Information strategy

Use

„Solid and goal-oriented public relations can only be sustainable if they are applied with methodology and according to a strategy". (Horst P. Borghs). The information strategy is a planning tool which encourages a comprehensive approach to all tasks in a project that have to do with information, external communication and public relations. It is always goal-oriented.

Elements of the information strategy

The following list contains the crucial elements of any information strategy. They are arranged from A to F.

A.   Initial situation

Initial situation (Where do we stand?)	This is where the initial situation and the important facts are described. Where is the project at present? Why is there a communication strategy (is this the first such strategy, has there been a previous one, why does it need updating, etc)? What is the project's background or what are the elements influencing it? What are its strengths, weaknesses, chances and risks?

B.   Objectives and strategy

Information objectives (What is the purpose of the information?)	The objectives for information are derived from the analysis of the initial situation and the project's objectives. Information objectives describe the purpose of the information. Information objectives should be specific, measurable, attractive, realistic and time-framed. The 'smarter' the formulation of the objectives the simpler it is to derive an information strategy from them.
Target groups (Who needs to be informed?)	Target groups are those (key) players or groups that have to be informed. There are some target groups within the project (i.e. collaborators, the groups at which the intervention is targeted, key-players in the setting, persons in charge from the institution responsible for the project, advisory/steering groups, etc.) and external to the project (e.g. the public). External groups include middlemen and brokers such as the media and opinion leaders.
Information strategy	"The strategy describes the way leading to the objectives" (Andresen). When the objectives, the target groups and the information that needs to be communicated are defined you are ready for the next step. You now have to decide how to best get the message across to the target groups. You need to find creative ways and avoid "made-to-measure" solutions.

C.   Content

Messages (What?)	This is where you decide what you want to communicate to the target group What information do you want to give to each target group? What do you want them to think about the project? What messages have to be given to each target group in order to achieve the intended effect?

D.   Information channels

Choice	The way you reach your target groups depends on what you want to achieve with your information: you may choose to reach them via advertisements in the local paper, via an event in the parish hall or via direct mailing.
Examples	Printed matter: Annual report, brochures, flyer, prospectus, catalogue, post-cards. Periodicals: Newsletters, in-house magazines, journals, e-letters (newsletter by e-mail). Advertising in the media: Advertisements in newspapers, magazines, journals; posters on advertising boards; TV and radio spots. Events: Events, open days, exhibitions, fairs, symposia, perimeter advertising. Working with the media: Media information, media briefing, media conference, press kit, media trip, press dispatch. Electronic and audiovisual media: Audio-visual presentation, video, DVD, CD-rom, internet, film. Campaigns: Contests, games, give-aways.

E.   Measures

Planning	Information is disseminated in order to achieve clear objectives. All activities undertaken to this end are based on the information strategy and the focus is clearly on the different target groups.Each intended activity is described, including timing and budget. Decisions are now taken as to which activity ought to convey which messages to which target group in the best possible way; the time scale, the available financial resources and the responsibility for these activities are also defined. The project management chart can be used for guidance.
Support	Some of these activities can be undertaken by the project team but professional support is sometimes needed, particularly for the visual presentation of the information.

F.   Quality development

Evaluation	In the same way as other measures implemented by the project, public relations activities should also be checked for effectiveness. Do they contribute to the achievement of the project's objectives? If not, do they need to be adapted?