



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
 Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG
 Resources, Communication
 Communication, CAD

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MINUTES

31st meeting of the Informal Network of ESF Information Officers (INIO) Berlin (DE), 28 March 2012

1. OPENING AND APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING'S MINUTES

The chair (EMPL.G.3) welcomed the INIO members to Berlin.

The Italian delegation requested the chair to note the formal protest of the Italian delegation against the interpretation facilities provided during the meeting, in particular the absence of any interpretation from and into Italian. At the same time, due to the great added value of the meeting as such, the Italian authorities had decided to participate nevertheless. The Spanish delegation supported this position and suggested that for this particular meeting, interpretation in German could exceptionally be acceptable as concerning the language of the host country.

The INIO members then approved the minutes of the INIO meeting of 12 October 2011 in Limassol, Cyprus.

2. PRESENTATION BY HOST ORGANISATION: FEDERAL MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The German delegation (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) presented the role of the ESF Unit divided between communication, implementation of the Federal programme, and management of a transnational learning network. ESF communication in Germany has to take into account the number of Operational Programmes (18 divided between federal and regional level) and the multitude of stakeholders involved.

Communication activities by the Federal Ministry included the introduction of a single logo, the organisation of stakeholder conferences, the provision of brochures and promotional items, and the running of one more "technical" website addressing the ESF community and one successfully addressing the general public ("My story" - <http://www.esf-meine-geschichte.de>).

DE expressed the opinion that in general terms, much effort still needs to be put into communicating what the ESF actually is and its key role as a labour market instrument.

The Authority for Labour, Social Affairs, Family and Integration of Hamburg presented its communication strategy, in particular with respect to specific target groups and the dissemination of best practices. The MA is successfully organising workshops to transfer basic public relation knowledge to project managers and has a history of involving stakeholders, media and the public in its annual events and in specific information events. The 2010 outreach campaign in form of a video contest for young people was presented as well. On a question from the French delegation, it was explained that the competition "show your talent" ran for about three months all together, including a six-week period for the production of video submissions. 110 participating young people submitted 24 videos. The 2012 main communication event "ESF in dialogue" will focus on helping some target groups such as women, senior citizens, migrants and young people to find a job by enhancing qualifications and skills.

The representative from the Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Family of the Land Brandenburg exposed the ESF communication strategy from this region, which targets strong visibility of ESF as the most important financing instrument within the regional labour market policy. A main task of the MA lies in establishing guidelines and supporting measures for ESF actors. Highlighted examples of communication activities included the "Future Day for Girls and Boys" and the "ESF City Festival Tour".

3. ESF COMMUNICATION WORK BY THE COMMISSION

The Commission (EMPL.G.3) gave an overview of its recent ESF communication activities. Regarding the ESF website, the new map-based showcase for project examples (<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=466>) and the soon to be released updated press & media section (<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=61>) were presented as well as the objective, methodology and results of the "On the brink" viral video campaign for attracting additional visitors to the ESF website (http://ec.europa.eu/esf/on_the_brink.jsp?langId=en).

DG EMPL will soon make available a set of 27 new ESF factsheets for each Member State, to be released in English as well as in the respective local languages. These can be combined with a new leaflet that will explain the ESF to a wider audience in 23 languages. Delegates were requested to inform DG EMPL about any orders they would like to place for these products. Moreover, the previously announced series of six new ESF posters is now available and sample copies were distributed to delegates.

DG REGIO and DG EMPL have jointly prepared a number of factsheets on the proposals for the 2014-2020 period; these are available for order from DG REGIO (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/proposals_2014_2020_en.cfm).

For its participation in public events, the EC has developed an interactive touch screen application that allows visitors to learn about the ESF, take a quiz, read and order the ESF comic book, and create their personal comic image and dialogue. The application is translated into the languages of the respective event's host country and

created huge interest at the "Youth on the Move" stands in Angoulême (FR) in January and Lisbon (PT) in March.

In the near future, plans are to improve the user experience on the Commission's ESF website and provide more added value to visitors, to disseminate the new ESF publications and to participate in a number of large public events in the frame of the "Youth on the Move" campaign.

4. THE ESF AND YOUNG PEOPLE – CAN WE REACH THIS AUDIENCE?

EMPL.F.1 presented the background and content of the EU's "Youth Opportunities Initiative" and detailed the foreseen actions on part of the Member States and of the European Commission as well as the timetable in view of the European semester.

By way of opening the debate, EMPL.F.1 noted that one could observe, to some extent, an inverse proportion between the level of unemployment of young people and their actual participation in ESF programmes, citing Spain as an example. The question was put forward whether communication could play a role in this context.

DE replied that the role of communication should not be overrated and that the observed correlation was probably more coincidental. The main issue is that the individual cannot directly apply for individual support from the ESF, leading to a gap between the ESF as a pure financial instrument and its final beneficiaries.

ES noted that Spain is reforming its programmes to optimise the resources available to young people, since the current programmes are insufficient in this respect. Regarding the role of communication, the regional nature of the Operational Programmes is an obstacle to a coordinated approach, and the ESF as an instrument is too distant from the citizen compared to for example the Erasmus programme.

5. PARALLEL WORKSHOPS: MUTUAL LEARNING

The parallel workshops in this meeting were designed to address a range of topics under the theme "mutual learning". As usual, each group was animated by a moderator, assisted by a rapporteur to summarize the group's findings.

Delegates split into three working groups:

Group 1: Building a communication strategy / outlook to 2014-2020. Case study: Germany.

Group 2: Communicating added value: Innovative ESF actions. Case studies: Belgium (Flanders), Austria.

Group 3: List of operations: success factors for implementation. Case studies: Czech Republic, Latvia.

6. PRESENTATION OF THE WORKSHOPS' MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In group 1, DE had presented the communication measures at federal level up to now, the complexity of the ESF communication structure in Germany and the main

issues to be addressed. The contractor of the Federal Ministry had presented the approach to the establishment of a new communication strategy, focussing on the clear definition of target groups and the leverage of the potential of the manifold stakeholders as disseminators. The discussion in the group centred on the necessity of balancing a broad involvement of actors at all levels when defining and implementing communication activities with an appropriate measure of direction and structure imposed by a leading authority. The benefit of minimum requirements set by the regulatory framework was highlighted in this context. With regard to the gap between the relatively abstract concept of the ESF as financial instrument and the need for messages that are meaningful to the citizen, the usefulness of concrete examples was underlined, as was the need to use accessible language already at the programming phase, for example when choosing names of Operational Programmes.

In group 2, BE (Flanders) had presented the annual selection process for the validation of innovative projects. Four main criteria are used for validation (usefulness, accessibility, transferability and sustainability) and both peers and experts are involved in the process. The top three innovative projects become the "ESF Ambassadors". This programme regularly draws significant media attention. AT recounted how innovation had been made the key theme in 2011 for all activities towards beneficiaries and the public, and that even specific calls for proposals had been published. The group debated on how to best communicate innovative projects (online was seen as the prime channel) and agreed that support from the top, for example the minister, would be needed to ensure visibility and success.

In group 3, CZ and LV both explained their respective approaches to the publication of the list of beneficiaries; In LV, the published list is automatically updated directly from the project management system. It covers all Funds, allows searching by various criteria and can be easily exported. An interactive map is planned for the future. Currently the list is among the top ten most consulted resources on the web site. In CZ, 26 Operational Programmes with individual web sites pose a major challenge. There is, however, only a single national database on projects. The ESF website presents 3000 projects in Excel format and offers a Google-based map with access to all projects. In summary, the group agreed that it is important to feed the list of beneficiaries from a single information system and that frequent updates, ideally automatically, are required. Project descriptions should avoid technical jargon. Delegates noted that visible progress had been made in recent years regarding the effectiveness of search engines. Activities in the next period should build on the current good practices and map interfaces are an important tool that allows user-friendly visualisation.

In the ensuing plenary debate, a number of issues were reacted upon:

DE underlined that one important element that emerged from the discussions was that communication should focus even more on human interest stories, referring more implicitly to the ESF. EMPL.E.1 opined that communication activities should nevertheless always clearly mention the ESF angle since the instrument itself might otherwise be dismantled in the long term. NL however insisted on national specificities that might require communicating foremost on the benefits of the EU as such, without reference to individual programmes.

EMPL.G.3 recalled the important role of communication. Based on lessons from the current period, innovative ways for communicating more and better must be

explored. EMPL.F.1 suggested taking inspiration from EURES, as most delegations seemed to agree that communication with the general public was still underdeveloped or left to beneficiaries. The question of how to address participants directly was noted as a possible subject for discussion in a next INIO meeting.

DE (Brandenburg) agreed that the most efficient would be taken locally in direct contact with the public. Beneficiaries are well placed to do so, and have the obligation, but often require corresponding resources and know-how.

7. STRUCTURAL FUNDS 2014- 2020: CATEGORISATION AND DATA COLLECTION

EMPL.E.1 presented an overview of the proposed rules on categorisation and data collection as from 2014 on. With reference to the overall programme logic, it was pointed out that in the new system, the Investment Priorities are the core targets for investment and therefore for reporting and that at EU level it is important that data collection and transmission make it possible to relate the information to the overall political objectives expressed by Europe 2020.

The current rules for monitoring and reporting make it practically impossible to put invested resources in relation to outputs, let alone results. This is addressed in the proposals for 2014-2020. It is however not proposed to fundamentally alter the categorization as such. The basic features are kept. A major innovation lies in the introduction of the new dimension "secondary theme", to capture data on ESF expenditure contributing to cross cutting objectives that are linked to all investment priorities e.g. climate change or social innovation, and a limited number of result-oriented additional indicators.

FR commented that given the upcoming availability of corresponding data, future communication strategies should include an approach for better highlighting results of ESF intervention, including those of qualitative nature. FR also referred to the crucial link between the evaluation of communication activities and the communication of evaluation efforts – an issue that was intensely debated at the "Objectif Com" conference (see agenda point 8).

EMPL.E.1 drew delegates' attention to the varying definition of results – at times, only output is meant while impact would be even more important. Also, one should always pay attention to the relation between invested resources (spending) and the achieved results.

DE (federal ministry) inquired whether the problem of linking results to spending would not pose itself predominantly at European level, while Member States would already now be capable of doing so and if common indicators would indeed be the most innovative aspect of the new rules. Also, what would happen if certain objectives would not be reached in terms of output indicators?

EMPL.E.1 responded that currently, the main problem is that a "priority axis" could be defined in any way in different Member States, and even Operational Programmes within a Member State. This can be solved by linking the Investment Priorities to the Investment Fields, which are common across the entire ESF. As regards the proposed performance framework: this would entail the selection of a set of input and output indicators that would allow monitoring if an Operational

Programme is on track towards its objectives. Should this not be the case, actions can then be undertaken to get the programme back on track.

DE (Brandenburg) underlined the importance of national communication strategies for the larger framework and perspective.

BE (Wallonia) pointed out the need for timely communicating to all actors for smoothly putting the new system in place.

8. PAST AND UPCOMING MAJOR ESF EVENTS

This agenda point was introduced by the EC who announced the Commission's decision to postpone, until further notice, the organisation of an ESF communication event initially planned for around November 2012 in Brussels. The event could possibly take place in the first half of 2013. Delegates would be kept informed.

FR presented the concept and main results of the conference "Objectif 'Com 2012" that took place 13-14 March in Bordeaux. The event was conceived as a meeting point for information officers for all European Funds and saw the participation of around 150 persons mostly from France, but also from a number of other European countries. Details of the programme, the presentations and workshop conclusions are available at <http://bercy.congressite.fr/evenement/20120313/index.php>.

The upcoming event "Village of ESF initiatives" to take place in Lyon (FR) from 21-22 June 2012 aims to permit the discovery of new approaches for supporting employment and inclusion, and provide a forum for exchange between actors in the field as well as an opportunity for reflection on the future. Around 80 exhibitors and 450 participants are expected: www.villagefse2012.fr.

FI reported on the "Conference on Evaluation and Gender Mainstreaming in the European Social Fund" that took place in Helsinki in January and was organised in cooperation with the European Community of Practice on Gender Mainstreaming coordinated by Sweden. A film on the event can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9JaMb5rUFg&feature=youtu.be>. A recurring issue at such conferences is the relatively stable community of participants, into which it is hard to include actual decision makers. The conference established a manual on integrating gender mainstreaming into project management. This guide book will also become available in English and Swedish in June 2012 and delegates are kindly requested to assist in its dissemination. The next conference in August 2012 will be addressing sustainable development with a view to identifying concrete ideas and tools for the next programming period.

The UK delegation (England) presented the 2012 "Adult Learners' Week" (ALW), the UK's largest festival of learning that has been running with support from the ESF in the past 20 years and will take place 12 to 18 May. Next to an outline of the ALW goals and results in 2011, the structure in 2012 and the plans for the its future were laid out (<http://www.alw.org.uk/>).

PL informed delegates about a forthcoming conference on the regionalisation of the ESF, aiming to introduce strategic thinking on regional and integrated approaches into key decisions for the future. The event would include discussions on advantages

and drawbacks of central or regional approaches as well as presentations of case studies on practical experiences, also from other Member States.

The Maltese delegation explained the concept of its communication campaign in 2011, which offered a bus tour to projects over six itineraries across Malta and Gozo. The event was attended by around 500 participants. In 2012, the Managing Authority plans to introduce a stand-alone website as a dedicated showcase for projects, and launch a new media campaign on cohesion policy. A documentary on Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 in Malta (which was shown during the bus tours), with particular reference to ESF actions, can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mf7_J34MZsU&context=C41d6580ADvjVQa1PpcFN7FsBNSOyRPV5if6QYvEZZadyE8gJgeYI.

PT noted the high demand for the 2012 workshops for beneficiaries on how to communicate (Porto: 200, Lisbon: 400 places), which were fully booked within hours after their announcement.

9. "YOUTH ON THE MOVE": UPDATE ON THE CAMPAIGN AND CALL FOR SUPPORT

The EC (EMPL.G.3) recalled the successful "Youth on the Move" campaign that led to 24 individual events in 2011. The campaign schedule for 2012 with 34 events was distributed. The EC underlined the importance of a good collaboration with local actors, in the preparation phase as well as during the event itself. The EC systematically approaches the local ESF authorities and continues to count on the good support it has received so far. The "Youth on the Move" self-standing events or stands at larger public events regularly draw huge interest by visitors and local actors can benefit from this opportunity for additional visibility and outreach occasions (<http://europa.eu/youthonthemove>).

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The chair thanked all for their participation in the meeting and looked forward to the next INIO meeting scheduled for 12 September in Poland.

Enclosure: List of delegations

Additional documents and presentations relating to the meeting can be found at the group's restricted work space on RegioNetwork 2020:
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/regionetwork2020/node/9930>.

31st INIO Meeting – List of delegations

COUNTRY	PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS (NO OF DELEGATES)
Austria	Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (1)
Belgium	ESF Agency Flanders (1) ESF Agency Wallonia (1) Ministry of German speaking Community (1)
Bulgaria	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (1)
Cyprus	
Czech Republic	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (1)
Denmark	Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority (1)
Estonia	Ministry of Education and Research (1) Ministry of Social Affairs (1)
Finland	Ministry of Employment and the Economy (2)
France	Ministry of the Economy, Industry and Employment (2)
Germany	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (4) Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Family of the Land Brandenburg (1) Authority for Labour, Social Affairs, Family and Integration of Hamburg (1) IFOK GmbH (2 – for agenda point 5)
Greece	Ministry of Employment and Social Protection (2)
Hungary	European Funds Development Agency (2)
Ireland	
Italy	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2)
Latvia	Ministry of Finance (2)
Lithuania	Ministry of Social Security and Labour (1)
Luxembourg	Ministry of Labour and Employment (2)
Malta	Planning and Priorities Coordination Division – Office of the Prime Minister (1)
The Netherlands	Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment (1)
Poland	Ministry of Regional Development (2)
Portugal	ESF Managing Authority (1)
Romania	Ministry of European Affairs (1)
Slovakia	
Slovenia	
Spain	Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs (2)
Sweden	Swedish ESF Council (1)
United Kingdom	Dept. for Work and Pensions – ESF England (1)
European Commission	DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion: Unit "Communication" – EMPL.G.3 (4) Unit "Geographical & Financial support, Thematic reporting, CELFI" – EMPL.F.1 (2) Unit "Germany, Austria, Slovenia" – EMPL.F.2 (1) Unit "ESF Legislation and Policy, Financial Engineering" – EMPL.E.2 (1)