



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

Brussels, 22 October 2012
BK D(2012)

MINUTES

32nd meeting of the Informal Network of ESF Information Officers (INIO) Krakow (PL), 12 September 2012

1. OPENING AND WELCOME

The chair (EMPL.G.3) welcomed the INIO members to Krakow. For the first time, Croatia took part as observer to the group.

Delegations were reminded that following several complaints, the arrangements for interpretation at the meeting were modified to cover only English and the language(s) of the respective host country.

2. PRESENTATION BY HOST ORGANISATION

After welcoming the delegates, the Polish Ministry of Regional Development presented an outline of the current and future organisational setup for the management of the Human Capital Operational Programme (<http://www.efs.gov.pl>) and gave a detailed account of the different information and promotion activities in the frame of the OP. Particular emphasis was given to the recent nation-wide campaigns on the Human Capital Programme and on gender mainstreaming. For both campaigns, instructive evaluation results are available. A forthcoming TV campaign aims to show the effects of the European Funds and their impact on the daily lives of Poles.

On a question from the Commission, PL confirmed that when planning new activities, the evaluation results of past campaigns are taken into account.

The EU Funds Department of the Malopolska Marshall Office presented the range of actions it is taking to promote and inform about the use of EU Funds in the region. Particularly noteworthy was the 2011 promotion campaign that resulted in over 6 million contacts in a region of 3 million inhabitants.

In the subsequent discussion, the Commission enquired how the different authorities in Poland would coordinate their approach. In response, it was explained that the national efforts are more focused on general subjects (e.g. gender mainstreaming). For the regions, their communication plans are approved by the Ministry which is thus aware of all planned actions. On a question from FR regarding the available resources, the Marshall's Office replied that in total, the region had around thirty collaborators dealing with promotion of all programmes and with information (including decentralised information points). The yearly budget for promotion activities within the OP Human Capital is around Zloty 300,000.

3. ESF COMMUNICATION WORK BY THE COMMISSION

The Commission (EMPL.G.3) provided an overview of the state of play of its ESF communication activities. The map-based showcase for project examples (<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=466>) continues to grow and delegates were invited to submit additional examples to the Commission. The set of 27 new ESF Member State leaflets has been published in English as well as in the respective local languages and delegations should already have received printed copies. The corresponding general leaflet on the ESF should become available before the end of the year.

A simplified version of the Commission's interactive touch screen application is now available for delegation should they want to make use of it at their events.

The improvement of the user experience on the Commission's ESF website is well under way: new wireframes, user testing and functional specifications have been finalised. Updated, more accessible content as well as improved layouts are currently being produced and the new version of site should go into production early 2013.

4. PARALLEL WORKSHOPS: MUTUAL LEARNING

The parallel workshops in this meeting were designed to address the topic "organisation of competitions" 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: Competitions involving good practice in projects. Case study: Poland.

Group 2: Online competitions. Case studies: European Commission (DG REGIO), Hungary.

Group 3: Competitions with physical participation. Case studies: Belgium (Wallonia), The Netherlands.

5. PRESENTATION OF THE WORKSHOPS' MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In group 1, PL presented the national "ESF best practices" competition that is currently in its sixth edition and has so far awarded about 100 projects. Group

members agreed that the primary benefits of such competitions are an increased awareness of the general public about the ESF as well as information of potential beneficiaries. However, their organisation is quite resource-intensive and takes quite some time. They require specific procedures for assessing the submissions and carry the risk of a potential promotion of projects that might be subject to irregularities. A close monitoring and appropriate selection of laureates is therefore indispensable. The evaluation process should ideally involve organisations that can add qualitative elements to the process, such as Intermediate Bodies. A particular challenge is to attract a significant number of submissions.

In group 2, HU shared the experiences gained with organising an online photo competition on Facebook. The involvement of popular artists and an attractive concept helped significantly to raise awareness about the contest without much dedicated publicity. The required budget was comparatively modest, while the overall organisation was quite time-consuming (about 4 months FTE). For the voting process, a two-fold approach was chosen: a part of the prizes were awarded randomly, while another part was based on the popularity of submissions.

DG REGIO gave an insight into the setup and particular challenges of its currently on-going photo competition on Facebook. The choice of the contest platform was subject to considerable debate, as Facebook comes with advantages as well as downsides, such as the obligation of having a personal profile. On the other hand, there are immediately linked benefits, such as a significant increase in the number of "likes" for the organisation's page. Also, submitted photos are subsequently available for other communication purposes. As one specific problem one has to take into account that the bulk of submissions might arrive only towards the deadline, which requires considerable resources for processing and validation within a short period. An online competition based on popular votes also carries the risk of possible vote rigging. Conditions for participation, voting and jury decisions (including reasons for disqualification) must be very clear. The focus on a specific Fund could be subject to criticism as participants cannot always make the distinction or the jury might find it hard to validate entries based on this criterion. An enlarged scope of the contest could avoid such problems

In group 3, NL recounted the experience with a rap contest organised for special schools that are supported through the ESF. The contest took place in the frame of the 2009 action plan against youth unemployment. The link to a bigger theme and/or campaign was seen as one crucial point to consider, as well as the focus on a specific group of potential participants and the involvement of an ambassador that is well-known within the target group (a popular artist in this case). Such a contest should have a focused subject, a clear timetable that includes sufficient time for the creative process and limited number of jury members. Social media can be a good tool for upfront publicity and the question of rights for further use of the generated material needs to be clarified in advance.

In the case study presented by BE (Wallonia), visitors to the project open day were asked to create a 60 second video on the visited initiative. The contest yielded only a limited number of submissions, of which many had rather poor quality. A lesson learnt was that the contest setup might have been too complicated (technical aspects as well as regarding content to be presented).

6. ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING: DG EMPL STRATEGY, EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES

EMPL.G.3 presented the rationale and context of its recently adopted strategy for electronic publishing. In the frame of on-going efforts for rationalization of the publication process, DG EMPL has analysed the potential of new technologies, and specifically e-books. In a transition phase, several already existing or upcoming publications will be published as an e-book in addition to the print version. A subsequent readership survey and evaluation should help to decide on further steps in this field.

In the ensuing discussion, delegations noted that so far, they have not addressed this issue and electronic publishing was not seen of immediate relevance for institutional communication. The Commission suggested that any future readership surveys done at national level could include a question on this topic.

DG REGIO highlighted the mobile app that is available for the Open Days (<http://www.opendays.europa.eu>).

7. COMMUNICATING EU FUNDS IN CROATIA

On the occasion of its first participation to an INIO meeting, the Croatian Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds gave a brief introduction to the setup and role of the Independent Service for Informational and Educational Activities. The educational tasks are mainly aimed at strengthening the human resources in the administrative bodies of local and regional governments and agencies. The informational activities include, among others, the design of a web portal as a central place of keeping information related to EU funds in Croatia, a publicity officer's network and several events directed at specialised audiences as well as at the general public.

8. JOINT INIO/INFORM NETWORK MEETING

FR explained the scope and practical details of this meeting, which will bring together communication officers from the INFORM network (Structural Funds), the INIO network, and respective colleagues from the accession countries (IPA). The meeting will be held on 3-4 December in Saint Denis, close to Paris, in the former chocolate factory "l'Usine" (<http://www.lusine-evenements.com>) for plenary sessions and workshops and in the "Académie Fratellini" (<http://www.academie-fratellini.com>) for an evening reception. Formal invitations to the meeting should be sent by end September. Around 300 participants are expected.

The Commission outlined the programme of the two days that will be structured with a mix of plenary sessions and up to four parallel workshops. For reasons of efficiency, the full meeting will be preceded by a restricted meeting of one representative from each MS for the Structural Funds and the ESF respectively. This group will address the functioning of the various networks, the role of the communication officer in the MS, key communication actions for 2013, as well as the preparation of a major conference on communication of cohesion policy around the end of 2013.

As regards potential workshop topics, the Commission proposed a first list that included the coordination of communication networks, evaluation of

communication actions, online competitions and social media, the issue of audits, 2013 and end of period activities as well as the finalisation of the wiki initiated within the INFORM network.

UK and Malta underlined their interest in a potential session on how to prepare for audits in the communication field and how to react to audit recommendations. An auditor could possibly be part of the speakers' panel. PT noted that an exchange of experience across Funds regarding the coordination and management of national communication networks would be very useful and PT would be happy to actively contribute to the meeting. HU inquired whether the range of potential participants to the meeting could be extended to representatives from Intermediate Bodies or large projects. For the Commission's viewpoint, these would rather be invited to the major communication conference planned for end 2013.

UK (Northern Ireland) suggested involving, where possible, professional experts from the communication field and FR suggested that the national association on public communication could play a role in the event. UK (Scotland) suggested that the question of how to best work with journalists could be another workshop topic.

It was then agreed that delegation should submit further proposals for the agenda until 19 September.

FR used the opportunity to express their regrets about the modified arrangements for interpretation that do not any more include French as a standard option.

9. OPEN DAYS 2012, REGIOSTARS AWARDS 2014

REGIO.B.1 recalled the concept of the RegioStars Awards, which are also open to ESF projects. Delegates were encouraged to promote the initiative (<http://ec.europa.eu/regiostars>). The upcoming Open Days were highlighted as an occasion to witness the presentation of the 2013 Awards finalists (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/opendays).

10. UPCOMING MAJOR NATIONAL/REGIONAL ESF EVENTS IN MEMBER STATES

FR gave a brief account of the "Village of ESF initiatives" that took place in Lyon in June 2012. With 600 participants and over 80 exhibitors, the event largely exceeded the expected results (www.villagefse2012.fr).

PL looked back at the conference on the regionalisation of the ESF that took place in Gdansk in July with 300 participants. PL plans to introduce regional OPs in the next programming period and the harvesting of experiences from the current period, also in other Member States, provided helpful input to this process.

DE announced the national annual ESF conference that will tackle the issues of the lack of specialized workforce and of enhanced labour participation of women (29 October, Berlin). In December, an award ceremony for the federal programme "XENOS" will reward beneficiaries for successful consolidation and stability of their projects' work.

PT referred to a new series of practical workshops for beneficiaries. Subjects covered will be how to avoid irregularities, public procurement procedures, and how to communicate ESF projects.

HU mentioned this year's edition of the auction event on CSR, to take place in November, where NGO's can offer their services to the business sector.

UK (England) referred to the Skills Show, the UK's biggest skills and careers event. Around 100,000 visitors are expected in Birmingham from 15-17 November (<http://worldskillsuk.apprenticeships.org.uk/the-skills-show>).

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The chair thanked all for their participation in the meeting and looked forward to the next INIO meeting scheduled for 3-4 December in France.

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>.

32nd INIO Meeting – List of delegations

COUNTRY	PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS (NO OF DELEGATES)
Austria	
Belgium	ESF Agency Flanders (1) ESF Agency Wallonia (1)
Bulgaria	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (1)
Cyprus	
Czech Republic	
Denmark	
Estonia	Ministry of Education and Research (1)
Finland	Ministry of Employment and the Economy (1)
France	Ministry of Labour, employment, vocational training and social dialogue (2)
Germany	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (1)
Greece	
Hungary	National Development Agency (1)
Ireland	
Italy	
Latvia	State Education Development Agency (1)
Lithuania	Ministry of Social Security and Labour (1)
Luxembourg	
Malta	Planning and Priorities Coordination Division – Office of the Prime Minister (1)
The Netherlands	Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment (2)
Poland	Ministry of Regional Development (3) Malopolska Marshall Office (2)
Portugal	ESF Managing Authority (1) NSRF Observatory (1)
Romania	Ministry of European Affairs (1)
Slovakia	
Slovenia	
Spain	x
Sweden	
United Kingdom	Dept. for Work and Pensions – ESF England (1) Dept. for Employment and Learning – ESF Northern Ireland (1) European Structural Funds Division – ESF Scotland (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 (1) DG Regional Policy: Unit "Communication, Information, relations with third countries" – REGIO.B.1 (1)