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Winter 2009/2010



Communicating EU Regional Policy

Letting the achievements speak

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Communication: making every word count

All over Europe thousands of lives have changed as a result of projects funded by Regional Policy: projects bringing clean water, new transport links, rejuvenated mining communities, new jobs. Behind every project there is a story to tell – a large infrastructure investment that has brought jobs into the community; support for innovative SMEs that allows the brightest young people to prosper locally rather than leaving for the capital; improved water treatment that makes the local river a source of pleasure for everyone around. These are just a few of the types of activities funded by Regional Policy. The money flows out into programmes around the EU with one clear aim – improving the daily life of those living in the regions. Effective communication of the activities of Regional Policy is as important as effective financial control: both reassure the tax payer that a third of the EU's budget is being properly and effectively spent.

However, there remains a paradox: when so many benefit from these programmes, why do so few realise it? There are a number of reasons: the press does not find Regional Policy funding an interesting topic; regions tend to underplay the significance of the EU context and contribution; and not all staff who have to work on communication have the relevant knowledge, tools or time to make a substantial contribution.

What can be done? While there is widespread agreement on the need to put a human story at the centre of communication about EU Regional Policy, this is not always practicable. Nevertheless, as the example of some regions shows, a story featuring real-life people increases the chance that Regional Policy will find more interest in the media. The Inform Network of communication officers, with its bi-annual conferences and its website, provides a good opportunity to share and learn from the experiences others have made with their various communication tools. Everyone can profit from the experience of the Inform Network to get Regional Policy's worthwhile message across better.

This issue of Panorama considers why the need for effective communication is so pressing, lets you know what others are up to and questions journalists about what makes them reach for the keyboard and get typing.

The time in which communicating with the public at large was left to chance, a secondary consideration, should be a thing of the past. Now let's all go up a gear and be serious about getting the story of this successful policy out. We know how valuable our policy is. We can't expect everyone else to support it unless they hear more about its successes.

Dirk Ahner

*Director General, European Commission
Directorate-General for Regional Policy*

“ The time in which communicating with the public at large was left to chance, a secondary consideration, should be a thing of the past. ”

REGIONAL POLICY – A STORY FOR EVERYONE

Huge budget, ambitious programmes and large scale projects – for such an influential element of the European Union, European Regional Policy still struggles to get the visibility it deserves. In this issue of Panorama we consider the relevance of communication, examine the regulations that make communication activities obligatory, take a close look at the ways in which communication officers can get their message across and explore intriguing examples of successful activities which draw more on creativity than budget.

What needs to be done

As part of the rules governing the management of a programme which receives regional funding from the EU, authorities have an obligation to communicate their activities.

Naturally, establishing close contacts with the media and making good use of the internet are two of the most commonly used methods to reach the general public. But there is also the obligation for managing authorities to reach potential project beneficiaries. One or more of the following institutions should be involved in these efforts:

- national, regional and local authorities;
- trade and professional associations;
- economic and social partners;
- non-governmental organisations;
- organisations representing businesses;
- information centres;
- educational institutions.

At least one major information action has to be organised each year, to present, for example, the programme's achievements. This can take the form of a new website, conference, or open day. And, for one week starting 9 May, the EU flag has to be flown outside of the managing authority. The bottom line is to raise awareness of EU Regional Policy in the regions: projects are making a difference for the citizens.

If you are running a programme funded through Regional Policy then 2010 is going to be a significant year for you since, for the first time, the 2010 annual implementation reports (due in Brussels on 30 June 2011) need to contain a separate chapter assessing the results of the information and publicity activities so far undertaken by managing authorities. The idea behind this requirement is to ensure that managing authorities take a moment to assess, if their communication priorities identified at the beginning of the programme period are still relevant and if the actions undertaken to reach these objectives have proven to be suitable. If needed, this exercise will help to refine the objectives and tools identified in the communication plan.

"This exercise is not to be seen as a bureaucratic burden but as an opportunity for each programme to fine-tune its communication activities according to the real needs identified 2–3 years into the programme implementation", underlines Raphaël Goulet, Head of the Information and Communication unit at the Directorate-General for Regional Policy (DG Regio).

Why put the emphasis on results?

About one-third of the total EU budget goes to support Regional Policy funds. Given the size of the allocation, the subject is always at the centre of debate. Justification needs to be made for the proportion allocated to regional funding. This justification can only take the form of clear examples of how well the money is spent and how successfully programmes are implemented.

The issue of transparency is also central to the idea of justification: the way the money is allocated needs to be demonstrably viable and above board.

Since the management of the funds and their allocation is mostly in the hands of national and regional authorities and not DG Regio, the information and communication actions have to originate from the managing authorities.

"The regulation, voted for by the member countries, came in because it was a key way to motivate everybody to say what they are achieving with the money concerned," explains Annabelle Maupas, Press Officer at DG Regio.

By requiring managing authorities to communicate, the Structural Funds regulation gives regions the opportunity to show how successful they are at running their programme and how much they are doing for their citizens.

The role of DG Regio is to make sure that the regulations governing the use of the Structural Funds are respected and to help the managing authorities to honour their obligations.

DG Regio, helping you to meet your requirements

However apparent the need, the regulations could be perceived as a constraint, but DG Regio invites regions to promote their effective communication methods, notably via the Inform Network.



Are people listening?

A quick Eurobarometer survey, conducted at the start of 2008, on the public's perception of EU Regional Policy funding, highlights the benefit of close engagement between communication officers and the media. Over 27 000 randomly selected citizens, aged 15 and above, were interviewed in the 27 EU Member States and the results show that a greater emphasis on communication is paying off.

Half (49%) of the respondents were aware that the EU supported their city or region. More than two-thirds of those respondents, knowing about the EU's support, also said the support was beneficial (70%). Only one in five respondents saw no positive effects from the EU's Regional Policy (22%). The awareness about the EU support is higher in the 12 newer Member States (60% against 47% in the 15 older Member States).

Ensuring transparency – the list of beneficiaries

A key element of the communication requirements introduced for the 2007–13 programme period has been the list of beneficiaries. This is part of the transparency initiative which obliges managing authorities to identify all Structural Fund beneficiaries, the amount they have been allocated and the names of the operations supported. With the exception of some European Territorial Co-operation programmes, all programmes are fulfilling this obligation. DG Regio encourages all stakeholders to increase the transparency and has created an interactive map on its website showing all the beneficiaries of the EU's Cohesion Policy. A key ingredient for transparency is to link the publication of beneficiaries to the monitoring system of the programme concerned, by creating a fully integrated management and communication system.

In the context of the **Inform Network** of communication officers of Regional Policy, DG Regio continues to encourage regions to go beyond the minimum publicity requirement and develop the list of beneficiaries into a comprehensive communication tool. For example by making the information available on national/regional websites in another widely spoken language in addition to the national language, or by providing websites, which are searchable and include digital maps indicating the project locations.

The European Parliament takes a particular interest in transparency matters. A recent study 'The Data Transparency Initiative and its Impact on Cohesion Policy' notes that data about beneficiaries is generally easily accessible. However, a number of recommendations are made, based on already existing good practice in some Member States. This would include improving the user-friendliness of the information provided: contact details of beneficiaries, summaries of approved projects could be added as well as the field of activity and the type of support received.

A prime example of a website, which includes virtually all of the above features was presented at the Inform Network meeting of December 2009. The Hungarian website www.ropter.nfu.hu is an online information and communication tool but at the same time an integrated management tool. One single IT system was set up, which includes all relevant programme management information and procedures (e.g. applying for funding), entirely accessible via the internet.

While not all programmes may have the means to follow the very same approach, this website has clearly impressed and one can only encourage other EU regions to follow this example.



Inform – make the most of your success

Each managing authority has informed DG Regio about the designated staff responsible for information and publicity of each Operational Programme. In addition, Member States have nominated a single contact person for all Operational Programmes of a country. These communication officers exchange ideas at networking events, such as the bi-annual Inform Network conferences organised by DG Regio.

At these events, Regional Policy communication officers from all 27 Member States come together to share experiences and learn from one another. On its dedicated website users can find innovative ideas, a problem-solving support forum and tools to raise the profile of their achievements. The website showcases the information tools managing authorities are proud to present: "The Inform Network and its website are as dynamic as the Inform Network members make them. It is an opportunity for the communication officers to exchange good practice. DG Regio is not there to tell programmes how to communicate in a given region. This is a decision that has to be taken at regional level. But with the help of Inform, we provide examples of interesting communication tools other programmes have successfully used to promote their projects", explains Peter Fischer, who is responsible for transparency and publicity issues at DG Regio.

While billboards and commemorative plaques are obligatory, communication officers have more fertile imaginations. Concepts, activities and generally eye-catching publicity events are outlined on the site – what works in one country could be adapted to another.

In one part of the site, activities are categorised according to the media they exploit. Publications include examples of best practice but also, guidelines on how to communicate Structural Funds so users can find both practical advice as well as examples of what they could achieve. In another, the most innovative communication events around the EU are highlighted.

The regulations call for evaluation, but what does that entail? Again, the Inform Network site can help with a range of documents covering, for example, how to assess activities targeting journalists, or assessing an event or a website. There are nine in all, available in German, English, Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese.

Inform grew out of the Structural Funds information team (SFIT), established at the request of communication officers in 2002. By the end of 2006 it had around 100 members from all 25 member countries and had met eight times. At the end of 2009, the Inform Network had more than 350 members. For 2010, it is DG Regio's intention to foster closer links between the managing authorities' communication officers and the Commission's representations in the capitals of the member countries in order to increase the visibility of EU Regional Policy in the regional media.

Hitting the streets in the Netherlands

Twenty project managers came together to tell their stories of how EU funding is making a difference to their activities through film, demonstrations and interviews using drama and music. They took their message out onto the streets to let those living in the Eastern Netherlands know: that European money counts, and, for every good idea there is funding.

Luxembourg goes interactive

Demographic change – not a phrase that slips off the tongue. But if you were in Luxembourg at the end of September 2008, you could have taken part in an interactive street exhibition which brought the subject to life. As a key area of the INTERREG IVB North West Europe programme, the topic and how the programme itself is funded were explored and celebrated through conferences, musical performances, theatre and even speed dating.

Over 400 people responded to the show by writing messages and tying them to a tree with colourful ribbons. EU funding and an aging population are not normally thought of as reasons to throw a street party, but the creativity and imagination of the communication officers showed that you can get a message across effectively without needing a huge budget.

Some ideas to get you thinking

Recent meetings of communication officers generated the following examples of innovative approaches to the business of getting the message across:

- Itinerant exhibition event which included giant touch-screen computers providing information on the ERDF programme 2000–06. Successful 'outreach' approach from Italy;
- Collaboration with secondary schools in the region where school pupils were provided with video cameras to make their own films about the impact of Cohesion Policy investments ('before' and 'after'). This initiative received a best practice award also from Italy;
- Europe Day 'Watershow': raising awareness of climate change in Lithuania, an 'eco-boat' toured the main rivers of the country over a month finishing up on May 9th for Europe Day festival kick-off. The 'skipper' wrote a blog during his trip, setting out reflections on the climate change crisis and providing commentary on various EU-funded projects he came across along the route. One of the most successful aspects of this was in the synergies developed with all partners involved in the event organisation;
- National televised EU youth quiz on Estonian membership of the EU – participation of 150 schools. Successful in integrating European studies into the curriculum and providing information in an entertaining way;
- Austrian video clips and podcasts letting the project beneficiary speak about the project's achievements

How to get the best out of the available tools

According to the European Communication Monitor, one of the largest transnational surveys on strategic communication in Europe, online communication and interactive websites using video and audio will become more and more important for public relations within the next few years. In **Brandenburg**, the managing authority has anticipated this trend with the launch of its eye-catching, interactive site. Both quirky and informative, the site is unusual in that it can be modified by the user who can drag and drop elements, revealing key messages on the ERDF and the role of the EU.

To be shown in 160 schools throughout Brandenburg, the site harnesses an example of cutting-edge technology – ‘Kubikfoto’. The site provides visitors with a three dimensional world to explore, in which hundreds of single pictures are assimilated to create a flash animated ‘story’.

By selecting various images, which make abstract processes more visual, the user encounters different people dealing with ERDF topics, such as the head of the managing authority, project partners or a desk officer responsible for assessing applications for ERDF funding. The site gives European funding a human face. The day-to-day work of these officers is explained, giving users a clearer idea of what actually goes on in the process of allocation.

Other parts of the site www.entdecke-efre.de provide users with an interactive ‘hall of fame’, highlighting best practice – projects can upload information and present themselves so the information flows two ways, site-user-site.

Martin Mueller, one of a team of communication officers at the managing authority, gave a key reason for the site: “We want to welcome those who are internet aware and use the web in their free time for fun and to be informed. So we incorporated audio, video, some text and interactive photos to get across complex ideas in a lively way. By exploiting all the opportunities provided by the web, we keep our visitors’ attention and encourage them to explore – statistics show this works well.”

Based in Vienna, the **Central Europe Programme** brings together eight EU countries and five border regions of Ukraine and funds a variety of projects. To help their beneficiaries communicate with the press and public they brought in a professional communication company to give a two-day seminar on practical aspects of public relations.

Over 70 people – mainly lead partners and communication managers of already approved projects – took part in workshops covering how to write a press release, how to time a publicity event and how to attract the right attention. Markus Stradner, head of the communication unit for the programme’s Joint Technical Secretariat, explained that the feedback was very positive, “Some people had already run a project and so knew more than those who were just starting out. But we found a balance and there was something for everybody.”

Carsten Debes went along and has no doubt of the benefit. He is a Lead Partner in the Resource project, which aims to revitalise former mining areas. “There was an exercise in which we role-played contacting a journalist and the communication professionals watched us and then told us where we were going wrong. I find I use what I learned then, regularly at work.” So convinced is he that this sort of learning process is the way forward that he then gathered together all the partners involved in his project for an in-house training session. “The best thing about the type of training is that you can pass it on,” explains Debes.

RegioStars – celebrating excellence

An integral part of the annual conference Regions for Economic Change, RegioStars is one of the event’s highlights. Set up to “improve information about good practice, stimulate the exchange of experience and provide visibility for progressive-thinking”, the awards now cover information and communication events.

The 2009 prize for a radio or television spot or programme that highlights the benefits of Cohesion Policy was awarded to Greece for its quirky, amusing TV spot called ‘Do you know about ESPA?’

For the **Information and Communication category of the 2010 RegioStars**, 39 valid entries of Regional Policy websites were received. The winner will receive its RegioStar on 20 May 2010 in the framework of the Regions for Economic Change conference. The competition is very strong – the independent jury of experts has a difficult choice to make.

DIANA CHEPISHEVA

Bulgarian National Radio, Brussels correspondent



Diana Chepishева has been covering the effect of EU membership on her country since the start of the process and has won the European Commission's Robert Schuman award for radio-journalism.

In your opinion, is the general public in your country/region interested and well informed about European Regional Policy? If not, why not?

Regional Policy is of great importance for Bulgaria – the poorest EU member, but there is still a lot to be done in terms of understanding how this policy works. Huge amounts of money had been frozen as a result of irregularities and fraud. At the same time, Bulgarian authorities have failed to submit adequate compliance assessments for the Operational Programmes, and more than €6 billion intended for the country remains out of reach.

Therefore, instead of being interested in the strategic concept of European Regional Policy, the general public perceives the situation as a national failure: "The EU is ready to give us a lot of money to catch up, but we are unable to qualify." That was among the main reasons why the previous government was swept away. A new government came in, pledging to put an end to corruption schemes and to ensure proper management of EU funds. The critical question now is whether there is still a chance to get on track in order to finally get the money. Then we will be able to start grasping the complexity of terms like 'Cohesion' by seeing how they really happen.

What makes stories about regional funds interesting?

The very concept of reducing disparities in a 27-country strong Union is interesting in Central and Eastern Europe. My experience leads me to believe that practical examples and success stories are the best explanations. They prove that 'Boosting growth and jobs' is not an empty phrase. Even in Bulgaria there are a lot of examples of how EU funding can make a difference.

What stories about EU Regional Policy would you like to be able to tell your audience?

I would like to see a break from stories of blocked payments and a move towards stories of money being injected into the country – it is just a matter of good governance.

Then we can focus on the key issues: how to take full advantage of EU funding; how to increase energy efficiency, promote renewables and find alternatives in order not to be as dependent on Russia; how to use Regional Policy to help us to 'go green' and obtain low carbon technologies while creating new jobs. Another key issue is the importance of these innovations for the EU and what they mean for SMEs. The list is a long one. At this point, it seems a bit abstract for many Bulgarians, but I believe it is feasible.

“ In Bulgaria there are a lot of examples of how EU funding can make a difference. ”



EVA MARTINEZ OROSA

Communication officer for the INTERREG IV North West Europe Programme



In your opinion, is the general public in your country/region interested and well informed about European Regional Policy? If not, why not?

I can speak only from the point of view of the 'co-operation zone' covered by my Programme, North West Europe. It covers 19% of the total EU-27 land area and is home to 179 million people. If we judge by the number of applications for projects we receive, we can say that, in general, the North West Europe population is well informed about European Regional Policy and its funds. There is, however, a lot of work to do. The knowledge about the funds is not as deep as we would desire. One of the reasons for this is the high number of programmes dealing with similar issues in overlapping areas. This makes it difficult for the majority to understand the scope and priorities of each programme and how they reflect the policies.

What makes stories about regional funds interesting?

The clearest stories about regional funds are the projects funded by them. They have great potential to appeal to people because they have a human dimension and help improve everyday life. The projects funded under the North West Europe Programme have an advantage: they are concrete measures and are therefore directly 'felt' by the citizen. In our case, they are also special because they are the product of an international 'magic' that allows for remote regions to work together on a common result. It is what we call in our jargon 'transnational'. A colleague of mine compared it once to a group of chefs each bringing one ingredient to bake a common cake. This international character is, at the same time, the most difficult to understand and to communicate to the media and from the media.

“The projects... have great potential to appeal to people because they have a human dimension and help improve everyday life.”

What is the biggest challenge in the communication of a Programme like INTERREG North West Europe?

The greatest difficulty is to create a label for the Programme and have it differentiated from the rest of the INTERREG Programmes. When informing about our projects, the media usually mention the fact that they have been co-financed with ERDF funds, but they do not always include the name of the Programme.



GIEDRIUS SURPLYS

Information Officer of the ENPI CBC Programme Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus



From 2005 to 2009 Giedrius Surplys worked as an Information Officer for the INTERREG IIIA/TACIS Lithuania, Poland, Kaliningrad Region Neighbourhood Programme and the ETC CBC programme Lithuania-Poland.

In your opinion, is the general public in your country/region interested and well informed about European Regional Policy? If not, why not?

There used to be a joke in the U.S.S.R. about a guy who lost a lot of weight quickly. He explained himself: 'I switch on my TV – I see Brezhnev, on my radio I hear Brezhnev. Now, I dare not open my fridge'. I am afraid the situation starts being similar to the EU communication.

In every Lithuanian daily paper you will find a bunch of articles with 'Order No' and the 'EU flag' written in boring language. This way, I think, the EU communication starts resembling propaganda and might soon antagonise our audiences.

So, I decided to conduct a little e-poll, of 117 people, regarding EU communication in Lithuania. Surprisingly, the answers to my poll have proven some Lithuanians are not fed up with the EU yet. The majority of them stated they do not feel a surplus of EU-based information and do not treat articles with the 'EU flag' as propaganda.

I feel happy my pessimism was not valid. But I am afraid the same poll may provide different answers in other EU countries or later in Lithuania.

What makes stories about regional funds interesting?

They are interesting simply because they are stories about my life and my neighbourhood. They help me feel a real European. Also, I truly feel I could be the one using regional funds, so I am interested and motivated. Everyone in the EU benefits.

I personally have worked with the cross-border co-operation and neighbourhood programmes, where bordering regions of

different countries implement joint projects. This is a wonderful opportunity for building bridges and an interesting story.

Especially in the situations when the relations in 'high-politics' are not so good. I like to say I prefer digging potatoes rather than flying kites together in situations like these. It is not so poetic, but it is tangible and paves the way for high level friendship.

Can communication on European Union policies be treated as a new profession?

Europromo (EU promotion) is mostly carried out by non-professional communication specialists, usually from bureaucratic backgrounds. Considering the huge amount of specific information that our job requires, a pure communication specialist would not necessarily cope better.

I believe treating Europromo as a separate profession would help us to coordinate our activities and would contribute to its development (by theoretical and practical means). Not to mention that revising the EPSO enrolling system, which first conducts a massive test and only then asks for CVs, would also help us to get smart people on board.

“ I truly feel I could be the one using regional funds, so I am interested and motivated. ”

PATRIZIA LENZARINI

Foreign correspondent for the Italian News Agency ANSA, based in Brussels



In your opinion, is the general public in your country/region interested and well informed about European Regional Policy? If not, why not?

The general public in Italy is very interested in knowing what Europe is doing for them through European Regional Policy. In light of this interest from the general public, the Italian press – and in particular the regional newspapers, which are important in Italy in terms of their size and circulation – is very receptive to all information coming out of Brussels on the management of the European regional funds. And their interest is not restricted to this. They also want to know how the projects will improve the lives of those intended to benefit from them once they have been completed.

What makes stories about regional funds interesting?

A 'story' becomes interesting when it is able to satisfy the public's curiosity about whether, for instance, investment in new technology planned for their cities with an ERDF contribution has been made, whether it will be completed on schedule, or whether there will be delays, and if so why. Also whether the funds have been well spent or partially wasted.

Once the project has been set up, people want to know how many jobs it will create. They basically want to know whether it has been worthwhile.

How can citizens in the most isolated and poorest towns in Italy be made aware that Europe, and Regional Policy, has not forgotten about them?

EU Regional Policy has all the attributes to become the policy most highly regarded and well recognized by the general public. For this to happen, the European Commission has to provide 'tailored' information.

Having been an accredited journalist for more than 20 years, I have always had difficulty in conveying the 'story' of projects financed with European funding contributions. This is not because of a lack of willingness, but because communication about Regional Policy is based on a single entity, whereas it is in fact made up of millions. What is the solution? Country-specific information units capable of providing information to journalists in Brussels wanting to know to what extent small projects can change the lives of the citizens of the poorest and most isolated towns in Italy. If a particular project is not implemented, it is essential to explain the reasons why.

“ Once the project has been set up, people want to know how many jobs it will create. ”



PROGRAMMES ON THE AIR IN PORTUGAL



In this edition of the magazine, Panorama considers three countries and looks at how they are dealing with the need to communicate the ways in which regional funding is working for their citizens.

Between 2007–13, Portugal is set to receive €21.5 billion worth of regional funding – that’s a lot of potential projects changing the lives of many people. As is often the case, the question is how to let them know where the money that is helping them, is being spent. So the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) network of Portuguese communication officers has taken to the airwaves, using radio programmes to explain funding programmes.

‘Objective 2013’ is a radio slot which goes out every weekday for three minutes and on Saturday all the week’s programmes are repeated in succession. Almost all the time is dedicated to describing projects.

On the same wavelength

The idea to use radio came about because the Portuguese communication officers feel communicating regional funding requires a shift in the language. All too frequently jargon and prose which is impenetrable to the general public creeps in. They also wanted to make full use of a medium that reaches a wide public.

The Objective 2013 radio programme forms part of a push to improve the way in which communicating with the public is made easier through the use of language which is engaging and more closely related to their daily lives.

TSF was the radio station chosen to broadcast the programmes, following a call for proposals which pre-selected those which covered the whole country and had high audience ratings.

In three minutes the journalist presents the project and identifies the Operational Programme and fund that supports it. A quote from a beneficiary is always included, underlining the relevance of the project. The beneficiary also talks of medium and long term expectations, how regional funding support has made a difference to them and, in some cases, will go on to give the audience advice on how to apply.

Those who miss the weekday slots can catch up with them on the radio station’s web site.

Listeners are brought in by human interest stories, which fortunately abound since Portugal is using its allocation under Structural Funds to develop skills, promote sustainable growth,

Media view

For the director of the station, Paulo Baldaia, the partnership with the NSRF’s Observatory is an important way to give new and useful information to the listeners. “We are a private radio but we believe that our content must be useful at the public service level. The NSRF is the European Union support for the modernisation and development of the country. It is important for the public to know what is being prepared and done all over the country and at the same time inform all who may benefit from the Structural Funds.”

guarantee social cohesion, ensure the development of the territory and the cities, and improve governance. You don’t have to dig deep to find the people behind the priorities.

How does it work?

An average of 2.2 million people a month tune in to hear the transmissions which, week by week, focus on different Operational Programmes – Portugal runs 14. But it is not only all the programmes that get covered, the slot also visits all the regions. “In terms of logistics and people involved in this initiative, it is also a challenge because all the NSRF authorities have to be very pro-active: a daily programme which will last for a year is quite demanding in terms of contents,” explains Elisabete Quintas, communication department coordinator at the NSRF Observatory.

Although the structure of the radio project is clearly defined, Quintas feels the independence of the station is important. They made it clear that it was a partnership that was being proposed and that the funds’ communication officers had no desire to determine all the content or screen programmes prior to airing. “The journalists can propose projects supported by Structural Funds they feel are relevant – we don’t interrupt their flair for identifying a good human interest story,” says Quintas.

From the station’s perspective the notion is interesting since it gives them a theme through which to explore the lives of their listeners.

“This is important,” says journalist Cláudia Timóteo, one of a team of four working on the project. “We help people understand that it is possible to make their dream come true through funding their project and it also gets people clear on where the money is coming from and where it is going.”

She has no doubt that she is at the place where newsworthy stories are breaking, “It is a privilege to be in the know about so many projects and initiatives that are a positive force for change in my country.”

A FRESH APPROACH TO URBAN RENEWAL IN GHENT AND FLANDERS

The ERDF Unit of the Flemish Government makes sure it has a visible presence at all regional events linked to EU funding. They are constantly re-evaluating the best way of communicating, as well as how they measure the effectiveness of their efforts, too.

Liliane Stinissen, Communication Officer in the ERDF Unit of the Flemish Government, is clear that "you must know your audience well if you are to get your message across in the right way". For many regional development opportunities, it is businesses and organisations that need to know the possibilities open to them. Here, novel approaches to spreading the word come second to reliable, regular communication of the facts through seminars, networking events and brochures or papers, whether printed or online.

Resources are carefully targeted at a known audience and, over time, the networks of contacts built up yield their own value in multiplying the impact of the basic information. To enhance this solid effort, the Flemish Government highlights real examples of how business has benefited and how the economy as a whole is growing with EU co-finance. So, for example, when investment in the Expo Centre in Kortrijk was completed and local hotel bookings rose, this was an ideal time to publicise how EU finance was part of the picture.

Beyond the well defined parameters of business, however, there is the wider task of keeping the general public on side. The Flemish Government grabs all publicity opportunities, combining its wealth of factual information with imaginative ways of engaging with people of every age and situation. At special events, like the one in Ghent, you can see investment projects first-hand. While you are there, you can take a walk through a special exhibition explaining how EU funding is making a difference to specific types of investment. If you are a teenager, the information is designed with you in mind, and includes interviews and interactive games to challenge your thinking.

Evaluating the true impact of this publicity is always a challenge, but clearer information is becoming available through online surveys and local media. On the Flemish Government website, the public can respond to surveys, but in the future, face-to-face questionnaires are envisaged, so that people can respond in person and know that their views have been heard.

Speaking up in Ghent

European co-funding is at the heart of regeneration and innovative development in Ghent. "Local residents need never be in any doubt that the prosperity of their city is partly due to EU membership", says Kathleen Tavernier, official at the City of Ghent authority.

On 8 May last year, the city authorities and Province of East Flanders jointly organised Europe Day, a series of events which explained how the EU is working for local people, young people and businesses. The day was set in the Rabot district, a previously run-down part of town and home to a large and diverse immigrant community. Europe blossomed before their eyes in fact, as a collective planting session took place to create the European flag entirely with flower bulbs.

There has been a particular focus on the Rabot and Blaisantvest residential areas. A long-term redevelopment programme, in place since 2003, is recreating the social identity of the district, revitalising its economic potential and providing good quality, sustainable housing.



Innovative use of time and opportunity has also led to a temporary community centre in a former industrial site in Rabot-Blaisantvest. The site is earmarked for new housing, but while it remains empty, social and artistic groups have made good use of EU co-funding to create De Site. Here different communities can come together, garden plots are available to residents and many cultural activities can take place.

October saw a joint event run by the City of Ghent and the Flemish Government to showcase the 'Living in the City' housing initiative. Residents had a chance to see first-hand how their city is turning its past into a thriving future with support from the EU. Boat tours were laid on to show the renovation of the docks, other sites being transformed into sustainable housing and investments in infrastructure strengthening the city's competitive position in Flanders.

POLAND - USING COMPETITIONS

TO GET THE MESSAGE ACROSS

There can be debate on how to use the funds allocated under the Regional Development remit. Where the money would be best applied and to what type of project. But one thing everybody can agree on is a desire for their country to be more beautiful. And it is the unanimous support for this simple idea that the Polish Ministry for Regional Development is using to promote regional funding across the country.

As with any competition, Poland Growing More Beautiful, now in its third year, awards prizes to winners of various categories. What makes this EU publicity campaign intriguing is that the prizes take the form of free publicity for the winning projects. All are associated with the tourist industry so the publicity they gain is vital. But it is not just the attraction that gets a boost, the publicity also highlights the fact that the lion's share of the money supporting the project has come from regional funding.

Anna Sulińska-Wójcik, Head of Unit at the Department for Information, Promotion and Training, smiles slightly, "We think it is rather clever" she says.

The germ of a good idea

The Poland Growing Beautiful (now 'Growing More Beautiful') competition is one example of a project funded by a grant scheme which the Department runs as part of its European Funds Communication Strategy. This identifies 20 projects annually, which promote EU involvement in Poland: celebrating EU funding and explaining how the system works to as wide an audience as possible. One selected project suggested a guide book on the country's key tourist attractions – from this arose the idea of an annual competition.

"We knew it was a great idea when we saw it" says Sulińska-Wójcik, "We wanted to show the public the real effects of the EU funds – tourist projects are very visible, high profile and attractive so we wanted to have a competition for such projects to prove that the funds go to something people can really see."

How to really get the media on board

Once the participants become involved, the local press is informed and the projects get a taste of the kind of publicity they can expect to gain should they win. "When we send out the list of nominees we get a lot of column inches in the press, they are very interested. The local media start to lobby for their favourite projects so the competition features in the press immediately," explains Sulińska-Wójcik.

And, with examples ranging from a disused textile mill in depressed, post-industrial Łódź being transformed into a now famous art gallery or an interactive science park in Cracow, there is a wide range of attractions to cover. "We knew the competition would showcase interesting projects, but we were really impressed by the variety of the applications," adds event specialist Edyta Meczyńska.

It is the quality of the media coverage that makes being nominated so useful and, of course, winning even better. Part of the project promotion was a regular feature on a popular breakfast time TV show which went out over the weekend and was hosted by a well known personality. The prime-time slot sees the journalist visiting the various winners and not only showing off the site of interest, but also explaining the role EU funding has played to bring the project about.

All this is then backed up by well placed ads in magazines to be found onboard incoming planes and an attractive exhibition, very state-of-the-art and high design, which has been mounted in the airport.

And the winner is...

Prizes at the first award ceremony were handed out by the Minister for Regional Development. Since many of the winners were from small towns and villages, the moment of recognition was a powerful one. "Many of the winners had tears rolling down their faces", remembers Magdalena Dziubek-Grudzinska, the department's chief specialist in international co-operation.

But isn't it hard to get high-level politicians to attend such a ceremony? "Yes," she acknowledges, and then explains the evening was planned to coincide with a high-level forum happening close by. "We knew they would be just next door, so we timed our event carefully and it paid off, they came."

This kind of canny planning can be seen throughout. Sulińska-Wójcik puts it in a nutshell, "We found a way to talk about more than the money – the money is abstract, just a large number that people can't conceptualize, it is impersonal. But when we communicate Poland is growing beautiful thanks to European money, people look around and they start to notice that some things really change."



TOULOUSE CITY BIKE TOUR IS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

Toulouse residents are well up to speed on making sustainable transport part of everyday life. Getting round the city by bike is made easy with the bike loan scheme run by Vélô Toulouse and there is a growing network of EU funded cycle tracks around the Garonne region. So in May, when Toulouse was part of the week-long regional Fête de l'Europe in Midi-Pyrénées, a cycle ride around the city, to see how EU money was working for local people, quickly generated interest.

On the day, the organisers were thrilled to see nearly 200 people turn up for the tour; some of them journalists, but the vast majority just interested local people. Their 15km route took them round 12 different investment projects in the city, part-funded by EU Regional Development Funds. It gave a very tangible insight into how EU money is a key part of achieving many different ventures, in partnership with regional authorities.

In 2009 the Balade à Vélo in Toulouse (part of the Fête de l'Europe) received:

- €4 500 from the ERDF
- Plus voluntary contributions in kind from participating organisations

At regional level, French government officials have fed comments and ideas into the French network for regional development and the concept has sparked interest elsewhere in France and further afield in the EU through the Inform Network of communication officers of EU Regional Policy. Everyone has responded well to the combination of an imaginative event with minimal financial outlay that promoted European regional development projects. Local groups had a direct role to play and the whole event was an original way of showing people the impact of EU funding.

The bike ride itself was an effective, low-budget use of funds. The EU resources were focused on producing a colourful and informative map of the route, with details about each of the sites visited and web links to further information. 5 000 maps were distributed throughout the whole city before the event, giving an eye-catching and simple focus to the day itself.

The journalists who took part had first-hand material for their reports and could get alongside local people for their comments. Media coverage before and after the event was very positive and naturally dispelled cynical or critical attitudes towards the EU. Many people said this was the best event in the whole Fête de l'Europe week and were keen to see the idea used again in a different context.

Small outlay, big impact

New opportunities take shape

Getting to the heart of things

The Toulouse bike tour showed how information on EU regional development does not need to be obscure or complicated. It linked easily with the positive image of cycling in Toulouse and was an engaging way of letting people see the results of EU investment. Participants and onlookers alike could make the connection between a sociable, fun event and the contribution of EU regional development in Toulouse.

The tour stopped at the Cancéropôle, with a unique opportunity to go inside this state-of-the-art cancer research centre, built following the devastating explosion at the AZF refinery in 2001. This was the biggest and most significant project included in the tour. It naturally generates great interest and emotion locally and it was good to be able to use this site as a centrepiece of the day.

A number of other projects in the city were initiated following the AZF explosion, including the rebuilding and upgrading of a secondary school. Some schemes have regenerated parts of the city with community art projects and aesthetic improvements. Others have provided new facilities for residents, such as a child care centre.

The success of the event was due to the commitment and energy of the local associations behind it. Façons L'Europe, part of the French pro-European lobby, had the original idea and took the lead in bringing it to fruition. Their members and those from Association Toulouse Vélo provided many volunteers to help organise and run the practical aspects such as stewarding and security. Together with the regional authorities in Midi-Pyrénées, these associations sold the concept to local people and showed how everyone could be involved.

MEETING YOUR

COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS



How can you calculate the space needed for the obligatory EU related information (Article 9 of the Commission Regulation 1828/2006) on a billboard or plaque?

It should be underlined that the obligations for beneficiaries regarding the type of information to be provided on permanent plaques differ slightly from those regarding billboards. What both should include is the EU emblem, reference to the fund concerned and a statement highlighting the EU's added value.

In the case of billboards, the information referred to in Article 9 must take up at least 25% of the billboard, in the case of plaques the information referred to in Article 9 *plus* the information on the type and name of the operation together must make up at least 25% of the plaque.

When organising and participating in conferences and seminars promoting Operational Programmes, what technical assistance can one claim?

Technical assistance sets out to facilitate overall programme management and implementation so related activities have to be clearly linked to what the Operational Programmes is setting out to do. For example, in relation to publicity and information actions, the programme technical assistance can pay for publicising activities that can be supported under the programme.

Each communication plan must contain an indicative budget (Article 2(2c) of the Commission Regulation 1828/2006). Can such budgets be used for the internal costs of the managing authorities, such as training in the field of communication for staff or salaries for communications officers?

Unlike the period 2000–06, there are no specific eligibility rules in relation to technical assistance expenditure. Provided that the rules set out in the regulation specific to each fund are respected, the eligibility of technical assistance activities is defined at national level. So if the national provisions allow, the technical assistance of the programme concerned can co-finance training or the salaries of staff carrying out the Operational Programme. However, it is necessary to show such expenditure is required for the implementation of the activities defined in the communication plan.

A billboard must be put up at the site of each operation (Article 8 of Commission Regulation 1828/2006), but what should be done when an operation has many sites? If 12 bridges are being built, does that mean 12 operation sites?

The information and publicity provisions aim to give sufficient visibility to EU supported projects so that citizens become aware of the contribution of Cohesion Policy to their quality of life. Therefore, Article 8 should be interpreted in a way ensuring a broad effect of its provisions (Art. 8.3): "The beneficiary shall, during the implementation of the operation, put up a billboard at the site of each operation which fulfils the following conditions:

- (a) the total public contribution to the operation exceeds € 500 000;
- (b) the operation consists in the financing of infrastructure or of construction operations."

So regardless of the definition of 12 bridges as 'one' or as '12 operations', if the 12 bridges are situated in different places, and separate work sites are installed for their construction, each site should bear the respective billboard.

Generally at what point should potential beneficiaries comply with publicity rules? Is it from the point at which they sign a co-financing agreement? What happens if the project has already prepared information and publicity materials before (but after 1 Jan 2007) and would like to claim those costs as eligible? What is the situation if a managing authority has already published promotional material on a project while planning to submit a project application?

Beneficiaries only have the obligation to respect the publicity rules once the project is selected for co-financing and a co-financing agreement has been signed with the competent authority. As a general rule, expenditure, including that linked to the publicity of the operation, is eligible if actually paid between the date of submission of an Operational Programme or 1 January 2007, whichever is earlier (Article 56 of the General Regulation). Expenditure on publicity material before this date and/or which does not comply with the publicity requirements of the Regulations cannot be considered eligible.

Panorama puts Regional Policy into context and takes a look at how other people and organisations communicate Regional Policy.

MAKING EACH WORD COUNT

Everyone involved in promoting and implementing regional development policies wants to get across the same consistent message of how EU co-funding is making a difference to people and communities. The trick is to make sure that your organisation is speaking directly to the groups you're working with. Here two different bodies reveal how they get to the heart of the matter.

Europe Direct at your service

You don't have to visit Brussels to understand how Europe works. People working for Europe Direct's offices around the EU have more answers at their fingertips than you could ever imagine.

Europe Direct staff are focused on seeing a good take up of EU regional funding for projects in their regions. They use every kind of approach to make sure that businesses and associations who could qualify for funds do actually apply and see the process through to completion. They network constantly with their counterparts in other regions to build co-operation and pick up the latest ideas. Wherever there is an opportunity to explain to people how EU funds are making a difference to everyday life, Europe Direct staff are there with publicity and up-to-date project information.

Across France, for example, their offices are linked through a Working Group, and Commission officials from DG Regio, Employment and Agriculture regularly take part in their meetings to discuss how funds can best be promoted at regional level. The Commission's direct involvement raises the profile of Europe Direct offices and builds stronger co-operation between Brussels and Member States.

Europe Direct staff know the power of imaginative communication and can be found organising briefings for journalists, business forums to promote applications for funding, regular e-mail newsletters and many 'behind the scenes' roles to achieve the best outcome for financial contribution.

ESF Information Officers – raising the profile of employment and training

Impressive amounts of EU money are invested each year, via the European Social Fund, in employment and training initiatives and the first priority of the **Informal Network of ESF Information Officers** (INIO) is making sure that everyone who could use them knows about them.

Given that these officers are spread right across the EU, one of their key assets is their network of colleagues around Europe, allowing them to share their successes and bounce ideas off each other. This INIO network is run by the Commission and demonstrates just how much good policy management relies on active partnerships. The network adds a further dimension to their overall mission of providing top quality information and

publicity and supports their own expertise in identifying the right people for the right opportunity.

With such a network in place, all types of exchanges and co-operation become possible. A conference being staged in one country can call on big name speakers from other parts of the EU. At a more personal level, contact between officials keeps a regular flow of information going and is a proven way of passing on good ideas.

One of the most personal approaches to publicity has been a series of interviews with individuals on video which can be accessed on the Commission's ESF website. These short interviews with 54 people, which are now available as a book too, show how they have taken significant steps in retraining to meet the changing requirements of the labour market around them. These are the real stories of people who have benefitted from training co-financed by the EU and they would simply not be possible without the communication officers on the ground bringing their stories to a wider audience.





EU Regional Policy communication links

RegioStars 2009

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/interregional/ecochange/regiostars_09_en.cfm?nmenu=4#f

RegioStars 2010

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/interregional/ecochange/regiostars_en.cfm?nmenu=4#2010

Open Days 2009 (European Week of Regions and Cities)

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2009/index.cfm

Europe Direct

http://ec.europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm

European Citizen Action Services

<http://www.ecas.org/>

Citizens' perceptions of EU Regional Policy (Flash Eurobarometer Series #234)

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_234_en.pdf
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_234_sum_en.pdf

European Commission links

The home page of the Directorate-General for Regional Policy

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index_en.htm

DG Regio's Inform Network

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/country/commu/index_en.cfm

Regulation 1083/2006 (General regulation)

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/general/ce_1083\(2006\)_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/general/ce_1083(2006)_en.pdf)

Regulation 1828/2006 (Implementing regulation)

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/fsfc/ce_1828\(2006\)_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/fsfc/ce_1828(2006)_en.pdf)

Regulation 1081/2006 (ESF regulation)

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/fse/ce_1081\(2006\)_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/fse/ce_1081(2006)_en.pdf)

Links to projects/organisations mentioned in this issue

"Do you know about ESPA?", Greece – RegioStars 2009 audiovisual winning clip

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/interregional/ecochange/doc/movie/greek_national.wmv

Swansea University Centre for NanoHealth

<http://www.swan.ac.uk/nanohealth/>

Musikpark Mannheim

<http://www.musikpark-mannheim.de/web09/>

Brandenburg managing authority

www.entdecke-efre.de

Canceropôle Toulouse

<http://www.canceropole-toulouse.com/en/index.php>

Central Europe Programme (2007–13) – Co-operating for success

<http://www.central2013.eu/>

Ghent Europe Day

www.gent.be

Toulouse Europe Day

<http://www.europe-en-midipyrenees.eu/web/Europe/1210-fete-de-l-europe.php/>

Europe Direct

http://ec.europa.eu/europedirect/visit_us/index_en.htm

ECAS

<http://www.ecas.org/>

Committee of the Regions

<http://www.cor.europa.eu/pages/HomeTemplate.aspx/>

The ERDF in Ghent, Belgium

<http://www.gent.be/EFRO>

Poland Growing More Beautiful

<http://www.polskapieknieje.pascal.pl/>

Regional Policy networking programmes

<http://www.interreg4c.eu/>

<http://www.espon.eu/>

<http://urbact.eu/>

<http://www.interact-eu.net/>

Other useful links

Annual survey on future trends in communication management and public relations

www.communicationmonitor.eu

Link to key websites for the next issue

Evaluations of the 2000–06 programming period

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/rado2_en.htm

Evaluations of the 2007–13 programming period

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/rado_en.htm

THE FUTURE OF COHESION POLICY

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT COHESION POLICY POST-2013 ARE WELL UNDER WAY

A new informal advisory group of Member State experts – the High Level Group Reflecting on Future Cohesion Policy – has been created to support the work of the Commission in developing post-2013 Cohesion Policy. This article explains the mandate of the group and places its work in the context of the debate on the future policy.

In 2007, with the launching of the 4th Cohesion Report, the reflection process on future Cohesion Policy started, putting forward a number of questions for public consultation related, in particular, to the challenges facing regions in the coming years. The results of this public consultation were summarised in the Fifth Progress Report on Economic and Social Cohesion (June 2008). The next step was the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion (October 2008). Its results were published in the Sixth Progress Report on Economic and Social Cohesion.

The likely regional impact of the four major challenges facing regions by 2020 was identified in a working paper in November 2008: globalisation, demographic change, climate change and energy.

In April 2009, the independent expert report 'An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy' was presented by Fabrizio Barca, making an assessment of the current situation and providing recommendations for the future.

Further to the presentation of a reflection paper by former Commissioner Danuta Hübner at the informal ministerial meeting in Mariánské Lázně in April 2009, the High Level Group (HLG) was established in order to provide an informal platform for discussion of the main elements for future Cohesion Policy between the Commission and Member States.

Katarína Mathernová, Deputy Director-General of DG Regio explains: "The HLG gives both the Commission and the Member States the opportunity to discuss in depth topics of mutual interest concerning future Cohesion Policy." She underlines the advantage of this group: "We are able to discuss future policy directions and to exchange between colleagues with similar experience of implementing Cohesion Policy. Since we do not have a mandate to discuss the budget – for this, we have more formally organised structures – the focus of the work is on the content and delivery of the policy."

The plan is to organise at least four meetings a year. Two meetings have taken place so far. The last meeting held in December, focussed on two main areas: Commissioner Samecki presented his 'Orientation Paper on Future Cohesion Policy' and the HLG members discussed the strategic alignment between the future EU 2020 strategy (a public consultation is currently open) and the role Cohesion Policy can play in addressing many of the key issues. The next meeting is scheduled to take place early in 2010.



Our regular update from... In each edition, Panorama finds out how two projects are unfolding from the perspective of the people managing them. We look into the highs and lows of managing ERDF funded projects: identifying the problems and sharing solutions.

PROJECT 1

INSIDE THE MUSIKPARK MANNHEIM

Musikpark, Mannheim – a project that gives start-up SMEs in the music sector their first step on the ladder. Musikpark's 4 300 square metres provide space for a choreography and performance room, workshop, several sound studios, TV studio and stylish meeting room for negotiating that all important, first commission.

Facts and figures

Just over €5 million is to be invested in Musikpark under Objective II. The funding started in 2004 and runs over 15 years.

Audit time at Musikpark

Nobody enjoys it; everybody has to do it – it's audit time. As anyone managing a project funded by Regional Policy knows, the paper work and person hours that go into opening up the books is part of the deal.

At Musikpark, project manager Christian Sommer is happy that the process is over and that all went well. "We got the information the official auditors for the EU in this region were coming back in August and had to get the paperwork down to the town hall three weeks later," all 50 metres of it.

The audit was looking over the first stage of the project, in which ERDF money went into the construction of the building which now houses Musikpark. For the week prior to the deadline, Sommer and all his colleagues at the park poured over printouts of technical details, plans, bills and all the communication that passed between contractors, architects and Musikpark. "Unfortunately many of those around at the time have now moved on and are no longer contracted to us. So we had to track them all down and ask them to be present," explains Sommer. No easy job given that they were no longer obliged to be involved, having ceased to be employed at Musikpark. But everyone turned up in the end and the whole process drew to a close in mid September. "We are waiting for a letter, but I have been told all is well", said Sommer.

Given Baden-Württemberg and the city of Mannheim's tradition of rigorous compliance with the regulations governing those in receipt of ERDF, Sommer never had any real doubts. "But it was a huge building project and there are always small things about which two opinions are possible," he adds.

Success means more space needed

While the auditors may have moved on to pastures new, Sommer's problems are far from over. The logic behind the establishment of the Musikpark was to provide a hothouse for aspiring industry professionals, small start-ups needing to get their feet on the ladder. Four years on and many have climbed high, outgrowing the space and the facilities on offer. It now becomes crucial that Musikpark does not fall victim to its own success.

"Some of the companies are doing really well – we have an events management SME which has really taken off and has clients all over Europe. They are telling us they either need us to give them more room or they'll have to move on", explains Sommer. And having them move on is exactly what he wants to avoid, "Companies that have grown with us turn to those in the same environment when they contract out work." He fears this will end if the larger, more successful SMEs go, taking their contracts and contacts with them.

To try and keep them on board will be the aim of the forthcoming quarter which will see intensive negotiations between the municipality of Mannheim and Musikpark.

Fame – and not just for the musicians

The undoubted success of Musikpark and its sister project, PopAkademie, encourages a lot of media attention. With write ups in publications as diverse as the music press and the Financial Times and coverage in a variety of media, Sommer is used to fielding journalists. "I know without doubt, the importance of crediting the hand that feeds you", he says. The synergy between local authority, national and EU regional funding is something he is keen to discuss. Sommer may be keen to get the message across, whether the journalists choose to publicise it is another matter, "The trick is to get the journalists to run with the information. It is important the public knows how projects like mine are made possible."



PROJECT 2

INSIDE THE CENTRE FOR NANOHEALTH (CNH) AT SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

Dovetailing the funding

A variety of funding sources are testament to a project's validity and to the quality of applications. At the CNH our regular contact Tim Claypole, the centre's director, is pleased to see smart synergies developing between the projects in which he is involved, "The funding becomes far more useful and goes much further when the money from different sources is used coherently. It takes a little time for everything to bed in", he explained.

But with success comes obligation. He is not so pleased to have to account for each hour he spends on seven different projects, no two funded in the same way and each requiring a separate time sheet. "When you are working flat out it is tricky to ascribe the hours – do you count the time flying to another city to give a presentation, or just the time spent standing in front of an audience? A different spreadsheet for seven projects, in some cases partially funded by up to four different sources."

Complex paperwork aside, the fact that the centre's new building, supported by both regional funds and the National Health Service Trust, will be built on both University and National Health Service land is a source of satisfaction to Claypole, "The new Life Sciences building will house both clinical trials and new start-ups so it is fitting that it straddles the boundary."

There are four centres of excellence in the field of plastic electronics in the UK: Cambridge, Manchester and Sedgefield and the CNH itself. Claypole is enthusiastic about future links between these national experts.

Developing the medical aids of tomorrow

With clinical trials at one end of the spectrum and fostering SMEs at the other, Claypole's activities at the CNH fall somewhere in between. His team is working on the development of bespoke bio-medical products for industry.

One thing Wales has no shortage of is sheep, and sheep have a useful ability to tolerate the extraction of quite a large quantity of their blood without suffering any ill effects. This makes them the perfect vehicle for antibody harvesting. Once injected with a virus, the sheep produce antibodies which are extracted from blood samples. The antibodies will then be subjected to the rigours of the printing process to see if they can stand up to the physical demands of being projected under pressure. "If they can, that will mean we can print them onto paper or another support and we'll end up with a sensor", explains Claypole.

The initial markets they have identified are progesterone sensors for fertility and pregnancy testing. "If this works, it will provide the industry with a far cheaper alternative to what is out there at the moment." And, that will just be the starting point, as other ways of applying the technology will spring up.

By bringing together the worlds of academia, the private sector and the National Health Service, the CNH works to apply nanotechnology to the detection of disease and identification of appropriate treatment.

Facts and figures

Just over €21 million is to be invested in the Centre for NanoHealth under the Convergence Objective. The funding started in 2009 and runs over five years.

Printing gelatine (bio polymers) to form three dimensional structures, around which cells can be encouraged to grow, is also being researched by his team. Printing will enable the forms to be regular – the machines calibrated and programmed to lay down lines with great accuracy and on a microscopic scale. The surface of the structure, called a scaffold, will be rough to permit cells to grow around it and adhere. Applications would include wound healing and stem cell growth.

"The variety of activities that go on at the CNH are supported by diverse funding sources – this is the key to keeping projects sustainable," Claypole affirms.



OPEN DAYS 2009, GLOBAL CHALLENGES

- EUROPEAN RESPONSES

From all over Europe, and further afield, over 7 000 people gathered to discuss sustainability, climate change, growth, cross-border co-operation and the way ahead for Cohesion Policy at the seventh annual Open Days conference in Brussels. And for those unable to make it to the city for 5 to 8 October, the month saw activities relating to the theme taking place across the EU under the banner 'Europe in our Regions/Cities'.

Communication – good for the planet

Around 1 000 people went to the Opening Session which started with speeches by President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso and the Commissioner for Regional Policy, Paweł Samecki and included a panel debate on the theme 'Global Challenges, European Responses'.

Welcoming the participants, Commissioner Samecki introduced Open Days as being the place where experience can be exchanged and the best ways to develop the regions discussed. Experience is particularly significant this year: since the last Open Days the world has seen turbulence in the financial markets. As the Commissioner explained, "We have been faced with a global financial and economic crisis to which we responded with the European Economic Recovery Plan, and other measures taken at national and regional levels."

President Barroso emphasised the fact that, in the face of the twin challenges of climate change and the economic crisis, old models of politics would not be sufficient which is why the theme of this year's Open Days was timely. "New questions demand new answers," he said. He welcomed the Irish 'yes' vote on the Lisbon Treaty that month and called for a partnership for progress, "It is my belief that only in partnership can we make Europe the sort of Europe we all dream of."

Over the three days delegates discussed, debated and examined the following themes:

Innovation as a way to restore growth in regions and cities

Strategies, programmes and projects at regional levels can innovate a range of sectors from tourism to the creative economy. Open Days hosted 54 seminars on the theme which considered healthcare, microcredit and employment and the role of the public sector in innovation, amongst other issues.

Climate change – regional solutions explored in the lead up to Copenhagen

Best practice shown in regional solutions to tackling climate change were showcased in 19 seminars covering the low carbon

The central themes at Open Days

- Restoring growth: Innovation in Europe's regions and cities
- Regions and climate change: Europe's way to sustainable regional development
- Territorial co-operation: Working together across borders
- Achieving results, looking ahead: EU Cohesion Policy's evaluation and future prospects

economy, the use of renewable energy sources and ways of financing energy-efficient measures through the Cohesion Policy. Under discussion at these seminars were subjects that included: Territorial Cohesion and integrated coastal zone management; how a city can set about making an inventory of its emissions, and the role of co-operative banks in financing eco-innovation.

Cross-border and interregional co-operation

Taking the recently adopted EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region as a prime example of European and international exchange on territorial cooperation, this theme underlined the exchange of ideas as being of key importance for policy development. Health care, the possibility of macro-regions as the future for delivering policy and the European grouping for territorial co-operation (EGTC) were covered in 29 seminars, alongside other subjects within the theme.

How has it gone so far, what lies ahead?

Evaluating Cohesion Policy and designing for the future – the 2000–06 programmes have now been evaluated. This formed the basis for discussion at 22 seminars, considering what has been learnt so far and how key findings from the evaluation process can best shape future policy. Regions brainstorming on the future of Cohesion Policy, a civil society forum on partnership principles and practices, ESPON 2013 – first results, and a panel debate on EU-Brazil Regional Policy co-operation were just some of the activities taking place within the theme.

Closing the event, Commissioner Samecki put his finger on the mood of the participants as they gathered for the last time, "I believe that discussion in a wide forum can widen the perspective of policymakers and improve their capacity to shape and implement the policy in the best possible way." In this he was clearly not alone, as the success of Open Days shows.



RegioNetwork 2020 – a new interactive discussion forum

To boost networking between regions and give them a means to exchange ideas at the click of a mouse, DG Regio is working on a networking tool, similar to existing social networks on the internet.

This dynamic platform will support the creation of new networks and allows Regio to share information on latest policy and users to create their own profile and receive automatic updates.

New in 2009

Last year’s event hosted some fun spin-offs:

Showcasing Cohesion Policy projects

A number of projects co-financed by European Cohesion Policy were showcased on a stage in front of the Commission headquarters in Brussels, the Berlaymont building. Music, dance and magic performances brought to life some extremely interesting projects featuring children from various regions across Europe. The success of showcasing some of these projects

will be repeated in 2010 when regions from all across Europe will be invited to ‘bring their projects to Brussels’, or showcase them at the numerous local Open Days events across the EU.

Open Days university

Open Days 2009 boasted a University for the first time, alongside the customary activities happening around the main events. This brought together renowned academics and researchers in a series of lectures and panels based on suggestions put forward by regions and partners.

“ European cities have to play a key role because they produce almost 80% of emissions. They have to be prepared for the implementation of new measures and I’m a little bit afraid that they are not prepared enough. They need some time, some resources and some knowledge to be better prepared.

Jirina Jilkova, Institute for Economics and Environmental Policy, Prague ”

“ There is a long-term objective of Cohesion Policy and that is to foster development across Europe and to make sure that even those regions which are lacking behind can unlock their potential and use the opportunities they have.

Dirk Ahner, Director General for Regional Policy, European Commission ”

“ The competition is very hard out there so we have to do our very best to use our resources in a more efficient way. We have to trust people that they have ideas, we have to trust small businesses that they are innovative but we also have to create an environment for them to be innovative and I think that’s how we can cope with the economic crisis that we have right now.

Maud Olofsson, Minister for Enterprise and Energy, Deputy Prime Minister, representing the Swedish Presidency ”

“ This policy needs to be a place-based policy, it needs to be a policy which is not sectoral but is regional or local. It needs to be based on investment that develops public goods in places and it needs to put together different actors across different levels of governance.

Mario Pezzini, OECD ”

What they are saying

“ Well, I think the Baltic Sea Strategy is very much a response to globalisation, it’s about using the challenges and opportunities that globalisation give us by improving our co-operation, by connecting young entrepreneurs and universities in the regions for instance.

Cecilia Malmström, Swedish Minister for European Affairs ”

SPREADING THE WORD THROUGH THE EU REPRESENTATIONS

Networks depend on a supply of information to keep them primed. In this issue Panorama talks with three EU Representations to see what they think of the information that is passed to them and ask them how they feel about their part in the knowledge chain.

The view from Rome

Working to provide information on European policies to interested citizens through communication networks such as Europe Direct, Mr Roland Prenen, based at the EU's Representation in Rome, has had many years of experience in using networks to explain policy.

In Italy, as in many other countries, the efficiency of communication varies from region to region. As he points out, it is not the job of Europe Direct to show regions where there are problems with regions' communication strategies. But Europe Direct offices depend on the quality of information coming out of Directorates-General such as Regio. "If that information is clear, transparent and bite-sized, even regions which are poorly organised will disseminate it," he explains.

"We don't need to use complex mechanisms to spread technical texts – we need to use the simple networks to pass on simple information," says Prenen.

To use the networks effectively and harness the geographical potential of Europe Direct, the message from Rome is clear, how the information reaches the Representation must be predictable



and the information itself has to be stripped of jargon and technicalities, "Objective 1, Objective 2 – people lose themselves in the complexities" Prenen feels. "What we on the ground need to convey is clarity and relevance to the person on the street who may not have been to university, let alone understand European affairs."

The view from the UK

As Head of UK Networks in London, Elizabeth Holt is aware that information flow depends on establishing good relationships between partners. It was to secure a simple and clear path for communication that she set up the UK Structural Funds Communication Network. "We're not looking at fund management, we want to reach the human stories behind the money," she explains.

She has brought together more than 30 people responsible for publicising EU-funded national, regional and local projects throughout the UK to find ways of increasing public interest and to demonstrate that European money contributes to the vibrancy of local communities. She has set up a dedicated intranet which allows members to discuss why some publicity events are a roaring success while others fail and which will also help identify media-friendly local personalities with something to say.

Holt knows success is also in the timing – coverage means getting out the information at exactly the right time for maximum impact. Partners will also use the intranet to signal upcoming newsworthy events.

"The UK is in the EU so the EU has to be in the UK. That isn't being seen now," says Holt. Given the attention the UK Representation is paying to getting the message over, this looks set to change.

The view from the EU's Northern Ireland office, part of the UK Representation

The projects co-financed with EU regional funding represent a cornerstone of Northern Ireland's relationship with Europe. The amounts involved are huge by Northern Ireland's standards (€2.2 billion for the period 2000–06, €1.1 billion for 2007–13). However, knowledge of the contribution Europe makes to local business, employment and support of civil society can easily pass by unnoticed.

Maurice Maxwell, Head of the EU's office in Northern Ireland, explains what he feels needs to be in place to increase public awareness:

"It is imperative that representations are kept informed of the principal developments in the programmes, in particular of media

relevant events. This can easily be achieved by networking both with colleagues in the Commission responsible for fund management but in particular with the various press and communication officers of managing authorities. Attendance at selected monitoring committees and involvement in communication networks such as Inform or the UK Structural Funds Communication Network is useful since this is where co-operation between managing authorities, the Commission Representations and DG Regio can be intensified."

DATES 2010	EVENT	PLACE
19 February	Informal ministerial meeting on Cohesion Policy http://www.eu2010.es/	Madrid (ES)
22–24 February	Local Government in network for a new Europe http://www.europeansummit2010.eu/	Barcelona (ES)
12 March	Territorial Cohesion: what scales of policy intervention?	Brussels (BE)
15–18 March	High-level meeting on innovation, organised by DG Research in co-operation with DG Regional Policy http://www.eu2010.es/	Granada (ES)
16–18 March	Informal ministerial meeting on Territorial Co-operation http://www.eu2010.es/	Málaga (ES)
19 April (tbc)	Cohesion Policy 2000–06: what have we achieved?	Brussels (BE)
19–21 May	6th European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns http://www.dunkerque2010.org/	Dunkerque (FR)
20–21 May	Regions for Economic Change conference and RegioStars Awards 2010	Brussels (BE)
24–26 May	Conference 'Regional Responses to Global Shifts: Actors, Institutions and Organisations' (http://www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/)	Pécs (HU)
27–28 May	Forum on Outermost regions	Brussels (BE)
4 June	Roma Inclusion conference: From data collection and evaluation to evidence based policy	Brussels (BE)
9 June	EU Danube Strategy conference	Vienna (AT)
21–22 June	Informal ministerial meeting on Housing and Urban Development	Toledo (ES)
4–7 October	Open Days – 8 th European Week of Regions and Cities – 'Objective 2020: Competitiveness, co-operation and cohesion for all regions'	Brussels (BE)

Themes for Open Days 2010 now announced

Open Days 2010 will consist of about 100 sessions such as seminars, workshops, debates, exhibitions, networking opportunities, etc. for about 6 000 participants. Under the headline 'Objective 2020: **Competitiveness, co-operation and cohesion** for all regions', the 8th Open Days will concentrate on three key themes – competitiveness, co-operation and cohesion – while presenting best practices from Cohesion Policy programmes across Europe:

- seminars on 'competitiveness' will focus on innovation, regional development and green economic growth, and results achieved by regions supported by the 'Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective' within the European Cohesion Policy programmes;
- under 'co-operation', debates about territorial and cross-border co-operation, the European Grouping on Territorial Co-operation (EGTC), and 'macro-regions' will highlight the latest developments and enhance exchange among practitioners;
- finally under 'cohesion', discussions will elaborate on the question to what extent convergence is occurring across Europe's regions, on the definition of territorial cohesion, on social cohesion, and on integrated approaches to policies relevant at the local level.

If you would like to contribute to the Open Days 2010 programme and become an event partner, please check the Open Days website for more information on how to apply:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2010/index.cfm

Additional information on these events can be found in the Agenda section of our Inforegio website:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/agenda/index_en.cfm

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Panorama welcomes your comments and questions. We want to hear from you. Tell us about your experience.

The next Panorama editions are:

Panorama 33 (Spring 2010) 'Evaluating Cohesion Policy 2000–06'.

Panorama 34 (Summer 2010) 'Integrated Development'. This issue will focus on urban development, urban-rural linkages and how an integrated approach can best be used to foster local and regional economic development. It will also include results from the Quality of Life in Cities survey and there will be a special section on the EU's ultra-peripheral regions.

Panorama 35 (Autumn 2010) 'Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion'. 2010 is the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. This issue examines how Cohesion Policy addresses the challenges of social exclusion, urban poverty and marginalised communities such as the Roma.

So if you have something to say, say it. If you would like to share interesting work in the above areas, to ask questions or express your views on this or any other Regional Policy issue, get in touch by contacting:

regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu

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