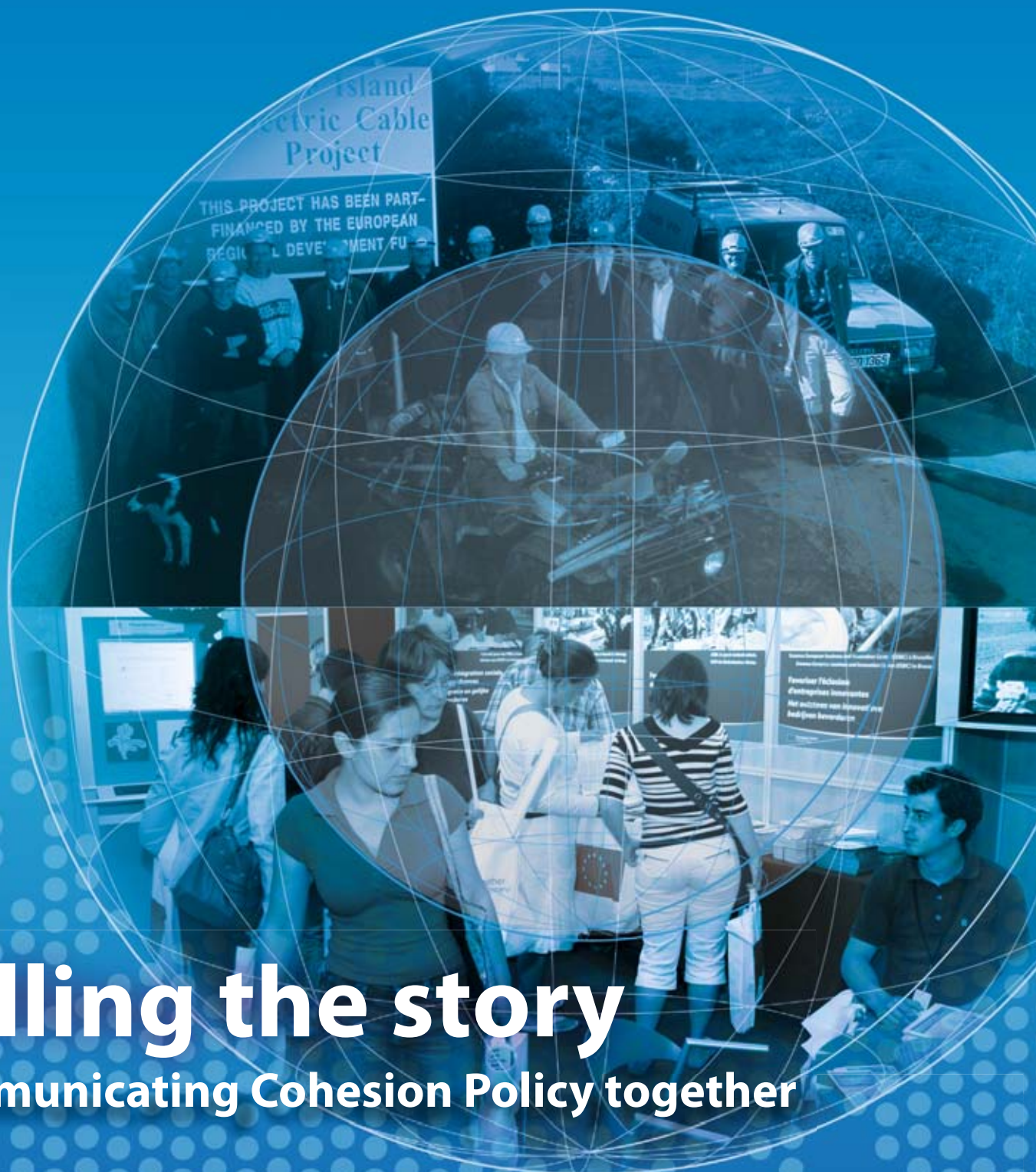




Conference proceedings

EN



Telling the story

Communicating Cohesion Policy together

26-27 November 2007



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Telling the story Conference proceedings Brussels, 26-27 November 2007

Background

In the programming period 2007-13, the emphasis on proper information and communication at all levels of the Structural Funds management process is not only maintained, but even strengthened. The efforts to enhance transparency on EU spending needs to be seen in the context of the stronger emphasis put on communication issues by the European Commission, in particular as regards the Growth and Jobs Agenda and the European Transparency Initiative. The new legal rules for the programming period 2007-13 oblige Member States and Managing Authorities for the operational programmes to provide information on operations and co-financed programmes and to publicise these.

The objective of the conference was to take stock of the implementation of the new information and communication requirements, and to learn from each other's best practices as regards various practical issues such as the setting-up of communication plans, the design of user-friendly websites, better cooperation with the media and the Commission's representations in the Member States, and – last but not least – how to measure the success of these activities.

The conference was structured around three workshop sessions, with three parallel workshops per session. The nine workshops showcased examples of good practice which had been selected following an open call for proposals. Enhanced networking opportunities over a day and a half allowed for an active exchange of experiences and working contacts among the participants. The event was organised by the Directorate-General for Regional Policy, in cooperation with the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities as well as the Directorate-General for Communication.

Conference programme

The conference was opened by Mr Dirk Ahner, Director-General for Regional Policy. The keynote addresses were delivered by Commissioners Danuta Hübner (Regional Policy) and Vladimir Špidla (Employment and Social Affairs).

Commissioner Hübner said *'This conference marks the starting point of a new era in communicating together the good story Cohesion Policy can tell. There are thousands of engaging stories to tell about the practical impact of Cohesion Policy all over the regions of Europe. Involving people at local level increases ownership of the policy by generating debate and providing a channel for their concerns. Cohesion Policy is the most visible benefit of EU membership in many regions, and offers tailor-made opportunities for better communication on Europe.'*

Commissioner Špidla added *'The funds help people to cope with the changes we see and the challenges we face. Investing in people's future has a real impact on their daily lives. The funds represent not only good economic policy, but also the social face of Europe.'*

Both Commissioners emphasised the fact that communication is a key factor for the success of programmes and that it is an integral part of their management. Information and communication must be designed into programmes from their outset right through to their end. Well-designed communication in this context means that the right potential beneficiaries are informed about possibilities for developing their projects, guaranteeing the influx of good projects.



Introduction

To stress the close links between information and publicity and the overall management of the programmes, new importance is being given to the communication plans. When speaking about them, **Commissioner Hübner** emphasised that *'Communication plans are not intended to be a bureaucratic burden, and should not be treated as such. They are meant to give you a strong tool, with sufficient budget and human resources, to enable efficient communication activities. I am happy to say that the quality of some documents we have seen recently is very high and promises indeed excellent communication activities, with innovative approaches and ideas.'*

The plenary session was followed by nine thematic workshops. The first workshop session was devoted to the organisation of communication activities, which begins with the preparation of a communication plan. **Ondrej Stefek** (Czech Republic) explained how a communication plan is being created on the basis of evaluation results. **Judit Szucs** (National Development Agency, Hungary) spoke about the communication strategy for the next seven years. **Vasilije Kujacic** (DIACT, France) presented the renewed and strengthened French approach to communication on the Cohesion Policy.

Several experts offered advice on how to help beneficiaries to communicate properly. An interesting idea came from **Richard Holmes** (Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, United Kingdom), who spoke about media training courses for voluntary and Community sector beneficiaries, which had turned out to be a low-cost, high-result experience.

Informing the public about the results of the Cohesion Policy is also crucial. Speakers from Estonia, Andalusia, Poland and France explained what actions they were undertaking to get the point across, often with the use of short and humorous video clips.

One of the objectives of this conference – and one of personal interest to most of the participants – was to make new contacts. This was encouraged several times during the programme at a number of purpose-built networking corners – a new feature, organised for the first time by DG REGIO. Participants had the opportunity to meet experts and their counterparts from other countries informally around a number of specific topics. Participants perceived this opportunity as very useful and asked to have more time devoted to networking with colleagues in the field of communication in future.

In the afternoon session, special attention was paid to the issue of transparency. In response to growing public demand for increased transparency over the use of EU funds, there is now a regulatory requirement for complete lists of beneficiaries to be published in the Member States. This is considered to be one of the most important information and publicity issues in the new period. During one of the workshops, several excellent examples already in existence were presented and explained. Latvia has been publishing all project beneficiaries since 2004, while some regions in Sweden provide Internet-based applications which give access to project and beneficiary data. For INTERREG programmes involving cross-border communication, transparency and full access to information have been features since the previous programming period.

Another workshop looked at ways of telling the story such that the different media would be interested and make constructive use of the material. A third workshop looked at various lessons which can be learned from web-based communication, which is becoming an increasingly significant communication tool within the Cohesion Policy field.

Networking continued more informally during a conference reception, where **Claus Sørensen**, Director-General for Communication, welcomed everybody and shared his view on work in the communication field.

Tuesday workshops were devoted to the issue of networking at various levels: from the regional level, presented by **Anna Maria Linsalata** (Emilia-Romagna, Italy), to the national level, where James Ritchie spoke about his experience of networking on the ESF in the United Kingdom, and finally the Community level. **Sonja Seiser** (Burgenland, Austria) presented her experiences of networking within the informal Structural Funds Information Team, which had resulted for her, among other experiences, in the transfer of an Andalusian game for children to the Burgenland region.



Other workshops stressed the role which the Commission Representations can play in information activities on Cohesion Policy. There is great potential for linking their knowledge about regional media with the communication plans and the work of officials of the Managing Authorities. Moreover, Europe Direct points can play a major role in informing the public about Cohesion Policy, as was explained by **Niels Christian Andersen** (Bornholm, Denmark), **Barbara Kerner** (Baranya County/Pecs, Hungary) and **Claire Sarda Verges** (Languedoc-Roussillon, France).

Conclusions

During the two days (26 and 27 November 2007), more than 500 participants from all over Europe actively took part in the conference. Originating from various levels of administration or from private companies that are assisting the authorities with developing the communication activities, they shared one thing in common:

all are responsible for information and publicity about the Structural Funds at regional or national level.

The closing session was chaired by Mr **David Coyne**, Director in the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Commissioner Hübner concluded by saying that the global outcome of operational programmes must be communicated as well. *'At all the stages it is essential to stress the role of the European Union in the process – in the development of ideas, and in the funding. All in all, including the budgetary means to be set aside for all programmes, I am convinced that we have all the necessary elements at our disposal to make "Communication on Cohesion Policy" a success story ensuring transparency and awareness of the fact that the EU has an added value for the citizens.'* She also assured the participants that she, together with all her colleagues working for the Regional Policy Directorate, are ready to support communication officials in their efforts.



PLANNING EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION

Chair: Jimmy Jamar, Head of Unit, European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Communication and CAD Unit

Speakers: Kamila Davidova, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Naviga 4, Czech Republic; Judit Szucs, National Development Agency, Hungary; Vasilije Kujacic, DIACT, France; Laura Rahola Ortega, European Commission Representation in Spain, Barcelona office

Rapporteur: Annabelle Maupas, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Information and Communication Unit

Introduction

The workshop included a debate on how to implement a successful communication strategy, how to improve people's awareness about Cohesion Policy and its actions, how to define needs and who to involve. Establishing a good communication strategy is particularly important in a context where all Managing Authorities (MA) are required to prepare communication plans for the new Operational Programmes 2007-13. The workshop offered an opportunity for different Member States to share their good practices.

Debate

The Czech Republic, represented by **Kamila Davidova**, had called on an external agency, Naviga 4, to evaluate its communication on the European Social Fund (ESF) during the 2004-06 period. **Ondrej Stefek** from Naviga 4 outlined how they proceeded with the evaluation. An important part of their study was based on feedback analysis and surveys covering predefined targeted groups. One group was comprised of representative samples of the Czech population. A second group was made up of experts (potential applicants, applicants, beneficiaries and the media). The evaluation results show that the level of general public awareness about EU Regional Policy is low (this also applies to the more expert public), and that there is general mistrust towards the EU. Mr Stefek also explained how they tested printed and online material using an original method based on 'eye-tracking', where a camera records eye movements when people go through websites and other promotional material. This is a good way of testing the communication tools and checking whether or not people easily find the information they are seeking.

The challenge is to bring together different actors and develop a network among the different stakeholders. There are many communication officers in Member States who deal with Cohesion Policy,

so it is vital to coordinate all the actions. This is why Hungary and France have chosen to set up a national strategy with common messages, clips and logos.

Judit Szucs explained that Hungary based its strategy on its National Development Plan. All communication activities are therefore coordinated by the National Development Agency, which was set up by the government. This decision was based on the results of evaluations which show that a centralised approach in Hungary is more efficient than communication based on the programmes. Judit Szucs explained that a national campaign was about to be launched and would last for two years. She presented a 40-second spot with a slogan that tries to create a real 'brand-image'. She also thinks that it is important to split duties between the different actors involved in communication. For example, the government has defined different communication tasks for its National Development Agency, the intermediary bodies and the beneficiaries.



Judit Szucs

In France, as explained by **Vasilije Kujacic**, there is also a clear political commitment at national level. The Prime Minister issued a special ordinance in February 2007 on communication for the funds. It stipulates requirements which go beyond EU obligations. Examples of these requirements are that each region should set up a special website to illustrate the actions of the funds, that 10% of the budget allocated to technical assistance should be spent on communication, and that beneficiaries should be encouraged to raise an EU flag on Europe Day. France, like Hungary, does not separate ERDF and ESF communication strategies: it has opted for an 'interfunds' and an 'interministerial' approach, as the idea is to present the general public with European action as a whole. Mr Kujacic also insisted on strengthening the communication between the different communication officers so that they can share experiences. He mentioned several national seminars and training sessions that were organised by the interministerial delegation in charge of Cohesion Policy (DIACT). Several questions were raised as regards financing these training sessions, as France is planning to have 3000-4000 hours of training for 80 participants during 2008.

There is also a need to pool different resources together. The representations of the European Commission in the Member States and the EU information points (such as *EUROPE DIRECT*) could help in building communication strategies. **Laura Rahola Ortega** from the Commission Representation in Barcelona explained the difficulties she encountered in centralising the information on the funded projects on the ground. She said that this information was crucial for the Commission being in a position to react. She expressed her wish to better coordinate the Commission's own activities with those led by the MAs. One interesting example she gave was that press releases issued by the MAs on concrete regional projects or website contents often do not even mention the EU funding. This is the reason why journalists in Barcelona, while they regularly report on different EU projects (for instance, a water treatment plant or the AVE train), do not refer to the EU funding. The Commission in Barcelona tries to advertise the EU projects on its website and organises Commissioner visits to funded projects in order to raise media interest. They also plan to organise journalist visits to projects as well as video footage and training sessions.

Various speakers mentioned the needs of communication officers and beneficiaries in terms of expected information and publicity activities. France has produced 'publicity kits' aimed at the MAs. Hungary has prepared communication guidelines to support the beneficiaries: there is a need to 'professionalise' these actors who are not always communication experts.

According to the evaluations, stories are needed. People want to see tangible results. It is important to base the communication on concrete cases involving people who have experienced the funds and also to avoid technical details (journalists for instance do not know what an 'OP' is). A suggestion was made to create updated databases of EU projects and their timetables to allow for reactions. Attractive layout and catchy headlines are obviously important factors for success. It is important to publish pictures and faces of the people in charge of implementing the funds in an effort to be less institutional. The speakers advised that the language of the target group should always be used. According to the Czech experience, we should avoid the 'zero target group document', i.e. too difficult for the general public and too easy for the experts.

During the debate, a representative from Poland mentioned that her country also opted for general communication without distinguishing between ERDF and ESF. However, they sometimes faced reluctance from the MAs who felt responsible for their own funds. She suggested that the Commission should allow Member States to communicate in a more general way. It was also pointed out that the public should be involved in a more interactive way (i.e. avoid one-way communication), for instance through discussion fora on websites.

Conclusions

It is impossible to define standardised strategies at European level, as different situations require different approaches. Evaluations help to make the right choices and adapt the strategies. It is important to have good feedback methods (direct polls, even if only suggestive, are very useful). The discussions showed the importance of creating a 'brand', attractive logos and good stories in order to 'sell' the EU projects. Cohesion Policy is an excellent way of showing Europe's concrete achievements on the ground.



HELPING BENEFICIARIES COMMUNICATE

Chair: Eddy Hartog, Head of Unit, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Thematic Development and Impact Unit

Speakers: Ewelina Budzinska-Gora, Silesia Marshal's Office, Poland; Jean-Christophe Binetti, Convis Consult & Marketing GmbH, Germany; Richard Holmes, Objective 1 Programme Directorate, Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, United Kingdom; Evi Panagiotakopoulou, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Greece

Rapporteur: Sebastian Stetter, European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, ESF Coordination Unit

Introduction

This workshop looked at what help Managing Authorities (MA) could provide to beneficiaries for their communication. 'Beneficiaries' in this context refers to project promoters rather than individuals or organisations benefiting from Structural Fund support. The workshop looked at a variety of beneficiary types, ranging from voluntary sector organisations to banks.

In practice, beneficiaries are a wide variety of different actors. It is important to note that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach when it comes to supporting them; instead, a tailored approach is necessary. For MAs or any other body providing support for beneficiaries' communication activities, it is important to be aware of the differences between beneficiaries. They can vary in the communication needs they have and their general characteristics, sizes, structures, motivations, etc. The level of communication expertise can vary greatly between beneficiaries.

Before MAs can provide concrete support to beneficiaries, beneficiaries need to know what is expected of them. According to **Jean-Christophe Binetti** (Convis Consult & Marketing GmbH), as far as beneficiaries are concerned, the expectations put on them with regard to communication are not always clear. It is therefore important for MAs to clearly spell out these expectations. There was agreement that the new Structural Funds Regulations for the funding period 2007-13 facilitate this process, as they are more detailed than the previous ones.

Once the expectations are clear, MAs have a number of ways to support beneficiaries' communication and therefore play a number of different roles. One way of helping beneficiaries communicate is to put them in touch with the media as early as possible. **Ewelina Budzinska-Gora** (Marshal's Office, Silesia) presented their support activities for (potential) beneficiaries, including European Funds Fairs, an extremely successful event that reaches out to potential beneficiaries to inform them about EU funding opportunities. The media can be brought on board from the outset, for example through involvement in similar events on EU funding for potential beneficiaries. By doing so, potential beneficiaries become aware of the media and their needs, and can make contacts early in the programming cycle.

Jean-Christophe Binetti



Debate

The presentations and debate showed that beneficiaries are in a good position to communicate, as they are close to the concrete activities on the ground. This makes support for their communication activities all the more important. It also became clear in the debate that most beneficiaries are unlikely to approach the MAs on their own initiative as regards communication. MAs therefore need to reach out to beneficiaries rather than wait until asked for support. In terms of motivating beneficiaries to communicate, it can be worthwhile for MAs to use their own communication as an example.

Concrete support for beneficiaries' communication, once they become running projects, is the role of the MA. It acts as a local network moderator to make sure that beneficiaries have enough material and content to communicate to their public. When communication is targeted at the general public, it is important to focus on the human aspect, as this is what people are interested in.

Another role the MA can play is that of a training provider. **Richard Holmes** (Objective 1 Programme Directorate, Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, United Kingdom) gave an account of his practical experience with Media Training for Voluntary and Community Sector Beneficiaries. These beneficiaries often manage small budgets, with very few resources and expertise available for communication. They are therefore looking for low or no-cost options for communicating. Experienced staff at MAs can provide them with basic knowledge/information, for example on how to prepare a press release and how to deliver messages about EU contributions with their project-related story.

For beneficiaries who are not media or communication experts, very basic knowledge/tools need to be provided. One such example is to provide answers to questions on what kind of information is newsworthy or how to include the fact that projects receive support through the Structural Funds. Highlighting the added value of Community assistance is particularly important, since at times, even though communication work on projects might be carried out in a professional way, beneficiary communication does not mention the contribution made by the EU or the Structural Funds.

MAs can also provide support to beneficiaries in evaluation questions, as this is an area where beneficiaries are often lacking the relevant capacity and knowledge.

Another example of helping beneficiaries communicate to potential final beneficiaries was given by **Evi Panagiotakopoulou** from the Ministry of National Economy and Finance, Greece. She gave an account of how the Ministry provided support to their beneficiaries (banks) in their communication efforts to reach SMEs (the final beneficiaries). This example showed the importance of carrying out targeted communication via interlocutors who have the best access to potential beneficiaries. In general, the different ways in which MAs can support beneficiaries reflect the variety of beneficiaries. This can put MAs in a difficult position, as they need to both 'police' and support the communication activities of beneficiaries at the same time.

Conclusions

There is clear recognition of the importance of helping beneficiaries to communicate, as they are in an ideal position to directly convey messages. The presentations and debate showed that there are a number of ways in which beneficiaries can be supported in their communication activities.

As a starting point, the communication provisions of the Structural Funds Regulations for 2007-13 are seen as a major improvement, since they set out the communication requirements in more detail. This helps MAs and subsequently beneficiaries in defining and carrying out their communication activities. MAs therefore need to spell out in clear terms what they expect of beneficiaries in terms of communication.

At the same time, MAs need to be aware of the different levels of communication knowledge among beneficiaries. According to the level of communication experience and knowledge, MAs can provide concrete support in the form of communication material and content, training, press and media relations or evaluation tools. Facilitating contacts with the media, as early on as possible, is another key way in which beneficiaries can be supported.



Evi Panagiotakopoulou

INFORMING THE PUBLIC

Chair: Ana Paula Laissy, Advisor to the Director-General, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Relations with the Civil Society

Speakers: Kristi Jõesaar and Annika Vilu, Ministry of Finance, Estonia; María Goretti Minaya Llatas, Andalusia, Spain; Rafal Nowak, Ministry for Regional Development, Poland; Dominique Jeremiasz, Head of Communication, Ministry of Employment and Solidarity, France; Kinga Kollar, Commission Representation in Hungary

Rapporteur: Christian Juliusson, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Lithuania, Sweden and Denmark Unit

Introduction

This workshop focused on how to inform the public about the achievements of the Structural Funds Programmes and the added value of European Cohesion Policy. Several interesting examples from different Member States and regions (Estonia, Andalusia, Poland, France and Hungary) showed how the story of the success and added value of the European Cohesion Policy was told. Several movie clips were shown to illustrate this.

Debate

After some introductory remarks by the Chair, **Ana Paula Laissy**, Advisor to the Director-General at DG REGIO, a presentation was made by **Kristi Jõesaar** and **Annika Vilu** from the Ministry of Finance in Estonia. Given the small size of the country and the relatively densely populated media landscape, the emphasis was put on 'infotainment' (i.e. entertaining elements such as funny stories in the information provided), the use of TV and the need for networking with regional partners to find the best success stories. One key suggestion was to try to find a balance, i.e. to let the project managers speak for themselves, including about negative aspects such as bureaucracy, instead of simply presenting success stories. The result is that the messages become more credible. At the same time, in a society with too much information and too many information sources, it is important to paint the bigger picture.

In her presentation, **María Goretti Minayas Llatas** from the region of Andalusia in Spain, described the importance of simple messages and creativity when it comes to presenting them. In their case, they had developed a clever and catchy slogan, 'Andalusia – on the move with Europe', which was consistently used in TV advertisement campaigns, posters and on DVD. Special efforts have also been made to sensitise children about EU policies through different TV competitions and monthly magazines (with comic strips).



The presentation from Poland was made by **Mr Nowak** from the Ministry of Regional Development in Poland and described the issue from the point of view of the Managing Authority (MA). According to their experience, large numbers of organisations involved could in fact be an obstacle (in their case, some 60 different institutions were involved). Another drawback is the use of 'Euro jargon' (in some cases, even the word 'operational programme' had made people think of surgery and hospitals). The lesson learned was therefore that promotion and information activities should be well coordinated – through cooperation rather than controls – and that coherent guidelines should be developed.

Dominique Jeremiasz from the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity in France presented several examples of short films (in total, 17 such short films of 45 seconds each were produced) which showed 'real people's stories'.

The films have been shown on French television at peak times and describe different aspects of social cohesion and how the Structural Funds have resulted in change – as well as how European and French policies have worked together, for example to create employment. The latter point was emphasised at the end of each film, with a comment that the film was 'co-financed by Europe'.

According to a survey, 60% of the viewers felt that the films had helped them to better understand the joint EU-French activities designed to promote employment and social cohesion.

The presentation from Hungary was made by **Kinga Kollar** and offered yet another perspective: communication from the viewpoint of the Commission Representation office in Budapest. It described how the Representation, operating with scarce resources, works with two-way communication provided mainly through intermediaries, such as the media, and information networks, such as the Europe Direct offices, in order to reach the general public. In addition to the different conferences and stakeholder forums (which involve local communities), the Representation also organises large events (such as a street festival on 9 May every year) and provides financial support to radio and TV broadcasters.

The discussion that followed was mainly concentrated on the use of TV. Some concerns were raised as to the public perception of advertisements and the use of PR agencies. In the case of France, there had even been negotiations with the relevant ministries to ensure broadcasting time at the state-owned TV. These types of activities could be seen as propaganda. Indeed, these were the initial reactions in Estonia. However, it gradually became clear to people – and the journalists – that the purpose was not to promote the EU but rather to inform about the relevance of the EU in our daily lives.

As for the short films, a suggestion was made to broadcast them more widely on the Internet than is currently the case, for instance, on the Commission Representations' websites.

On the matter of 'Euro jargon', there was discussion on whether or not to avoid using such terminology and/or to publish it with explanations so that the public can become more familiar with it.

As regards using PR agencies, it was generally felt to be important for the authorities to work closely with them and to give clear instructions. One suggestion, made by the Chair (Ana Paula Laissy), was to investigate whether or not examples of terms/conditions of the calls made by the MAs to PR agencies could be published on the DG REGIO website, as a source of inspiration and a transparent exchange of best practice.



Kinga Kollar

Conclusions

When informing the public, simplicity, creativity, coherence and diversity are the key words. It is important to use 'infotainment', in other words, to try not to be too serious. Through humour, sketches and funny stories, the messages will be more interesting. Another fruitful approach is to identify a good, simple slogan and to use it consistently in several different media (DVDs, posters, TV advertisement campaigns, etc., not forgetting the Internet). The use of 'Euro jargon' should be avoided and dictionaries should be made publicly available on websites, etc.

It is important to establish networks and to use intermediaries, not least on the regional level where knowledge of success stories is to be found. Furthermore, the communication should also be 'regionalised'. One size does not fit all! However, there is also a need to coordinate the different authorities and actors involved to make sure that at the very least the same key messages are being conveyed to all areas in Member States. It is also important to have consistent communication from the EU and the Member States.

As mentioned above, it is vital to try and find a balance in the messages, otherwise they will only be seen as propaganda. By letting real people tell their real stories about their real experiences – also the negative ones – the information immediately becomes much more credible. Finally, despite the great efforts already made, there is still a need to raise awareness about the European Cohesion Policy – including among journalists, as their limited knowledge in some countries has been seen as an obstacle – and also about the Policy's links to national strategies.

TRANSPARENCY – PRESENTING BENEFICIARIES AND PROJECTS

Chair: Michael Niejahr, Head of Unit, European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, Coordination of horizontal questions concerning the clearance of accounts

Speakers: Nacereddine Sekri, European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, Internal and External Communication Unit; Sanda Rieksta, Ministry of Finance, Latvia; David Mellaerts, ESF-agentschap Flanders, Belgium; Isabelle Roger, Joint Secretariat INTERREG III B South West Europe, Spain; Malin Lingefelt, Information Officer, Objective 2 South Sweden and Objective 2 Swedish Islands, Sweden

Rapporteur: Dominique Be, European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, ESF Coordination

Introduction

This workshop focused on the information and publicity on beneficiaries and projects co-financed by EU funds. Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 have strengthened requirements concerning information and publicity on beneficiaries and on the contribution the funds make to projects in the 2007-13 programming period. The objectives were to highlight the role of the EU and to guarantee transparency.

Nacereddine Sekri from the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development put implementation of the principle of transparency in agricultural policy in the context of the European Transparency Initiative. The Commission facilitates public access to information provided by Member States on beneficiaries and EU co-financing, without taking responsibility for the actual data being published. A recently adopted regulation concerning transparency in agricultural policy will ensure greater standardisation of the information, thereby making it more user-friendly.

Michael Niejahr



Debate

Michael Niejahr, Head of Unit for Coordination of horizontal questions concerning the clearance of accounts at the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, stressed the importance of the principle of transparency within the context of shared management, with transparency being key to facilitating general public involvement in public policy debate. He introduced the speakers, inviting them to share their experiences with the issues of methodology – how and for whom to publish the information about EU support and beneficiaries – and data protection related to the identity of beneficiaries.



Nacereddine Sekri

Sanda Rieksta from the Ministry of Finance, Latvia, presented Latvia's approach towards transparency. In response to pressure from NGOs such as Transparency International, Latvia adopted legislation in 2004 that goes beyond EU requirements, making it compulsory to publish detailed information about EU and national funding on a single website containing information on all EU funds. Data has to be made available two weeks following the granting decision.

Sanda Rieksta



David Mellaerts from the Flanders ESF Agency in Belgium made a presentation on how the principle of transparency is applied to the ESF in Flanders. The main objective of the Flanders ESF Agency, in terms of transparency, is to let people know what the ESF does by showing project results. The ESF Agency in Flanders therefore combines a website with a paper newsletter to provide transparency on EU and regional co-funding. Beneficiaries directly input data, including photos and products of their projects.

Isabelle Roger from the Joint Secretariat INTERREG III B in South West Europe and Spain presented the implementation of the transparency principle within the INTERREG III B European South West programme. Transparency is seen as key to promoting the INTERREG programme to the general public and promoters, as well as to facilitating good cooperation between the programme partners. Full transparency is provided right from the announcement of calls for proposals through to the publication of project results, making it an effective management tool and a valuable promotion instrument.

Malin Lingefelt, Information Officer for the Objective 2 South Sweden and Objective 2 Swedish Islands programme in Sweden, presented the database used for searching for programmes. This covers more than 1000 projects on the Internet, with information being extracted from applications submitted by beneficiaries. The database, which includes a map application and is aimed at beneficiaries, the general public and media alike, has been frequently used by the media and other Swedish regions.

The questions raised relate to the workload involved in implementing transparency and to personal data protection issues. In terms of success factors and potential difficulties, the speakers underlined the importance of extracting information from existing databases to minimise the cost of publishing information about beneficiaries and EU support, and agreed that data protection issues should be dealt with at project level.

Conclusions

The various experiences presented during the workshop demonstrated that publicity on beneficiaries and EU support, in particular on the Internet, is already widely used across various countries and funds, yet implementation and content vary.



Isabelle Roger

GOING BEYOND PRESS RELEASES: MEDIA RELATIONS, HOW SHOULD WE TELL THE STORY?

Chair: Eva Kaluzynska, Spokesperson for Regional Policy, European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication

Speakers: Carleen Kelemen and Mark Yeoman, Objective One Partnership for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, United Kingdom; Claudia Salvi, FORMEZ, Italy; Roger Hope, Communications Manager, Special EU Programmes Body, United Kingdom; Maria Kokkonen, Head of Press Service, Commission Representation in France, Paris office

Rapporteur: Ulla Ropponen, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Territorial Cooperation Unit

Introduction

The workshop focused on the role of the media, both printed and broadcasted, and the contact between the programme management bodies and the media for disseminating information on the Regional Policy and project results. The cooperation between programme bodies and the Commission Representations in the Member States was also addressed. A presentation was also made on the Italian support system designed to help programmes set up press offices.

Debate

Eva Kaluzynska, Commission Spokesperson for Regional Policy, opened the workshop by introducing the speakers. Following the presentations, several participants presented their experiences of different ways of approaching the media and asked the panel members for advice.

Maria Kokkonen from the Commission Representation in France suggested possible concrete forms of cooperation with their office, which could also be applied in other Member States. She suggested that the Representation websites could be used for publicity on programme events. The press offices in the Representations have good contact with national, regional and local press as well as specialised press, which could help spread information on the Cohesion Policy, programmes and projects. The Representations also engage in long-term follow-up of the communication activities, including monitoring website visitor numbers. They can therefore provide information on the interest shown in Regional Policy and on the number of related articles published.

The Representation in Lithuania has organised training sessions for the media and has therefore built up very good relations with them. Press releases of the Representation can be used to publish Regional Policy news, as well as the Representation website.

Several unsuccessfully organised project visits for the press were mentioned, where very few reporters showed interest and even fewer wrote about the projects. In some Member States, reporters expect all travel and accommodation expenses to be paid by the hosting organisation, while in other Member States this is not standard practice and is therefore not approved.

It was also considered important to seize the opportunity to react to public discussion. For example, when the issue of child obesity was raised in Great Britain, an INTERREG programme contacted the media telling them that the programme was financing a project on this. It received very positive publicity. Using these opportunities requires close cooperation between the programme management and the project partners so that they can respond quickly and with a common view.

Timing is very important, i.e. speaking to the right people at the right time and by the right means. To achieve this, recruiting real professional communicators to work as communication managers for the programmes would help in getting the message across.



Maria Kokkonen

Training on Structural Funds and Regional Policy should be offered to the media to avoid basic errors in reporting, as the terminology is not widely known. Regional Policy actors with experience speak about operational programmes and co-financing, but for a reporter these mean nothing – there are also the many abbreviations used.

Nevertheless, the importance of the media should not be overestimated. This happens all too easily, as media news is relatively easy to measure and quantify. Furthermore, newspapers are not considered very reliable in many countries. Web presence can do much more, and it surprisingly often reaches all generations, from children to the older public. The webpage, in addition to being an up-to-date source of information on the ongoing programme activities, should also be developed as an institutional memory of a programme. Project outcomes and results should be posted on the programme webpage, including testimonials from the beneficiaries. The websites should be frozen at programme closure.

Conclusions

The financial resources of the programmes vary considerably: some can afford full-time communication professionals, while others have to manage with people who also work in other management roles.

Project partners should actively communicate with their environment: it is easier to 'sell' a local story with a local face than sell information about the programme level.

The policy should not be used as an actor: it is not the Cohesion Policy that has many stories to tell, but rather the people who are involved and engaged in it. People are the champions, not the Funds. Other conclusions include:

- 'old media' are often overestimated: the webpage is the institutional memory;
- communicate in the way you wish to be communicated with;
- cooperate with the Commission Representations;
- choose the right timing: approval of a project is news for very few, but a project addressing a 'hot' issue can get very positive publicity – if you are fortunate.



STRUCTURAL FUNDS AND THE INTERNET

- Chair:** Raphaël Goulet, Head of Unit, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Strategic programming and relations with the EP, the CoR and the EESC
- Speakers:** Ivana Doulgerof, CSF Management Organisation Unit SA, Greece; Peter Farago, National Development Agency, Hungary; Kirsti Mijnhijmer, INTERREG IIIB/IVB North Sea Region Programme, Denmark; Wolf Born, Deputy Director, Mecklenburg–Vorpommern Information Office to the EU
- Rapporteur:** John Walsh, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Thematic Development and Impact

Introduction

The Internet's place within the overall communication strategy was explored on the basis of its different uses and its related information technology (IT) tools. IT plays an increasing role in serving the Managing Authorities as they communicate with different stakeholders within the various programming contexts.

The workshop was structured around four presentations: two from national management organisations; one regional account of experiences; and one interregional account of experiences with designing IT tools and exploiting Internet possibilities. In developing their Internet tools, these organisations have had to address varying levels of interest among key target audiences by using a range of techniques (database of available funding programmes, examples of good practices, electronic application forms, partner-search facilities, e-mail updates for registered users, etc.). On the basis of the various experiences and tools developed, the speakers put forward practical lessons.

Discussion

Ivana Doulgerof (CSF Management Organisation Unit, Greece) presented two Internet tools developed within the national context. The website www.info3kps.gr provides citizens, enterprises and other stakeholders with access to information on financial support schemes throughout Greece and across a range of thematic areas. Its main target audience is made up of potential beneficiaries. A second Internet-based tool is the www.hellaskps.gr/bestpractices website, which provides access to project descriptions. Its aim is to inform the public and implementing bodies about good examples of the use of EU funding. The website utilises existing tools such as email alerts, a 'my basket' facility, project videos and partner-search options. The main challenges in harnessing the potential of the Internet are: how to ensure accuracy and completeness; how to keep information topical and relevant; and how to present simple, easy-to-understand information.

In the context of delivering co-funded EU/national programmes in Hungary, the National Development Agency there has developed its 'Single Window eCommunication' (www.nfu.hu). **Peter Farago** described how the website mainly targets beneficiaries by providing a search facility for programme calls, and also allows online applications courtesy of electronic forms and access to information on the results of calls. A recent addition in this regard is the 'Frequently Asked Questions' section. He emphasised the need for a clear website structure, navigation features and consistent layout. In the future, additional refinements are being planned and users might be surveyed about their satisfaction with services.



Kirsti Mijnhijmer

Kirsti Mijnhijmer presented the experiences of the North Sea Region Programme with administering a website for an INTERREG IIIB / IVB transnational programme (www.northsearegion.eu). The website is linked to the overall communication strategy which spotlights web-based communication supported by other materials and is deliberately targeted in the main at programme beneficiaries. She echoed the key message that websites need to be user-friendly, that consideration must be given to clear design, page structure and the use of graphics, and that the site must be kept up to date. The programme's website has also continued to innovate by investing in new video technology for broadcasting videos of good

practice projects. The technology allows excerpts from high-quality video made available via the website to be used by media companies, while its subsequent use can be tracked by the programme authorities.

The Mecklenburg Vorpommern experience with providing a regional one-stop-shop on EU funding was presented by **Wolf Born**. The website (www.europa-mv.de) is again a core component of the communication strategy. Its objective is to make the EU more visible in the region by showing concrete results and, at the same time, through support for regional actors in their development efforts. A major challenge has involved presenting coherent and integrated information about several programming periods and assorted EU funding programmes (ERDF and ESF). Recent innovations have included briefings provided by the European Commission information office in Berlin and a monthly focus on a different programme and project.

Several major pointers could be derived from the presentations and the discussion chaired by **Raphaël Goulet** (DG Regio). The first relates to the growth in the use of Internet sites. Potentially, the Internet is a powerful tool – *the technology available can do much more to inform and provide services to partners*. It provides a medium through which to pass targeted messages or deliver services to different user groups – potential final beneficiaries, journalists/media outlets, and members of the general public. The Internet allows a greater variety of services to be provided and offers outlets for harnessing creativity. It also allows faster interaction between service provider and client.

Secondly, the place of Internet tools in the overall communication strategy must be clearly established. Effective use of constantly evolving technologies requires a clear idea of how they can serve the communication aim. It also requires that target groups be clearly identified and that clear messages and adapted materials be developed. Designers therefore need to be clear about the message to get across. The fact that *'information is not communication'* was emphasised several times. While the potential danger of excluding certain beneficiaries or members of the general public by relying solely on the Internet is diminishing as Internet penetration increases, several speakers highlighted the need for a range of communication tools to be deployed (newsletters, publications, road shows, etc.) in addition to websites.

The third message was that Internet sites can act as effective multipliers for implementing bodies. An efficient and acknowledged

site can bring positive feedback through deeper commitment from those bodies to servicing the site once they perceive the advantages. A good site also promotes the use of ICT tools for e-government.

A fourth message was not to underestimate the challenge when structuring an Internet site. The structure of programmes and the variety of funds and delivery agencies made for a complex environment. Presenting the different aspects along integrated lines was a real challenge. Structured, well-presented information represents value added and provides users not just with information, but also knowledge - *integrate and innovate*.

The final message concerned the need to evaluate the website and its tools and utilise such exercises in order to gain a clearer insight into user needs and satisfaction.



Wolf Born

Conclusions

The various speakers provided useful recommendations regarding Internet good practices. These included:

- keep information accurate and timely;
- ensure the 'usability' of the website by means of coherent design and clear navigation features and by providing value added;
- keep texts short, use clear language, and use subpages to develop detail;
- be aware that users browse web pages in different ways – use more photos and graphics;
- remember that 'developing a successful website means having to go beyond the minimum requirements'.

NETWORKS: WORKING TOGETHER ON COMMUNICATION

Chair: Georgios Markopouliotis, Head of Unit, European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, Geographical Coordination

Speakers: Sonja Seiser, Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH, Austria; Anna Maria Linsalata, Regione Emilia-Romagna, Italy; Claire Sarda Vergès, Europe Direct Pyrénées Languedoc Roussillon, France; James Ritchie, European Social Fund Division, Department for Work and Pensions, United Kingdom

Rapporteur: Charles White, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Information and Communication Unit



Debate

The delegates attending this workshop, chaired by Georgios Markopouliotis, listened to four presentations. The first came from **Sonja Seiser** (Burgenland), who reported on the adaptation of a children's game pioneered by Murcia (Andalusia). The game has proved something of a success in Spain and been featured on television. Burgenland learnt about this game through the informal network of communication officers chaired by the Commission's Directorate-General for Regional Policy, known as the Structural Funds Information Team. Redeployed in the Burgenland region, it is proving a popular, humorous and entertaining way of learning more about Europe.

The second presentation was delivered by **Ana Maria Linsalata** (Emilia Romagna), who highlighted some of the lessons learnt in the course of intraregional networking on the communication plan, the most important of which was to involve all partners at an early stage and base activities on a targeted approach.

Claire Sarda Vergès then described the successes of the Europe Direct network in France, e.g. its incorporation of the former 'Car-refours ruraux' network. The main achievement has been to remove the air of mystery surrounding Brussels and relate its activities to everyday local life while acting as a link between the two and also providing training, feedback and even project-partner searches.

Last to speak was **James Ritchie** (ESF Division, Department for Work and Pensions, United Kingdom). He outlined assorted difficulties as regards networking in a multi-level environment. Some of the biggest challenges involve establishing who exactly should be part of the network and how to calculate real value added. Yet challenges, and challenging personalities in particular, are to be welcomed for the stimulation they provide.

Conclusions

The discussion ranged from engaging the media to evaluation indicators and the best ways in which to counter knee-jerk Euro-scepticism. The group's conclusions may be summarised as follows:

- Networking in this field is so important that it has to be intelligently managed.
- Targeting interest groups is essential, as is humour in order to get the message across.
- More frequent reporting, as is required over the new period 2007-13, will be an influential factor for the quality of information and communication activities, including networking.
- Regular and reliable communication on the work of the Funds, their successes, star performers and winners may not in itself convert Euro-sceptics. Openness and honesty, however, will certainly help.
- Face-to-face meetings can never entirely be replaced by email or video communications. The essence of networking revolves around contact, and meetings really can save time and money.
- In terms of what the Commission could do to help more, one thing is clear: the future Community network of communication officers working within Cohesion Policy and the Structural Funds, known as INFORM, should be kept as informal as possible.

Ana Maria Linsalata



Claire Sarda Vergès



COOPERATION WITH COMMISSION REPRESENTATIONS AND OTHER INFORMATION RELAYS

Chair: **Thierry Daman, Head of Unit, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Information and Communication Unit**

Speakers: **Sarah Lambert, Commission Representation in London; Barbara Steffner, Commission Representation in Berlin; Barbara Kerner, Europe Direct Baranya County/Pécs, Hungary; Niels Chresten Andersen, Head of Europe Direct Bornholm, Denmark**

Rapporteur: **Wolfgang Petzold, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Information and Communication Unit**

Introduction

This workshop discussed the opportunities for enhanced cooperation between the Structural Funds Managing Authorities and the existing communication resources of the European Commission in the Member States. It was based on two presentations from the Commission's representations in London and Berlin and two from Europe Direct centres in Baranya County/Pécs, Hungary, and on the island of Bornholm, Denmark.

The chairman of the workshop, **Thierry Daman** (Head of Information and Communication, Directorate-General for Regional Policy) introduced the speakers and then opened proceedings by highlighting the necessity of 'communicating together' and of involving the European Commission's representations and information relays in information activities on Cohesion Policy interventions. Thierry Daman elaborated on the new rules governing information and publicity for the Structural Funds and the period 2007-13. These stipulate that the national and regional Managing Authorities should involve the Commission's representations more actively while making good use of their potential as regards reaching out to citizens and local media.

Debate

Sarah Lambert (European Commission Representation, London) outlined efforts for communicating Cohesion Policy in the United Kingdom. For the new period, cooperation has been established with government departments responsible for the implementation of the Structural Funds as well as with bodies in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, notably the Regional Development Agencies. On the premise that less funding is available for the United Kingdom compared to the preceding period, Sarah Lambert highlighted the importance of branding the representation's programmes and value added by commenting on some of the communication plans for the 2007-13 period. In addition, a new cooperation network involving the relevant government and regional bodies has been set up to provide better strategic planning. Ms Lambert concluded that value added from the Commission's representation should guarantee a national overview on cohesion funding and facilitate networking among regional actors and with national media and experts from Brussels.

Barbara Steffner (Commission Representation, Berlin) focused her presentation on experiences with a number of seminars organised for journalists from regional media. About 300 regional and local newspapers in Germany are read by about 80% of the relevant audience. This makes them an important tool for delivering on 'going local' and for conveying the Cohesion Policy message. While the customary perception of the latter usually focuses on financial aspects and on bad rather than good news, the relevant case is often undermined by technocratic jargon. The aim of the seminars therefore was to foster regional journalists' knowledge of EU topics, to have them tell the tale of regional projects and success stories, and to connect the actors at local level. In general, the feedback received from the journalists has been very positive and indicates that more regular support would be welcomed.



Barbara Steffner



Barbara Steffner concluded by stating that information about regional policy should avoid a one-sided approach, that key figures showing the Cohesion Policy's results should be readily available, and that information needs to be prepared well in advance in a ready-to-use format.

Barbara Kerner (*Europe Direct* office, Baranya County, Hungary) presented the work of 'Europe House' in Pécs. With a population of about 400 000, Baranya county is the most southerly of the 19 Hungarian counties and also one of the less developed ones. Given its geography, whose features include common borders with Croatia and Serbia, the region participates in a number of cross-border programmes, projects and European networks. 'Europe House' has been coordinating much of the region's communication on EU affairs since its foundation in May 2000, including activities on behalf of the region of South Transdanubia. For Hungary as a whole, a total of EUR 25.3 billion from the EU Structural Funds will be available for the current period, representing more than a tripling of annual resources from the years 2004-06. Barbara Kerner explained that the communication priorities of 'Europe House' are heavily focused on EU programmes and related calls for proposals. In this respect, the house collaborates with a wide range of institutions at municipal level, particularly education and civil society organisations, e.g. organising conferences and seminars.

The next speaker was **Niels Chresten Andersen** (*Europe Direct* office, Bornholm Island, Denmark). With a population of 43 000, Bornholm represents one of the central locations in the Baltic Sea and attracts some 600 000 tourists per year. Based on an economy of micro-enterprises in agriculture, fishing and tourism, the island has had to face up to outward migration, particularly among its younger people, for a number of years. The Europe Direct office's activities provide a website, a regular newsletter, seminars, conferences and cross-border activities. In recent years, the 3 to 5 million euro from the Structural Funds invested on Bornholm have been aimed at improving the infrastructure, supporting training and

developing tourism. In the opinion of Niels Chresten Andersen, the core message of Cohesion Policy, i.e. solidarity with the poorest EU regions and competitiveness of the economy as a whole, needs to be developed more clearly. He concluded by saying that EU communication should be proactive and involve schools and local communities and, at the same time, address them in their language using concrete examples found locally.

During the debate, the following issues were discussed:

- the bureaucratic terminology of Cohesion Policy and ways to overcome it, e.g. through slogans and the branding of programmes;
- the capacity of Commission representations to coordinate communication from devolved EU Cohesion Policy programmes;
- how to communicate 'beyond projects', and finding the right sort of narrative when funding declines;
- the adaptation of messages to regional and local situations, the need to plan ahead, and the involvement of the relevant actors;
- the use of the 'communicative potential' of Structural Funds networking programmes, e.g. INTERREG.

Conclusions

In his conclusions, Thierry Daman summarised the presentations and the debate as follows. First, information and communication must form an integral part of the management of the Structural Funds programmes. Therefore, communication actors in the Member States and the regions should get to know one another and coordinate their activities more effectively. In this respect, the most efficient way is to communicate proactively, locally and on the basis of results. Second, 'communicating together' and involving the Commission representations and relays has become an obligation under the new rules for the 2007-13 period, but still needs to be put into practice. Managing Authorities, Commission national representations and networks as well as Commission departments responsible for Cohesion Policy are being urged to explore possible communication tie-ups. Finally, information and communication activities on Cohesion Policy require better coordination at the EU, national and regional levels based on multiannual strategic planning. In this respect, the communication plans accompanying the new programmes along with their coordination nationally may be defined as starting points for enhanced future cooperation.

CROSSING BORDERS: COMMUNICATING COHESION POLICY ACROSS EUROPE

Chair: Ann-Kerstin Myleus, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Territorial Cooperation Unit

Speakers: Henrik Josephson, The INTERREG IVB North Sea Region Programme, Denmark; Claus Schultze, CENTRAL EUROPE Programme JTS, Austria; Giedrius Surplys, INTERREG Joint Technical Secretariat, Lithuania

Rapporteur: Peter Fischer, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Information and Communication Unit

Introduction

In her introductory comments, **Ann-Kerstin Myleus** (Deputy Head of Unit for Territorial Cooperation, Directorate-General for Regional Policy) highlighted the specific difficulties of communicating European Territorial Cooperation (INTERREG) programmes, which have to address target groups from (at least two) different Member States.

In this context, the workshop set out to examine two specific questions:

- 1) What is the best way to visualise results at the level of Operational Programmes?
- 2) What is the best way to communicate results at project level?

Presentations

Henrik Josephson (North Sea Region INTERREG IV B programme) argued that the work of communication officers must start in their own organisations by explaining to management precisely why a communication plan is needed. Without a communication plan, the staff and funding needed to perform the necessary work is much harder to come by.

Communication adds content and quality to an organisation or programme – effective communication draws more resources to projects and improves the quality of the programme (e.g. by attracting more qualified staff and additional funding). Efficient communication is built on long-term commitment (e.g. sticking to a logo), transparency and consistency. All of these elements should be part of a programme's communication strategy. The North Sea Region IV B programme's communication plan makes provision for a web-based approach using new media such as web videos, provides a publicity tool kit online, and supplies printed copies on request only (The programme's website was presented in workshop 2C). At project level it is important to involve the people actually carrying out the projects since they are its messengers. Mr Josephson closed by reminding the workshop participants that 'news is concrete and involves people'.

Claus Schultze (CENTRAL Europe programme JTS, Austria) presented the challenging media landscape across the nine countries his programme has to cover and the difficulties in generating 'media uptake' for programme news. Within this context, he referred to an inherent difficulty of the programme: to date, programme-monitoring systems have been dominated by financial aspects and are characterised by the absence of newsworthy categories. This has to change. Moreover, news on a particular project should be enshrined 'in the bigger picture', explaining the broader issue for which the project could offer solutions. Mr Schultze also diagnosed an absence of professionalism within project communication, for example a lack of continuity.

As possible solutions at programme level, he suggested budgeting for the necessary technical communication assistance, providing guidance for projects on the programme's general orientation (such as 'offline' and 'online' management activities and thematic events) and supplying the necessary communication tools for beneficiaries (e.g. regular PR and media training and exchanges of good practice).



Giedrus Surplys (Information Officer, Lithuania-Poland-Kaliningrad Neighbourhood Programme) used a number of original expressions to explain this programme's communication strategy. Given the troubled history in these border regions, a 'wolfisation' approach had been necessary, to paraphrase a common proverb in the region about neighbours: A neighbour is not a wolf; he will not run into the forest! In other words, building trust between partners has been a key task.

Mr Surplys then described the process of branding the programme (e.g. its logo), informing people and explaining funding possibilities in simple terms (at regional and local level across all three countries) and extra incentives for successful applicants (e.g. 'best project of the month', visits to other projects, souvenirs) as 'sweeteners'.

Finally, he focussed on the role of technical assistance: it is crucial to brief applicants on the main rules in simple terms, but also on how to go about filling in application forms. Moreover, communication experts should be recruited to tell the story of the programme. Mr Surplys also mentioned another aspect that is not the exclusive preserve of complex cooperation programmes: unfortunately, journalists are often not very interested in EU matters and have to be won over as communication partners. Inviting them to seminars and to inspect project sites, while perhaps also arranging meetings with high-ranking officials, can sometimes do the trick. He ended with a sound piece of advice: have a media pack ready with success stories in case the programme is suddenly 'attacked' by journalists.

Conclusions

Finally, the chair asked the speakers briefly to sum up for the audience.

Henrik Josephson emphasised that:

- Information and communication are not the same thing. Both are relevant, but communication is what is required. Information means making something available, i.e. a regulation or a paper, for example, on the web, but this has nothing to do with communication. Communication is all about extrapolating the key message(s) and fitting these into a two-paragraph story which can be posted on the same website, along with relevant links.
- A platform and a budget must be secured in order to be successful in communications. If management understands the value of communications, the required platform will follow – the job cannot be done without it.
- Communication adds value. Communication is a way to add value to an organisation – an organisation which puts itself across effectively will attract more sources of external funding (not least once EU funding has ended) as well as talent (human resources capacity building), i.e. communication means more than simply talking about value added, but should be used to add value.
- A grandiose-sounding job title does not make anyone an expert, i.e. experts should be consulted as and when needed. Communications Manager is a job title, but Communications Expert is a skill which people acquire through the relevant education and accrue over many years of experience working professionally, in either marketing or qualified communications.

Claus Schultze stated that transnational cooperation is all about the creation and transfer of knowledge and capabilities. The entire programme set-up, including the way in which operations are monitored, needs to support communication. This should also include knowledge management measures that help to build wider communities of best practice and projects to achieve consistently solid output, which is then targeted at end users and presented in a way that allows for wider dissemination.

Giedrus Surplys added that communication officers should not forget that their role is to help other people achieve something good.

Claus Schultze





Prof. Danuta Hübner

European Commissioner for Regional Policy
'Communication: do better, do more, telling the story together'

Conference

'Telling the Story: Communicating Cohesion Policy together'
26 November 2007
Charlemagne building, Salle 'GASP'

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Do better, do more

I am happy to see so many of you here today and to welcome you to this conference, which marks the starting point of a **new era** in communicating together the good story cohesion policy can tell. Indeed, in view of the new requirements and enhanced transparency, we have to do more and better communication but also exchange our views on it. That's why we are here today and tomorrow and I hope that you will be inspired to share and take away as many good ideas and contacts as possible.

As Commissioner for Regional Policy, I have a special responsibility for **engaging with citizens**. From the beginning of my service, I have put great emphasis on visiting regions and projects and meeting the people, who manage, take part in and benefit from Cohesion Policy.

I am therefore in constant contact with public authorities and stakeholders at the regional and local level where most of the key decisions and investments are made when it comes to promoting jobs and growth, social cohesion and environmental sustainability in Europe. It is also here that a prime responsibility for informing both beneficiaries and the general public lies. So I feel that those of you who have come here today are the **ambassadors of the policy on the ground**, and I am delighted to have this opportunity to meet you. I am also delighted that we are joined here by 12 regional journalists who will participate in the discussions and debates during the two days.

What is very important to have in mind is that whether informing about the Cohesion Policy in general or on a single project, we put the European Union label or brand on it. Over this financial period we will be responsible for the biggest part of the Union's budget. We will also be responsible for the main instrument that directly serves the citizen.



Indeed, Cohesion Policy is the perfect tool to demonstrate that the European Union is both **serious and effective** in creating growth and jobs, in improving the quality of people's life.

To be effective, communicating cannot be done in isolation. In other words, we need to cooperate, exchange information, network and support each other in our common goal: to engage people in the policy which is essential to the progress of the Union and which delivers visible results in the regions.

Transmitting the message about EU's role in the citizens' life through the delivery of the cohesion policy should be our main pre-occupation. This is all the more important in the context of Plan D: Democracy, Dialogue, Debate, which was launched by the Commission some time ago. It has been recently spelled out in more detail at the beginning of October in the Commission's Communication 'Communicating Europe in Partnership'.

The objective is also to **involve citizens** in policy substance and to increase ownership by generating debate and providing a channel for citizens' concerns. That is why regional policy is tailor-made to help meet the challenge of improving communication within the EU. It is very close to the citizens and their concerns and it is implemented with the direct involvement of local people. Cohesion policy projects in the regions are among the most visible benefits of EU membership and you hold the key to making sure that the citizens actually get this vital piece of information.

What is at stake?

I know perfectly well that your job can be challenging and that it is often strongly politicised but I also believe that it is stimulating, rewarding and fun. I am grateful for your efforts in the regions.

As you know, the policy has evolved over time. In the last three years, the **policy has been repositioned** as one of the main engines in the pursuit of the economic modernisation of the Union, through which we can enhance the competitiveness of our territories and businesses. If we can help our businesses to become more competitive, they will grow and they will employ more people. And if they do so, then the European Union's economy will grow faster and will face up to the challenges we expect to see from the globalising world.

The Commission must rely on, and cooperate with colleagues in the Member States working in the regional authorities in order to present an **engaging story about the Cohesion Policy**. But it is the people on the ground that will help to distil the story and tell it. Working together is indeed a precondition for a successful communication.



What is different and new in this period

Let me now turn to what is different and new in this period. Cohesion Policy now touches **all regions** in the EU, which are covered either by the Convergence or the Competitiveness and Employment Objective. In addition, many are covered by the third objective, European Territorial Cooperation. Remember that this was not the case in the previous period when eligibility was far more geographically specific. This has created a new communication opportunity, to present Cohesion Policy as a policy for all regions as well as being the main vehicle for the growth and jobs agenda.

For 2007-13, communication is not only a key factor in the **success of programmes** but it is also **an integral part** of their management. It is not by chance that the Court of Auditors stressed to us five years ago that a programme with good information is most likely to be a well managed programme. This takes on a particular resonance in the light of their recent comments on the effectiveness of some Managing Authorities and I would like to stress it again here. **Information and Communication must be designed into programmes from their outset**. Well-designed communication in this context means that the potential beneficiaries are informed about possibilities of developing their projects within the framework of the cohesion policy. This improves the quality and influx of projects and, in turn, the full use of the funds.

The transparency issue

New emphasis in this period is also on **transparency** issues concerning the use of the European Funds. For the first time there is a regulatory requirement that complete **lists of beneficiaries** must be published in the Member States. In my view, it is one of the most important information and publicity issues in the new period. We have to reflect together on how to make this requirement practicable, so that presentation of beneficiaries becomes a useful tool for citizens, professionals, journalists and even us at the Commission. One of today's workshops will be devoted to that topic.

The Communication plans

In the new period, the links between information and publicity and the overall management of the programmes need to grow stronger. Indeed, this is the reason for putting a strong emphasis on the communication plans and their links with the operational programmes. Since we believe they are very important, my services are closely involved in monitoring the **communication plans**, to make sure that sufficient information measures are foreseen for each programme.

Communication plans are not intended to be a bureaucratic burden and should not be treated as such. They are meant to give you a strong tool, with sufficient budget and human resources, to enable efficient communication activities. I am happy to say that the quality of some documents we have seen recently is very high and promises indeed excellent communication activities, with innovative approaches and ideas.

Another novelty is that managing authorities must guarantee **major information activity** at least once a year. In this way citizens will be kept informed about the outcomes of the programmes and they will know what improvements the European Cohesion Policy has brought into their neighbourhoods and lives.

Formally, the global **outcome** of operational programmes must be communicated as well. At all those stages it is essential to stress the role of the European Union in the process – in the development of ideas, and in the funding. All in all, including the budgetary means to be set aside for all programmes, I am convinced that we now have all the necessary elements at our disposal to make the task of ‘Communicating Cohesion Policy’ a success story, insisting on the added value of the policy. And your presence here means that we also have your commitment.

Networking is essential

Of course we need to do this together. Networking is, in this context, essential. Since the beginnings of the previous programming period we have been promoting networking as being an extremely **important element** of the communication officers’ work. Exchange of information, fresh ideas, fruitful discussions have been encouraged by the Commission partly through conferences, similar to the one today. As an outcome from the first conference in 2002, an informal network was set up by yourselves, which in its final stage had well above 100 participants, meeting twice a year in Brussels. And as you will see in one of the presentations, it truly helped to exchange ideas, so we are not starting from scratch. In this period, we would like to build on your good work and continue with the Community network but perhaps in a more structured way, not to make it heavier but to give it a stronger voice. It is also a very useful tool to receive information from you but also to transfer information to you.

For even more efficient information exchange, my hope is that this Community network is linked with the national networks of information officers which I know already exist in several Member States. And this brings me to the question of possible cooperation with the Commission Representations.

I wanted also to use today as an opportunity to stress the role the **Commission Representations** can play in information activities about Cohesion Policy. One of tomorrow’s workshops is focusing on these issues. As you are aware, the representations are offices focusing on relations with the media and journalists. There is a big potential for linking your knowledge and resources with the knowledge and resources of the Representations. We are open for your comments as to what could be useful for you, what you may need, and also, what kind of information and knowledge you could offer to the Representation offices.



Challenges lying ahead of Regional Policy

Let me briefly mention some of the challenges ahead of Cohesion Policy which we need to bear in mind for our communication activities. The European territory is currently at the **crossroads** of numerous factors of change. Many of them are exogenous such as accelerating globalisation, rising energy prices, stronger external immigration pressure or emerging climate change. Other factors are endogenous such as population ageing or the struggle to promote competitiveness and to improve the living environment. These challenges do not take any account of national, institutional or policy borders and they impact directly on regional and local communities.

Against this background, the main **issues at stake for cohesion policy** beyond 2013 were set out in the fourth Cohesion Report, a policy document that I’m sure you know and which is published every three years by the European Commission. At the time of its publication, I announced a wide ranging public consultation about the future of Cohesion Policy after 2013. Some of the key questions which we have to address are:

- How to make the policy more performance based in order to achieve more with the available budget?
- How to allocate optimally responsibilities between the Community, national and regional levels within a multi-level governance system?
- How to strengthen the relationship between Cohesion Policy and other Community and National policies? Which also includes the question of giving other polices a more territorial focus.
- How to design delivery mechanisms that improve the responsiveness of the Policy to a rapidly changing environment?
- What are the new opportunities for co-operation between regions, both within and outside the EU?

In all, quite substantial challenges for the future but let us bear in mind that the communication efforts of today will actually strengthen our hand when we discuss the future of the policy.

Conclusions

Let me end by saying that we count very much on your readiness, professionalism and creativity to make, together, the most out of the opportunities of the policy. In my view, communication does not always have the priority it should but managing public money must always be accompanied by serious communication efforts.

This is also the kind of tool where enthusiasm matters greatly. We need your enthusiasm and I extend my thanks to you for supporting this event today and tomorrow and also invite you to share ideas and participate actively in the discussions.

I think you can be in no doubt of my commitment to this cause and with your co-operation I am in no doubt as to the successful outcome.

Let us tell the story well, together. Thank you for your attention.





Vladimir Špidla

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunities

Communicating on Cohesion Policy

Conference

'Telling the Story: Communicating Cohesion Policy together'

26 November 2007

Charlemagne building, Salle 'GASP'

Hello everyone,

I am delighted to be able to address you today on the topic of Cohesion Policy and, in particular, the European Social Fund.

My usual approach to this subject is to present its virtues, objectives and resources. Today, I am happy to talk about an equally important aspect of one of the EU's main successes: how to communicate on Cohesion Policy.

Mrs Hübner rightly underlined just now the importance of working together in order to get our message across to citizens.

Within our European democracy, we need to 'do' as much as 'make known'. In other words, pursuing a policy and getting results is one thing; developing this process further and presenting the results we achieve for citizens is just as important.

Within this field, however, there are mixed results: at the very time when the ESF is celebrating its 50th birthday, knowledge of this Fund among citizens remains limited.

Many citizens have heard of the Social Fund, but barely one in ten has a decent knowledge of the actions it finances in practice.

The Commission realises that we could do a better job of explaining what the EU does to promote jobs and, more generally, on social matters.

As I see it, today's gathering is wholly appropriate: a time to reflect such as this is invaluable since it allow us impartially to ask the right questions:

- Are we doing all we should to get the message across about the ESF?
- Could we do more to tell citizens about the benefits it brings them?
- Or should we do things differently?

What makes these issues all the more central is the fact that the ESF fundamentally needs to adapt its communication in order to reach its target audience.

Quality information is essential so that the parties involved may benefit from ESF-subsidised actions.

Communicating a policy which addresses citizens' requirements

The EU must play a central role for its citizens in the area of employment and social affairs. Thus, a recent Eurobarometer survey from the Commission has highlighted the three main concerns among Europe's citizens:

- number one: unemployment;
- number two: the cost of living;
- and number three: pensions.

From this angle, the European Social Fund is the pre-eminent instrument. Indeed, what other instrument could provide a better illustration of our actions on employment than these Funds, which account for 10% of the EU budget?

The ESF is also the most suitable instrument for meeting other major challenges such as the ageing population and new technologies, which demand an ever more skilled workforce increasingly capable of working longer and in good health.

The ESF allows us to turn our efforts on behalf of citizens into a reality. We have the raw material on which to communicate: tangible, solid results which we have to bring to people's attention.

Communicating more effectively on the ESF

To achieve this, we have rolled out an entirely new communications strategy for the ESF this year. Moreover, I invite you all to join us in our efforts and to supplement these on the ground, so that together we can reach an even wider audience.

In order to familiarise people with the ESF more effectively, it is vital to underline the fact that Europe, through the ESF, is investing in individuals, their future, their well-being and their quality of life.

Although the Commission has been working in partnership with the Member States for a number of years now to get the message across about the ESF, the new 2007-13 programming period obliges us to redouble our efforts in order to raise the profile of the Fund.

This year, our communication has focussed on the adoption of operational programmes and the 50th anniversary of the ESF.

I myself have taken part in the launch of several ESF operational programmes across Europe. This has given me the opportunity to see how the ESF is being implemented in a host of European countries and regions.

We must now place the emphasis on communicating the ESF's achievements on the ground. We need to demonstrate how the ESF provides a tangible response to the needs of our citizens.

Indeed, practical examples of successful projects are vital in order to illustrate how the ESF operates in the Member States. We need to show how people have been able to find work or follow a training course in order to remain in the job market.

Communication channelled through the Member States

Finally, I would like to stress the fact that effective ESF communication necessarily must be channelled through the Member States.

Without their intervention on the ground, we would not be able to reach citizens on such a targeted basis. This is why we attach such importance to the communication efforts of the various countries and, accordingly, to their communication plans.

Conclusion

To sum up, I would like to stress that the ESF constitutes a particularly valuable instrument, because:

- it responds to citizens' needs;
- it helps to overcome the major challenges facing the European Union.

The message we need to get across can be summarised in a single phrase:

'The European Social Fund is an investment in human potential!'

This, in a nutshell, is what the ESF is all about.

All our efforts now involve adapting this message to the various target audiences and developing the right communication media.

Nothing could be simpler, I hear you say.

That's true: but this type of communication, because it is difficult, has to take original and innovative forms. The door, therefore, is open for creative thinking, reflections in every shape and form, and the development of new strategies.

I invite all of you to work with the Commission in order to spread the ESF message as far and wide as possible.

For our part, we shall pursue our efforts and carry on supporting you in order to convey the ESF message more effectively.

Thank you for listening.





European Commission

Telling the story – Conference proceedings – Communicating Cohesion Policy together

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Telling the story. Communicating Cohesion Policy together.

Given the scale of the Cohesion Policy budget, the European Commission does not want to leave the 'right to know' to chance. With the Member States' agreement, it has established a number of obligations so that the mechanisms for granting funds are transparent and citizens can find out about the European objectives of these funds along with their results. On 26 to 27 November 2007, the European Commission invited all those who, on an everyday basis, provide information on the Funds and communicate with potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries and EU citizens, to share their experiences and acquire fresh ideas for even more effective communication on the Cohesion Policy for the years 2007-13. The 'Telling the story. Communicating Cohesion Policy together' conference proceedings provide an overview of the discussions held, complete with a DVD containing all the presentations and films displayed during the event.

Inforegio

Consult the Inforegio website for an overview of EU Regional Policy:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy

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