

Communication Handbook - Factsheet 2

Version 2 – April 2013

Target Audiences

- ⇒ The importance of analysing your target audience
- ⇒ How to define the **stakeholders** for your project and how to engage with them
- ⇒ The importance of defining the benefits that your projects bring to them
- ⇒ How to understand what they think now and what you want them to think



Audiences

All MED projects need to communicate with a number of different groups of people each with different characteristics and needs. These groups are called “target audiences”. It is important to define target audiences that are directly relevant to helping you achieve your communications objectives.

⇒ **Think about the audience every time you communicate.**

To communicate effectively and in a results-driven way, MED projects need to understand their target audiences.

Different aspects audiences have different motivations and demographics; they respond to different approaches and means of persuasion. Different audiences are reached by different tactics and different media. Different aspects of a project will be relevant and interesting for different audiences – local communities as opposed to businesses, for instance. Different groups of people will help you to achieve different objectives, if you identify, understand and communicate with them effectively.

Each project needs a clear view of who its target audiences are. This analysis will enable an effective tailoring of messages, materials and public relations tactics for the greatest impact.

Most projects will already have thought about their audiences and how to communicate with them – they may even be defined in the original application form. Still, it is worthwhile at this stage to take a fresh look to see whether these audiences are still appropriate, whether they have changed over time, and whether you have any new insight about how to reach them.

Stakeholder engagement

What is stakeholder engagement?

Stakeholders are groups of people and individual citizens who have an interest in an organisation’s programmes and can have an influence on its ability to achieve its goals rapidly and efficiently.

Stakeholder engagement means communicating with these groups and individuals in a manner which enables them to understand your project work and to support it enthusiastically.

The goal of stakeholder engagement is to make all stakeholders feel that your project is relevant to their personal concerns and cares about them. This only

happens when you deliberately set out to identify your key stakeholders, communicate with them and gives evidence that their opinions matter.

Positive, neutral and negative stakeholder attitudes

The result of an effective stakeholder engagement programme is that positive attitudes will be reinforced, neutral attitudes will become positive and negative attitudes will be neutralised.

To plan and monitor these improvements, we need to know who our stakeholders are and how they currently feel about the issues that your project deal with.

Stakeholder engagement planning

Our resources are finite, so we need to prioritise stakeholders in terms of the strength of their interest and the degree of their influence. This is called stakeholder mapping.

Some stakeholders are categorised as groups – for example, schoolteachers. Some stakeholders are listed as individuals – for example, the Mayor of a particular town.

⇒ **List and review all of the audiences that you want to reach out to through communications activities.**

Examples of MED projects' audiences

Project-level audiences

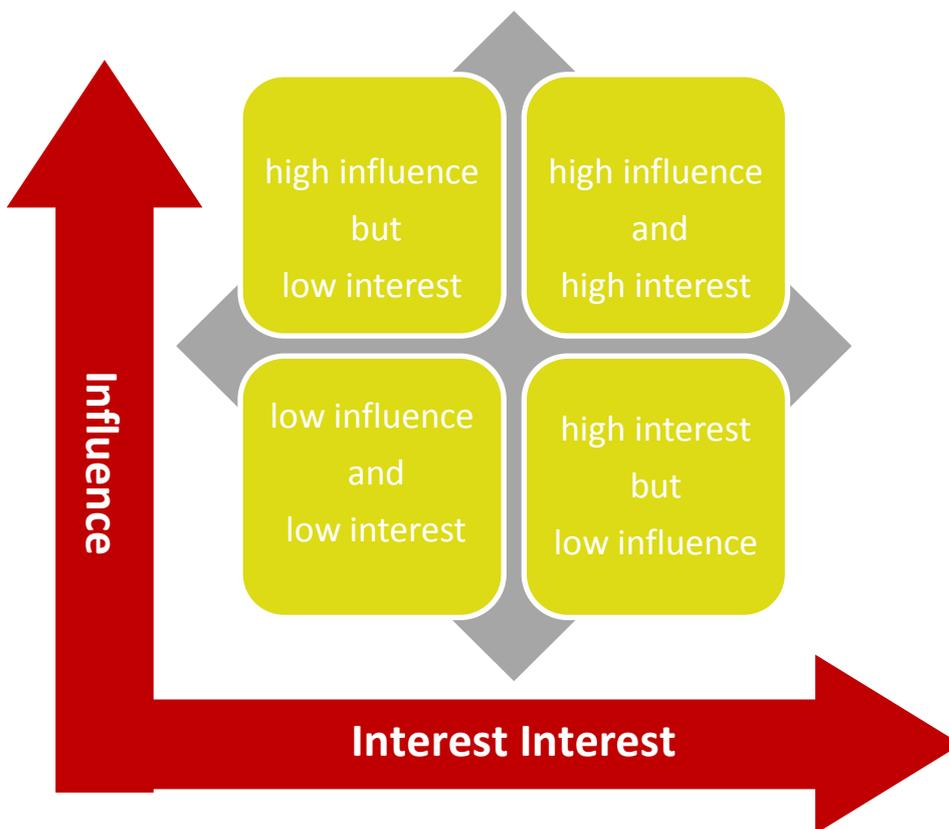
Projects themselves will likely share many of these key audiences, but will no doubt also have different key audiences. For instance, your audiences might include:

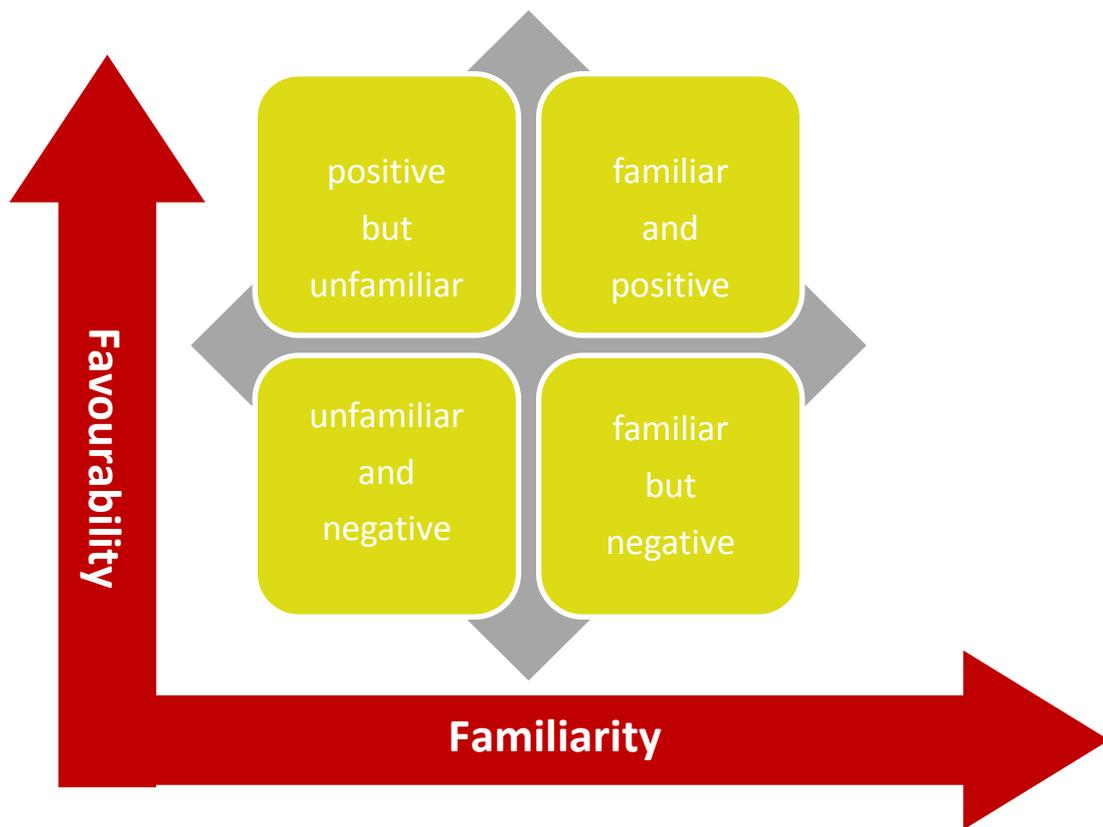
- Regional and local authorities
- Managing Authority
- Economic and social partners
- City authorities
- Trade and industry
- Public equivalent bodies
- Regional development agencies, Universities, Research institutes, Chambers of Commerce, NGOs, etc.
- General public
- Regional communities
- Schoolchildren
- Families
- EU institutions
- Brussels regional offices

- European Commission
- European Parliament
- Committee of the Regions
- Member States
- Relevant ministries
- Other relevant national bodies
- Specialised EU networks
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The Influence/Interest and Familiarity/Favourability grid

A good way to create a stakeholder map are the grids below, which show us at a glance which categories of stakeholder demand priority attention in our projects.





We use these grids by inserting the names of groups and significant individuals in the four quadrants: those who have considerable influence but not much interest in our project go for example in the top-left quadrant; those with both influence and interest go in the top-right; those with less influence and less interest go in the lower-left, and those with a lot of interest but little influence go in the lower-right. There should be between five and ten names in each quadrant. Clearly, the priorities for our project are those in the upper-right quadrant.

We use opinion research to create a benchmark for each stakeholder category. This tells us if the general opinion in the group is positive, neutral or negative. Likewise for the individual stakeholders on our list. This knowledge enables us to allocate resources where they will have the greatest beneficial effect.

Message / Audience Matrix

The tool we use for stakeholder engagement planning is the Message/Audience Matrix. Here is a template for the M/A Matrix. You can see how the current attitudes of the stakeholder audiences and the attitudes we want them to adopt form the first columns in the matrix.

	Think Now	Should Think	Timeframe	Key Channels
Audience 1				
Audience 2				
Audience 3				
Audience 4				

Stakeholder outreach

Each stakeholder group will be amenable to their own, specific types of communication and involvement. For example, older citizens read newspapers while the younger generation typically depend on the internet; some communities have a social hub while others – especially in the cities - are more dispersed.

A stakeholder engagement plan should allocate the most effective communications channels for each audience. These could include, for example: sponsorships, exhibitions, events, newsletters, public meetings, speeches, internet (online) postings, awards and prizes, consultative forums (symposia), clubs, VIP visits and celebrations. There are over 100 different channels available.

The Message/Audience Matrix has a column for the principal channels you have selected for each audience. It also has a column for timeframe, and here you should estimate how long it will take to change the majority of each stakeholder category from 'Think Now' to 'Should Think'. The timeframe may be as short as 3 months or as long as five years.

Always bear in mind that the goal of stakeholder engagement is to make citizens – and in particular their most influential representatives – feel included in your project outcomes. If you communicate regularly and effectively with them, stakeholders can be your most powerful allies in achieving your goals.

⇒ **You should promote the benefits of your project and the programme on a targeted local and regional level.**



IN SHORT

Remember to consider your audiences' interests and needs:

1. Brainstorm, with your team, a list of your target audiences

2. Prioritise – which stakeholders have the most influence and interest in your project

3. What benefits of your project will have most effect on your stakeholders

4. What do your stakeholders think now

5. What do you want them to think

6. Which media channels are going to most effective