as it is well seen and recognized from the participant side; annual conference should serve as the main programme information event of the year

Informing others about BSR INTERREG III B

Almost three fourth (69%) of users see themselves as source of information about INTERREG programmes and inform others. It seems that information users are willing to inform others about INTERREG, if they are provided and equipped with the information they need. "Mouth-to-mouth" principle is very important and effective instrument to distribute information as wide as possible. The better we inform the potential information-users the bigger is the chance that the right information will be distributed further and further on and will reach as many interested people as possible.

Majority of respondents as their ways of informing specified: sending emails, distributing programme newsletters; personal contact; networking; informing in seminars, meetings and conferences; by lobbying to decision makers; informing on the phone, via web site, in staff meetings and through discussions; by advising. See Annex 2 for details.

In year 2004 around 80% considered themselves as the information source. The drop of the indicator has to been seen in conjunction with the programme activities, which starting from end of 2006 have minimised.

Conclusions:

- the information-users should be well informed and equipped with information that they could forward to the other users in their environment e.g. regularly send them latest information materials, newsletters, event announcements
- promote "Mouth-to-mouth" principle in between the information users
- to increase the participation in the programme on different levels promote the lobbying; encourage information-users to act as programme lobbies

Recognisability of BSR INTERREG III B to a wider general public or in the region

Half of respondents (48%) think that BSR INTERREG III B is recognisable to a wider general public or in the region and half that not (49%).

The main respondent conclusions are that BSR INTERREG III B is recognisable in particularly in regions and mostly to the ones directly engaged and benefiting, not to general public and that should not be the aim of the programme. However project outcomes are interesting to a wider public and should be jointly – projects together with JS - promoted. Other respondents stress that it is well know between relevant actors e.g. EU related specialists, municipalise, scientists etc. Many stress that the programme itself is too complicated to understand for general public.

It seems that the majority think that information about the programme should be still spread out in all the BSR countries in order to achieve transnational cooperation. Some suggest to have more emphases on informing the non EU countries about the programme, as their knowledge about EU regional policy is poor, especially Russia and Belarus.

Conclusions:

- as programme is specific put more emphases on informing regions in the whole programme are e.g. authorities, organisations, not so much general public; aim is to increase the participation rate in the future
- as communicating with general public need to concentrate on concrete project outcomes and achievements in the concrete area and promote the programme by mentioning that it is co-financed by the EU

BSR INTERREG III B is mass media

Majority of respondents (75%) have heard about the programme in mass media communication channels. One forth has not heard anything. Internet is main channel (48%), information in newspapers/magazines are also quit common (38%). Not so many people (8%) have heard about BSR INTERREG III B in television. Radio was additionally mentioned by many of the respondents.

It seems from the received comments that mostly coverage has been on the regional level e.g. articles about project activities in the local newspapers or in the regional organisation printed materials. Some projects like MoCuba got coverage in German national television, as well as some other examples in Poland and Latvia.

Conclusions:

- as the project stories are what the mass media is interested for then projects should be well informed and trained how to work with press e.g. continue organising communication seminars
- support projects in their everyday communication activities
- as working with mass media concentrate on the regional level, as the chances to be noticed and get coverage are much bigger
- information-owner should instruct projects that by mentioning the project the programme has to be mentioned as well

Summary conclusions

The results of the questionnaire confirm that the information and communication plan for the BSR INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Programme is serving well its purpose and that in the last years the information dissemination about the programme has improved.

The users know where to find information about the programme (96%) and are satisfied with its quality. Most of the time (75%) users find the information they are looking for. Programme webpage www.bsrinterreg.net is well known as 80% users check it least once per month (75%) and serve as the main source of information about the programme, as well is considered to be the most attractive information media also for the future. The language in the information media should be simplified, the information should be made available in good time and with concrete examples. The information should be sent directly. It is very important to keep information users well informed – as most of them (69%) spread the information further.

As majority (93%) of the participants of INTERREG events have been very satisfied with information they received then regular and targeted programme events should be organised also in the future. Annual programme conference should become as a tradition and serve as the main programme information event of the year.

Half of respondents (48%) think that BSR INTERREG III B is recognisable to a wider general public or in the region and majority of respondents (75%) have heard about the programme in mass media communication channels, most often on regional level. Also in the future information about the programme should firstly be spread around to the regions, secondly to wider general public. Projects and their success stories should be put in the centre. Further training for project communication officers on communication and mass media issues should be organised in order to improve project communication as the projects have the real stories to tell.