



PROPER COMMUNICATION IS THE "CHERRY ON TOP" IN CLIMATE ACTION

As a journalist working for many years on communication and public awareness of environmental issues, I was particularly challenged when some 6-7 years ago it was necessary to develop the national level communication basis for climate change.

At the time, the people in the country perceived climate change as something that deserves our attention, but it is still happening somewhere else, away from us. But it was only an illusion that needed to be unveiled, and climate change needed to get the right attention and place in the activities of all stakeholders and win the battle with ongoing day-to-day societal politics and problems.

The challenge was enormous, because it was first needed to properly address and identify future needs and responsibilities, but also to prioritize activities to be implemented by a broad range of stakeholders at various levels, based on scientific evidence. It was the only way to implement genuine #Climate action, and achieving this goal **required powerful, clear, accessible and properly communicated information**. The thought that was in our minds when we devised the **communication platform** was that communication should not be an end in itself, but that **it must be continuous and an integral part leading to behavioral change, while at the same time it should motivate, reduce barriers and deliver jointly developed solutions and visions**.

From the very beginning, in order to achieve an efficient implementation of the foreseen activities, we had a **strategic approach** to communication and we were **continuously** working on its development. Thus, with the assistance of the Macedonian Institute for Media and UNDP, during the preparation of the [Third National Communication on Climate Change](#), we developed the [COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN](#) (2013). With this we set the communication framework and we tried to follow and adapt to trends and use new communication methods and tools. We conducted three online surveys of the public perception in relation to climate change (2014, 2016 and 2019). We developed a communication web platform www.klimatskipromeni.mk, and seeing the importance of social media we created a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/klimatskipromenimk>, and we also opened an Instagram and YouTube channel. At the same time, wanting to check if we are on the right track, we [monitored the implementation of activities](#) under the Climate Change Action Plan and implemented a series of public awareness events involving different target groups.

We organized a number of different events starting with the education of the media representatives, who as major promoters in society inevitably needed an orientation to the field in order to be able to properly handle climate change information. Then we held a series of consultative meetings with CSOs, local governments, companies, and organized many events in which the innovative approach came to light. We should mention the two climatic challenges "It depends on you" in which me and my colleagues from the MoEPP Communication Office were actively involved, although the UNDP communicators were mainly responsible for the activities. I cannot disregard the workshop organized at the Skopje Airport attended by numerous celebrities from the country, who were transported to the airport in the open JSP tourist bus. It was indeed an attraction at the time, and from a communication point of view it really achieved its goal, drawing public attention to the topic of climate change.

I had an opportunity to be part of all of these events and I am really proud to have been given an opportunity to devise the communication method and really to influence not only the proper understanding and treatment of climate change, but also to motivate people for climate action.

It was interesting to follow the change in public perception, and see the comparative analysis of data from the three surveys which showed progress in the public's readiness to take action ([Survey of Public Opinion 2019](#)), the change in recognizing the actors of climate actions, but also their responsibilities.

Working in communications, I realized that most often the true meaning and importance of communication is not fully understood, so when communication is necessary for the implementation of a project it requires a lot of explanation, persuasion and perseverance. It is still worth the effort because as I usually say - properly communicated activity is the "cherry on top".

And, even more important is that by sharing all information on climate action in one place, on our communication platform www.klimatskipromeni.mk, we present a comprehensive overview of climate actions in the country, thus preventing duplication of projects and implementation of the same ideas that irrevocably wastes time and financial resources.