



Влада на Република Северна Македонија
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Government of the Republic of North Macedonia

Communication and Visibility Plan (CVP)
For the Growth Plan and the Reform Agenda of North Macedonia
2024-2027

March 2025

1. CONTEXT

The EU's **Growth Plan for Western Balkan**¹ is a fundamental initiative aimed at strengthening the region's economic integration with the European Union (EU) and accelerating socio-economic convergence. This Plan seeks to offer the region some of the benefits of EU membership ahead of formal accession. By fostering regional economic collaboration and aligning the Western Balkans with EU values, rules, and standards, the Plan sets the stage for sustainable economic growth and long-term regional stability.

This in turn is expected to significantly accelerate the speed of the enlargement process and the growth of their economies. Economic convergence is an essential element in getting the Western Balkan partners closer to the EU. The lack of convergence is a major issue for the Western Balkan region; currently stands at 30% to 50% of the EU average and is not progressing at a satisfactory pace².

The Growth Plan has the potential to double the size of the Western Balkan economies within the next decade. The new growth plan for the Western Balkans is structured around four pillars and aims to:

- **Enhance economic integration with the European Union's single market**, subject to the Western Balkans aligning with single market rules and opening the relevant sectors and areas to all their neighbours at the same time, in line with the Common Regional Market.
- **Boost economic integration within the Western Balkans through the Common Regional Market**, based on EU rules and standards, which could potentially boost their economic growth by 10%.
- **Accelerate fundamental reforms**, including on the fundamentals cluster, supporting the Western Balkans' path towards EU membership and deepening reforms aiming at accelerating growth in the region, promoting economic convergence and strengthening regional stability;
- **Increase financial assistance to support the reforms through a Reform and Growth Facility** for the Western Balkans for the 2024-2027 period, as the new financial instrument³.

The **Reform and Growth Facility** (RGF) represents a transformative opportunity for North Macedonia to advance its economic development, align with European Union (EU) standards, and bring tangible benefits to its citizens. As a key component of the EU's *New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans* this facility combines financial support with targeted reforms to accelerate regional integration and socio-economic convergence with the EU. Under the Reform and Growth Facility, North Macedonia will benefit from a €6 billion package for the WB region, consisting of €2 billion in grants and €4 billion in concessional loans, contingent upon the successful implementation of reforms. In October 2024, the European Commission approved €750.4 million⁴ in non-repayable grants (€215,3 million) and favourable loans (€535,1 million) under the RGF which will be available when the country meets the conditions it has committed to within the national Reform Agenda.

The Reform Agenda of North Macedonia addresses structural changes and reforms required to modernize the economy, especially by boosting green and digital transition, modernising the labour market, the business environment, and the reforms that will foster good governance and enforce the fundamentals of enlargement. The Reform Agenda will also enhance the ability of North Macedonia to take on the obligations of membership, and increase its capacity to effectively implement the rules, standards and policies of the EU *acquis*⁵.

¹ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/growth-plan-western-balkans_en

² https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/reform-and-growth-facility-western-balkans_en

³ Ibid.

⁴ EU-North Macedonia factsheet 2024, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/67e9638a-c753-4b42-a740-56b4125fbfe0_en?filename=EU-North_Macedonia-factsheet-2024.pdf

⁵ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/commission-implementing-decision-approving-reform-agendas-and-multiannual-work-programme-under_en

By preparing and adopting **Reform Agenda under the RGF 2024-2027** that paves way for payments under the Reform and Growth Facility, **North Macedonia** committed to socio-economic and fundamental reforms the country will undertake to spur growth and convergence with the EU under the Growth Plan.

The **Reform Agenda under the RGF for the Western Balkans** introduces a performance-based approach to EU support, ensuring that funds are disbursed only upon measurable progress in implementing critical reforms. This mechanism aims to drive socio-economic growth, strengthen governance, and align beneficiaries with EU standards, reinforcing North Macedonia's European integration journey.

The Reform Agenda under the RGF is not merely a policy framework; it is a shared vision where the EU and North Macedonia work together as equal partners to achieve full integration into the Union. The reforms are designed to bring tangible benefits while ensuring alignment with EU legislation, promoting governance efficiency, and fostering socio-economic development.

In this regard, this **Communication and Visibility Plan (CVP) related to the Union assistance to North Macedonia under the RGF** that has been prepared with support from the EU, aims to bring the benefits of RGF closer to citizens and stakeholders by promoting transparency, participation, and trust. It highlights the partnership and shared values between North Macedonia and the EU, emphasising how reforms will lead to job creation, improved living standards, and stronger ties within Europe.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The formal process of North Macedonia's accession⁶ to the European Union began with the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA)⁷ on 9 April 2001. This agreement, which came into force on 1 April 2004, established a framework for cooperation between the EU and North Macedonia, marking the first step towards the EU membership.

In March 2020, the European Council approved the start of accession negotiations with North Macedonia. The first Intergovernmental Conference, which marks the formal commencement of these negotiations and the start of the screening process, took place on 19 July 2022. The screening process was completed in December 2023.

Following the EU accession process, the Growth Plan for the WB is grounded in several key legal documents and regulations guiding the implementation, funding, and communication efforts thus ensuring that the plan aligns with the EU's broader objectives of socio-economic development and integration of the Western Balkans partners in the EU. They provide the structure necessary for successful implementation and offer a clear roadmap for North Macedonia's reform path. Below are the main legal foundations and sources for this framework:

1. **The Growth Plan for the Western Balkans**⁸ was launched by the Commission on 8 November 2023. This Initiative is the primary legal instrument that establishes the Reform and Growth Facility, designed to support socio-economic reforms in the Western Balkans, including North Macedonia. It sets out the purpose, scope, and financial details of the facility, including conditional payments based on the successful implementation of the qualitative and quantitative steps. The regulation also outlines the general conditions for the disbursement of funds, ensuring that beneficiaries meet specific reform milestones;
2. **Regulation (EU) 2024/1449** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on establishing the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans;
3. **Commission implementing decision (CID)** of 23.10.2024 approving the Reform Agendas and the multiannual work programme under the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans;

⁶ North Macedonia Membership status, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/north-macedonia_en

⁷ Stabilisation and Association Agreement, <https://www.mep.gov.mk/en/post/?id=17>

⁸ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/2023-communication-new-growth-plan-western-balkans_en

4. **COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT (North Macedonia)** Accompanying the document Commission Implementing Decision approving the Reform Agendas and the multiannual work programme on the approval under the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans ((SWD(2024) 244 final));
5. The **Reform Agenda under the RGF 2024-2027** outlines North Macedonia's roadmap for implementing structural reforms to align with EU standards, improve governance, and drive economic growth. It is a crucial component of the **Western Balkans Growth Plan** and serves as the foundation for accessing financial support under the **Reform and Growth Facility focusing on the following policy areas: rule of law and fundamental rights, public administration reform, digitalisation, green transition (energy); human capital, private sector development and business environment.** (*Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans Reform Agenda for North Macedonia 2024-2027*)
6. The **Facility Agreement between EU and North Macedonia** is a formal arrangement establishing the terms and conditions under which the country accesses financial support from the EU's **Reform and Growth Facility**. This agreement is part of the EU's broader initiative to accelerate socioeconomic convergence, strengthen governance, and align Western Balkans countries with EU standards. (*Facility agreement signed between the European Union and North Macedonia on Specific arrangements for implementation of Unions support to the Republic of North Macedonia under the Reform and Growth Facility and ratified by the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia in January 2025 and published in the Official Gazette MKD No 23/2025 of 4 March 2025*)
7. **Loan Agreement: Macro-Financial Assistance to North Macedonia:** The EU has provided macro-financial assistance to support North Macedonia's economic stabilisation and reform agenda.

3. THE NEED FOR CVP RELATED TO THE REFORM AGENDA UNDER THE RGF

The **Communication and visibility plan** is crucial for communicating the benefits of the successful implementation of the **Union assistance under the RGF** in North Macedonia, as it plays a fundamental role in ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are informed, engaged, and involved in the reform process, each on their level.

First and foremost, **transparency and accountability** are essential. The Reform and Growth Plan is a significant source of financial support from the EU, aimed at accelerating economic growth and facilitating the convergence of the Western Balkans with the EU. Transparency directly contributes towards preventing misinformation in the EU accession and reduces the risk of public scepticism.

Furthermore, effective communication is crucial to **promoting stakeholder engagement**. The success of the Reform Agenda under the RGF depends on active participation from a variety of stakeholders, including government institutions, civil society, businesses, and individual citizens. Engaging stakeholders fosters a sense of ownership, which is crucial for the long-term success of the implementation of national reforms.

Another key aspect of the Communication and Visibility plan is its role in **supporting the reform process and EU integration**. A key aspect of the Communication and visibility plan is to ensure that citizens and stakeholders understand how the reforms are linked to the path of North Macedonia towards EU membership.

Moreover, the CVP will help **manage expectations** and **raise awareness**. Reforms and their associated funding come with high expectations, but they also present challenges and complexities. Since payments are conditioned on the achievement of specific reforms and steps, it is important that citizens and stakeholders understand what these conditions are and how they will be met.

In addition, the communication plan prepares the Government/MEA and other relevant stakeholders for **crisis management** and the handling of resistance or challenges, including the disinformation challenge, which underlines that **the CVP will ensure that there are clear guidelines in place to address these challenges swiftly and effectively,**

at the same time offering clear messages and corrective actions to maintain momentum and trust in the reform process.

Finally, it is essential that the CVP aligns with **EU communication and visibility guidelines**⁹ and the established protocols for communicating the EU support, including the EU visibility requirements and funding statements.

4. THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF THE CVP

A well-structured and implementable CVP is vital for effectively communicating the implementation of North Macedonia's reforms under the RGF. It creates a structure to clearly communicate the benefits of the reforms, bridging the gap between technical processes and public understanding.

Engaging stakeholders through targeted communication is crucial to building support and trust for the reforms. The CVP derives from the Strategic Communication Framework¹⁰ related to the EU Assistance in North Macedonia as a general umbrella for strategic communication on EU support, EU values and the EU integration of North Macedonia, thus highlighting the EU's and North Macedonia's commitment to fostering accountability and shared growth, ensuring that citizens are well-informed about the tangible benefits of reforms.

5. MAIN OBJECTIVES

The core objective of this CVP is the strategic communication of the support for the **full EU membership of North Macedonia** and understanding of the **tangible benefits of closer EU integration and accession**. The CVP aims towards pointing out the concrete benefits for the citizens of North Macedonia, as well as encouraging stakeholders and different target audience involvement in consultations processes in relation to the reforms of the country. Furthermore, by fostering transparency and open dialogue, the plan aims to **strengthen public trust in the reform process**, assuring citizens that reforms are being implemented responsibly and effectively.

Finally, the plan envisages communication based on the **tangible socio-economic improvements for citizens and businesses**, including job creation, economic growth, and enhanced public services. As reforms align North Macedonia more closely with EU standards, citizens and businesses will experience the benefits of a more integrated and competitive economy. These visible improvements will not only validate the Reform Agenda under the RGF, but also inspire broader support for ongoing efforts to advance the nation's EU integration journey.

Specific objectives:

1. **Raising awareness of opportunities and effects** - Informing the stakeholders and the general public about the opportunities and benefits provided by the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans.
2. **Promote involvement of potential beneficiaries** - Actively encouraging businesses, civil society, public institutions, and other relevant stakeholders to participate in the national Reform Agenda under the RGF.
3. **Familiarise beneficiaries with their responsibilities** - Educate the beneficiaries and partners about their roles and responsibilities in the EU-funded activities.

6. TARGET GROUPS AND KEY MESSAGES

The CVP will be focused on the following main target audiences:

⁹ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/knowledge-hub/communicating-and-raising-eu-visibility-guidance-external-actions_en

¹⁰ The Strategic Communication Framework related to EU Assistance is in a draft phase and it is expected to be officially adopted by the Government/Ministry of European Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia

Target Audience	Objective:	Key messages
General Public	Build broad understanding of reforms' socio-economic benefits.	<i>Reforms will enhance economic opportunities, create jobs, and improve living standards for each citizen in North Macedonia</i>
Young people	Empowerment and increase engagement of young people.	<i>The RGF/Reform Agenda is creating opportunities for you - better education, jobs, and a chance to shape your future</i>
Target Beneficiaries	Increase awareness of reforms benefits	<i>Empower your growth and seize opportunities with the Reform Agenda – connect with EU-funded programs to enhance your business, organization, or community.</i>
Media and media workers	Act as a multiplier to disseminate accurate information and additionally explain the role of the RA activities.	<i>Your role as a reliable partner in the process is critical – support in communicating the goals, opportunities, and successes of the Reform Agenda to the public.</i>
Policy makers and internal stakeholders	Coordinate and promote alignment with national and EU policies.	<i>Collaborative and effective reform implementation is vital to North Macedonia's progress – align policies and efforts for sustainable growth and EU integration.</i>
Interested audiences	Engage citizens and organisations interested in specific policy areas.	<i>Stay informed and get involved – the Reform Agenda aligns with EU values and addresses the crucial policy priorities that matter to you and the community.</i>

All key messages should “translate” actions of all reform projects and activities into the benefits that engage the wider public. The messages should be based on the premise for a shared commitment for reforms of EU and North Macedonia, as well that the reforms are not only for the country to meet EU standards but also to enhance the daily lives of citizens by creating jobs, fostering economic stability, and upholding the principles of democracy and the rule of law and the final aim of full membership of North Macedonia in the EU.

7. COMMUNICATION PHASES

In the initial period of implementation, the emphasis shall be on the communication of programme documents, the amount of available funds, planned reforms and the clarification of open questions related to the RGF. In the second implementation period, communication should be focused on the results and effects of the use of the Facility funds. Also, during the process, a coordination with the EU Delegation in North Macedonia has to be ensured and implemented at all stages.

The CVP foresees two phases approach: Phase 1 ensures early awareness and engagement, while Phase 2 reinforces trust and credibility through evidence of real-world results. This approach fosters sustained public support and meaningful participation in the Reform and Growth Facility's implementation.

In the **initial phase**, the communication focus will be on **raising awareness** and providing **clarity on key programme elements**. This includes:

- Promoting programme documents, explaining their objectives and scope;
- Drive growth and unlock opportunities by engaging with the Reform Agenda under the RGF – leverage EU-funded programs to enhance your business, organization, or community;
- Conducting Q&A sessions, workshops, and outreach activities to address open questions and ensure potential beneficiaries and the general public understand the national Reform Agenda's opportunities and requirements.

As the implementation progresses, the emphasis will shift towards **showcasing tangible results and impact** achieved through the Facility funds. This **second phase** includes:

- Communicating success stories that demonstrate the benefits of reforms for citizens, businesses, and institutions;
- Highlighting concrete outcomes through visual storytelling, such as infographics, videos, and testimonials from beneficiaries;
- Organising events and campaigns to celebrate milestones and achievements, fostering public trust and engagement.

By dividing the communication efforts into these two distinct phases - **Awareness and Engagement** followed by **Results and Impact** - the strategy will ensure that information is delivered in a clear, timely, and impactful manner. This phased approach will not only engage stakeholders but also build a strong narrative around the benefits of the reforms under the RGF, reinforcing public confidence in the process and aligning the communication with EU values of **transparency, accountability, and shared growth**.

8. COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Key approaches include, but not limited to:

- **Media Engagement:** Press conferences, press statements, press releases, interviews, and appearances on talk shows to foster consistent messaging through trusted media channels.
- **Segmented Media Outreach:** Announcements in the electronic and print media, as well as targeted campaigns on social media platforms to amplify visibility.
- **Direct Engagement:** Conferences, seminars, workshops, briefings and other different types of public events designed to connect directly with (potential) beneficiaries and the general public.
- **Print and Promotional Materials:** Development of publications, leaflets, posters, and promotional products to communicate key messages effectively.
- **Interactive Initiatives:** Contests, prize games, and quizzes to engage audiences in an innovative and participatory way. Influencers and other innovative campaign also included and planned to be developed together with the youth audiences.
- **Digital Presence:** Establishment of a strong online presence via an official dedicated website and unified communication channels on social media, utilising engaging tools like infographics, video clips, and interactive content.

9. BRANDING AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility activities will be carried out with consideration of the EC communication and visibility guidelines¹¹.

A **dedicated website related to Growth Plan implementation** is crucial to ensure transparency, engagement and inclusiveness of the reform processes. **This platform will continuously provide all information (one stop shop) and will highlight the benefits of the reforms, ensuring that** all the stakeholders can easily access information about the progress, outcomes, and impacts of the reforms and also serve as additional platform for monitoring and reporting.

To ensure that the communication efforts surrounding the RGF are consistent, professional, and easily recognisable, it is essential to create a **Visibility Package** that includes key visual elements such as a **logo, colour schemes, typography, and other design details**.¹² These visual components will be instrumental in building a strong brand identity, fostering public recognition, and reinforcing the alignment between North Macedonia's growth objectives and its path to full EU membership.

¹¹ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/knowledge-hub/communicating-and-raising-eu-visibility-guidance-external-actions_en

¹² This action is in detail explained in Annex 1 of this document.

Also, a **Brandbook** needs to be developed to ensure that the visual identity is consistently applied across all communication materials. This comprehensive guide will outline how to use the logo, colour scheme, typography, and other design elements in different contexts, including reports, presentations, websites, social media, and public events. The Brandbook will provide clear rules on co-branding with EU logos and how to maintain the Growth Plan's identity across all formats.

It is of utmost importance that the usage of the visual identity is regularly monitored to ensure compliance and assess the effectiveness of the communication strategy. Adjustments will be made as needed, based on public feedback and evaluations of the impact of the branding.

10. MONITORING, REPORTING AND EVALUATION

Reporting on communication and visibility related activities by the national authorities will be done in accordance with the requirements laid down in the Facility Agreement or any other guidance that might be issued by the EC in relation to Reform and Growth Facility and related national Reform Agenda programme.

This includes but is not limited to: 1) **Regular Updates:** Communication activities will be monitored and evaluated to ensure alignment with objectives; and 2) **Reporting:** National authorities will ensure reporting in line with EC requirements: *The Beneficiary is requested to regularly report on implementation of the communication and visibility plan as part of their request to the Commission for the release of funding. This report will be part of the regular assessments.*

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE AND INTERNAL COORDINATION

The Government of North Macedonia/MEA will frequently coordinate efforts with the EC, EU Delegation and align activities with ongoing initiatives, programmes and projects with an aim of multiplying effects of the communication activities and capitalisation. This alignment will help maximise the impact of the RGF communication efforts, multiplying their effectiveness and capitalising on synergies between various stakeholders. The Government/MEA will ensure that the CVP is harmonised with National and EU CV priorities, ensuring both consistency and the broadest possible outreach.

Additionally, MEA will play a crucial role in facilitating coordination between national and EU bodies. MEA will oversee the integration of the CVP communication activities into the broader National Strategic Communication Framework¹³ on EU Assistance and the National Strategy on European Integration.

Furthermore, MEA's responsibility will extend to ensuring that the internal coordination of the implementation of the CVP is organised in efficient process, including the submission of the formal reports to the Government and EU Delegation on a regular, e.g., quarterly basis.

12. PROPOSED ACTIONS, COST AND INDICATIVE TIMELINES OF ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE CVP

¹³ The Strategic Communication Framework related to EU Assistance is in a draft phase and it is expected to be officially adopted by the Government/Ministry of European Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia

Proposed Action	Target Group	Implementer/ Involved	How	Timeline and Frequency	Estimated Cost	Indicators for Success (KPIs)
General Awareness Campaigns						
Launch and implement a comprehensive communication campaign	General public	Communication team, outsources agency and communication experts	Design and implement integrated campaigns using TV, radio, social media, and outdoor.	Quarterly, 2025-2026 <i>(Launch in June 2025)</i>	€ 150,000	Increased public awareness (measured via surveys, polls and media reach metrics)
Create a dedicated website related to Growth Plan implementation	General public, all groups	IT team, content creators, IT providers	Develop a website where all information is provided continuously (one stop shop) (e.g., www.growthplan.gov.mk) with news, reform tracker, beneficiary stories, and visuals. At the very beginning, a subdomain could be an interim solution.	Launch in 2025, continues update and maintenance (2025-2027)	€ 10-20,000	Website visits (Analytics); engagement metrics (time spent, shares, downloads, clicks)
Targeted Outreach						
Q&A sessions	Various target groups	MEA and Government officials and employees, EUD	Interactive sessions on Reform and Growth Facility	Quarterly, 2025-2027	€30,000	Attendance numbers at informative sessions
Conduct webinars on Reform and Growth Facility opportunities	Interested audience familiar with the remote technologies	Communication team, EU experts, MEA Training Centre employees, EUD	Provide continuous learning through webinars by the MEA Training Centre.	Quarterly, 2025-2027	€20,000	Number of webinars conducted; engagement analytics
Highlight targeted success stories	General public, all groups	Journalists, videographers, MEA Communication team, EUD	Video/documentary series showcasing direct Reform and Growth Facility benefits.	Semi-annually, 2026-2027	€60,000	Number of videos produced; views and shares on social media
Partnerships and Media Relations						
Briefings with media on RGF progress	Journalists, media outlets	MEA ministry cabinets and MEA Communication team, EU Ambassador in Skopje	Monthly regular briefings to update media on milestones and achievements, including 2-4 outside of Skopje events + Brussels visits	Monthly, 2025-2027	€60,000	Number of briefings held (12 annually); media coverage generated (70+ articles/year), meetings with EU institutions

Proposed Action	Target Group	Implementer/ Involved	How	Timeline and Frequency	Estimated Cost	Indicators for Success (KPIs)
Briefings with CSOs on RGF progress	CSOs	MEA ministry cabinets and MEA Communication team, EU Ambassador in Skopje	Briefings to update CSOs on milestones and achievements	Semi-annually, 2025-2027	€10,000	Number of briefings held
Briefings with ZELS on RGF progress	Local governments, citizens	MEA Communication team, ZELS, EUD	Joint activities to promote RGF benefits at municipal levels.	Annually, 2025-2027	€25,000	Number of local events held; local feedback on RGF awareness
Briefings with business community	Business community	MEA Communication team, Chambers of Commerce, EUD	Joint activities to promote RGF benefits for business community	Semi-annually, 2025-2027	€10,000	Number of briefings held
Digital Engagement						
Launch a hashtag campaign (such as #RGF or #GrowthPlan2025)	Young people, social media users	MEA Comms and Social media strategists	Engage audiences with user-generated content contests and trending hashtags including Ads targeted campaigns	Continuous, 2025-2027	€45,000	Engagement metrics (number of mentions of hashtags); increase in followers (% of increase annually)
Create infographics on RGF benefits by target groups	General public, businesses	MEA Comms, Marketing agency	Sensitise the wider audience and specific target groups with the tangible benefits and results of the implementation of the RGF	Quarterly, 2025-2027	€20,000	Infographic reach on social media (number of views); shares/downloads (annual number)
Internal and external communication and coordination						
Establish and implement a coordination system for activities	Internal and external stakeholders	MEA Communication Team, line ministries and external communication teams...	Define roles for planning, executing, and reporting activities. Ensure a digital trail for all activities and actions on the RGF website (Main digital register of all actions)	Coordination system formally established in April 2025, ongoing process	€30,000	Number of coordination sessions; minutes of meetings), team and capacity building activities
Create a RGF Brandbook published on the RGF website for external usage and visibility package	Internal and external stakeholders	Outsourcing branding experts/agency, MEA Communication team	Develop a logo, colour scheme, and brand guidelines for all communication; Coordination with the ministries and other stakeholders	First half of 2025	€10,000	Brandbook usage -across campaigns (100% adherence); focus groups opinion of the proposed Brandbook, stakeholder use of branding