



**COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR  
INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY OF  
BULGARIA'S ACCESSION TO THE EURO  
AREA**



**UPDATE, February 2024**

The current updated Communication Strategy for information and publicity of Bulgaria's accession to the euro area (hereinafter "Communication Strategy") was prepared in fulfilment of the activities in the field of communications provided for in the updated National Plan for the Introduction of the Euro in the Republic of Bulgaria. The development and implementation of the Communication Strategy is also part of the mandate of the "Communications" working group, assisting the Coordination Council for the Preparation of the Republic of Bulgaria for Membership in the Euro Area created by Resolution No. 168 of the Council of Ministers of 2015.

The Strategy describes the principles and tasks of the information and communication campaign; the responsible institutions that will conduct the campaign; the campaign implementation stages; the target groups; the channels for disseminating information, etc. The document builds on what was laid down in the National Plan for the Introduction of the Euro in the Republic of Bulgaria (hereinafter "the Plan") with regard to the communication of the process of introduction of the euro and the public awareness of the issue.

### ***GOAL:***

The goal of the Communication Strategy is to promote the process of preparation of the Republic of Bulgaria for joining the euro area, as well as providing information in the first months of its actual membership. The replacement of the lev with the euro will affect each person living in or traveling to and from Bulgaria. The communication campaign aims to acquaint the audience with all the effects resulting from the adoption of the euro for citizens, businesses and the state in the process according to the accession with the new target date. At the same time, it strives to counteract any misinformation that misleads about the effects of membership in the euro area and instils unfounded concerns in citizens about this key step in raising the standard of living in Bulgaria. Keeping the public well informed about the introduction of the Euro is crucial for the success of the process. It is essential to apply the most up-to-date and effective communication techniques, in line with the changed attitudes and expectations of the public regarding the euro and the euro area and the progress in the technological process of the adoption of the euro.

The information campaign will be aimed at providing accurate, accessible, understandable, timely and comprehensive information about what the euro area is, what the criteria for the country's accession to the euro area are, what the benefits of the euro are, at what rate the lev will be exchanged for the euro after the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria, when the lev will cease to be legal tender, how the accounts will be converted from lev to euro, as well as the exchange of money in cash and on accounts, where and for how long it will be possible to exchange lev for euro after the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria and if there will be fees, when the dual labelling of prices in euro and lev will be introduced, will inflation increase with the introduction of the euro, etc.

Providing good information and increasing financial literacy in relation to the euro will help ensure broad public support for the project and the efficient running of all preparations. The campaign will include communication activities to explain consumer protection measures, as well as relevant informational activities to familiarize the public with euro banknotes and coins, as well as with their protection against counterfeiting.

### ***PRINCIPLES:***

When implementing communication activities, the following principles are the main priority:

- ✓ Openness in the provision of information - to the maximum extent and in an accessible manner to answer questions posed by citizens and businesses;
- ✓ Transparency and feedback – the responsible institutions should be accessible to everyone interested in the process of the introduction of the euro and to answer questions on the subject as per their competence.
- ✓ Coordination in the information provided – the responsible institutions should not provide contradictory information. The individual materials prepared under the information campaign should have a unified design and slogan, according to Article 4, paragraph 1 of the Recommendation of the European Commission on measures to facilitate the future transition to the euro. Use of a common hashtag #Zaevroto (in translation: “about the euro”) in order to achieve homogeneity in the campaign rather than fragmentation.
- ✓ Quality of information – the information provided should be complete, timely and accessible and tailored to the different target groups.
- ✓ Language accessibility – information related to the adoption of the euro should also be accessible to people with special needs. In addition to Bulgarian, the information should be prepared in other languages, including Braille, and according to the new legislative decisions, it should also be provided using sign language.
- ✓ Effectiveness and efficiency – information should be disseminated by using all types of information tools and channels that reach the public and the individual target groups as quickly and easily as possible and through which the respective desired results are achieved.

### ***RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTIONS/AGENCIES:***

It is important that all competent public institutions, as well as a significant part of the private sector and civil society, business and trade union organisations and professional communities participate directly or indirectly in the implementation of the information campaign. In order to ensure a wide scope of the information campaign, partner institutions should be sought and mobilised to carry out information activities within their competences. Such are employers' organisations and industry associations (for example the Bulgarian Industrial Association, the Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association, the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Association for Modern Trade, the National Board of Tourism and various industry associations in the field of tourism, restaurants and hotels), trade unions (for example, the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria and the Confederation of Labour “Podkrepa”), state and municipal institutions, even those not directly involved in the process of introducing the euro, media, credit institutions, non-governmental organisations, mobile operators, universities, schools and others.

When preparing well-coordinated information for distribution from different sources, the desired effect, namely, the information reaching the widest possible circle of Bulgarian citizens, will be present.

***MAIN THEMES AND MESSAGES:***

The communication campaign should include the following main topics, consistent with the processes and stages foreseen in the National Plan for the Introduction of the Euro in Bulgaria, and the institutions responsible for each of the topics will be the leaders in their communication with the target groups:

**Subjects**

Subjects	Leading institutions
Benefits of the adoption of the euro in Bulgaria for the economy, businesses and citizens	Ministry of Finance (MF), Bulgarian National Bank (BNB)
Principles and scenarios for the transition to the euro included in the Plan, as well as the stages of the process	MF, BNB
The current economic situation, the exact time of changeover to the euro, the economic effects and prospects thereafter	MF, BNB
Presentation of the new Bulgarian euro coins and existing euro banknotes, design, characteristics and security features	BNB
Exchange rate of the euro and lev	MF, BNB
Safety of cash exchange	Ministry of Interior
Impact of the adoption of the euro on prices	Ministry of Economy and Industry (MEI), Consumer Protection Commission (CPC), Competition Protection Commission (CCP)
Consumer protection - dual labelling of prices, possibility of filing complaints against commercial establishments and companies that violate the rule of dual labelling or have incorrectly converted prices from BGN to EUR; fraud prevention	MEI, CPC, National Revenue Agency (NRA)
Converting accounts and cash. Time periods and places for exchanging banknotes and coins from BGN to EUR (including when and where it will be free of charge for citizens)	BNB, Ministry of Transport and Communications (MTC) ("Bulgarian Posts" EAD)
Combating disinformation about the adoption of the euro	MF

## Messages

In order to promote the benefits of the introduction of the euro and provide information on the most common questions citizens are raising, the current updated Communication Strategy proposes three main messages which will be refined during the different phases of the information campaign by additional opinion polls and focus groups:

1. The accession of Bulgaria to the euro area will help increase incomes:
  - ✓ Increasing the efficiency of the labour market, employment, high levels of economic activity, labour integration and incomes;
  - ✓ Improving the employment rate through high levels of labour integration and economic activity;
  - ✓ Optimization and greater predictability of household and business spending related to savings in net interest costs from currency exchange costs;
  - ✓ Effects on migration processes – in the countries that have acceded to the euro area in recent years there is a reversal of the negative trend in emigration;
  - ✓ Lower government debt spending will allow for an increase in public spending in other areas of government policy.
  
2. The accession of Bulgaria to the euro area will have a favourable effect on the Bulgarian economy and business:
  - ✓ Numerous benefits for the state and the businesses that come from being full members of the Eurosystem and having access to all the related financial support instruments;
  - ✓ Higher potential GDP and average annual real growth rate;
  - ✓ Higher productivity and potential for accelerated development and convergence towards the average productivity and income levels in the more advanced Eastern European countries, the Baltic countries and the euro area countries;
  - ✓ Improvement in the investment environment, galvanising of local and foreign investments, with increased investment activity expected to support employment;
  - ✓ An economic push towards sustainable structural changes in support of growth as a result of Bulgaria's closer integration with the euro area countries;
  - ✓ Increasing export orientation and unlocking statistically significant positive direct and indirect effects on export-oriented sectors and on the net export of goods and services;
  - ✓ Increasing the speed of convergence of productivity and income, sustainable nominal wage growth higher than inflation, reduction of income inequality to levels characteristic of the EU and the euro area, respectively;
  - ✓ Improvement in the fiscal base, possibility of reformatting the national strategic governance, long-term budgeting and efficiency of public expenditure and investment programmes;
  - ✓ Reduction of public debt servicing costs;
  - ✓ Reduction of transaction costs.
  
3. The accession of Bulgaria to the euro area is a clear sign of our European identity and a logical conclusion of our European integration, as well as a strategic national goal of Bulgaria:

- ✓ Bulgaria has made a commitment to join the euro area already by signing the EU accession treaty;
- ✓ The accession of Bulgaria to the euro area is a factor for our much deeper European integration;
- ✓ With the adoption of the euro, Bulgaria does not give up monetary sovereignty, but will have more powers in monetary policy than in the current currency board regime.

**For this purpose, it is planned to implement activities in the following directions:**

- ✓ Dissemination of information about the benefits from the introduction of the euro for the country, businesses and citizens, the main time periods, goals and activities laid down in the National Plan for the Introduction of the Euro in the Republic of Bulgaria for the involved institutions and organisations;
- ✓ Ensuring equal access to information for all citizens through the use of various communication channels;
- ✓ Encouraging the participation of the involved institutions and non-governmental organisations to popularise the information;
- ✓ Conducting information campaigns for all target groups through mass media and direct communication with citizens - television, radio, press, Internet publications and social networks, outdoor advertising, targeted distribution of printed materials, advertising in commercial establishments, SMS communication, etc.;
- ✓ Holding press conferences and workshops/webinars for journalists, as well as workshops/webinars for mediators/speakers to reach individual target groups, including particular vulnerable groups;
- ✓ Conducting other explanatory events and initiatives at the national and regional level with the support of all involved parties - lectures, workshops, discussions, round tables, etc. for multiple stakeholders;
- ✓ Feedback with citizens, for example, via email address, chatbot in all popular online chats /Viber, Signal, WhatsApp, Telegram/.

In order to reach the public and the individual target groups identified in the National Plan, it is the responsibility of the relevant institutions to provide accessible and detailed information on the subject of replacing the country's national currency with the euro. The main messages addressed to the individual target groups are intended to be developed in such a way that they correspond to their interests and values, but above all to give concrete answers to the questions they ask themselves about how the introduction of the euro will affect their lives.

***TARGET GROUPS:***

**The target group of the campaign** is the general public. In order to ensure the planned broad reach of the campaign, specific target subgroups have been identified to which special attention should be paid, namely:

- ✓ households;
- ✓ all employed people, regardless of whether they have deposits and loans in banks or not;
- ✓ pupils, students;
- ✓ pensioners;
- ✓ small and medium-sized enterprises;
- ✓ public sector representatives;

- ✓ commercial banks and the non-banking financial sector (insurance and social security and investment companies) in the country;
- ✓ investors, insured persons;
- ✓ employers;
- ✓ trade unions;
- ✓ tourists and foreigners residing permanently in Bulgaria;
- ✓ journalists;
- ✓ non-governmental organisations;
- ✓ vulnerable groups - according to Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Commission's Recommendation on measures to facilitate future transition to the euro, special information activities should be created for hard-to-reach groups of the population such as people living in remote and/or underdeveloped areas, representatives of social vulnerable groups, unemployed people, pensioners, persons with special needs (suffering from physical, sensory or mental illnesses), as well as citizens for whom access to information is difficult, such as homeless people, prisoners and others.

### ***INFORMATION CHANNELS:***

To achieve the goals of the Communication Strategy, a variety of informational activities will be implemented and all existing channels will be used, i.e. television; radio; outdoor and indoor advertising; social media; digital space; Internet information pages and platforms; printed publications and printed materials; short telephone messages (SMS); public events; trainings; opinion leaders from the relevant social community/organisations and specialists supporting the relevant vulnerable groups, etc. Their choice will depend on the specifics of the target groups, their expectations and attitudes.

### **Target groups and communication channels to reach them**

<b>Target groups</b>	<b>Communication channels</b>
<b>Internal target groups</b>	
Coordination Council for the Preparation of the Republic of Bulgaria for Euro Area Membership	Correspondence by e-mail Personal contacts and informal communication Formal correspondence Online communication
Employees of the institutions/organisations of the Coordination Council for the Preparation of the Republic of Bulgaria for Euro Area Membership	Internet pages (official internal) Correspondence by e-mail Personal contacts and informal communication Online communication
<b>External target groups</b>	
General public	Media Internet page about the euro Internet pages and own channels of institutions and organisations Mobile app Media Social media Public events

	<p>Opinion leaders Outdoor advertising Advertising in commercial establishments Direct marketing</p>
Pupils and students	<p>Media Internet page about the euro Social media Interactive games Learning platforms Educational and other printed materials Public events</p>
Public sector representatives	<p>Media Internet page about the euro Internet pages and own channels of institutions and organisations Social media Events</p>
Private sector representatives	<p>Media Internet page about the euro Internet pages and own channels of institutions and organisations Public events Social media Events</p>
Vulnerable groups facing a higher risk of poverty, social and economic exclusion	<p>Media - television, radio Social media Public events Printed materials Opinion leaders from the relevant community/Organisations and specialists supporting the relevant vulnerable group</p>
Media	<p>Electronic correspondence Press conferences Press releases Answers to specific media questions Workshops/webinars Internet page about the euro Internet pages and own channels of institutions and organisations Online communication</p>



## **Communication methods to attract the interest of target groups**

### **1. Creating a visual identity of the campaign - Graphic sign (logo), motto (slogan) and brand book of the campaign**

Before the start of the campaign, it is planned to create a common visual identity of the campaign, and the central visual elements that will accompany it will be mandatory for all institutions. Their use is an element of modern communications and marks the communication processes on the subject as unified and purposeful. When creating the visual identity for the campaign any relevant guidelines, ECB's including, will be respected when using the € symbol or related elements in the audio-visual and graphic design materials that are planned to be produced at a later stage.

### **2. Public opinion polls**

A series of representative sociological surveys and focus groups will be conducted within the framework of the communication campaign in order to track the public attitudes and awareness about the introduction of the euro (citizens' fears and expectations related to the change, as well as the reasons for them). The results of the research will be presented in a timely manner both to various groups of stakeholders, i.e. media, businesses, NGOs, and to the general public. The information from the surveys will be the basis for the timely adaptation of the information and communication campaign to the most current issues and attitudes in the society so that clear and timely responses and messages are given during the campaign.

### **3. Web page**

The website for the euro is the main institutional channel for informing citizens and businesses regarding all aspects of the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria. It should provide up-to-date information in an appropriate manner about the various objectives of the Communication Strategy and target groups. Through this communication channel, the main messages can reach the Bulgarian citizens quickly and easily, and through the English version the foreign citizens as well. The main target groups of the website will be citizens and businesses, and the page will mainly provide user-friendly and accessible information to the public. Information for a more specialised audience - for example, for public sector representatives - will be presented in separate sections.

The page will publish information about:

- Benefits of the introduction of the euro, changes for citizens and businesses; time periods and methods of currency exchange and dual labelling of prices;
- Frequently Asked Questions section;
- Appearance and security features of euro banknotes and coins;
- Informational campaign videos, targeted to the citizens and businesses;
- Good practices and experience of other countries that have adopted the Euro;
- Options for citizens to alert the competent institutions in cases of abuse and unfair practices;
- Information from published materials in the media and from public statements of the responsible institutions on the topic which explain the changeover process well;
- Information about and from events on the topic;

- Feedback from citizens, for example via email address, chatbot, etc.
- Information about the functions of the ECB;
- The documents regulating the process of introducing the euro, i.e. the Law on the Introduction of the Euro, and other key documents on the subject in which there is significant public interest.

The website for the euro will be promoted initially through the media and partners in the process, and subsequently the target groups will have attitudes about it through the information campaign, interviews and reports in the media, advertising banners both on the websites of the involved institutions and organisations, and on the websites of all central and local government bodies, advertising on social networks. The address will also be placed on the information materials from the campaign - videos, banners, brochures, etc.

The website for the euro will be launched during the first phase of the communication campaign.

#### **4. Promotion of the design of the national side of the euro coins**

The design of the current exchange coins will be reproduced for the main motifs and details of the design of the national side of the euro coins. All Bulgarian symbols from the current Bulgarian coins are envisaged to be used, so instead of being used by just a few million citizens in Bulgaria, they will be used by over 300 million people in the euro area and by possibly even more outside it.

The Bulgarian National Bank submitted the draft designs to the Council of the EU and received a notification that they have been approved. The BNB will organise events to present both the Bulgarian euro coins and all the coins and banknotes of the euro area member states.

#### **5. Citizen Q&A feedback - online communication options (chat, chatbot and email)**

Due to the great public significance of the process of replacing the lev with the euro, various communication channels for contact with citizens and feedback on their questions will be provided to the site. For example, it is planned to have an email as well as a chatbot through which citizens can get answers to their questions.

Promotion of these communication channels will also be part of the information campaign.

#### **6. National and regional events**

The main informational events through which the change of the national currency in Bulgaria will be promoted and the interest of the target groups will be attracted to the subject are:

- ✓ Thematic public events for the different target groups tailored to their characteristics;
- ✓ Press conferences with information on important dates and activities in the process of introducing the euro as an official currency;
- ✓ Workshops/webinars for journalists - on the specific activities and deadlines for adopting the euro;
- ✓ Organisation of public lectures;

- ✓ Organisation of a number of regional explanatory events in the 28 regional centres and in a number of towns;
- ✓ Organisation of euro-related pupil and student competitions with prizes;
- ✓ Key events and initiatives with the participation of European Commission representatives;
- ✓ Holding conferences with international participation for the exchange of experience and good practices related to the adoption of the euro;

## 7. Media and social channels

All institutions that are involved in the adoption of the euro in the country will have a commitment to provide a variety of information to the media within their competence. It must be coordinated and submitted in accordance with the goals and responsibilities set in the National Plan. Announcements about specific dates, planned activities and the effect of the relevant activity on the citizens will be sent to the media, with thematic sections in the public media and in private national television and radio stations being planned to be created.

Video content, i.e. video series aimed at different target groups and addressing disinformation, infographics, animations, interactive games and other engaging content, will be created in the social networks.

The institutions will work to stimulate the interest of and provide assistance to journalists in developing in-depth and accessible materials on the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria and its consequences for the country's economy and the finances of individual citizens.

Within the framework of the campaign it is planned to work with:

- ✓ Electronic media – they will be the most widely used ones as they ensure the speed of the information delivered and are well-established in the information flow. National electronic media can be involved as partners by including columns in thematic and/or other shows.
- ✓ Printed media - in addition to information for articles, interviews and paid publications, they can also assist in the distribution of brochures or organise events on the subject.
- ✓ Internet pages and digital space - it is planned to work actively with the websites of national and regional media both to popularize important information within the process and to place banners on the official Internet page for the euro and to create thematic text and video content.
- ✓ Social networks should be an active channel for transmitting information as they are actively used by part of the target groups (young people, economically active population, tourists, etc.).
- ✓ The possibilities of direct marketing - "direct mailing" /online newsletters/, SMS from mobile operators, malls and supermarkets, etc.
- ✓ Stakeholders - financial institutions - banks through communication with customers through electronic banking, applications, institutions' social networks and information channels;
- ✓ "Bulgarian Posts" EAD through their offices in the country;
- ✓ Outdoor advertising - it is planned to use the possibilities of outdoor advertising (on busy roads, metro, bus, railway and airport stations, tourist destinations, hospitals) in order to reach the target groups.

## **8. Roadshow**

A series of events will be organised throughout Bulgaria, with the route including both cities and towns. The goal is to provide quality and reliable information to people across the country. The key to the success of the events is to engage various groups of interested parties by providing explanations in the process - the executive and legislative authorities, for example regional governors, mayors, regional structures of the state administration, employers' organisations and trade unions, the National Association of the Municipalities in Republic of Bulgaria, local NGOs, media.

## **9. Mail to households/Bulk SMS**

During the communication campaign non-personally addressed letters with information about the introduction of the euro, about the security features of euro banknotes and coins, about the possible ways of currency exchange and other technical requirements for the change will be sent to different target groups.

It is planned to send short messages to all subscribers of the mobile operators with information about the upcoming introduction of the euro in Bulgaria and a link to the official website for the euro. This is one of the quick and easy ways to reach the target group.

It is also planned to use the paper bills for electricity, heating, mobile services, etc. to disseminate information about the overall process of introducing the euro and its stages, as well as important user information.

## **10. Exhibitions**

Organising of (travelling) exhibitions to present the history of the euro and the design of the Bulgarian side of the euro coins will be an important part of the process of recognition of the new coins and banknotes by the Bulgarian citizens. The exhibitions could help the transformation and direct the patriotic and emotional attitudes on the lev as a national currency towards the design of the "Bulgarian" euro.

## **11. Monitoring for unjustified price increases and a campaign to protect consumer rights**

The competent authorities will continuously monitor the movement of consumer prices, as well as any attempts to unreasonably increase prices, and will regularly inform the public both about prices and about the measures taken to protect the rights of consumers. In addition to information about inflation as an aggregate measure of price movements, data on price movements of key categories of goods and services will be published. The results of the price monitoring will be regularly presented to the public, thereby reducing the perception of citizens that prices will increase in a non-transparent manner.

## **12. Informing citizens for the purpose of fraud prevention**

The competent authorities will be engaged in prevention and adequate response to any attempts for misleading citizens. The population will be informed in a timely manner about any fraud attempts by telephone and others, in order to prevent criminal acts. Communication activities aimed specifically at the elderly and vulnerable groups will be planned in order to

inform them as much as possible about the regulatory processes envisaged for the introduction of the euro, thus to prevent them from becoming victims of fraud as much as possible.

### **Phases of the information and communication campaign**

The information and communication campaign will take place in three phases:

#### **Phase One**

**Phase One of the campaign (15-12 months before the indicative date for the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria until the date of decision by the Council of the EU on the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria)** will be aimed at providing information about the benefits and opportunities for Bulgaria from the accession towards the euro area, thereby answering the questions that matter to people and cutting off opportunities to spread speculation and false claims on the subject. It is very important at this stage to include information about some of the practical aspects of the transition period, so that all interested parties, and above all citizens, can fully informed participate not only in the process, but also in the formation of the policies that will subsequently be reflected in their daily life. Within the framework of this phase activities are envisaged to build a complete visual identity of the campaign (creating a logo, slogan and brand book), to conduct sociological surveys of public opinion and focus groups, to create, produce and distribute audio-visual, digital and printed static and dynamic informational, educational and advertising materials in print and Internet media, publications and platforms, in social channels and networks, outdoor advertising, creation of videos, radio spots and other video and audio content, outdoor advertising, purchase of programme time in electronic media, organising national and regional events (e.g. roadshows, events surrounding the presentation of the Law on the Euro) for the general public and various stakeholder groups, as well as press conferences.

The main activities include the implementation of publicity and transparency measures of the Communication Campaign laid down in the National Plan for the Introduction of the Euro, namely:

- ✓ organising and conducting public procurement necessary for the effective and successful conduct of the information campaign;
- ✓ creating a visual identity of the information campaign for the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria, including logo and slogan;
- ✓ public opinion surveys regarding the replacement of the lev with the euro;
- ✓ presentation of the special website for the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria where citizens will find information about the entire process of introducing the euro, as well as a large volume of other user information, they will find a section with questions and answers, as well as directions where they can submit complaints and alerts about incorrect traders;
- ✓ familiarising citizens with the benefits of adopting the single currency;
- ✓ informing the public how long the Bulgarian lev will be legal tender;
- ✓ clarification of the measures that the authorities will take to protect consumers, the main one of which will be the obligation for dual labelling of prices in BGN and EUR;
- ✓ an answer to their question whether the introduction of the euro will lead to a significant increase in prices;
- ✓ warning citizens not to exchange cash before the official day of the introduction of the euro as the exchange may involve costs and fees;
- ✓ clarifying what will happen to existing BGN deposits, money on accounts and loans, especially loans with variable interest rates;

- ✓ informing merchants that during the dual pricing period they will be required to display and report prices in both currencies.

## Phase Two

**Phase Two of the campaign (from the date of the EU Council's decision to introduce the euro in Bulgaria to 1 month after the actual introduction of the euro)** will be aimed mostly at more practical information on how the adoption of the new currency will affect all aspects of people's lives or informing interested parties about the overall process of adopting the euro and its practical aspects - conversion of loans and deposits, administrative steps of legal entities, where the money will be exchanged, recognition of euro coins and banknotes, where to file complaints in case of irregularities. The activities in this phase build on the activities in phase 1, namely conducting sociological surveys and focus groups, creating, developing and distributing new audio-visual, digital and printed static and dynamic informational, educational and advertising materials in printed and Internet media, publications and platforms, in social channels and networks, outdoor advertising, creation of videos, radio spots and other video and audio content building on the content of phase 1, outdoor advertising, purchase of programme time in electronic media, organising national and regional events (e.g. roadshows and happenings for 100 days before the adoption of the euro in Bulgaria), exhibitions for the general public and various groups of interested parties, press conferences, as well as a large international conference when the EU Council takes the decision to introduce the euro in Bulgaria. The main communication efforts will be planned with periods around the following key dates:

- the date of the decision of the EU Council on Bulgaria's euro area accession;
- 100 days until the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria;
- 30 days until the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria;
- 1 week until introduction of the euro in Bulgaria;
- the date of the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria;
- 1 month from the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria.

During this second phase, the activities within the framework of the information and communication campaign will be the most intensive and will be mainly focused on practical and consumer issues. Efforts will be focused mainly on:

- ✓ informing citizens about the official fixed exchange rate at which the Bulgarian lev will be converted into euro;
- ✓ informing citizens about the period of dual labelling of prices and about the period in which the lev and the euro will be legal tender in the country at the same time;
- ✓ informing citizens that during the period of dual circulation in shops it will be possible to pay in both currencies and that after this period the lev will cease to be legal tender;
- ✓ informing the public that cash exchange will be possible free of charge in banks and in some offices of "Bulgarian Posts" EAD within a period of 6 months from the date of introduction of the euro, after which a fee may be introduced;
- ✓ informing and educating citizens (especially those who handle cash at work) about the design and security features of euro banknotes and coins;
- ✓ informing citizens before the day of the introduction of the euro to keep their money in lev in bank accounts and in accounts with payment institutions and e-money companies, and not in cash, in view of their automatic conversion into euro from the date of membership in the euro area;
- ✓ a recommendation to the public not to exchange cash before the official introduction of the euro as the exchange may involve costs and fees;



- ✓ providing an opportunity to submit complaints in case of violation of the rules for dual labelling of prices or unjustified increase/incorrect conversion of prices into euro and inviting citizens to use this opportunity;
- ✓ timely information about any telephone and other fraud attempts;
- ✓ holding a large conference on the introduction of the euro after the decision of the Council of the EU on Bulgaria's euro area accession;
- ✓ conducting "Euro Day" - organised 100 days before the introduction of the euro and including a series of public events throughout the country;
- ✓ surveys of public attitudes regarding the introduction of the euro;
- ✓ setting a clock to count down the days until the introduction of the euro.

### **Phase Three**

**Phase Three of the campaign** (it will start 1 month after the actual introduction of the euro in Bulgaria and will end 6 months after the introduction of the euro) will be very important for the affirmation of the new currency, as well as for increasing the confidence of citizens in the institutions. The smooth process of the introduction of the euro and the reflection of all its practical aspects will help to increase the level of trust of the citizens in relation to the euro, as well as in the Bulgarian institutions. Within this stage, it will be important to provide detailed information on the formation of prices and inflation, monitoring against abuse and fraud, measures, consumer protection. Within this phase, it is planned to continue the activities of conducting sociological surveys and focus groups, new audio-visual, digital and printed static and dynamic informational, educational and advertising materials will be created and distributed in printed and Internet media, publications and platforms, in social channels and networks, outdoor advertising, videos, radio spots and other video and audio content will be created, building on that from phase 1 and 2, buying programme time in electronic media, organising press conferences and events. Between the third and the sixth month of the introduction of the euro in Bulgaria, a large conference with international participation should be organised to exchange experience and good practices related to the adoption of the euro. At the end of the third phase the process of the introduction of the euro, the communication campaign itself (through a final survey of public opinion), as well as the measures to protect the interests of consumers are evaluated.

The main activities during this period will be:

- ✓ monitoring and disclosure of data on price movements (in order to eliminate the possible perception that the changeover to the euro has greatly increased prices);
- ✓ identifying and refuting any inaccurate information in the media about the progress and the effects of replacing the Bulgarian lev with the euro;
- ✓ reiteration of important information about the deadlines for cash exchange;
- ✓ continuation of activities related to informing the public about the security features of the euro;
- ✓ timely providing of information about any telephone and other fraud attempts;
- ✓ a major conference 6 months after the introduction of the euro – an overview of the path to the euro and tracking the change in attitudes;
- ✓ public opinion polls;
- ✓ evaluation and financial report of the information campaign.

## **Emergency management and crisis communication**

In order to manage the risk and react to various crises, a crisis action plan will be developed through which the obligations of the involved institutions will be defined and distributed in the event of crisis situations. During the development of the plan, the leading Bulgarian industry associations – the Bulgarian Association of PR Agencies, the Bulgarian Association for PR, the Bulgarian Association of Communication Agencies, the communication units of the employers' and trade unions' organisations will be mobilized, and they will assist in developing various scenarios for crisis situations and possible measures and providing solutions for each of them.

The action plan will include:

- ✓ general description of the possible crisis situations;
- ✓ formation of an emergency/crisis management team, formulation of rules of action and functioning of the team;
- ✓ description of a crisis team coordination and communication system;
- ✓ description of the commitments of the team members - gathering and analysing the facts; quick response, openness and clear description of the facts; generating the right messages as the key to overcoming the crisis, drawing up rules for informing the media and the public.

### **Schedule for implementation of the information and communication campaign**

The schedule for the implementation of the information and communication campaign will follow the activities described in the Action Plan for the National Plan for the Introduction of the Euro in the Republic of Bulgaria. The activities will be reviewed periodically within the "Communications" working group and will be updated as necessary, giving the opportunity to focus efforts on the activities that have been proven effective or to further develop activities with potential that were not represented in the planning until now.

In the event of unforeseen circumstances, communication activities can be modified and organised in a different way in order to achieve the goals set in view of the changing environment and the current events.

Communication activities will be coordinated as necessary with the European Commission and the ECB.

### **Indicative financial resources**

Sufficient resources must be provided for the successful implementation of the Communication Strategy. The financing of the activities related to the implementation of the campaign should be provided by the state budget should be included within the annual budgets of the participating institutions. The responsible institutions should anticipate and plan their costs related to the adoption of the euro. Opportunities for partnership and support from the European Commission and the ECB in the implementation of various campaign activities are foreseen.