

## Annexes A to the Final Report

### Evaluation study on good practices in EU Regional Policy communication 2007-2013 and beyond

### Good practices in the Member States

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## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICES .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>CASE STUDY REPORT: ESTONIA .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>CASE STUDY REPORT: FRANCE .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>CASE STUDY REPORT: GERMANY .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>CASE STUDY REPORT: HUNGARY .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>CASE STUDY REPORT: ITALY .....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>CASE STUDY REPORT: POLAND .....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>CASE STUDY REPORT: SPAIN .....</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>CASE STUDY REPORT: SWEDEN.....</b>	<b>182</b>

## INTRODUCTION

This document contains annexes to the draft final report submitted by The Evaluation Partnership in the context of the Evaluation study on good practices in EU Regional Policy communication 2007-2013 and beyond.

The annexes contain the results of eight case studies carried out as part of Task 1 of the above-mentioned evaluation study. Each of these case studies investigated regional policy communication approaches, tools, challenges and good practices in one Member State.

The detailed results per Member State are presented in chapters 2 to 9 of this report. Chapter 1 provides a summary overview of the good practices that were identified, and highlights those that seem most interesting and relevant for presenting and sharing at a conference on regional policy communication planned for December 2013.

### **Approach to the case studies**

Following consultation with DG REGIO, eight Member States were selected for case studies: Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden. For each case study, three to five OPs were selected for an in-depth review of their communication activities, with a focus on identifying and collecting detailed information on good practices. For this purpose, in each country interviews were to be conducted with approx. 15 representatives of institutions that are involved in the communication effort of the selected OPs, as well as observers and stakeholders.

Visits to all eight Member States took place in May 2013, and a few additional interviews were conducted in the months of June and July. A total of 111 institutions / stakeholders were interviewed. It should be noted that a higher number of interviews were conducted in Member States where regional policy communication activities are decentralised (e.g. Spain) as opposed to being coordinated by a single central organisation (e.g. Sweden).

Below is a summary of the interviews that were conducted.

**Table 2: Overview of Member State case studies and interviews conducted**

Member State:	Estonia	France	Germany	Hungary	Italy	Poland	Spain	Sweden
Operational Programmes covered:	1. OP Development of the Living Environment (national) 2. OP Development of the Economic Environment (national) 3. OP Estonia – Latvia (ETC)	1. OP North West Europe (ETC) 2. OP Nord Pas de Calais (regional) 3. OP Ile de France (regional) 4. OP Europ'Act (DATAR) (national) 5. OP Midi Pyrenees (regional)	1. OP 'Brandenburg' (regional) 2. OP 'North-Rhine Westphalia' (regional) 3. OP 'Saxony' (regional) 4. OP 'Poland – Germany (Saxony)' (ETC)	1. OP Implementation (national) 2. OP South Great Plain (regional) 3. OP Economic Development (national)	1. OP Lombardia (regional) 2. OP Research and Competitiveness (national) 3. OP Learning Environment (national) 4. OP Friuli Venezia Giulia (regional), 5. OP Italy-Slovenia (ETC)	1. OP Innovative Economy (national) 2. OP Development of Eastern Poland (multi-regional) 3. OP for Silesian Voivodeship (regional) 4. OP for Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship (regional)	1. OP Cohesion Fund (national) 2. OP Andalucía (regional) 3. OP Castilla-La Mancha (regional) 4. OP Knowledge-Based Economy (multiregional) 5. OP Research, Development and Innovation (multiregional)	Centralised Comms Unit in Managing Authority (The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth) works with and supports eight regional OPs
Dates of country visit:	7-10 May 2013	16 & 24 May 2013 18 & 19 July 2013	21-24 May 2013	7-10 May 2013	7-13 May 2013	29 April - 9 May 2013	6-10 May 2013	20-22 May 2013
EC officials interviewed:	1 (Representation)	2 (DG REGIO, Representation)	2 (DG REGIO, Representation)	2 (DG REGIO, Representation)	2 (DG REGIO, Representation)	1 (Representation)	2 (DG REGIO, Representation)	1 (DG REGIO)
Primary communicators interviewed:	4 organisations (5 individuals)	5 organisations (5 individuals)	5 organisations (5 individuals)	2 organisations (6 individuals)	5 organisations (17 individuals)	5 organisations (6 individuals)	3 organisations (6 individuals)	1 organisation (3 individuals)
Secondary communicators interviewed:	3 organisations (4 individuals)	5 organisations (5 individuals)	4 organisations (6 individuals)	2 organisations (2 individuals)	4 organisations (8 individuals)	5 organisations (5 individuals)	15 organisations (18 individuals)	3 organisations (3 individuals)
Observers / independents interviewed:	3 organisations (3 individuals)	7 organisations (7 individuals)	0	5 organisations (5 individuals)	2 organisation (2 individuals)	6 organisations (6 individuals)	4 organisations (5 individuals)	0
<b>Total interviews (organisations)</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>5</b>

## 1 SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICES

In the following pages, we list and briefly describe all good practices identified during the visits to eight Member States (Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden) by categories (i.e. main types of communication tools or activities). We also show which of the seven ‘good practice criteria’ identified at the outset of the project we consider each of the examples to fulfil – as different examples stand out for different reasons. These criteria are:

Criterion	Description
<b>1. Design</b> <i>Extent to which the tool is attractive, eye-catching, user-friendly</i>	<p>This criterion relates to the ‘look and feel’ of communication measures. “Good practice” in this area means:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The tool looks very professional</li> <li>2. It is clearly better designed than other, similar tools</li> <li>3. It is particularly eye-catching – there’s something about it that stands out at first sight</li> </ol>
<b>2. Language</b> <i>Extent to which the tool employs simple and clear wording (i.e. accessible to target audiences)</i>	<p>For measures that target the general public (or specific sub-groups thereof), this criterion is all about avoiding overly bureaucratic, technical language, and conveying the essence of regional policy in clear and simple terms. “Good practice” in this area can mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The avoidance of overly technical terms</li> <li>• Language that is engaging and ‘speaks to’ the target audience</li> <li>• Where appropriate, a visual format that facilitates engagement and understanding</li> </ul>
<b>3. Content</b> <i>Extent to which the content of the tool is relevant to target audiences (not too technical, not too generic)</i>	<p>This criterion is a little hard to keep conceptually separate from the previous one (language). It should be taken to refer mostly to <i>what</i> is being communicated (as opposed to <i>how</i>). “Good practice” in this area means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The content is well thought through so as to be relevant</li> <li>• A focus on simple, clear messages (as opposed to technical details)</li> <li>• An appreciation of what the target audience cares about and is likely to be willing and able to take in</li> </ul>
<b>4. Outreach</b> <i>Extent to which the tool reaches target audiences / generates media interests, etc.</i>	<p>This criterion is about whether the measure has been able to reach a relatively large target audience – be it directly (e.g. through paid advertisements) or indirectly (e.g. through significant media coverage). Good practice in this area means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaching a large proportion of the general public with basic facts to raise their awareness;</li> <li>• Reaching a significant number of people with more direct contact;</li> <li>• Achieving an outreach that is far in excess of what could normally be expected for a given budget.</li> </ul>







Criterion	Description
<b>5. Novelty effect</b> <i>Extent to which the tool is different, innovative, unlike others of the same kind</i>	<p>This criterion relates to something that stands out because it is different, forward-thinking, and/or unexpected. This could mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An innovative technical solution (e.g. use of IT)</li> <li>• An innovative concept</li> <li>• An innovative dissemination</li> </ul>
<b>6. EU visibility</b> <i>Extent to which the EU forms part of communication</i>	<p>This criterion is about going beyond the legal requirements, and ensuring the EU features prominently in the communication measures. Good practice in this area means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A real emphasis on the EU contribution</li> <li>• Ensuring the EU logo / slogan etc. stands out visually</li> </ul>
<b>7. EU messages</b> <i>Extent to which the key messages defined by DG REGIO are clearly conveyed</i>	<p>The three key messages are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC (or EU) supports regional development (added value and role of the EC / EU)</li> <li>• Regional policy contributes to Europe 2020 (contribution to 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth')</li> <li>• RP makes a positive difference in people's lives (results / benefits at regional and/or individual level)</li> </ul> <p>When assessing good practice, we did not insist on verbatim mentions of these messages (or of the EC), but paid attention to the spirit of these messages, and whether the measures dedicate significant space / effort to conveying this.</p>





Following the summary overview per type of communication tool / activity below, we provide suggestions for which good practices seem especially interesting and appropriate for presentation at the conference on regional policy communication that DG REGIO intends to hold in December 2013. Where relevant, we include good practices from *Member States other than the eight we visited* that were brought to our attention by various key informants and stakeholders. These are not described and assessed in detail in the ensuing case study reports, but we nonetheless deem they represent interesting and successful examples which could be disseminated via the conference.

All good practices put forward should be seen merely as suggestions. Our field work was limited to eight Member States, and we were not in a position to visit / assess all Operational Programmes. It is highly likely that there are other good practices that we were not in a position to take into account. The final selection for the conference will have to be made by DG REGIO, in light of the thematic focus and structure it intends to give to the conference.

## 1.1 Events

Members of the evaluation team came across a large number of events of very different types, characteristics and sizes. The examples that stood out included participation in larger events, fairs or festivals (at which the main challenge tends to be attracting visitors and capturing their interest), as well as specific events that used different ways in which to convey key messages and bring regional policy closer to citizens. There are also examples that demonstrate that even smaller events targeted mainly at beneficiaries or stakeholders (and typically favoured by OPs with limited communication budgets) can reach the general public if well organised and combined with an effective media outreach strategy.

MS	Activity / tool	Good practice criteria						
		Design	Language	Content	Outreach	Novelty	EU visibility	EU messages
	<b>“GETAFE IN” cinema festival:</b> A cinema festival developed in the framework of the ERDF OP in Madrid, to increase the cultural offer and to encourage the participation of citizens in this type of events.				✓	✓		
	<b>Le joli mois de l'Europe:</b> Increasingly, the French regions organise EU-themed activities in May. Each region is free to make use of the common logo or not, and organise the month as it sees fit. Some regions focus on open houses of funded projects, others also organise events / activities around these.	✓			✓		✓	✓
	<b>Events for the general public in Saxony:</b> The authorities in Saxony have a presence at many large-scale events and fairs, and attract members of the public to the stand via a series of tools such as a quiz and a photo box.			✓	✓		✓	
	<b>Participation in the SMAU Event:</b> At this large trade fair targeted at technology entrepreneurs, the MA of Lombardy OP hosted a stand and organised a series of events, including a conference followed by 3 ‘talk show’ type meetings, moderated by a radio journalist.		✓		✓			✓
	<b>“Turn on the light of science”:</b> In the context of the EU Researchers’ Night in 2011 and 2012, the NOP for R&C organised events in several cities and showcased some of the science / innovation projects funded by the ERDF.			✓	✓	✓		
	<b>Attendance of summer festivals:</b> The NDA provided young festival goers with bin bags to collect certain types of waste. Full bags could be returned for specific gift coupons.				✓	✓		

	<b>European cycle ride in Toulouse:</b> Three-hour bike ride organised around a specific theme each year, and involving stops at different projects funded by the ERDF or ESF (where temporary signs are put up).	✓			✓	✓	✓	
	<b>Open Days of EU Development:</b> On two (weekend) days in March 2013, people were invited to visit between 20 and 30 EU-funded projects (free of charge) which are not usually accessible, and to upload their personal memories on an online memory wall.			✓	✓	✓		
	<b>Europe on the Ground – INTERREG IV:</b> Four events around given regional policy projects falling under the ETC North West Europe in 2013. For greater visibility, podcasts were uploaded onto the INTERREG's website.		✓	✓			✓	✓
	<b>Annual information event of the OP PL-SN (2011):</b> A small-scale stakeholder conference that managed to generate significant media interest by insisting on interesting, 'human' project presentations.			✓	✓			

With a view to the conference, we would put forward the following events for DG REGIO to consider inviting:

- 1. Open Days of EU Development (Hungary, national):** Open days allowing the public to visit projects exist in many countries. The Hungarian event in March 2013 stands out mainly due to its scope (20-30 projects that are not usually accessible), its effective promotion strategy (resulting in visits by 6,200 members of the public as well as 170 journalists), and the way in which it got people to create personal memories by uploading pictures on a special website (the so-called Memory Wall) to participate in a prize draw.
- 2. Le joli mois de l'Europe (France, many regional OPs):** The 'pretty / nice / pleasant' month of Europe was 'invented' by the region of Aquitaine in 2010 to provide more exposure to EU regional policy than was possible in a day (9 May) or a week. The concept is increasingly being taken up by regions across France. In Nord Pas de Calais, such a cross-fund (ERDF and ESF) month dedicated to showcasing projects to the general public was organised for the first time in May 2013, including 100 events, ranging from visits of projects, to conferences, to forums, to exhibits.
- 3. Participation in the SMAU event (Italy, Regional OP Lombardy):** SMAU is a large and prestigious innovation expo held annually in Milan. The MA used this to target the general public and potential beneficiaries alike, and raise awareness of the funding opportunities, the results, and more generally, the role of the EU as a major player in this sector. This was achieved via not only a stand, but a conference with MA and EC representatives, and three 'talk show' type meetings, moderated by a radio journalist, where beneficiaries took the stage and were given the opportunity to share their experiences.

Another initiative that is worth mentioning (even though it does not stem from any of the countries that were visited as part of this study) are the **Dutch "Europa Kijkdagen"** (<http://www.europaomdehoek.nl/kijkdagen>). These have been organised by MAs in the






Netherlands since 2011, and are considered by many as ‘state of the art’ as regards annual major information activities. In this sense, they can be said to have set a trend for other programmes, and have since been emulated by “Open Days” initiatives in many other Member States.

Finally, an interesting (and ‘different’) example of project visits was the **initiative “EU-Radln”** organised in **Burgenland (Austria)** in 2010 (<http://www.phasing-out.at/de/veranstaltungen/eu-radln>). This was a bicycle tour (similar in some ways to the example from Midi-Pyrénées listed above) along a route taking in several EU-funded projects. Perhaps most importantly, the participants included Commissioner Johannes Hahn and the Head of the Regional Government Landeshauptmann Hans Niessl, as well as numerous regular citizens and a number of journalists; the initiative resulted inter alia in a short segment on a national news programme of the state broadcaster ORF.

## 1.2 Campaigns

In some ways, what we have called ‘campaigns’ represents a specific type (or rather series) of ‘events’. It includes installations that are displayed for a period of time, as well as competitions, where citizens can participate and win prizes. Such competitions can encourage citizens to identify and engage with the manifestations of regional policy in their local area, and thereby grasp the contribution to their own lives.

MS	Activity / tool	Good practice criteria						
		Design	Language	Content	Outreach	Novelty	EU visibility	EU messages
	<b>“The huge numbers” campaign:</b> Seven installations designed by contemporary artists aimed to make abstract concepts related to regional policy and the impact on people’s lives visible and understandable for the Hungarian citizens.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	<b>Photo competition:</b> In Estonia, citizens were invited to submit a picture of themselves in front of a sign displaying the EU structural funds logo. The competition was promoted via the radio, and prizes were donated by beneficiaries. The public response exceeded all expectations.				✓		✓	

	<b>Campaign “EU touristic passport”:</b> A highly creative and interesting means of engaging the general public, citizens were provided with a booklet and encouraged to collect stamps, in the process discovering the effects of regional policy in the region.	✓	✓	✓		✓		
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All three campaigns / competitions listed above merit consideration for the conference:





1. **“The huge numbers” campaign (Hungary, national):** The campaign displayed the quantified results of the development policy through seven installations designed by contemporary artists and placed in the seven main regions of Hungary. In doing so, it made abstract concepts related to regional policy and the impact on people’s lives visible and understandable for the Hungarian citizens. The installations were placed in central locations so as to be seen by a very large number of citizens. Most importantly, they used clever ways to convey key results (e.g. the number of tons of greenhouse gases saved annually, or the length of new and renovated roads in kilometres).
2. **Photo competition (Estonia, national OP Economic Environment):** The competition proved immensely popular, and was mentioned by almost all interviewees as the most successful example of how regional policy had been communicated to the public in Estonia, evidenced by over 2,000 entries in 8 weeks. It was conducted on three of Estonia’s national radio stations, each aimed at a different demographic. Audience figures suggest the competition reached over 500,000 people across Estonia, or almost 40% of the population.
3. **Campaign “EU touristic passport” (Poland, regional OP Kuyavian-Pommeranian):** Another successful example of engaging the general public and interesting them in ERDF project, in this case touristic sites revitalised with European funds, where people could collect stamps in a booklet (“EU tourist passport”) which was distributed and promoted widely (e.g. tourist information offices, a dedicated website, a Facebook fan page), press and radio releases and outdoor events and contests). The campaign proved very successful, and there have been enquiries from tourists about a second edition, as well as from other regions interested in copying the idea.





### 1.3 Audiovisual materials

A number of OPs / MAs produced short promotional videos and spots, for use in a variety of settings. They include more or less typical advertisement spots (duration typically 30-60 seconds) that are broadcast on TV and/or in cinemas. The concepts used to convey the often complex reality of regional policy in a way that the audience can grasp quickly and easily vary considerably – in some cases using elements of surprise or even humour. Such spots can potentially reach a substantial number of viewers (albeit at a significant cost).

A different category of audiovisual material is made up of slightly longer videos (duration typically 3-5 minutes), which are used in different settings (e.g. at conferences and/or for specific audiences). Such videos face similar challenges in terms of the complexity of the subject matter, as well as the challenge of dissemination (i.e. how to make them accessible to an audience that is sufficiently large to justify the production cost).

Finally, in a few countries, the MAs were able to produce / place content in television programmes. This includes the production and broadcasting of documentaries, as well as – interestingly – product (or ‘idea’) placement in entertainment programmes.

MS	Activity / tool	Good practice criteria						
		Design	Language	Content	Outreach	Novelty	EU visibility	EU messages
	<b>Cinema spots “Auch Ganz Schön”:</b> The MA in Brandenburg produced a very different kind of spot, based on an ‘interruption’ concept developed by university students, which was aired in cinemas across the region.		✓	✓		✓	✓	
	<b>Audio-visual campaign “Everyone benefits, not everyone sees it”:</b> TV spots based on an interesting and creative idea, a simple message and a catchy slogan catchy, to show how the benefits from EU regional policy extend further than one might think.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	<b>“The experience is yours” campaign:</b> The campaign, which featured TV spots and short videos, showed the “emotional” side of the effects of regional policy rather than only numbers and rational arguments, and won a creative prize awarded by an international jury.	✓	✓		✓			
	<b>“About to. Twenty-five years of European Funds in Andalucía” video:</b> A 5-minute video using strong, moving and eye-catching images and music to show the social and economic changes that have taken place in the region of Andalucía in the 25 years since Spain’s entry into the EU as a result of cohesion policy and EU funds.	✓		✓		✓		

	<b>Project Videos:</b> 3-5 minute professional videos on selected projects, produced with versatility in mind (i.e. making best use of the video).			✓				
	<b>“Better neighbours” TV documentary:</b> A documentary about the ETC OP Estonia-Latvia, following a ‘road movie’ format (with a group of students travelling around the border region) and using everyday language, was broadcast on TV in both countries.		✓		✓	✓		
	<b>TV programmes about OP IE:</b> The MA cooperated with three TV stations to produce and broadcast TV programmes presenting selected projects.		✓	✓				✓
	<b>Idea placement in popular TV series, OP DEP:</b> The MA paid for including a dialogue about EU funding for broadband internet in Eastern Poland in a popular soap opera broadcast on a national TV station, reaching over 2 million viewers.		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

For the conference, the initiatives that would be most interesting / useful to present and share (depending on DG REGIO’s intended focus) include 2 short promotional video spots aired on TV and/or in cinemas; 1 slightly longer video for more discrete use; 1 longer documentary; and 1 example of ‘idea placement’:







1. **Cinema spots “Auch Ganz Schön” (Germany, regional OP Brandenburg):** A very ‘different’ kind of spot, both in the way it was produced (concepts submitted by university students) and in how it conveys the messages. While it may seem unspectacular when first viewed, the approach of ‘interruption’ and the subtle humour work very well in the cinema environment, where ERDF spots can hardly compete with the ads of multinational companies in terms of special effects, professional look and feel, etc.
2. **Campaign “Everyone benefits, not everyone sees it” (Poland, national):** Three very professionally produced spots, broadcast on TV, radio and the internet, which reached a large proportion of the audience across Poland. They are based on a very interesting and creative idea, a simple message and a catchy slogan. Each spot follows the same basic concept: a person talking about the EU funds and how the results are often not visible, oblivious to the fact that they are using the results while talking.
3. **Video “About to. Twenty-five years of European Funds in Andalucía” (Spain, regional OP Andalucía):** Developed for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Spain’s entry into the EU, the video shows the social and economic changes that have taken place in the region of Andalucía as a result of cohesion policy and EU funds. It uses a combination of personal / emotional elements and powerful images and infographics to convey this message, although its length (5 minutes) makes it less suitable for TV.
4. **“Better neighbours” TV documentary (Estonia-Latvia ETC OP):** An attempt to make EU funding seem ‘cool’ by using a road movie format, featuring a group of students drawn from both sides of the border who tackle national stereotypes head on while exploring projects funded by the ETC programme. This documentary was inexpensive to produce yet reached approx. 80,000 viewers in both countries.




- 5. Idea placement in popular TV series (Poland, multi-regional OP Development of Eastern Poland):** The MA paid for the inclusion of a dialogue in an episode of a popular soap opera watched by over 2 million people. During 90 seconds, two of the characters have a natural seeming conversation about financing broadband internet access in Eastern Poland from EU funds. This is reportedly an effective and increasingly popular marketing technique in Poland.

In a similar vein to the Brandenburg videos mentioned above, the MA of the OP for Brussels (Belgium) has also worked with journalism students (in this case from IHECS) to produce videos inexpensively, while at the same time teaching future journalists about EU regional funding (accessible via [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3Q\\_aStWrdM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3Q_aStWrdM)). A similar approach was used to develop an 'e-magazine' showcasing five ERDF-funded projects in the Brussels region (<http://www.emageurope.eu>); this could also be considered a potentially interesting example of written materials (see section 1.5 below).

## 1.4 Online information tools (websites)

All OPs use websites, most of which are relatively similar in terms of the type of content they provide and the general structure. Below are examples of websites that stood out for various reasons, including their user-friendliness, and/or innovative content. In addition, we came across one example of a website targeted specifically at young people, and a few examples of the use of social media to communicate information about the EU Structural Funds and regional policy.

MS	Activity / tool	Good practice criteria						
		Design	Language	Content	Outreach	Novelty	EU visibility	EU messages
	<b>Structural funds website:</b> The website for all 3 Estonian national OPs is easy to navigate, very comprehensive in terms of its content, and the EU flag and references to the EU are omnipresent.							✓
	<b>Tillväxtverket website:</b> The website contains all information relating to EU Structural Funds in Sweden, and stands out due to its specific focus on communicating concrete results and demonstrating how EU funds have made a difference.			✓				
	<b>Website with information on Europe in Midi-Pyrénées:</b> Launched in 2013 in partnership between various actors so as to provide beneficiaries and the general public with all the information they need on the European resources available in Midi-Pyrénées within three clicks of a mouse.	✓		✓		✓		
	<b>OP website including projects of the month and project browser:</b> NRW was one of the first regions to present a new project each month, and to provide up-to-date information on all funded projects, searchable via a map or list.			✓	✓			
	<b>Web portal of the structural funds OPs of Castilla-La Mancha:</b> An attractive, modern and dynamic website including video and photo libraries, a calendar with main events, and a news section. A Facebook page was also launched recently.	✓		✓			✓	
	<b>OpenCoesione Website:</b> The website brings together in one single location all the data available on EU regional policy funding and on all projects in Italy, in order to enhance transparency and enable public scrutiny.	✓		✓		✓		






	<b>Website “Entdecke EFRE”:</b> An interactive, ‘photo realistic’ website targeted specifically at young people in the region, who are avid internet users but have a low level of awareness of regional policy.	✓	✓			✓		
	<b>Estonia – Latvia Facebook page:</b> One of the few examples found of the use of social media, the page is intended to communicate with (potential) beneficiaries, as well as reach the general public. At the time of writing, it had just over 230 “likes”.	✓				✓		
	<b>Innovative use of Social Media:</b> The National OP Research and Competitiveness uses Twitter very actively (1,100 followers, avg. 3 tweets a day). It also has a dedicated YouTube channel (68 videos) and has recently begun using Storify.		✓		✓	✓		✓

It is difficult to recommend websites or online tools that are truly ‘best’ practices, given that we were only able to review a small selection of the hundreds of OP websites across the EU, most of which are broadly similar in terms of the information they contain and how it is structured. The examples listed above stand out because of specific aspects (e.g. navigation, presentation of project data, transparency of data etc.), but it would be hard to argue that any one of them is intrinsically ‘better’ than the others. Similarly, the (few) examples of use of social media we have identified are certainly noteworthy, but the evidence to judge whether this is an effective technique for communicating the particular subject of EU regional policy funding is too scarce.



If forced to select one, it may be most interesting to present the website from Midi- Pyrénées ([www.europe-en-midipyrenees.eu](http://www.europe-en-midipyrenees.eu)), which is particularly user-friendly in terms of its structure, design and content. It may be appropriate to (also) recur to the examples of websites that were finalists in the 2012 RegioStar awards in Category 5 (Information and Communication: presenting project data). The winner was the website of the Regional OP of the Podlaskie Voivodship (Poland) ([www.podlaskiedotacje.pl](http://www.podlaskiedotacje.pl)), a very user-friendly and complete website. Another interesting example is the Dutch [www.europaomdehoek.nl](http://www.europaomdehoek.nl), a front runner with regard to geo-mapping of projects.

## 1.5 Written materials

Written materials (brochures, leaflets, magazines etc.) on all aspects of regional policy (at general, fund, OP, priority or project level) still abound in all of the countries visited. The good practice examples were chosen for different reasons, including their outreach (e.g. a special newspaper distributed to all households via bulk mail in a region where this format is relatively popular), their professional design (e.g. specific examples of magazines / newsletters dedicated to the Structural Funds), focus on a topic of particular interest to the general public and the EU contribution to this (e.g. a leaflet on high-speed rail), or the extent to which they were tailored to the specific target audience (e.g. children).

MS	Activity / tool	Good practice criteria						
		Design	Language	Content	Outreach	Novelty	EU visibility	EU messages
	<b>Special newspaper “Sächsische Perspektiven”:</b> A 12-page brochure with project examples and general EU information, distributed via bulk mail to all 1.7 million households in Saxony.		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	<b>“Huella” magazine:</b> A quarterly magazine to reach decision-makers and multipliers and provide relevant content including interviews, examples of good communication practices, and other relevant information on the Andalucía OP.			✓			✓	✓
	<b>TEMPO magazine:</b> Contains articles written by professional writers on project results and current affairs concerning the cohesion policy in Sweden, and conveys content on results packaged in an engaging and professional way.	✓		✓				
	<b>“How does the EU contribute to the development of the Spanish high-speed rail?” brochure:</b> A short brochure, highlighting an area where much progress has been made in the past years and that is a matter of pride to Spanish citizens, and the EU contribution to it.			✓			✓	✓
	<b>“El Gancho” newspaper for school children:</b> A didactic and attractive monthly print and digital publication for children aged 7 to 13 to raise awareness and increase knowledge about the EU and in particular its role in the field of regional policy.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓







 	<b>Cross-border Road Atlas:</b> The ETC OP Italia-Slovenia prepared a special road atlas of the Programme area in both countries. The first pages describe the OP, the main areas of intervention, the list of potential beneficiaries, and instructions on how to present projects.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
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The good practice examples that would appear most interesting, and therefore best suited to presenting at the conference, are:

- **Special newspaper “Sächsische Perspektiven” (Germany, regional OP Saxony):** In some ways, this is like a simplified version of the magazines published by many OPs, aimed at the general public, and distributed annually to all households in the region. This is considered effective partly because in Eastern Germany, newspaper subscriptions are very low, and people do tend to read free materials distributed via bulk mail to a greater extent than elsewhere.
- **“El Gancho” newspaper for school children (Spain, regional OP Andalucía):** A very popular monthly publication for children aged 7 to 13, it provides information about the EU through interviews, games, videos and a comic “Los Ganchos y Europa”. It also provides news and organises competitions on the EU, for example covering celebrations on the EU Day.
- **Cross-border Road Atlas (Italy-Slovenia ETC OP):** An interesting way to both showcase the OP and create a sense of cohesion between the two countries, the road atlas shows the border region and describes the OP in clear, simple and concise language. It thus combines the useful (road maps) with the promotional. Furthermore, it supports the many initiatives of the OP to promote the touristic routes between the two countries.

## 1.6 School projects

In several countries, specific activities were organised for school children. Due to their specific nature, these seem worth mentioning separately. They include formal lessons, where pupils are provided with information in a more or less typical school setting, as well as a more playful way of encouraging learning about the EU and regional policy via a game / competition.






MS	Activity / tool	Good practice criteria						
		Design	Language	Content	Outreach	Novelty	EU visibility	EU messages
	<b>“Andalucía se mueve con Europa” annual school contest:</b> An increasingly popular competition for schools, based on a specifically designed board game, the last phase of which is broadcast on regional TV.			✓	✓		✓	
	<b>The European Funds Lesson, OP DEP:</b> Lessons on the European Funds for students of primary and high schools in the region used an innovative and creative comic book to convey key messages and generate interest.	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
	<b>School project “Europa im Blick”:</b> More than 12,000 pupils in Brandenburg have taken part in 1.5 hour lessons on the EU in general and regional policy funding in particular.			✓			✓	✓
	<b>Competition “Discovering ROP Lombardy: the view from your lenses”:</b> An annual competition for secondary school students. Classes present a project focussed on the ERDF activities in the region; the winner gets a trip to Brussels.			✓			✓	✓

Among these, the **Andalucian school contest** is clearly the most far-reaching / ambitious initiative, since it engages a large number of children in a playful way, and reaches even non-participants through the TV broadcast of the final.

The **Polish and German (Brandenburg) projects** are broadly similar to each other, except the former relies on regular teachers (who are provided with a dedicated script, as well as a comic book for distribution), whereas the latter sends dedicated lecturers to impart the lessons, which provides more direct control over the content, but at a significantly higher cost.

## 1.7 Media relations

All MAs attempt to engage the media (in particular the regional and local media) to a greater or lesser extent, and most acknowledge that generating interest in and coverage of regional policy tends to be challenging. In addition to traditional media relations work (press releases, conferences), some have invited journalists to take part in specific tours or project visits to raise their awareness and provide an incentive to report – sometimes with considerable success. In the context of media relations, we also found interesting examples of projects that may not have a direct impact, but prepare the ground for successful dealings with the press (especially in crisis situations), including analysis of coverage and strategy formulation.






MS	Activity / tool	Good practice criteria						
		Design	Language	Content	Outreach	Novelty	EU visibility	EU messages
	<b>Study tours for the press:</b> Groups of journalists were invited to the sites of specific projects, and provided with information on their main achievements. The tours were well attended and led to the publication of articles on certain projects.			✓	✓			
	<b>Media trip, ROP Lubuskie:</b> To improve the generally quite poor media relations in the region, trips were organised to enable groups of journalists to experience EU funding first hand.		✓		✓			✓
	<b>Media relations in Silesian region:</b> The MA has engaged journalists through a range of tools, including quarterly bulletins, and press conferences in sub-regions involving local authorities, regional authority representative and local media.	✓		✓	✓			
	<b>Media Analysis:</b> A quantitative and qualitative analysis of the articles generated in print and online, relating to EU Funding across the eight regional OPs, which has guided the media strategy leading to increase in reach and increased EU visibility.			✓			✓	
	<b>Media relations strategy:</b> The Tillväxtverket has developed a strategy and defined process for how it communicates with and handles the media, particularly in the context of bad news, which has led to fewer negative articles and an increased number of balanced articles in the press.			✓			✓	




With a view to the conference, the most interesting approach to share may well be the **Swedish combination of a media analysis which feeds into a media relations strategy**. Both of these should be seen as a package: The media is the main conduit to communicating with the general public in Sweden. Therefore tracking media coverage (both in terms of quantitative and qualitative data) has become an important evidence base on which to make decisions and formulate a communications (including media relations) strategy.

Organising **journalist project visits / tours** can also be effective (if well organised and attended), as the examples from **Hungary (national) and Poland (regional OP for Lubuskie Voivodeship)** show. Project visits for journalists can also be combined with visits for regular citizens, as in the Austrian bicycle tour example from Burgenland mentioned in section 2.1 above.

## 1.8 Internal tools and activities

It is also worth highlighting a number of internal tools and activities used by MAs and IBs to enhance their own communication activities and/or those of multipliers (in particular beneficiaries). Some countries use internal networks and/or workshops to exchange knowledge and/or train communicators, or even organise competitions for MAs and beneficiaries to submit their best communication activities, and thereby identify and disseminate best practices.

MS	Activity / tool	Good practice criteria						
		Design	Language	Content	Outreach	Novelty	EU visibility	EU messages
	<b>“GERIP” and “GRECO-AGE” internal communication networks:</b> Networks which provide a forum for discussion, development and implementation of communication plans, strategies, approaches and procedures, indicators, external evaluations, and best practices.			✓		✓	✓	✓
	<b>Internal communication workshops:</b> Workshops to help staff speak about their jobs, the Agency and its purpose, including EU funds, so that staff are able to deliver consistent messages and to explain the benefits of Structural Funds			✓		✓		
	<b>Contest "Power of promotion - power of a project", OP IE:</b> A competition among beneficiaries to facilitate better communication activities, which has resulted in knowledge sharing between specialists, present beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries.			✓	✓		✓	
	<b>Contest for promotional spots on the European Funds - Plus Camerimage film festival, ROP K-P:</b> MAs of all OPs were invited to submit their best promotional spots concerning regional policy and the European Funds to the competition – and the difference in quality between first and third editions of the competition was remarkable.	✓		✓		✓		
	<b>Competition for the design of OP poster:</b> The MA organised a national competition among beneficiary schools to award the best advertisement posters illustrating the achievements of the projects, followed by a seminar and a training session for the school managers.				✓	✓	✓	✓



	<b>Award “Communicating the Structural Funds 2012”:</b> The MA of one regional OP organised a competition at national level for all the MAs of ERDF OPs in Italy to award the best / most innovative communication activity. The competition served as a stimulus to share good practices and ultimately contribute to cross regional collaboration.			✓		✓	✓	✓
	<b>Story Telling Workshops:</b> Popular free workshop for beneficiaries to learn how to report on the results of their work, share their successes and challenges. This facilitates their role as multipliers and generates rich content on results in a novel way.			✓		✓		
	<b>Internal software application to register communication activities:</b> An application that captures details of all communication activities related to EU funds undertaken by the Spanish port authorities across the country, very helpful to share ideas and to facilitate the centralised external communication			✓		✓		

Out of these internal activities, the most interesting from the point of view of conference participants are likely to be:

- 1. “GERIP” and “GRECO-AGE” internal communication networks (Spain):** GERIP is a national network of communication officers in MAs, whereas GRECO-AGE is for implementing bodies (which provide the link with the beneficiaries). Both networks were created in 2007, and have been active ever since. Both networks have been an innovative solution in the Spanish context as they have helped to reinforce the importance of communication across the autonomous communities. EU visibility and messages have been strongly enhanced among members of the two networks, and it is confirmed that messages have in turn been communicated more widely with the support of the networks.
- 2. Contest “Power of promotion - power of a project” (Poland, national OP Innovative Economy):** A competition to foster the adoption of good practice in the promotional activities among beneficiaries, and at the same time to promote beneficiaries’ projects, which stands out due to its practicality and outreach among the target group. In addition to significant media coverage, it resulted in a booklet presenting best practices, beneficiaries’ and experts’ advice on the promotion of the initiatives co-funded by the EU.
- 3. Story Telling Workshops (Sweden):** At these workshops, after an opening address from an inspirational speaker the participants are divided into small groups where they talk about the results of their projects – it becomes a forum for sharing their successes and challenges. The best stories are selected and turned into a 3-5 minute professional video. The fact that the workshops pro-actively involve project beneficiaries, that all stories are used in some shape or form and that EU funding is brought to life through real project stories are perceived as the major benefits to this approach.

## 1.9 Branding and corporate design

Finally, it is worth mentioning branding and corporate design. Different countries / regions / OPs use a variety of logos and other distinguishing features to give a consistent and recognisable look and feel to their communications. These often refer to the OP as such, which sometimes means that the EU dimension is not very prominent. Below are two examples where the logos and corporate identity gives the EU centre stage, by focusing on elements other than the specific OP in question.

MS	Activity / tool	Good practice criteria					
		Design	Language	Content	Outreach	Novelty	EU visibility EU messages
	<b>Corporate design for Structural Funds in Saxony:</b> An attractive and modern design that is applied to all information measures to enhance recognisability and awareness, including a logo and a strapline that is common to all EU funds in the region.	✓					✓ ✓
	<b>France-wide regional policy logo:</b> The MA for a national OP designed a logo in 2009 and encourages France's regions to use it on their websites in order to provide cross-territorial professionalism, consistency and coherence to its messaging. The logo reads 'L'Europe s'engage en France'	✓					✓

**Both of these 'brands'** are potentially suitable for presentation during the conference. The Saxony approach is particularly interesting, as it has created a visual identity that marries the EU and the region, focuses not on the OP but on the funds, can be used for the ESF, ERDF or both, and includes a strapline that emphasises how Europe supports Saxony.

## 2 CASE STUDY REPORT: ESTONIA

### 1. Introduction

The evaluator visited Estonia to conduct a series of interviews in Tallinn, the capital, and Tartu, in the south of the country, between 7 and 10 May 2013. Representatives of Managing Authorities, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> level intermediate bodies, beneficiaries and the EU Representation were invited to share their opinions on EU regional policy communication in Estonia, as set out in the text below. The evaluator followed up these interviews with a series of telephone calls with independent observers from the Estonian media and academia. While in Estonia, the evaluator was also able to visit several EU-funded projects across the country, including the Natural History Museum in Tallinn and Tartu Science Park.

A full list of the interviewees who shared information and their opinions with the evaluator is given in the annex to this report.

### 2. Context for regional policy communication

During the funding period 2007-2013 Structural Assistance totalling €3.41 billion was made available to Estonia<sup>1</sup>, organised under three national Operational Programmes (OPs):

1. Operational Programme for the Development of the Living Environment (**‘Living Environment OP’**)
2. Operational Programme for the Development of Economic Environment (**‘Economic Environment OP’**)
3. Operational Programme for Human Resource Development (a European Social Fund programme)

In addition to this, the cross border **Estonia - Latvia Programme** is funded under the principles of European Territorial Cooperation by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and co-financed by national partners in Estonia and Latvia. During 2007-2013 the ERDF budget available for the Estonia - Latvia Programme amounted to €36 million, matched with public and private co-financing<sup>2</sup>.

In accordance with DG REGIO’s suggestions, the evaluation team examined communications in the context of the Living Environment and Economic Environment OPs as well as the Estonia Latvia Programme.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.struktuurifondid.ee/mis-on-struktuuritoetus/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.estlat.eu/programme/financing/>



## - Main regional policy objectives and priorities

The **Living Environment OP**, co-funded by the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund (CF) was the first of the two national OPs examined by the evaluators. The OP's total budget is around €1.8 billion, with investment through the ERDF and CF amounting to €1.5 billion and the remainder contributed by the Estonian state<sup>3</sup>. The Living Environment OP aims to improve the quality of life in Estonia 'in environmental and social terms' and to lay foundations for long-term sustained growth. The OP specifies **six main priorities for development and two for technical assistance**<sup>4</sup>, as follows:

1. Development of water and waste management infrastructure
2. Development of infrastructure and support systems for sustainable use of the environment
3. Development of energy sector
4. Integral and balanced development of regions – including developing local public services to improve living conditions in rural regions, alleviation of urban problems and strengthening of regional competitiveness
5. Development of educational infrastructure
6. Development of health and welfare infrastructure
7. Horizontal Technical Assistance: Measures common for all programmes to ensure the proper management of the funds, such as monitoring of assistance, evaluation, training of officials, support for project preparation and management, publicity measures etc.
8. Technical assistance: Support for specific measures relating to the implementation of the programme.

The evaluators also focussed on the **Economic Environment OP**. As with the Living Environment OP, this programme had a budget totalling around €1.8 billion, with investment through the ERDF and CF again amounting to €1.5 billion<sup>5</sup>. This OP aims to improve the economic environment in Estonia to allow the competitiveness and productivity of enterprises to increase<sup>6</sup>. The programme's implementation is based on five main priorities for development and two for technical assistance:

1. Innovation and growth capacity of enterprises
2. Improving the competitiveness of Estonian R&D through the research programmes and modernisation of higher education and R&D institutions
3. Transport investments of strategic importance
4. Development of regional transport infrastructure
5. Development of information society
6. Horizontal Technical Assistance: measures will ensure the proper management of the funds, such as monitoring of assistance, evaluation, training of officials, support for project preparation and management, communication and information activities

<sup>3</sup>

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/country/prordn/details\\_new.cfm?gv\\_PAY=EE&gv\\_reg=all&gv\\_PG M=1106&LAN=7&gv\\_per=2&gv\\_defL=7](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/country/prordn/details_new.cfm?gv_PAY=EE&gv_reg=all&gv_PG M=1106&LAN=7&gv_per=2&gv_defL=7)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup>

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/country/prordn/details\\_new.cfm?gv\\_PAY=EE&gv\\_reg=all&gv\\_PG M=1107&LAN=7&gv\\_per=2&gv\\_defL=7](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/country/prordn/details_new.cfm?gv_PAY=EE&gv_reg=all&gv_PG M=1107&LAN=7&gv_per=2&gv_defL=7)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

7. Technical assistance: Support for specific measures relating to the implementation of the programme

Finally, the evaluators looked at communications under the **Estonia - Latvia Programme**. This supports projects within its 'Programme area': specified regions in Estonia and Latvia, most of which are close to the countries' common border. With its ERDF funded budget of €36 million, matched with public and private co-financing, this programme is significantly smaller than the two Estonian national OPs outlined above. It aims to 'promote sustainable development and economic competitiveness of the Programme area through achieving an integrated and cross-border approach to economic, social and environmental development in ways which involve and benefit local people and communities'<sup>7</sup>.

The programme is divided into three priority axes for support<sup>8</sup>:

1. Increased cohesion of the Programme area: increasing both internal and external connectivity and reducing the impacts of the existing physical border
2. Higher competitiveness of the Programme area: aimed at improving the environment for business activities and adapting to structural changes in the economy
3. Active, sustainable and integrated communities: improving the sustainability of the Programme area by promoting vitality of the local communities and supporting cross-border social and cultural interactions

- **Economic and political environment**

The Republic of Estonia is a parliamentary democracy, which declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Estonia joined the European Union in May 2004 and adopted the Euro in January 2011. With a population of 1.3 million<sup>9</sup>, Estonia is the EU's fourth smallest Member State, accounting for just 0.26% of the total EU population. 30% of the population speak Russian as their native language<sup>10</sup>.

In 2011 Estonia's GDP per capita based on PPS<sup>11</sup> stood at approximately 65% of the EU average, down from 70% in 2007. Following a sustained period of GDP growth of between 5% and 10% annually from 2003 and 2007, the economic crisis saw Estonia record negative GDP growth between 2008 and 2010. From 2010 to the present the economy has grown, although recent figures recorded slowing growth in the first quarter of 2013<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.estlat.eu/programme/about-programme/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.estlat.eu/for-applicants/programme-manual>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.stat.ee/publication-download-pdf?publication\\_id=34210](http://www.stat.ee/publication-download-pdf?publication_id=34210)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.stat.ee/64629>

<sup>11</sup> purchasing power standard – a unit which is based on Eurostat estimates and eliminates the difference in price levels between countries

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.stat.ee/65114>

### - Attitudes towards the EU, awareness of Regional Policy

In November 2012 73% of people surveyed in Estonia considered themselves citizens of the EU (the EU average was 63%)<sup>13</sup>. 46% tended to trust the EU (the EU-27 average was 33%), while only 35% tended to trust their government. Estonians were more likely than the EU average to agree that the media in their country presented the EU in an objective manner<sup>14</sup> (see Table 2).

**Table 1: Portrayal of the EU in the Estonian media**

**Do you think that the Estonian media present the EU too positively, objectively or too negatively?**

	Too positively	Objectively	Too negatively
Television	20% (17%)	65% (53%)	3% (15%)
Press	17% (12%)	62% (51%)	4% (14%)
Radio	16% (11%)	62% (52%)	2% (10%)
Websites	9% (6%)	53% (40%)	5% (8%)

( ) = EU-27 average

Source: Eurobarometer (2012)<sup>15</sup>

In 2010 57% of Estonians were aware of EU regional support projects in their area<sup>16</sup>, down from 62% in 2008, but well above the EU-27 average of 34%. Amongst those who had heard of EU co-financed projects, 89% considered they had brought a positive impact to the development of their city or region<sup>17</sup>. 29% of Estonians said they had personally benefited from a project funded by the ERDF or the Cohesion Fund (the second highest % in any MS), rising to 43% amongst those who had heard of EU co-financed projects<sup>18</sup>.

The independent observers who shared their opinions with the evaluator agreed that most Estonians would be aware of EU regional support for the country. Whether the reasons behind this support would be as widely understood was called into question by one interviewee.

### 3. Key actors and approaches:

Communications for the **Living Environment OP** and the **Economic Environment OP** are coordinated by Estonia's Ministry of Finance, acting as the 'managing authority' (MA) for both OPs. The role of managing authority during the 2007-2013 period included both communicating directly with the general public on issues related to EU Regional Policy, as

<sup>13</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78\\_fact\\_ee\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_fact_ee_en.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78\\_media\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_media_en.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78\\_media\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_media_en.pdf) Standard Eurobarometer

78 – Media Use - Autumn 2012

<sup>16</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl\\_298\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_298_en.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

well as coordinating the communications actions of intermediate bodies. These intermediate bodies are themselves divided between 1<sup>st</sup> level intermediate bodies ('1<sup>st</sup> level IBs', also referred to as 'lead ministries') and 2<sup>nd</sup> level intermediate bodies ('2<sup>nd</sup> level IBs'). Responsibility for communicating with the general public is shared between the MA and 1<sup>st</sup> level IBs, whereas 2<sup>nd</sup> level IBs are primarily responsible for communicating with 'beneficiaries' and potential beneficiaries – the bodies which ultimately receive the funding.

The MA, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> level IBs for the Living Environment OP and the Economic Environment OP form a network which meets every 3 months to coordinate communications on EU regional policy in Estonia. The participating bodies are listed in Table 3.

**Table 2: List of bodies participating in the Network for Structural Assistance Communications**

Managing Authority
Ministry of Finance
1 <sup>st</sup> level IBs (lead ministries)
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications
Ministry of the Environment
Ministry of Education and Research
Ministry of Social Affairs
Ministry of the Interior
2 <sup>nd</sup> level IBs
INNOVE Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development
Enterprise Estonia
Environmental Investment Centre
Credit and Export Guarantee Fund KredEx
Tallinn Airport
Estonian Road Administration
Archimedes Foundation
Estonian Technical Surveillance Authority
Estonian Information Systems Authority
Estonian Maritime Administration
Ministry of Finance (in relation to the Administrative Capacity priority)

The size of the country, physical proximity of most of the network's members (whose offices are mostly located within a 1 km radius of the centre of Tallinn), and the fact that many if not most studied on the same communications course at Tartu University, means that informal contact is also frequent.

Estonia's Ministry of the Interior acts as the MA for the **Estonia – Latvia Programme**. The programme's communications are coordinated by the 'Joint Technical Secretariat' (JTS), hosted by Enterprise Estonia, a development agency, and located in Tartu. The JTS communicates directly with the general public in both Estonia and Latvia and coordinates communications by the programme's beneficiaries.

In terms of their **communications to the general public**, the MA and 1<sup>st</sup> level IBs for the Estonian national OPs favoured a coordinated approach and frequently collaborated. Interviewees agreed that the fact 'the money had come from the EU' was more important, and communicating this was more realistic, than trying to distinguish amongst the different

Operational Programmes. **Communications to beneficiaries**, mostly conducted by 2<sup>nd</sup> level IBs were more nuanced: communicators understood the necessity of explaining the specific objectives of the relevant OP to these groups, and sometimes saw their role as “translating the jargon” when it came to assisting beneficiaries to fulfil their obligations, or help potential beneficiaries understand what would be expected of them. Interviewees in direct contact with beneficiaries explained that the internet was often the most appropriate tool for communicating with recipients of EU-funds. Other channels forced communicators to simplify the message and information which beneficiaries required.

Communications to the public were carried out at both a **national level**, with at least one major campaign by all national OPs conducted annually, and **locally**, to inform communities of the projects receiving EU funds in their vicinity. Beneficiaries were generally targeted on a sector by sector approach, resulting from the organisation of the OPs and their different priority areas.

**Target audiences** varied: whereas the MA, 1<sup>st</sup> level IBs and beneficiaries concentrated their efforts on communicating with the general public, 2<sup>nd</sup> level IBs focussed on reaching an audience of beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. The second group in particular needed information on the advantages available through EU financial support and secondly how to apply for it.

In terms of **messages**, communicators to the general public sought to promote the role EU funds played in the development of Estonia. Primary communicators at the MA and IBs explained their communications to the public were intended to explain how EU money was used for projects which could not be implemented, or at least not as quickly, without European financial help.

Communicators responsible for the **Estonia – Latvia Programme**, while echoing these sentiments, privileged the importance of fostering feelings of neighbourliness between two small countries with much in common. Given the countries’ location on the EU’s periphery, the importance for Estonians of working together with neighbouring Latvia was considered to be easier for the public to grasp than trying to explain why the countries received funds ‘from the EU in faraway Brussels’.

## - **Key challenges to communicating Regional Policy**

Most interviewees agreed the main challenge to communicating Regional Policy to the general public is **the need to make it interesting**. It was pointed out by several interviewees that the fact a project has been paid for with EU funds is no longer in itself newsworthy. Indeed, the fact that Estonia has one of the EU’s highest per capita absorption rates (i.e. the proportion of funds available to the country which have actually been used)<sup>19</sup>, mean that the EU logo is omnipresent<sup>20</sup>. The average Estonian is very accustomed to seeing the logo, said these interviewees, to the point where it is no longer remarkable. Some communicators considered that, in any case, the focus should be on what is being done, rather than from

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.struktuurifondid.ee/mis-on-tehtud/>

<sup>20</sup> This observation was reflected in the evaluator’s journey across the country, where the EU structural funds logo was spotted on display at Tallinn Airport’s extension, the construction site of a new road into town, at the museum, railway station and a shopping mall in southern Estonia...

where the money comes. “We need to focus on the content of what we do, rather than the funder. The good work will speak for itself and people will realise who’s paying for it and will be more positive towards the EU”, said one 1<sup>st</sup> level IB interviewee.

Another factor which made communication more challenging, mentioned by both MA and IB interviewees, was the obligation to indicate which EU fund a project had received its grant from. The general public know little about the distinction between the Cohesion Fund and the ERDF and care even less, they complained. Communicators suggested removing these tags, perhaps replacing them with a simple ‘Paid for by the EU’ slogan to get the most important message across. This issue was linked to the challenge, widely reported by MA and IB interviewees, of **finding alternatives to the ‘EU jargon’** when trying to explain to the public how regional policy benefitted Estonia.

Another difficulty raised by several interviews is that the **groups amongst whom awareness of EU regional policy is lowest** are people with lower levels of education, Russian speakers generally and particularly those in the north-eastern counties of East and West Viru, close to the Russian border. Several interviewees explained that Russian speakers outside Tallinn often favour Russia-based media, which communicators in Estonia are unable to influence. To overcome this challenge, 1<sup>st</sup> level IB communicators had included a Russian language supplement which was distributed inside an Estonia-based Russian language free newspaper.

Estonia’s success in using the EU funds available to it has meant that there are over 14,000 projects funded by its three national OPs under the 2007-2013 period, according to the MA. It was suggested by some interviewees that it is not efficient, and perhaps even counterproductive, to expect all beneficiaries to communicate with the public. The independent observers agreed it is unrealistic and undesirable to expect all beneficiaries, regardless of their size, to communicate with the public.

Some IB and MA communicators said that one of the main challenges they faced was explaining to the public why EU-funds were being spent on particular projects, rather than to plug gaps in the state budget e.g. to raise the salaries of key workers. The challenge for communicators was to make people understand that EU money was intended for a particular purpose i.e. developing Estonia. The best way of doing this was to point to tangible results e.g. 100s of kms of roads constructed, 1,000s of start-up companies created, said interviewees.

One independent observer suggested most Estonians (in common with other EU citizens from small countries) found the term ‘regional policy’ confusing, in that it seemed to refer only to development in the provinces or ‘regions’ i.e. outside the capital city. 20 years on from hard won independence, the average Estonian would be unlikely to consider his/ her homeland as ‘just’ a ‘region’ of the EU. The term ‘regional policy’ might be appropriate for OPs which operated within the confines of recognised sub-national territories, such as the German Länder, but it was less fitting in the case of small Member States such as Estonia, where 3 national OPs fund projects across the whole country.

#### 4. Activities and good practice examples

Table 4 indicates the communication budget for the 3 Operational Programmes examined. It is important to note that while the size of the communication budgets for the 2 national OPs varies significantly, a centralised approach to communications mean that national tools and campaigns are intended to communicate on all Estonian national OPs (including the ESF-funded Human Resource Development OP). While smaller in absolute terms, the proportion of the total budget for communication under the Estonia – Latvia Programme (0.9%) is significantly larger than the equivalent figures for the national OPs.

**Table 3: Communication budgets in relation to the total OP budgets**

Operational Programme	Indicative communication budget (in EUR)	Technical assistance budget including horizontal TA (in EUR)	Total Programme budget (in EUR)	% of total budget for communication
Development of Living Environment	3.1 million	36.4 million	1,779 million	0.17%
Development of Economic Environment	1.5 million	35 million	1,625 million	0.09%
Estonia – Latvia	477,000	6.4 million	51 million	0.9%

Sources: For indicative communication budgets: OP communication plans 2007-2013

For TA and OP budgets: European Commission, Info regio website

Projects funded under the Estonian national OPs are indicated by the use of a dual logo: the EU flag and the *Eesti tuleviku heaks* (loosely translated as ‘for Estonia’s future’) logo. While the text under the EU flag (Figure 1) increasingly refers to ‘EU Structural Funds’, some projects executed earlier in the funding period specify whether the ERDF, ESF or CF had co-financed the project. Some communicators complained that it should be enough to signal that the project was ‘co-financed by the EU’ or that the EU flag alone (without accompanying text) would be enough to get the message across. Projects funded by the Estonia-Latvia Programme are indicated using a dual logo, which is usually displayed with English text in both Estonia and Latvia.

**Figure 1: the EU (structural funds) logo and Estonian national OPs logo**





Figure 2: the Estonia - Latvia Programme dual logo



#### - Tools and mechanisms used

A wide variety of tools were deployed in Estonia to promote EU regional policy and projects funded by it. Many of the tools used to promote the use of structural assistance sought to promote all three national OPs<sup>21</sup>. The Estonia Latvia programme carried out its own promotional activities both with regard to targeting the general public as well as when trying to reach final beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. In 2012 the programme was a finalist for DG Regio's RegioStars Award in the category for 'information and communication: presenting project data'<sup>22</sup>.

A brief overview of the tools used to promote the 3 OPs examined is given in the following list:

- Printed press
  - o Supplements for newspapers – the 1<sup>st</sup> level IBs produced printed newsletters in the form of supplements for inclusion in nationally distributed and, in particular, local newspapers, in both Russian and Estonian. These newsletters typically contained success stories detailing local projects funded under the relevant OP.
- Audio-visual
  - o Radio photo competition<sup>23</sup> (discussed under 'Examples of good practice', below)
  - o Breakfast TV clips – a series of clips were produced under the coordination of the MA to promote the national OPs. These were broadcast on Estonia's only national TV breakfast show.
  - o Better Neighbours documentary (discussed under 'Examples of good practice', below)
- Internet
  - o Estonia's national OPs are promoted by a central website<sup>24</sup> (discussed under 'Examples of good practice', below).

<sup>21</sup> including the Operational Programme for Human Resource Development (a European Social Fund programme)

<sup>22</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/cooperate/regions\\_for\\_economic\\_change/regiostars\\_12\\_en.cfm?xp=5#anchor5](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperate/regions_for_economic_change/regiostars_12_en.cfm?xp=5#anchor5)

<sup>23</sup> <http://pilt.postimees.ee/eurotoetused>



- Social Media
  - o Estonia – Latvia Programme Facebook page (discussed under ‘Examples of good practice’, below)
  - o The Ministry for Economic Affairs and Communication maintains a blog with regular posts on different projects funded under the Economic Environment OP<sup>25</sup>. While 37 posts were published in its peak year of 2011, only 3 had been made in 2013 by early June.
- Promotional materials

A range of different materials were used to promote the various OPs and specific projects to the general public in Estonia. The Living Environment OP, for example, produced mugs bearing the EU logo. Drawing on Estonians’ and Latvians’ shared passion for the outdoors, the Estonia – Latvia Programme commissioned camping equipment (displayed below), bearing the Programme and EU logos, to give away to visitors at promotional events.

**Figure 3 Promotional materials distributed by the Estonia – Latvia Programme**



- Public events

A large number of events are organised across Estonia every year to promote the use of structural funds and raise the general public’s awareness of the role played by the EU in the country’s development. A few examples are set out below

- o European Cooperation Day

The Estonia- Latvia programme hosts an annual conference for beneficiaries. Held in English in a location close to the border the conference is intended to promote the work of the programme, explore beneficiaries’ approaches to communication and share good practice to enable more effective communication of projects to the general public in future.

<sup>24</sup> The European Union Structural Assistance to Estonia website, <http://www.struktuurifondid.ee/index.php>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.toetustasku.blogspot.com/search?updated-min=2011-01-01T00:00:00%2B02:00&updated-max=2012-01-01T00:00:00%2B02:00&max-results=37> (Estonian only)

**Figure 4: Conference on Estonia – Latvia Programme, 18-19 September 2012 at Võru, Estonia**



- Grand reopening at the museum – the Natural History Museum in Tallinn reopened in September 2012 after a grant awarded under the Living Environment OP enabled its renovation. As well as a plaque on the wall of the renovated building indicating the EU source of the funding, references in Estonian and Russian language press releases ensured the role of EU structural assistance was picked up by the national press which covered the event.
- Tagasi Kooli<sup>26</sup> (Back to School) is a civil society initiative which aims to strengthen the cooperation between Estonian schools and the rest of society. Guest teachers are invited to teach lessons and share their experience. In April 2013, the Estonia Latvia Programme's information manager, a Latvian national, taught three classes in English at an Estonian junior school near the Latvian border. The topic of all three classes was "Estonian – Latvian cooperation" and included discussing projects which received funding from the EU.

This last example was mentioned by some interviewees as an exemplary use of an existing initiative to promote EU-funded projects and communicate with young people in an innovative way. Indeed, these examples indicate how pre-existing events and initiatives (such as European Cooperation Day and Tagasi Kooli) were harnessed by communicators to promote their projects, programmes and the use of EU funds generally to the public in Estonia in an efficient and effective manner.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.estlat.eu/news/programme-news/estonia-latvia-programme-joins-tagasi-kooli-initiative/>

## - Examples of good practice

Four examples of good practice stood out amongst the numerous tools used to promote EU regional policy in Estonia listed above. Interviewees involved in their inception and management were interviewed to allow the evaluator to obtain greater understanding of the processes behind their creation and the reasons behind their success.

### 1. Photo competition (All 3 Estonian national operational programmes)

A 2010 competition was an idea initiated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications (as 1<sup>st</sup> level IB for the Economic Environment OP) to meet its obligation to promote the OP and EU regional policy generally. Cooperating with the MA and leading ministries from the other national OPs, the competition was mentioned by almost all interviewees as the most successful example of how regional policy had been communicated to the public in Estonia.

“Photo competition”		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	

It was not initially clear whether a photography competition would work well on the radio. Those responsible admitted they had doubted whether the competition would catch the public’s attention. Over July and August 2010, during the school summer holidays, listeners were encouraged to upload pictures of themselves, friends or family standing in front of signs displaying the EU structural assistance logo. Entries showed members of the public of all ages standing next to various EU funded projects, including newly resurfaced roads, new health centres and construction sites for planned infrastructure projects. A couple of examples are displayed below.

Figure 5: Photos taken by entrants to the 2010 competition to promote Estonian national OPs



Entrants had to include a contact number and on Friday afternoons, following a week collecting entries, an entrant was drawn at random and phoned live on air. If they answered,

entrants were informed they had won a prize: these consisted of 'experiences' donated by beneficiaries and other Estonia companies, such as flights on the national airline or a boat trip to an Estonian island nature reserve.

The interviewees responsible said the public response to the competition had exceeded all expectations, with 2,225 entries in 8 weeks. The competition was conducted on three of Estonia's national radio stations, each aimed at a different demographic:

- a pop music station aimed at younger listeners up to 25 years of age;
- a mixed station, interspersing music with spoken-word, aiming at listeners between 25 and 45; and
- a spoken-word station aimed at older listeners, focussing on news and discussion.

In addition to their cooperation with the radio stations, communicators from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications worked with a national news portal run by a daily national newspaper, Postimees<sup>27</sup>. At the time of the competition, Postimees' online presence was a distant second to the leading news portal in Estonia, and the paper saw the competition as a means to increase its visibility among the public. The portal hosted the campaign website and displayed the photo entries free of charge.

The cooperation of these different media operators for free meant the cost of staffing the competition was limited to €10,200. Audience figures suggested the competition reached over 500,000 people across Estonia, or almost 40% of the population, resulting in a cost per contact of €0.02. 25,000 unique visitors were recorded on the campaign's website

Its organisers considered the competition had been 'massively successful' in raising public awareness of the EU logo and the EU's role funding projects across Estonia. This success was attributed to several factors:

- The relatively limited funds available to leading ministries' communicators had forced them to be creative, interviewees said. Had a larger budget been available to make a film, they may well have done so, but this would have cost far more and potentially reached a smaller audience;
- 'Two heads are better than one', commented one interviewee closely involved with the competition, referring to the fact the leading ministries worked in close cooperation with beneficiaries and different media channels;
- The competition was tailored by local communicators to the circumstances in Estonia. "It was always clear that this kind of competition could only be held in the summer", they said, "when people are outdoors, travelling around. This would never have worked during Estonia's long dark winters".
- Prizes – the substantial audience exposure on offer meant beneficiaries were very willing to donate prizes, which also helped to keep costs down. Although entrants had clearly enjoyed themselves while taking the photos, the organisers doubted whether the public would have participated quite so enthusiastically had no prizes been offered.

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<sup>27</sup> [pilt.postimees.ee/eurotoetused](http://pilt.postimees.ee/eurotoetused)

The competition was clearly very **successful in reaching a wide cross section of Estonia's population**. This can be attributed to the use of existing media channels (popular radio stations and a news portal). **High EU visibility** was ensured by demanding contestants search for and then photograph projects displaying the dual logo. While agreeing that it would certainly have raised awareness of the existence of EU-funded projects, some independent observers questioned whether the competition would have done much to increase understanding of the underlying reasons behind regional policy. The competition's popularity was attributed by its organisers and an independent observer to the **innovative use of prizes**, provided by project beneficiaries, to attract participants. Competitions held in other Member States which sought to copy the Estonian example failed to capture the public imagination if they were unable to offer enticing prizes, the organisers explained.

## 2. Better Neighbours TV documentary (Estonia – Latvia Programme)

When considering how best to promote the Estonia – Latvia programme, the JTS communications manager considered European Cooperation Day 2012 offered a good opportunity for an awareness raising activity. After discussions amongst the JTS's bi-national staff, it was decided to commission a documentary to explain the programme to an under-informed public on both sides of the Estonia-Latvia border. The documentary, 'Better Neighbours' was filmed in Estonian, Latvian and English and subtitled for broadcast in the respective languages<sup>28</sup>. The JTS estimated the documentary, which premiered at a Programme conference in Estonia and was aired three times on national television in the two countries, in Autumn 2012, reaching an audience in excess of 80,000. The documentary's **innovative format** was thought to be the key to explaining the success of Better Neighbours in **reaching a large audience** within Estonia and Latvia.

“Better neighbours” TV documentary		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	✓
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.estlat.eu/european-cooperation-day/better-neighbors/>



**Figure 6: Scenes from the production of the Better Neighbours documentary promoting the Estonia - Latvia Programme**



During the film's production the JTS's communicators explained they deliberately eschewed the 'talking heads' approach of having 'bland officials explain [EU regional] policy'. Rather, audience interest was maintained by focussing on a group of students drawn from both sides of the border who tackle national stereotypes head on while exploring projects funded by the programme. The film followed a road movie format, with the group travelling the borderlands to meet people who learn to be better neighbours in order to gain mutual benefits. These include:

- farmers learning from each other to grow organic products for restaurants in both countries;
- musicians performing together, playing their own traditional instruments;
- residents of the twin cities of Valka and Valga where different generations learn to get along.

According to the Programme's information manager, the documentary cost approximately €30,000 to produce meaning an estimated cost per contact of under €0.40.

The main message intended to be communicated by the documentary, in the words of those closely involved with the project, is that "there is very active cooperation between Latvians and Estonians, which brings great results and improves quality of life on both sides of the border. It is worth cooperating with your neighbours, who are not so far away from you and have things that could be shared". The **use of everyday language**, as the students were filmed interacting freely with each other and the beneficiaries they met, was thought to be successful in transmitting this message.

The documentary's producers favoured a subtle approach to displaying the EU logo, as well as that of the Estonia – Latvia Programme: "We really wanted the documentary to be without any official statements, although our logo was often in the background. We wanted it to be for the general public and they would not be so receptive to a documentary with officials talking".

Beneficiaries participated in the project with much enthusiasm. Producers had recruited them by playing up the fact that as well as offering a good opportunity to communicate what their projects are currently doing, the film would act as a record for posterity, documenting the social history of the young countries as they entered their third decade since independence. As the Programme's information manager put it, "we wanted it to have a value besides just talking about the projects. I wanted the TV stations to keep it in their archives so they can look back in 20 years and smile about cooperation when these countries were only 20 years old".

Although primarily intended for television broadcast, the clips generated by the documentary could be used for many purposes, such as teasers in between speakers at conferences organised under the Programme. Summing up their success, the information manager considered, "this was a good way to talk about projects in simple language from the perspective of four young kids. The idea of having something on national TV was unprecedented".

### 3. Structural funds website (All 3 Estonian national operational programmes)

Estonia and Latvia have amongst the highest rates of internet usage in the EU with 64% and 63% (respectively) of people surveyed in November 2012 using the internet almost every day<sup>29</sup>. The Internet is the second most important source of information for national news after television in Estonia (55%) and Latvia (56%) and is the preferred source when searching for information on the EU in both Estonia (50%) and Latvia (42%)<sup>30</sup>.

The new European Union Structural Assistance to Estonia website<sup>31</sup> was created in 2011 as the result of a consensus amongst the structural funds network that the existing website was ripe for renewal. The new website promotes the three national OPs in Estonia, and is managed by their MA, the Ministry of Finance. No reference is made to the ETC programmes in which Estonia participates.

In its own words, the site aims to provide examples to illustrate its **key message: "how Estonia uses European Union structural assistance for the development of the state"**. According to interviewees closely involved in its creation, the site aims to target three groups simultaneously:

Structural funds website		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	✓

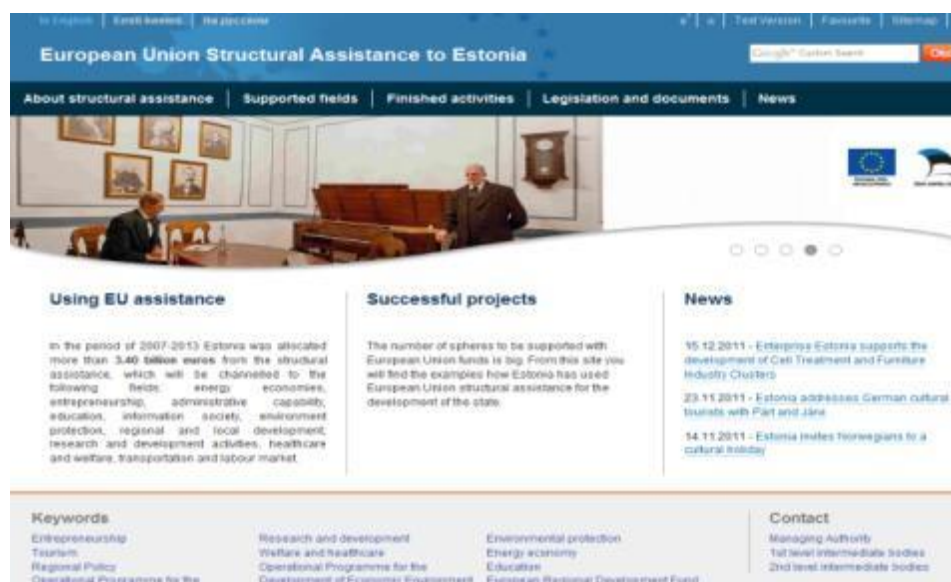
<sup>29</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78\\_media\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_media_en.pdf) at page 10

<sup>30</sup> Ibid at page 37

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.strukturifondid.ee/index.php>

1. The general public in Estonia;
2. Stakeholders – including IBs, beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries (with a focus on the latter); and
3. The media, both at home and abroad.

Figure 7: Screen shot from the EU Structural Assistance to Estonia website



Most interviewees considered the site's organisation makes it easy to navigate, with headings such as 'Finished activities' (giving brief details of successful projects) and 'Supported fields' giving information about the priority areas of the three national OPs. While information is available regarding the three distinct OPs, the site is not organised along OP lines, but rather presents information which is overarching and relevant to all three. According to those involved in its creation and day-to-day management, the site was never meant to highlight the differences between the three OPs, considering this to be relatively unimportant to the general public visiting the site. Potential beneficiaries would find the OP appropriate to their funding needs by selecting the relevant 'Supported field.'

News updates are regularly provided in Estonian, although the limited items on the English and Russian versions of the site date from its inception in 2011. In general, the Estonian version of the site contains more detailed information than the other language versions and was thought to be **very comprehensive in terms of its content**. Independent observers and beneficiaries referred to the site as their first port of call for information on regional policy in Estonia. The lack of updates to the English language version was not thought to be a major issue, as the site provided sufficient information for visitors from abroad, its managers said. By contrast, the need for greater information accessible by Estonia's sizeable Russian-speaking minority was something which did need to be addressed.

No-one visiting the site would leave unaware of the EU's role supporting regional development in Estonia – **the EU flag and references to the EU are omnipresent** - and it



would be easy to find examples of the positive difference made to people's lives by EU regional policy.

**In summary** the website is intended to:

- Address three main target audiences through a single portal;
- Represent all three national OPs in Estonia and their 16 IBs;
- Promote the work already carried out under the auspices of the three national OPs;
- Look to the future, particularly to explain the forthcoming 2014 – 2020 funding period to existing and potential new beneficiaries;
- Act as a reference for IBs and beneficiaries in relation to their projects by providing information with regard to, but not limited to, their communications obligations.

Information was not directly available on the cost of the website, or visitor numbers.

#### 4. Social media – Estonia Latvia Facebook page

The importance of social media divided MA and IB interviewees, with some considering it inappropriate as a means for passing on information on EU regional policy, while others considered it to very useful, particularly for reaching younger audiences. The second view would appear to be supported by the latest data: 55% of Estonians (and 61% of Latvians) surveyed in November 2012 agreed that social networks<sup>32</sup> are a modern way of keeping abreast of political affairs, regardless of whether they themselves used social media<sup>33</sup>.

Estonia – Latvia Facebook page		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	
	Content	
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

With this in mind, the Estonia – Latvia Programme's Facebook page<sup>34</sup> is intended to communicate with beneficiaries and to promote the programme to potential beneficiaries, as well as reach the general public through the popular social-networking site. Launched in January 2012, the page is currently liked by a modest 231 users<sup>35</sup>, although the Programme's information manager expects this to increase significantly in future as interest increases in the forthcoming 2014 – 2020 funding period.

<sup>32</sup> including social networking websites, blogs and video hosting websites

<sup>33</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78\\_media\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_media_en.pdf) at page 48

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Estonia-Latvia-Programme/242774882467282>

<sup>35</sup> As of 6 June 2013

Figure 8: Screen shot from the Estonia - Latvia Programme Facebook page



The page is most popular amongst the 25-34 age group<sup>36</sup> attributed by the page's creator to **its design, which favours pictures and infographics over lengthy text**. The page's creator described Facebook as offering a good opportunity to display information in a less formal style than that of the Programme's official website. The page provides links to the official website, allowing users interested in a particular event or topic to find further detail. The Programme's bi-annual newsletter, available in Estonian, Latvian and English is also accessible via the Facebook page<sup>37</sup>. The page concentrates on displaying photos taken at Programme events with short captions, mostly in English. The page allows functions to publicise upcoming events, such as the annual partners meeting and European cooperation day. The page is very simple but a light hearted counterpoint to the more formal official website.

Key to ensuring the page's success would be both:

1. keeping it "current and interesting" with regular updates on project developments and other relevant news; and
2. favouring pictures over text. "The use of visuals should be increased, explaining things in a very simple way. Self-explanatory infographics, rather than technical text, is important for communication with the general public" said the site's manager.

## 5. Conclusions and outlook

Overall, communications on EU regional policy in Estonia are conducted in a coordinated and collaborative manner between the MA and IBs. Limited budgets have resulted in imaginative ideas for public awareness-raising campaigns, while more traditional forms of communication are also used. Estonia's high internet use has allowed many

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Estonia-Latvia-Programme/242774882467282?id=242774882467282&sk=likes>

<sup>37</sup> <https://sites.google.com/site/latestfromestlat/english/3-2013>

communications to beneficiaries and the general public to be conducted online. Interviewees disagreed over the role to be played by social media in regional policy communications. While some considered it an inappropriate means of communicating on a serious topic, others thought it offered an opportunity to get closer to beneficiaries and the general public.

Some interviewees raised concerns about fragmented branding: the fact that, at least during the early years of the current funding period, the source of funding (ERDF, CF or ESF) was always indicated under the EU logo was considered to be confusing for people, many interviewees suggested. In general, communicators interviewed considered the need to specify from which fund a project receives its grant to be less important than the key message: the EU is the source of the financial support for Estonian development. It was widely considered that this message was successfully passed to its intended audience, a claim which appears to be supported by the most recent figures on awareness of EU support.

Looking to the future, most interviewees pointed out that the 2014 - 2020 funding period will see a shift in the way EU money is spent in Estonia under the planned national OP. Under the future Estonia – Latvia Programme ‘support for SMEs’ will be one of two thematic objectives for 2014 - 2020, as agreed upon by Estonia and Latvia through the Joint Programming Committee<sup>38</sup>. Put simply, in the words of one interviewee, having patched up their infrastructure, future funds will be invested in Estonians’ invisible skills. Communicators will need to alter their approach accordingly. This shift will mean explaining to the public how (and why) EU money is spent on retraining the unemployed, for example. It may be that communicators in Estonia, as in other new Member States, will need to learn lessons from countries in the EU-15 which are already trying to communicate the intangible results of their EU-funded projects.

Finally, interviewees were asked to comment on the role of the EC and give their views on **DG REGIO’s activities and tools**. The following bullet points summarise these views:

- Where they had participated in them, interviewees considered **INFORM network meetings** offered a useful opportunity to listen to the opinions of other communicators on regional policy and to share best practices, both during the meetings and informally on their margins.
- One interviewee mentioned the competition **REGIO Stars**<sup>39</sup>, considering this to be an effective means of sharing best practices from across the Member States. A few interviewees were aware of and had used the **Regio Network on Yammer**, most of whom considered it to be a useful tool for exchanging information.
- Interviewees generally did not consider DG REGIO well placed to communicate on regional policy in Estonia. The idea that the Commission was a distant institution unlikely to appreciate the needs and subtleties of an Estonian audience was widespread. One interviewee suggested the Commission was not always very sensitive in its communications and could sometimes fail to take into account cultural differences between Member States. By way of example, a 2011 circus themed campaign to promote the European Social Fund<sup>40</sup> was thought totally unsuitable for

<sup>38</sup> <https://sites.google.com/site/latestfromestlat/english/3-2013/discussions-on-estonia-latvia-programme-2014-2020>

<sup>39</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/cooperate/regions\\_for\\_economic\\_change/regiostars\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperate/regions_for_economic_change/regiostars_en.cfm)

<sup>40</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=370&featuresId=127&furtherFeatures=yes&langId=en>

Estonia, given the stigma carried by circuses as a form of entertainment associated with the country's Soviet past.

- Another interviewee suggested that **sending the Commissioner to attend events** in Estonia would be a great way to bring regional policy and structural assistance to the general public's attention: "Here, the Commissioner is a big deal. Last year he went to Vienna and no-one reported on it. Had he come to Estonia, he would have been all over the news. Even producing a video message for [our OP] to use on its Facebook page would have been useful", said the IB representative.

**Annex: List of interviewees**

Category of interviewee	Position	Programme	Date and location of interview
European Commission	Press officer European Commission Representation in Tallinn	N/A	7 May 2013, Tallinn
Primary communicators	Communications officer Ministry of Finance	MA for Living Environment and Economic Environment Operational Programmes	9 May 2013, Tallinn
	Communications officer Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication	Economic Environment Operational Programme	9 May 2013, Tallinn
	Communications officer Ministry of Environment	Living Environment Operational Programme	8 May 2013, Tallinn
	Information Manager Estonia – Latvia Programme, Joint Technical Secretariat	Estonia-Latvia Programme	10 May 2013, Tartu
	Former communications officer (2007 – 2012) Formerly with Ministry of Finance	Living Environment and Economic Environment Operational Programmes	8 May 2013, Tallinn
Secondary communicator	Head of Research and Development, Human Resource Development Archimedes Foundation	Living Environment and Economic Environment Operational Programmes	23 May 2013 (telephone)
Beneficiaries	Communications Officer Natural History Museum	Living Environment Operational Programme	8 May 2013, Tallinn
	Project Manager Tartu Science Park	Estonia-Latvia Programme	10 May 2013, Tartu
	Project Manager Tartu Science Park	Estonia-Latvia Programme	10 May 2013, Tartu
Independent observers	Reporter Eesti Päevaleht (daily newspaper)	N/A	6 June 2013 (telephone)
	Researcher PRAXIS Center for Policy Studies (think tank)	N/A	11 June 2013 (telephone)
	Researcher (Regional policy and local government) Tartu University	N/A	13 June 2013 (telephone)

### 3 CASE STUDY REPORT: FRANCE

#### 1. Introduction

Based on preliminary research, five Operational Programmes (OPs) were chosen as the focus of the case study on regional policy communication in France. They include three regional OPs, one national OP and one European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) OP, namely:

- OP 'Ile de France' (regional)
- OP 'Nord-Pas de Calais' (regional)
- OP 'Midi-Pyrénées' (regional)
- OP Europ'Act (national)
- OP 'North-West Europe' (cross-border)

Following a review of relevant documentation (including communication plans, annual implementation reports, regional websites etc.), a member of the evaluation team visited France (Lille, Paris and Toulouse) in mid-May and mid-July 2013, and conducted a total of 16 interviews with representatives of Managing Authorities (MAs), intermediate bodies such as regional councils, and independents who were aware of the MAs communication activities and could comment on these (e.g. project beneficiaries, journalists, representatives of the chamber of commerce, and representatives of organisations representing Europe or young people). Additional interviews were carried out with the INFORM core member for France (also the contact at for the national programme) and European Commission officials from DG REGIO and the Representation in Marseilles. For more details, please consult the annex to this report.

#### 2. Context for regional policy communication

##### EU funding in 2007-2013

Over the course of the 2007-2013 programming period, France has benefitted from European regional aid of more than €14 billion, of which €10.3 billion under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective, €3.2 billion under the Convergence Objective, and €860 million under the European Territorial Cooperation Objective.<sup>41</sup>

This investment has been implemented through 36 programmes, of which 31 are funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and five by the European Social Funds (ESF). The ERDF-funded programmes are primarily uni-regional in their focus (26 in total – 22 in metropolitan France and four overseas), but there are also four multi-regional programmes and one multi-objective national-technical assistance programme which also includes the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) objective. In fact, France is involved in 17 cross-border, transnational and interregional co-operation programmes (ETCs).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/informat/country2009/fr\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/country2009/fr_en.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/atlas2007/fiche/fr\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/atlas2007/fiche/fr_en.pdf)

## Main regional policy objectives and priorities

France's metropolitan regions benefit from aid under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective, while its four overseas departments (i.e. Martinique, Guadeloupe, La Réunion and French Guyana) benefit from aid granted under the Convergence Objective.

In particular, France's National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) stipulates that structural funds will be applied to the following objectives<sup>43</sup>:

- Innovation and the knowledge economy (notably to support small and medium-sized enterprises);
- Training, employment for priority groups, human resource management and social inclusion;
- Development of information and communication technologies;
- The environment, risk avoidance and energy policy;
- Sustainable development throughout the territories.

In addition, France's overseas regions will benefit from improvements in accessibility and compensation for constraints specific to these departments.

## Economic and political environment

France is a relatively rich EU country, with a Gross Domestic Product in Purchasing Power Standards (GDP in PPS) above the EU average in 2012, but below that of a number of other EU Member States.<sup>44</sup> It has been moderately hard hit by the financial crisis of 2007-08 (in relation to other EU Member States), with an economy that contracted by 3.1% in 2009<sup>45</sup> and an unemployment rate of 11% in June 2013 (compared to 4.6% in Austria and over 26% in Spain) which placed it in 16<sup>th</sup> highest position, just above the EU average (10.9%).<sup>46</sup> At the time of writing, a socialist government run by Francois Holland had been in power since 2012 and would serve a five-year term.

## French attitudes towards the EU

Since the peak of the financial crisis in 2008, the attitudes towards the EU in France have become more negative. In the July 2013 Eurobarometer, 57% of the French nationals interviewed said that they "tended not to trust" the European Union<sup>47</sup>, compared to 34% in the autumn 2007 Eurobarometer<sup>48</sup> (which preceded the peak of the economic crisis in 2008).

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<sup>43</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/atlas2007/fiche/fr\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/atlas2007/fiche/fr_en.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Eurostat's definitions: "GDP is a measure for the economic activity. It is defined as the value of all goods and services produced less the value of any goods or services used in their creation. The volume index of GDP per capita in PPS is expressed in relation to the European Union (EU28) average set to equal 100. If the index of a country is higher than 100, this country's level of GDP per head is higher than the EU average and vice versa."

<sup>45</sup> Eurostat GDP growth table :

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tec00115>

<sup>46</sup> Eurostat: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics)

<sup>47</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 79:

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79\\_fact\\_fr\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79_fact_fr_en.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 68:

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb68/eb\\_68\\_fr\\_exec.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb68/eb_68_fr_exec.pdf)



According to interviewees, the EU is often used as a scapegoat for many of France's ills and the media tend to fuel this negative image.

### Levels of awareness of Regional Policy in France

In terms of the French's awareness of regional policy, the results of a national awareness survey undertaken by TNS Sofres in December 2010 suggest that it is quite limited. In fact, 73% of the near 4,000 members of the general public consulted felt they were either very badly or quite badly informed about what Europe undertakes or contributes to in their region<sup>49</sup>.

The interviews carried out as part of this case study confirmed this, with many MAs and their partners stating the lack of awareness of the general public of the intricacies of the EU, let alone regional policy and the various funds, as one of the key communication challenges they faced. As such, those MAs interviewed tended to focus in the first instance on communicating about what Europe is doing in people's backyards, rather than on informing them about the existence of different funds.

## 3. Key actors and approaches:

### Roles and responsibilities for implementing communication requirements

The management of European regional aid was, at the time of writing, semi-decentralised, with state representatives in each of France's 28 regions (if one includes Corsica as a region rather than a "territorial collectivity (*collectivité territoriale*)", as it is officially managing the funds allocated to their region. These bodies are called SGAR (*Secrétariat Général pour les Affaires Régionales*) and are based in France's regional *préfectures*.

In France, a 2007 "communication" (*circulaire*) from the Prime-Minister complements and reinforces the EU's requirements on communication on regional aid, notably by establishing the need for a national communication plan (including the development of a common logo, a national communications campaign); stressing the importance of having dedicated regional websites; and underlining the need for cooperation and exchange across the different levels of government and different actors across France, and by stipulating that 10% of the Technical Assistance budget should be spent on communications.<sup>50</sup>

At national level, the DATAR (*Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale*), the managing authority (MA) for the national Programme Europ'Act<sup>51</sup>,

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<sup>49</sup> The question asked was : « Diriez-vous que vous êtes très bien informé, assez bien informé, assez mal informé ou très mal informé sur ce que l'Europe réalise ou contribue à réaliser dans votre Région ? »

<sup>50</sup> Circulaire du Premier Ministre du 12 février 2007 relative à la communication sur les projets financés par l'Union Européenne dans le cadre de la politique de cohésion économique et sociale.  
<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000245313&dateTexte=&categorieLien=id>

<sup>51</sup> Europ'Act is a national programme which over the period 2007-2013 aims to support those actors involved in France's cohesion policy. It is co-financed by the ERDF.



is in charge of communicating about regional aid. It is a cross-ministerial entity<sup>52</sup> with a cross-fund focus. At regional level, it is the role of the communication officials in the SGAR.

It is worthy of note that, as of the next programming period, the management of regional aid will be further decentralised and in part managed by the regional councils (*conseils régionaux*), which are partly made up of representatives voted into office in regional elections. This decentralisation will apply primarily to ERDF funds, the management of ESF funds remaining in the hands of the state.

### **Coordination and cooperation at national and regional level**

The DATAR does not have the remit to impose anything on its regional counterparts, but aims to assist and support them in their activities (including communication, among others). For example, it organises a yearly meeting to enable an exchange of best practice across the territory, set up a common logo which France's regions are free to use (see below), established a communications kit, developed an extranet website for the exchange of information and best practices, and maintains a website that provides information on regional aid nationally and serves as a gateway to the websites of France's regions.

At regional level, the SGAR tend to work closely with the regional councils. While the communications officials in the SGAR tend to spend 100% of their time on communicating about cross-fund regional aid, their counterparts in the regional councils tend to have a wider remit, for example involving all EU-focussed communications. The SCAR and regional councils also cooperate regularly with their counterparts at departmental level.

### **A France-wide regional policy logo**

The DATAR decided in 2009 to design a cross-fund (ERDF, ESF, EFF, EARDF) regional policy logo which it encouraged France's regions to use on their websites in order to provide cross-territorial professionalism, consistency and coherence to its messaging. The logo is now being used by many of France's regions on their dedicated cross-fund regional policy websites<sup>53</sup>.

The national logo reads "*L'Europe s'engage en France*" (Europe is active in France), and the regional ones each state their region's name instead of France, e.g. "*L'Europe s'engage en Nord-Pas de Calais*", "*L'Europe s'engage en Midi-Pyrénées*". Examples of these logos can be found below (see figure 1). In order to maintain coherence in the visual imaging, certain regions have decided to use the 'E' with the stars in the 'Es' in ERDF, ESF and EARDF in their brochures / on their website (see figure 2) and other European regional initiatives have done the same (see figure 3).

<sup>52</sup> The inter-ministerial committee includes representatives of four French ministries : *le ministère de l'intérieur et de l'aménagement du territoire, le ministère de l'emploi, de la cohésion sociale et du logement, le ministère de l'outre-mer et le ministère de l'agriculture et de la pêche*.

<sup>53</sup> See for example the following regional websites: <http://www.europe-en-nordpasdecals.eu/>, <http://www.europeidf.fr/index.php> and <http://www.europe-en-midiPyrénées.eu/>.

The cost of establishing, designing and distributing the logo to France's regions (a special tool kit was prepared for each region) amounted to €28,350, representing 1.2% of the annual inter-fund communications budget.<sup>54</sup>

While these logos do not specifically refer to the regional development funds, they make clear that Europe is having an impact on France's regions. The fact that they are being used both at national level and by a number of France's regions will also help to strengthen the "brand" and build awareness of what Europe is doing more locally.

Figure 1: The French national and regional policy logos


Figure 2: Logos for the ERDF, ESF and EARDF used on the Ile de France website and in a Joli Mois de l'Europe brochure in Nord-Pas de Calais



<sup>54</sup> The total inter-fund communications budget for the programme Europ'Act over the seven year period represents €16 million, equating to approximately 2.3 million per year.

Figure 3: Logos used for other regional initiatives in Ile de France



## Communication strategies and approaches

At the beginning of the programming period, the OPs developed a communication plan which set out the broad lines of their communication strategy for the full period, highlighting the key objectives, target audience and messages of their planned activities.

In general terms, the main objectives of France's regions' communication activities are to:

- a. Inform potential beneficiaries of the funding opportunities available to them;
- b. Keep existing beneficiaries informed of new opportunities, their communication requirements etc.;
- c. Increase awareness of EU action in regional policy among the general public.

In particular, the ETC North West Europe's communication aims and objectives were stated as follows<sup>55</sup>:

- a. To help generate new partnerships by increasing awareness amongst potential beneficiaries on the funding opportunities offered by the NWE Programme;
- b. To provide potential beneficiaries and stakeholders with accurate and reliable information to stimulate high quality applications;
- c. To promote the benefits and added value of cooperation to the general public in its widest sense by highlighting project results and outputs and their European dimension;
- d. To promote the visibility of the EU's role in the promotion of projects;
- e. To raise the profile of transnational cooperation within national and regional administrative systems;
- f. To encourage active dissemination of projects and programme results to professionals and political stakeholders;
- g. To promote transparency by providing accurate and accessible information about the programme to the stakeholders and the general public.

As these objectives suggest, the target audiences are:

- a. Potential beneficiaries;
- b. Existing beneficiaries;
- c. The general public;
- d. Politicians and key decision makers.

<sup>55</sup> COMMUNICATION PLAN, INTERREG IVB North West Europe, 2007-13.

The main messages that France's regions and the ETC are trying to communicate on regional policy include:

- a. Europe can help you realise your projects = (potential) beneficiaries;
- b. Europe is active in your backyard / funds projects near you = the general public;
- c. Europe funds the cooperation of actors in different regions in Europe (ETC) = (potential) beneficiaries and the general public.

During the interviews carried out, it was stressed that informing about the existence and characteristics of the different funds or programmes (for ETCs in particular) was a secondary / more complex message, and one that was directed at a more interested / informed audience, such as (potential) beneficiaries, as opposed to the general public.

### Communication budgets

Operational Programme	Indicative communication budget for ERDF funds (in EUR)	Technical assistance budget (in EUR)	Total Programme budget (in EUR)	% of total budget for communication of ERDF funds
OP Europ'Act (national TA programme)	16 million, of which 10 million for the European funds combined (ERDF, ESF, EARDF) <sup>56</sup>	68 million, of which 39 million for ERDF	--	--
OP 'Ile de France'	915,575	9.2 million	312 million	0.29%
OP 'Midi-Pyrénées'	1.6 million	16.2 million	908 million	0.18%
OP 'Nord-Pas de Calais'	627,800	14 million	2,336 million	0.03%
OP 'North-West Europe'	2.7 million	28.4 million	697 million	0.39%

Sources: For indicative communication budgets: OP communication plans 2007-2013, annual reports or interviews. For TA and OP budgets: European Commission, Inforegio website.

### Key challenges to communicating Regional Policy

Some of the key challenges to communicating Regional Policy according to interviewees included:

- The negative attitudes towards the EU in France, in particular in the current economic climate (see above);
- The complexity of the EU and its component parts with different funds, and different OPs for ETCs in particular that "*are doing similar things in slightly different ways in territories that overlap in some cases*";
- Making what is being done in terms of regional policy relevant for the general public;
- The fact that each fund has its own budget line, making communicating cross-fund and carrying out joint activities (which is the MAs preferred way of working) very complex;

<sup>56</sup> This budget is a combined inter-fund budget which primarily serves to communicate on the activities of the funds themselves; only a small proportion of the budget is used to communicate on the Europ'Act programme itself.

- The “*atomisation*” of the information about regional aid, with each OP working in a separate direction, when most OPs have limited communication resources (in particular ETC OPs);
- The fact that in order to create a harmonious communications approach, the ETCs are having to work from the bottom-up and try to convince the MS concerned that it is a good idea as they do not have the authority to impose anything on them.

#### 4. Activities and good practice examples

A variety of tools and mechanisms are used in France to communicate on regional policy across the four European funds (i.e. ERDF, ESF, EFF, EARDF). The table below provides an overview of some of these, based on the OPs included in this case study.

Key tools / mechanisms	Further details on these tools / mechanisms per OP
<b>National TV and radio campaigns</b>	A <u>national</u> TV and radio campaign was launched in 2010, and another is forthcoming.
<b>Websites</b>	<p>A <u>national</u> website provides information on the funds and serves as a gateway to the regions' websites: <a href="http://www.europe-en-france.gouv.fr/">http://www.europe-en-france.gouv.fr/</a></p> <p>Each <u>region</u> has its own website which can either be accessed through the national gateway (<a href="http://www.europe-en-france.gouv.fr/Des-programmes-pour-qui-pour-quoi/Trouver-une-aide/Programmes-regionaux-pluri-regionaux-et-nationaux">http://www.europe-en-france.gouv.fr/Des-programmes-pour-qui-pour-quoi/Trouver-une-aide/Programmes-regionaux-pluri-regionaux-et-nationaux</a>) or directly. See for example the following websites:</p> <p><a href="http://www.europe-en-nordpasdecalsais.eu/">http://www.europe-en-nordpasdecalsais.eu/</a>  <a href="http://www.europeidf.fr/index.php">http://www.europeidf.fr/index.php</a>  <a href="http://www.europe-en-midiPyrénées.eu/">http://www.europe-en-midiPyrénées.eu/</a></p>
<b>Events</b>	<p>Events are organised by the regions to advertise what Europe is doing in people's backyards, mainly through funded projects opening their doors to the general public. The most important of these events is the Joli Mois de l'Europe (see below).</p> <p>The MAs also 'piggy-back' on events organised by the region around Europe day on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, such as by having a stand in the European village built for the occasion.</p>
<b>Billboards and posters</b>	Billboards and posters are developed by the regional MAs to advertise key moments in the programming period, such as in order to launch the programming period and inform potential beneficiaries of the funds available, or during key events such as the Joli Mois de l'Europe to attract the general public to the events organised.
<b>Videos</b>	Videos are produced at regional level to inform the general public of the projects funded. They tend to be shown at events or alongside the stand-alone posters (see below) put up in official buildings, at schools etc., rather than on television.
<b>Stand-alone posters (“<i>kakimonos</i>”)</b>	The regions tend to produce stand-alone posters that are put up at given events or in official buildings (e.g. prefectures, consulates, schools etc.).

Key tools / mechanisms	Further details on these tools / mechanisms per OP
<b>Newsletters</b>	One region in particular produces a monthly newsletter which is primarily aimed at (potential) beneficiaries, but also the general public, and includes articles on projects funded / sought and / or on new developments relating to the European funds; an 'in brief' section with calls for projects in given areas; and an agenda of upcoming dates to remember / events.
<b>Brochures, flyers, postcards</b>	<p>A wide variety of brochures are produced, some aimed at potential beneficiaries and including more technical information, and others aimed at the general public with descriptions of the EU / the funds and examples of projects.</p> <p>Flyers and postcards tend to be used to advertise given events, such as the Joli Mois de l'Europe or the cycle ride in Midi-Pyrénées (see below).</p>
<b>Press activities (e.g. releases, conferences and press packs)</b>	<p>The press activities of MAs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press releases, which are sent to relevant contacts and put on the regions' websites;</li> <li>• Press conferences for the launch of the programming period or events like the Joli Mois de l'Europe;</li> <li>• Press packs, which are developed for specific events such as the Joli Mois de l'Europe.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication kits</b>	The MAs produce communication kits for beneficiaries, providing them with guidance to ensure that they abide by the communication requirements set at national and EU level.
<b>Gadgets</b>	Some examples of gadgets include USB sticks, pens, pencil holders, badges, masks etc.
<b>Internal communications</b>	<p>At <u>national level</u>, the DATAR has set up an extra-net which can be used by the regional MAs to exchange best practices, download relevant documentation such as awareness surveys etc.</p> <p>At <u>regional level</u>, certain regions have developed committees and networks to ensure communication, transparency, exchange of best practice and the development of joint initiatives across the bodies in charge of different funds and / or across a broader range of actors working on European issues in a given region. For example, in Midi-Pyrénées, there exists both an intra-fund committee (<i>Comité inter-fond</i>) that includes the relevant state-bodies such as the SGAR and regional councils, and a broader network of partners (<i>Réseau des relais</i>).</p> <p>These regional committees and networks impact upon external communications in that they work towards ensuring transparency, and coherence and consistency in the messages communicated across all the funds and / or about the activities of the EU in given regions more generally.</p>

The section below highlights a few examples of best practice in France, selected on the basis of interviews with primary and secondary communicators, interviews with independents (where possible) and the good practice criteria established by the evaluation team.



## Le joli mois de l'Europe

In the past, the OPs in France tended to organise events / activities aimed at informing the general public about European regional policy around the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, be it for a couple of days or a week. In 2010, the region of Aquitaine decided to organise a full month of activities / events, feeling that a week was too little (especially during the month of May when many back holidays fall). The following year, the region of Midi-Pyrénées followed suit, having a logo designed which in 2013 was adopted at national level and also by a large number of France's regions.

France's regions are not obliged to organise a Joli Mois de l'Europe and whether they do so or not tends to depend on the budget they have available and the level of support granted to the idea by senior management. Where they do decide to do so, each region is free to make use of the butterfly logo or not, and organise the month as it sees fit, with certain regions focussing principally on funded projects opening their doors to the public, and others also organising entertaining events /activities around these (e.g. picnics, walks or cycle tours through cities, scavenger hunts etc.) in an attempt to attract more people. In 2013, 18 out of 27 regions organised a month of activities and events, a large proportion of which adopted the butterfly logo.

Le joli mois de l'Europe		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓

The DATAR created a page dedicated to the Joli Mois de l'Europe on the national website for the European funds (<http://www.europe-en-france.gouv.fr/>) which included a brief introduction to what was going on in participating regions in France (and in some other EU Member States), links to the regions' dedicated sites and a press pack that was also distributed regionally.

It is unclear how many regions in France have (formally) evaluated this event, though, of those consulted, the Nord-Pas de Calais region conducted a survey of the general public at given events, and the Midi-Pyrénées MA uses public awareness surveys to gauge the impact of such events. Those independents consulted were of the opinion that this event was innovative in that it was spread over a whole month and in some regions was quite varied, combining more formal and informal events (see below). Moreover, it was perceived as being successful at communicating about what the EU is doing locally to a variety of members of the general public (including younger audiences) across the regions concerned as a whole (rather than simply their capitals).

Further details are provided below on the Joli Mois de l'Europe organised in three of France's regions, namely Midi-Pyrénées, Nord-Pas de Calais and Ile de France.

## 1. *Le joli mois de l'Europe in Midi-Pyrénées*

The region of Midi-Pyrénées first organised the Joli Mois de l'Europe in 2011 in an attempt to increase awareness among the general public of the EU's activities in its region. In order to try and attract a maximum amount of people, the month includes regional policy-focussed events, such as open door visits of projects, the cycle ride detailed below, and other types of entertainment, such as concerts. Combining the open doors with more recreational events is seen as a means to further highlight what has been done by the EU in the region, to add value, and give the overall event more credibility, by having a content that is of interest to all.

In 2013, 130 events were organised, and included open door visits of projects (37), exhibits (28), conferences and debates (23), entertainment (16), discovery tours (10), tastings (8), shows (6) and professional meet-ups (2). Over time, more events have been organised and the variety of the organisers has increased; 65 events were organised in 2011 and 79 in 2012.

A dedicated Joli Mois de l'Europe website was created to advertise the event, as were posters, postcards (see figure 4) and other gadgets. While keeping with the nature theme, blue and green colours, and the European stars, the MA has adapted the visuals each year, first using a flower, then a ladybird, then the butterfly also used by other French regions in 2013 (see figure 5). It plans to continue to adapt the visuals as such in the future.

Figure 4: Website for the Joli Mois de l'Europe in Midi-Pyrénées, May 2013



Moreover, a press conference is organised each year to launch the Joli Mois de l'Europe. Over the course of the month of May 2013, close to 100 articles were published in the press in relation to events organised, and 58 on the Internet sites of partners and those specifically targeted.

The approximate budget for the event in 2013 was €90,000 (including €11,000 for the launch, €500 for the website and €2,100 for the bike ride through Toulouse (see below)), representing 39% of the ERDF annual communications budget<sup>57</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> The total communication budget for the ERDF represents €1.6m for the seven-year programming period (2007-2013), equating to an annual budget of €228,571. Within this context, it is important to



Those independents interviewed in Midi-Pyrénées felt that the Joli Mois de l'Europe was a successful event in that it was varied and generated interest from the general public. In particular, reference was made to the “*variety*” of events on offer and the benefit of combining the more “*formal*” events (e.g. open houses, conferences) with recreational activities to attract more interest. It was also seen as an event that is accessible to a younger public, with the use of simple terms in the advertising and the distribution of gadgets that appeal to younger audiences.

The MA uses awareness surveys to evaluate the level of success of such events aimed at the general public. In 2010, survey results suggest that 24% of respondents were aware of the logo “*L'Europe s'engage en Midi-Pyrénées*” (seven percentage points above the national average) and 43% of respondents in Midi-Pyrénées felt that they benefitted personally, directly or indirectly from actions financed by the EU (ten percentage points above the national average). Another such survey is to be launched at the end of the funding period.

**Figure 5: Postcards (flyers) for the Joli Mois de l'Europe in Midi-Pyrénées, 2011 to 2013**



## **2. Le joli mois de l'Europe in Nord-Pas de Calais**

In Nord-Pas de Calais, such a cross-fund (ERDF and ESF) month dedicated to showcasing projects to the general public was organised for the first time in May 2013. The month included 100 events showcasing 65 projects financed by the ERDF and 35 by the ESF, and ranging from visits of projects, to conferences, to forums, to exhibits.

To publicise the event and what Europe is doing in Nord-Pas de Calais with slogans like “*Au mois de mai, portez un nouveau regard sur l'action de l'Europe en Nord-Pas de Calais*”<sup>58</sup>, the MAs put together a number of tools, namely posters on billboards in towns; a small double-sided cardboard flyer including a flashcode linking to the dedicated website (<http://jolimoisnpsc.eu/>); and a booklet of 15 pages presenting the ERDF and ESF, some key moments in the development of the EU, and eight projects financed by either the ERDF or

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note that the communication activities are cross-fund, the ESF (but to date not the ERDF) having also in part funded such activities.

<sup>58</sup> Translated as: “During the month of May, take a look at what Europe is doing in Nord-Pas de Calais.”

ESF (see figure 2). A publicity campaign was also launched via local radio, local TV and in a regional newspaper.

A press conference launched the event, leading to the publication of at least 22 articles in the written press (see figure 7), seven on the internet and three interviews on TV and radio. Moreover, a communications kit (including banners, signatures, badges, stickers, masques etc.) was made available to and used by project presenters during the event (in particular the badges which reproduced the butterfly logo and free-standing posters). A seminar was organised for project presenters to show them the communication tools at their disposal and ensure consistency. A facebook site was also launched with project participants being able to inform people of their upcoming event and its status, and people being able to comment on the events “in real time”.

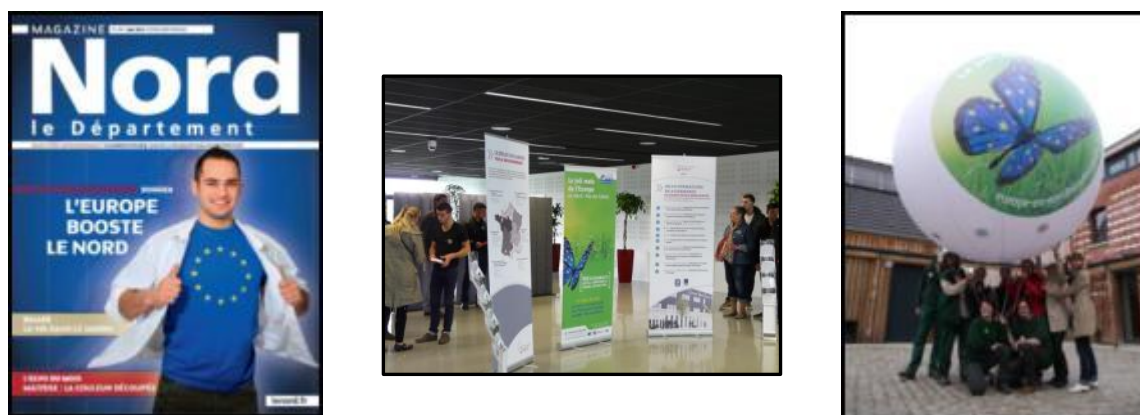
**Figure 6: Flyer for the Joli Mois de l'Europe in Nord-Pas de Calais**



The cost of the month was divided between the ERDF and ESF communications budgets for the region. The communication budget for the ERDF for 2007-2013 was €627,800 and the Joli Mois de l'Europe cost approximately €260,000 in total, representing (once this cost is cut in two) 21% of the total ERDF communications budget.

It is estimated that over 10,000 people visited the event over the course of the month. The website witnessed 6,000 unique visitors, and the facebook page generated 750 ‘Likes’.

**Figure 7: Some of the “results” of the Joli Mois de l'Europe in Nord-Pas de Calais**



An evaluation was undertaken by the MA among members of the general public, with 730 people answering a survey distributed at 11 events. In addition to some profiling questions,

those surveyed were asked where they had heard about the event (multiple answers were possible) – the majority had received an invitation (50%), 22% had heard about it through word of mouth, 13% via the press, 11% via the poster campaign and a combined total of 9% via the internet or social networks. The theme (59%) or place / location itself (40%) were what tended to attract visitors to a given event, over the information provided on Europe (15%), though this may partly be explained by the fact that Europe was not presented as being the main theme of these events as such. A majority of visitors were aware of European interventions at local level prior to the event, suggesting that the event enabled them to further this knowledge. A combined total of 97% of respondents felt that the event had helped improve their perception of Europe, and 81% stated that the event had made them want to find out more about Europe, their planned recourse for this being primarily the internet.

### ***Le joli mois de l'Europe in Ile de France***

Ile de France began organising the Joli Mois de l'Europe in 2011. The event is aimed at the general public with the intention of informing people about what the EU funds in the region. In 2013, 18 events were organised across Ile de France, ranging from walks in a regional park where the EU funded trails, to a round-table on mobility, to presentations on and site visits of given European-funded projects etc.

The region adopted the butterfly as its logo in 2013. The slogans used in its 2013 postcard and brochure underline that a number of events are being organised near you (*De nombreux événements près de chez vous!*) and that Europe makes projects happen in Ile de France (*L'Europe fait avancer des projets en Ile de France*). The brochure includes a flashcode linking to a dedicated webpage, and a page presenting the amount and type of ERDF, ESF and ERDEAF's investments in Ile de France.

**Figure 8: Brochure for the Joli Mois de l'Europe in Ile de France**



The total cost of the event was €62,500 in 2011 and €64,100 in 2012, including the production of the promotional objects, the design of the regional programme, the development of films, and the rental of a stand. This represents approximately 14% of the total annual, cross-fund communications budget<sup>59</sup> and 7% of the total ERDF budget<sup>60</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> The annual cross-fund communications budget funded by the EU in Ile de France is approximately €223,000, with €65,400 from ERDF, €150,400 from ESF and €7,200 from EARDF. France matches this sum, bringing the total annual cross-fund communications budget to €446,000.

In contrast to other communication activities developed by the MA, this event generates some media interest. Those independents consulted in relation to the activities of Ile de France were of the opinion that for the Joli Mois de l'Europe it was important to combine more recreational events with the presentation of projects to attract more people (as is the case), and that the month served to show individuals (by showcasing projects that are working) the impact that regional policy can have on their day to day lives. It was also suggested that more publicity could be undertaken to showcase the event.

No formal evaluation of the event was undertaken.

### A European cycle ride in Toulouse

In 2009, the OP Midi-Pyrénées first organised a cycle ride through the town of Toulouse, dedicated to informing the general public about regional policy. It is an activity which is organised on the weekend following or preceding the 9<sup>th</sup> of May (so is part of the Joli Mois de l'Europe mentioned above), and involves making brief to longer stops at nine to ten different projects funded by the ERDF or ESF. The cycle ride lasts three hours, and each year has been organised around a given theme, such as solidarity in 2012 and innovation in 2013, thereby ensuring a degree of coherence in terms of the projects selected. Temporary signs are put up at each of the project sites included in the ride, with a brief description provided of seven to eight projects during a short two-minute stop, and longer stops made at the sites of two to three projects, where presentations and tours are given and refreshments provided. For example, in 2013, one of the stops of the innovation-themed cycle tour was at the “*Cité de l'Espace*”<sup>61</sup>, one of the most visited sites in Toulouse, where participants were given a presentation about the role played by EU funds in the creation of the space museum, and free tickets to be used at a later date.

A cycle ride in Toulouse		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	

In order to publicise the event, a brochure was developed that included a map of the route and brief descriptions of some of the projects that formed part of it and posters were printed (see figure 9). These communication tools made clear reference to Europe, using the regional logo “*l'Europe s'engage en Midi-Pyrénées*” (see above), and (in smaller print) referred to the EU funds themselves. Those interested in Europe and those interested in outdoor activities were targeted via relevant organisations, such as European associations like the Maison de l'Europe, cycling and hiking associations, cycle shops and the company that owns the bicycles for public hire in the streets of Toulouse, consulates etc., with the MA providing them with posters and brochures to advertise the event. In addition, the event was publicised at the European village set up in town around the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, on the OP's website, via social media sites (see figure 9) and through e-mails being sent out to relevant parties.

<sup>60</sup> The total ERDF communications budget for 2007-2013 in Ile de France is €915,575.

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.cite-espace.com/>



**Figure 9: Poster, brochure (including map of route) and Facebook page advertising the bike-ride in Toulouse, May 2013**



Moreover, in addition to the temporary signs placed at each of the ten project sites, visibility was provided to the EU on the day itself (and thereafter) with participants wearing a take-away yellow cycling vest which on the back read “*La Balade Européenne à vélo*”<sup>62</sup> and included the bike logo of the event (see figure 9), and attaching yellow and blue-starred balloons to their bicycles (see figure 10). Through the combination of these communication means, the event reaches a wider public than those who actually participate as cyclists.

**Figure 10: Photos taken during the European bike ride in Toulouse, May 2013**



Due to its popularity, the cycle ride has been organised in the town every year since its inception in 2009 (aside from in 2010 when it was cancelled due to poor weather). In 2013, 118 people took part in the cycle ride, of which only five had heard about it through a European association, the others tending to come from the cycling scene. In 2012, 98 people took part, compared to approximately 40 in 2011 and 200 in 2009.

The cost of the event is comparatively little in terms of the production and distribution costs, but organising it takes a lot of person time. In 2013, it cost €8,100 in total, €2,100 for the production of the brochures, temporary signs etc. and €6,000 for postage etc. This

<sup>62</sup> Translated as: The European cycle ride.

represents 3.5% of the annual ERDF communications budget.<sup>63</sup> During the initial years more was spent on production, with the development of the logo etc., and less on distribution (€3,500 to €5,000).

The strength of the event lies in being able to transmit quite a lot of information about EU regional policy to people while they are enjoying a relaxed cycle ride. Project managers also see it as a good opportunity to publicise what they do. One of the drawbacks of the event is that it only takes place in Toulouse. While it could be organised elsewhere in the region, the human costs involved in doing so would be too large for the current communications team. Those independents interviewed in Midi-Pyrénées had not taken part in the cycle ride, but felt that it was an event that was good practice as it showed “concrete” examples of what the EU funds locally, provided visibility to the EU in the streets of Toulouse, and that it is an event that appealed to younger audiences too.

Organising a formal evaluation of the event is difficult logistically as the MA has made a conscious decision not to ask for participants’ personal details, and it would need to be done at the end of the cycle ride, when people want to get home. A representative of the MA has, to date, tended to circulate among participants and informally ask them what they think of the event, with the majority providing positive feedback. In 2013, participants were asked where they had heard about the event, and it was concluded that they had done so through a variety of sources, ranging from word of mouth, to cycling associations/companies, to the Internet. While none of the third parties interviewed in relation to the communication activities of the MA in Midi-Pyrénées had actually attended the event, they felt that it was a good, novel idea which contributed to increasing the visibility of and knowledge about EU regional policy.

### A one-stop shop for information on Europe in Midi-Pyrénées

In 2013, a new website was launched as a gateway to clarify the information about Europe in Midi-Pyrénées. The aim is to provide beneficiaries and the general public with all the information they need on the European resources available in Midi-Pyrénées within three clicks of a mouse. The site was developed by the MA, regional council and a network of regional partners (*Réseau des relais*) that was initiated by the MA in late 2011 to bring together (on a voluntary basis) a variety of actors working on European themes in the region. The website was developed in response to the network’s conclusion that there existed a multitude of websites containing information on Europe in Midi-Pyrénées, but that citizens sometimes found it difficult to find what they were looking for.

The ‘Europe in Midi-Pyrénées’ website		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

<sup>63</sup> The total communication budget for the ERDF represents €1.6m for the seven-year programming period (2007-2013), equating to an annual budget of €228,571. Within this context, it is important to note that the communication activities are cross-funded, the ESF (but to date not the EARDF) having also in part funded such activities.

The website does not aim to replace what already exists, but to direct (potential) beneficiaries and the general public towards (1) the correct information and (2) the right person to speak to.

The website contains three main sections:

1. *Les programmes Européens, comment ça marche?* This section provides information on how the funds work, the project selection process, and the upcoming programming period.
2. *Le programme Européen pour votre projet.* This is a search engine designed to help those interested find out which programme is best adapted to funding a given project. Direct links to more information on the different funds themselves are also included.
3. *Les contacts Européens près de chez vous.* This is a search engine designed to help those concerned find the contact details of the person to speak to in relation to a given query relating to the EU or a project idea.

In addition, the site includes a section on news (Actualités), a focus on given subjects / events of interest (Focus), and a description of given projects funded by the EU (Réalisations).

Figure 11: The 'Europe in Midi-Pyrénées' website



The design and development of the website cost €8,000, representing 3.5% of the annual ERDF communications budget<sup>64</sup>. The Midi-Pyrénées regional, cross-fund site developed in 2008 ([www.europe-en-midiPyrénées.eu](http://www.europe-en-midiPyrénées.eu)) was used as the basis for the redesign, thereby capitalising on people's pre-existing awareness of the site.

Two press conferences marked the launch of the website and its launch featured in the regional press. To date, people have responded favourably to the new site in terms of

<sup>64</sup> The total communication budget for the ERDF represents €1.6m for the seven-year programming period (2007-2013), equating to an annual budget of €228,571. Within this context, it is important to note that as the communication activities are cross-fund, the ESF (but to date not the EARDF) having also in part funded such activities.

opinions gauged and the number of visits to the site; an evaluation of partners and users is scheduled to take place. Those independents interviewed (all members of the network of partners) felt that the website was a good development in that it clarified what was out there for beneficiaries in particular. In fact, it was generally felt that the website was aimed more at beneficiaries than the general public.

### Europe on the Ground – INTERREG IV

In 2012 and 2013, three events were organised around given regional policy projects falling under the ETC North West Europe – a fourth was scheduled for later in 2013. These events brought together cross-border beneficiaries from given projects and interested parties. The three projects that formed the focus of the events were: the EnAlgae, Senior Enterprise and Dairyman projects (see [http://www.nweurope.eu/index.php?act=ontheground\\_blog](http://www.nweurope.eu/index.php?act=ontheground_blog)). The aim of the events was to “*get to the people*” and “*communicate by showing*”. The MA wanted every participant who attended an event to go home with a clear idea of what Europe had done for them through the ERDF funds and these projects.

The events included an introductory presentation by an European Commission official and/or project manager(s) which set the scene on European regional policy, the OP and the project; a background and a status update on the project at hand by the experts (where relevant, e.g. En Algae project); and a workshop/round-table discussion for an exchange of experiences and ideas. The events were attended by approximately 50 people, of which members of the ETC’s MA, project managers and beneficiaries from the different countries concerned, and interested parties from the general public (such as residents living near the reactor for the EnAlgae project). Journalists were also invited to attend and report on the projects.

Europe on the ground		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	✓
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓

One beneficiary, who had received funding to start up her own business as part of the Senior Enterprise project, stated that it was good for people from different countries to get together in a room and exchange their experiences, and that she was well aware of the part that played the EU in funding her business. In the case of the EnAlgae project, the event was covered by a local journalist from a specialised magazine who, in collaboration with the project managers, wrote three stories on the project which made reference to it being financed through European funding.

During the event, a number of beneficiaries were interviewed and these interviews posted on INTERREG IVB NWE’s website (see figure 12 below and [http://www.nweurope.eu/index.php?act=ontheground\\_blog](http://www.nweurope.eu/index.php?act=ontheground_blog)).

The cost of this event was limited in that the logistics were organised by the project concerned, though the MA provided financial support where they could (e.g. catering, translation etc.) in order not to financially over-burden the project level. The MA primarily came with the concept and provided the projects with greater visibility on INTERREG’s



website via the podcasts. It budgeted €30,000 for the four events combined, representing 7.8% of the annual communications budget<sup>65</sup>, but under-spent on this.

Figure 12: The podcast for the EnAlgae project posted on INTERREG IV NWE's website



## 5. Conclusions and outlook

### Summary of key findings

The findings presented above show that France has successfully managed to develop a common nationwide logo promoting Europe's regional interventions cross-fund, which is being used and declined by France's regions. Moreover, the findings show that France's regions have been active in communicating about what Europe is doing in their backyards through a variety of tools and activities. In particular, a number of good practice examples were identified, namely:

- **Le Joli Mois de L'Europe** which over the period of a month in May provides visibility to EU regional policy with various EU-funded regional projects opening their doors to the general public, and in some regions this being combined with more "recreational" activities such as concerts, bike rides etc. The event is organised by many of France's regions (in 2013 using an optional common logo), is promoted through a variety of means ranging from billboards to badges to social media sites, and generates media interest, and a good number of visitors.
- The **European bike ride through Toulouse**, which lasts three hours with shorter or longer stops at up to ten sites funded by the ERDF or ESF. It provides visibility to EU regional policy both prior to and during the event via brochures, complementary cycling vests for the riders, signs at project sites along the route etc.

<sup>65</sup> The communications budget represents €2.7 million over the seven year period, equating to €385,714 per year.

- **Midi-Pyrénées' one-stop-shop website** for information about Europe and European interventions at regional level. The website forms a gateway, providing users with (1) the information they require and (2) the details of the right person to speak to.
- The **Europe on the ground** events, which bring together cross-border beneficiaries from given ETC projects and interested parties to exchange experiences and best-practice. The events generate media interest, and allow the MAs / those interested to find out more about what is happening on the ground - interviews were made of the experiences of some beneficiaries and put on the ETC's website.

## Views on DG REGIO's activities and tools

Interviewees were asked to comment on the role of the EC in relation to communicating about regional policy, and the communication tools and activities of DG REGIO.

Most primary communicators were aware of and referred to the **INFOREGIO website**, but this was not so much the case for secondary communicators or independents. However, it was felt that the site could be further improved in that it was seen as too "institutional", "complex" and not aimed at the general public.

Where interviewees had attended **INFORM network meetings**, they had found these useful in that they had (1) met relevant people and developed a more personal relationship with them, (2) exchanged ideas and best practices and (3) learnt about something new (such as the benefits of social media). It was felt that these meetings could be used not only as a forum for the exchange of best practice, but also as a means to "do something together", generate an output, for example by getting together as ETCs to work on harmonisation for the next programming period (see below) or creating common communication guidance documents across OPs. The main reasons for interviewees not attending these events included a lack of time to do so (i.e. poor timings of the meetings in relation to their own schedules), the cost of travelling to meetings organised further afield, and lack of support from their superiors to do so. In addition, it was questioned whether the distribution lists for the meetings were regularly updated as a couple of interviewees had not received an invitation.

Few interviewees were aware of or had used **Yammer**. In one instance, it was stressed that there are a lot of such networks out there and that those that are aimed at pooling resources and ideas, and would save work later on, were much more profitable to be members of than those that only involve sharing experiences.

One communication activity which was considered particularly effective by a couple of interviewees was the **circus** which toured the EU's Member States, and contained a simple, clear message about a social, equal Europe that was relevant to the general public.

It was questioned whether **gadgets** were effective at communicating the chosen messages, though the pens were said to be popular, as were gadgets more generally for younger audiences.

## Role of the EC and DG REGIO

In terms of what the EC / DG REGIO could do in the future to support the work of France's regions, interviewees made a number of suggestions described in detail below:

1. It was generally felt that DG REGIO should **continue using the regional hubs in France** (i.e. the SGAR and regional councils) to help it communicate about regional policy, rather than try to engage in activities of its own at national level. The strength of DG REGIO lies in bringing MS representatives together to exchange best practice, putting in place common rules, helping organise coordinated / common (European) activities / guidelines across MS / ETCs / OPs etc.
2. In fact, it was stated that rather than developing tools, DG REGIO should focus on defining what exactly regional policy is, what is trying to be achieved and **harmonising the vision so that it is more understandable to the general public** as it is currently too atomised from one MS to another, from one OP to another.
3. That said, a couple of interviewees felt that DG REGIO could look to producing some **television spots** or try to get **articles published in national broadsheets** like "Le Monde" which tend to be costly activities, but have an impact and provide legitimacy.
4. Moreover, it was suggested that it would be helpful to have a regularly updated, e-mailable **repository of good practice examples** per activity / tool as a source of inspiration for their communication activities.
5. Finally, it was said that it would be helpful to **have the support of DG REGIO as a coordinator / higher authority above the MS to help in harmonising the (communication) activities of the ETCs** (e.g. creating a common monitoring system, a common database across ETCs). In fact, in response to limited communication budgets, and the "*atomisation*" and complexity and overlap of information on cross-territorial regional policy (see above), the ETCs have realised that it makes sense to try to work together to show the cross-territorial impact of regional aid. However, to date it has proved a challenge to organise this from the bottom up, namely because the MAs do not have a mandate to "impose" (only propose) things on all the MS concerned. In spite of this, in 2010 the ETCs started working together, and some of the things they are looking to do from the bottom-up (for the next programming period) include trying to harmonise their activities to have a common message; having a common logo for all trans-national programmes (e.g. focussing more on the EU flag); bringing together the data across ETCs to show what had been done by theme (transport energy, natural resources etc.) etc.

### **Future challenges and opportunities**

Aside from the recommendations made above in relation to DG REGIO's tools and activities, some of the future challenges and opportunities identified by interviewees included:

- Communicating harmoniously about something that is complex, atomised, dispersed and cross-border in a clear and simple way that is understandable to the general public;

- Looking to simplify the system to have common rules for everyone, and a structure that facilitates the aggregation of data and results across projects and ETCs, showing what regional aid is doing on the ground. (ETC);
- Making it easier to fund cross-fund communication activities.

## Annex

### List of institutions consulted

Operational Programme	Institution / Project	Role
OP 'Europ'Act'	DATAR (Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale)	Managing Authority
OP 'Europ'Act'	DGEFP (Délégation générale à l'emploi et à la formation professionnelle)	Intermediate Body (contributes to communication)
OP 'Ile de France'	Préfecture de Paris et d'Ile de France Cabinet du préfet - SGAR	Managing Authority
OP 'Ile de France'	Maison de l'Europe de Paris	Project coordinator
OP 'Ile de France'	GIP – FCIP de l'Académie de Versailles	Section responsible for European social funds
OP 'Nord-Pas de Calais'	Préfecture de la région Nord – Pas de Calais Cabinet du préfet - SGAR	Managing Authority (ERDF)
OP 'Nord-Pas de Calais'	Centre Régional de Ressources Pédagogiques	Responsible for the Pôle Europe (ESF Technical Assistance)
OP 'Nord-Pas de Calais'	Conseil de Région Nord-Pas de Calais Direction Europe	Intermediate Body (contributes to communication)
OP 'Midi-Pyrénées'	Préfecture de Midi-Pyrénées Cabinet du préfet - SGAR	Managing Authority
OP 'Midi-Pyrénées'	Conseil de Région Midi-Pyrénées	Intermediate Body (contributes to communication)
OP 'Midi-Pyrénées'	Centre régional de l'information jeunesse	Resource centre for the young (part of the network of partners)
OP 'Midi-Pyrénées'	Chambre de Commerce et d'industrie	Chamber of commerce (part of the network of partners)
OP 'Midi-Pyrénées'	Programme Leader, Pays Portes de Gascogne	Leader programme animator (EARDF) (part of the network of partners)
OP 'North-West Europe'	Joint Technical Secretariat, INTERREG IVB NWE	Intermediate Body (responsible for communication)
OP 'North-West Europe'	Boer & Tuinder, Management & Techniek	Journalist
OP 'North-West Europe'	Senior Enterprise project	Beneficiary

Operational Programme	Institution / Project	Role
N/A	DATAR ( <i>Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale</i> )	Co-ordinator, INFORM core member
N/A	European Commission, Representation in France (Marseilles)	Observer, contributor
N/A	European Commission, DG REGIO, France desk	Observer, contributor

## 4 CASE STUDY REPORT: GERMANY

### 1. Introduction

This report examines regional policy communication in Germany, with a focus on identifying good practices. Based on preliminary research, four Operational Programmes (OPs) were chosen as the focus of the case study on regional policy communication in Germany. They include three regional OPs and one European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) OP, namely:

- OP 'Brandenburg' (regional)
- OP 'North-Rhine Westphalia' (regional)
- OP 'Saxony' (regional)
- OP 'Poland – Germany (Saxony)' (cross-border)

Following a review of relevant documentation (including communication plans and annual implementation reports), a member of the evaluation team visited Germany (Berlin, Potsdam and Dresden) in late May 2013, and conducted a total of nine interviews with representatives of Managing Authorities (MAs), intermediate bodies, and professional agencies that design / implement / support the communication effort for the different OPs, the INFORM core member for Germany and European Commission officials from the Representation in Berlin. Telephone interviews were conducted with the MA in North-Rhine Westphalia and representatives of DG REGIO. For more details, please consult the annex to this report.

### 2. Context for regional policy communication

For the 2007-13 period, Germany was allocated €26.4 billion of EU Cohesion Policy funding in total, which is equal to approx. 7.5% of the total Cohesion Policy budget for the period. Considering Germany accounts for just over 16% of the EU's population, this situates the country near the bottom in terms of EU funding per capita. Of the total amount for Germany, €17 billion are provided through the ERDF and €9.4 billion through the ESF. Five regions in the former East Germany (Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Thüringen) as well as one region in the former West (Lüneburg) fall under the Convergence Objective, with funding totalling €16.1 billion. All other regions fall under the Competitiveness and Employment Objective, with total funding of €9.4 billion. An additional €850 million is provided under the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) Objective.

Germany has translated its ERDF funding into 18 Operational Programmes (OPs): 17 regional OPs (one each for the 16 'Länder' plus Lüneburg) and one national OP for transport. Furthermore, Germany participates in 23 ETC programmes. Unsurprisingly, the largest OPs (in terms of EU funding per capita) are those of the Convergence regions, mostly in the former East Germany. In absolute terms, the largest ERDF OP is that of Saxony, with a total budget of just over €4.1 billion, of which 75% comes from the EU. In per capita terms, Saxony receives just under €750 of ERDF funds per person over the 7-year funding period; the equivalent figure for Bavaria amounts to less than €50 per person. Seen



across Germany, the focus of the OPs is mostly on fostering innovation; strengthening competitiveness; improving regional attractiveness; and creating more and better jobs.<sup>66</sup>

Most likely as a result of the relative stability of the political and economic situation in Germany in recent years – which contrasts sharply with the effects of the crisis in other parts of Europe – the attitude of Germans towards the EU continues to be relatively positive. The results of a 2013 survey show that 60% of Germans held a favourable view of the EU; although this was 8% lower than in the previous year, it was higher than in any other large EU country.<sup>67</sup> Even more significantly, 54% of Germans who were surveyed believed that economic integration had strengthened the economy – a striking difference with other countries including Britain (where only 26% held this view), France (22%) or Italy (11%). However, this does not necessarily mean that Germans trust the EU as an institution: in a 2012 survey, only 30% of German responded they tended to trust the EU (slightly below the EU average of 33%).<sup>68</sup>

In terms of Germans' awareness of and attitude towards regional policy, the results of a survey in 2010<sup>69</sup> showed that the proportion of citizens who are aware of EU regional support projects in their area was only 19%, significantly below the EU average (34%), and only a few percentage points higher than in the countries with the lowest awareness levels (UK 13%, Belgium 15%, Denmark 16%). Only 9% of Germans reported that they had personally benefited from a project funded by the EFRD or the Cohesion Fund (EU average: 13%). On the other hand, 80% of Germans *who had heard about* EU co-financed projects in their area said that this support had been positive for development in their area (slightly higher than the EU average of 76%).

### 3. Key actors and approaches

The responsibility for regional policy communication lies with the MAs of the ERDF OPs. Since these are mostly regional, there is a separate communication plan, and hence, different approaches and measures, in each 'Land'. At the national level, the Federal Ministry for Transport, Building and Urban Development acts as the MA for the only national OP ('Transport Infrastructure'). The Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology plays a *co-ordinating* role for EU Cohesion and Structural Policy in Germany, and organises typically one or two informal meetings per year of the MAs for the ERDF and ESF OPs in order to facilitate the exchange of experiences and mutual learning around communication. On several occasions, EC officials (from DG REGIO and/or the Representation in Berlin) have participated in and/or co-organised (parts of) these meetings. Apart from co-ordinating meetings, the Ministry of Economics' scope to develop its own communication measures is very limited, since it does not manage its own OP and therefore does not have access to any technical assistance funding.

<sup>66</sup> European Commission: Working for the regions. EU Regional Policy 2007-2013, January 2008. URL: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/presenta/working2008/work\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/presenta/working2008/work_en.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> Pew Research Center: The New Sick Man of Europe: the European Union, May 2013

<sup>68</sup> European Commission: Standard Eurobarometer 78 / Autumn 2012

<sup>69</sup> European Commission: Flash Eurobarometer 298. Citizens' awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy, 2010.

In line with EU regulations, the MA of each OP has drawn up a communication plan at the beginning of the programming period, and reports on its implementation as part of each annual implementation report (AIR). In most cases, the communication plan covers the ERDF-co-funded OP only, but a few regional authorities (e.g. Saxony) decided to develop a common multi-fund communication plan including the ERDF and the ESF. The communication plans include information on aims and target groups, the strategy and content of the main measures aimed at potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries and the public, as well as indicative budgets for the implementation of the plans. These indicative budgets for the four OPs that were reviewed in depth are shown in the table below.

**Table 1: Communication budgets**

Operational Programme	Indicative communication budget for ERDF funds (in EUR)	Technical assistance budget (in EUR)	Total Programme budget (in EUR)	% of total budget for communication of ERDF funds
Brandenburg	3 million	40 million	1,879 million	0.15%
North-Rhine Westphalia	3 million	25 million	2,297 million	0.13%
Saxony	5 million*	58.6 million	4,060 million	0.12%
Poland – Germany (Saxony)	210,000	7.4 million	123.3 million	0.17%

\* ERDF OP only. The common communication plan foresees an additional € 5 million from the ESF OP.

Sources: For indicative communication budgets: OP communication plans 2007-2013  
For TA and OP budgets: European Commission, Inforegio website

The communication objectives and target audiences defined in the respective communication plans are broadly similar across the OPs that were reviewed. The objectives tend to revolve around three main issues: (1) informing about the concrete opportunities provided by the respective OPs; (2) raising awareness and/or understanding of the EU, its regional policy and the support for the specific region in question; and (3) enhancing transparency in terms of the access to and the use of the financial resources provided. The wording and emphasis in the different communication plans suggests that these objectives are weighted somewhat differently; for example, the communication plan for Saxony emphasises as its foremost objective to “convey the European idea through the demonstration of the positive effects of the EU funding for Saxony”; whereas the plan for North Rhine-Westphalia would seem to place greater emphasis on the more pragmatic objectives around disseminating information on funding opportunities, as well as fostering a “critical discussion of the effects”. However, it is important to note that these are differences of emphasis rather than of substance; to a greater or lesser extent, all three main objectives listed above are present in all of the communication plans.

All plans also list broadly similar target audiences, including (potential) beneficiaries, a range of multipliers (including institutions that are involved in the OP implementation, as well as the press), and the general public at large (sometimes further segmented into sub-groups). The approaches, tools and channels to reach these audiences vary somewhat, partly depending on the size, although there are many similarities. All OPs use (to a greater or lesser extent) dedicated websites, publications (e.g. newsletters, brochures), media relations, events, and

branded gadgets. Brandenburg and Saxony also make explicit mention of “campaigns” (including radio, TV and/or cinema spots, billboards, advertising in regional media, etc.), be they for the general public or for a specific target audience.

In their communications, most OPs try to use a consistent visual / corporate identity including a logo and – in some cases – a slogan or strapline. Below is an overview of the logos of the four OPs that were reviewed. It’s interesting to note the differences in approach – whereas North-Rhine Westphalia and the ETC Saxony-Poland use dedicated OP logos, Brandenburg and Saxony have chosen a different approach, emphasising the EU and/or the Structural Funds (as opposed to the specific OPs) in their communication, both in terms of the wording and the colours. Within this group, the MAs in Brandenburg made the conscious decision not to design a separate logo in order to avoid confusion, but instead communicate the EU flag, usually together with a stylised eagle that is associated with the regional government / administration. Saxony, on the other hand, has designed a specific logo, but not for a specific OP, but for the Structural Funds (ERDF and ESF) in Saxony.

**Figure 1: Programme / Fund logos**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Brandenburg</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">(Text / image ‘brand’ for the ERDF)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>North-Rhine Westphalia</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">(NRW OP logo)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Saxony</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">(Saxon ERDF logo)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Poland – Germany (Saxony)</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">(OP logo)</p>

During the interviews, communication officers and professionals tended to agree that communicating the ERDF to a broad audience can be challenging, mainly due to the complexity and variety of projects and interventions that are funded. Especially in non-convergence regions, where large infrastructure projects are the exception rather than the norm, the reality of the ERDF and how it impacts on individual citizens can be difficult to convey. At the same time, the human dimension tends to be less obvious than in the case of the ESF, meaning that the benefits often seem more tangible and relevant for businesses than for individual citizens. Furthermore, it was widely reported that interest from the media (especially national media) in regional policy funding tends to be very limited – unless there is a scandal or some other negative story to report. The ensuing sections provide information on a selection of interesting examples of communication activities that have successfully managed to overcome these difficulties by adopting effective, sometimes innovative approaches.

#### 4. Activities and good practice examples

The following selection of particularly interesting / successful communication tools, activities or approaches were identified during the case study.

##### Cinema spots “Auch Ganz Schön”

In 2010, the MAs of the various OPs in Brandenburg (ERDF, ESF, as well as EAFRD) decided to produce a cinema spot to enhance the awareness of EU funding in the region. In order to develop a concept for these spots, the MAs decided to cooperate with the Technical University Potsdam, where a seminar for students of the degree in European Media Sciences was organised. At the end of the seminar, the students were invited to pitch their ideas to the MAs. Eight teams presented their ideas, which varied significantly both in terms of the content and the presentation, ranging from attempts to explain key characteristics of the funds in a narrative way, to much more abstract concepts.

Cinema spots “Auch Ganz Schön”		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	✓
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	

The winner stood out mainly because of its perplexingly different approach, based on the concept of ‘interruption’. To differentiate the spot from the often loud and shrill advertisement by which it would normally be surrounded in cinemas, the spot surprises viewers and tries to capture their attention with a long period of nearly complete silence and quiet, before going on to convey only a single piece of key information about the EU funding (see below). Three spots with very similar concepts, look and feel were produced. In order to enhance retention of the message, postcards were displayed at the exits of cinemas where the spot was shown.

The spot begins with silence, only interrupted by soft sounds of nature, and an almost static image of a typical Brandenburg landscape. After about 15 seconds of silence, a deadpan voice from the off says something along the lines of “We could try to show you what the over 3 billion Euros of EU funding have done for Brandenburg. But if we did that, you’d still be here tomorrow. Instead, we’re showing you a typical Brandenburg heath. We reckon it’s quite nice, too.” Following this, the words “EU Funds Brandenburg” appear, along with the acronyms of the three Funds and the slogan “Investing in your future”. Viewers are invited to visit a website for more information.



Spots accessible via:

<http://www.eu-fonds.brandenburg.de>

The spots were first shown in cinemas in around 30 cities and towns in Brandenburg during Europe week in May 2011. The MA estimates 37,000 ‘contacts’ from this, and registered around 400 hits on the website which was specifically created for the spots (this number fell to less than 100 per month during the following months). In order to capitalise on the perceived popularity of the spots, in 2012 the MA launched a campaign, which included a second and third wave of cinema screenings of the spot, as well as a range of other tools

and activities using variations of the same concept, including radio spots, a 'photo box' that is used at events (visitors can have their picture taken against with the landscape from the spots in the background and a few pieces of key information at the bottom), banners which beneficiaries or other stakeholders can use at their premises, and a website with expanded functionality, including, most recently, a 'geocaching' game.

According to interviewees in Brandenburg, the cinema spots worked very well due to their combination of several key success factors: an element of **surprise** (due to the silence and stillness that distinguishes the spots from most other cinema advertising); a **motive** that is typical of the mainly rural region of Brandenburg and therefore appealing to the audience; a small dose of 'tongue in cheek' **humour**; and the reduction of the potentially very complex nature of EU funding (according to the creators of the concept, "impossible to convey in a 30 second spot") to only **one or two key pieces of information** that are digestible for the audience, and clearly emphasise the EU contribution. An indication of the uniqueness and quality of the spots is the fact that they were among the finalists of the 2013 Regiostar awards (Category 5, Information and Communication: Promoting EU Regional policy using short videos).

At the same time, interviewees acknowledged that the spots were relatively expensive to produce and screen. The production cost was reportedly € 49,000, and the first wave of screening (in 2011) cost € 26,000, plus € 2,400 for the accompanying postcards. Thus, the total cost per contact was likely to be just over € 2 for the first wave of screenings only – which does not take into account that the same spots were used again as part of the larger-scale campaign in 2012 and 2013 (see above), the total budget of which is € 286,000. It should also be kept in mind that the spots and the campaign cover three Funds, and the costs are shared between these.

### School project "Europa im Blick"

The project "Europa im Blick" (loosely translated as "Europe in the spotlight") was launched in early 2009 to enhance awareness of the EU and the significance of its funding in Brandenburg among adolescents. During tailored lessons with a duration of 1.5 hours, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade pupils (typically aged between 14 and 16) are provided with general information (tailored to their level of prior knowledge) about the EU, its history and institutions, as well as more specific information about how Brandenburg benefits from EU funding, based on a series of concrete examples. This latter aspect should amount to at least 50% of the lesson (so as to justify the use of ERDF technical assistance funds). The first edition of the project came to an end in 2010; due to the success (according to interviewees) it was extended until 2013. It is expected that in the years 2009-2013, a total of 600 lessons will have been held in different kinds of schools across Brandenburg, and will have reached at least 12,000 pupils.

School project "Europa im Blick"		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓



According to interviewees, the decision to specifically target adolescents was taken based on the results of the awareness survey carried out among adults in Brandenburg in 2008, which showed that the awareness of the EU support was lowest among the youngest citizens (those aged 18 to 25 years). The project is implemented (following a public tendering process) by a not-for-profit association of lecturers with in-depth knowledge of EU issues.<sup>70</sup> These are briefed by the regional authorities, and over the years have developed what was described as an “impressive” array of teaching materials and information. They are also equipped with promotional material (such as EU-branded pens, sweets, bags etc.).



At the end of each lesson, students had to fill in an evaluation questionnaire, which contained questions to test the knowledge that had been gained, as well as the students' views and opinions on the class. The available summary results (pertaining to the period 2009-2010) suggest that the project was effective in conveying basic knowledge (such as the number of Member States of the EU), and – to a certain extent – in enhancing knowledge

about the specificities of the different funds (around 90% were able to provide a completely or at least partially correct response to the question of what is funded by the ERDF, ESF and EAFRD, respectively). Nearly half of all students also reported that the lesson had enhanced their interest in EU affairs, while nearly all teachers thought that the lesson was helpful for their students.

It is worth noting that there have been attempts to leverage the school project to disseminate information to a wider target audience, including via two events for the media per year (such as press conferences or workshops with participating students). However, interviewees acknowledged that it has been difficult to generate media interest, except in a few cases where a figure of public interest (such as a local MEP) was involved.

The second edition of the project (covering 2011-2013) has a total cost of € 123,000 for 361 lessons, or approx. € 17 per pupil. Again, these costs are shared between the three Funds.

### Website “Entdecke EFRE”

Another initiative to target specifically young people in Brandenburg is the website “Entdecke EFRE” (“Discover EFRE”; URL: <http://www.entdecke-efre.de>). This is a ‘photo realistic’ website which first went live in August 2009. It was decided to target young people because research has shown that they are avid internet users, but have a relatively low level of awareness and knowledge of the EU funding in Brandenburg. The general EU fund websites are aimed primarily at (potential) beneficiaries, stakeholders and others looking for very specific

Website “Entdecke EFRE”		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	✓
	Content	
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

<sup>70</sup> Gesellschaft für Europa- und Kommunalpolitik e.V. URL: <http://www.geko-bb.de>

information; they are hardly interesting for most young people.



Therefore, the “Entdecke EFRE” website takes a very playful approach to conveying information about EU regional policy in Brandenburg. Users discover the ERDF as if they were playing a computer game. The website relies primarily on images (many of which are interactive / ‘clickable’), while the amount of text is kept to a minimum. According to the MA, this innovative way of conveying highly complex content – “fun, but professional” – has been a

success. Qualitative feedback from users suggests that the website does appeal to the target audience and incites it to stay and explore – as evidenced by the relatively long time users spend on it on average (3.11 minutes according to the 2010 AIR). It is worth noting that the originality of the website also led to it receiving an honourable mention at the 2010 Regiostar awards (Category 6: Information and Communication – Web sites), which in turn led to several mentions in the local and regional media.

Nonetheless, interviewees acknowledged that user numbers have failed to fully meet expectations. Although the website was promoted via several means (including banners on the websites of local and regional media, as well as postcards and other promotional materials), in the years for which data is available (2010 and 2011), it only had an average of around 60 unique visitors per week – far fewer than the other (more ‘serious’) websites on the ERDF and other EU funds in Brandenburg. At the time of writing (May 2013), the website had received just over 17,000 visitors in total, around 10,000 of which were unique (the remainder being returning visitors). Almost half of all visitors found their way to the website directly (indicating they became aware of it via some other communication tool or activity), while only a few hundred arrived at it by clicking on the online adverts (banners) in the local and regional media. The cost of developing and maintaining the website (including its expansion in 2012) was estimated by the MA at around € 150,000.

### Corporate design for Structural Funds in Saxony

A key feature that stands out for all of the communication approaches, activities and tools related to EU funding in Saxony is the consistent corporate design. This corporate design is common to both funds (ERDF and ESF), and was first developed in the previous programming period. It is inspired by and consistent with the visual identity of the government of the region of Saxony and of the EU, but represents a clearly distinguishable brand. It is applied consistently to all publicity measures in order to enhance the recognisability and, ultimately, the awareness of the Funds. The main feature of the visual identity is the logo, which consists of the letters of the fund(s) in question (where appropriate with the full name

Corporate design for Structural Funds in Saxony		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	
	Content	
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓



of the fund in small fonts underneath), a graphical element consisting of five yellow stars against a background that is split into (EU) blue and (Saxon) green, and the strapline “Europa fördert Sachsen” (which means “Europe supports Saxony”; note that the word “fördern” can also refer to related concepts such as “promote” or “boost”). Further to the logo, there is a full set of guidelines and supporting tools to facilitate and ensure a consistent look and feel of all products, inter alia via the consistent use of colours and spacing.



The fact that the corporate design is common to both funds is a reflection of the integrated nature of the communication activities in Saxony, which also have a common communication plan, close cooperation between the responsible officials, as well as a number of common tools (including a common website: <http://www.strukturfonds.sachsen.de/> and publications such as the special newspaper mentioned elsewhere in this report). According to interviewees, the common identity and logo is ideal because it allows specific brochures, posters, videos etc. to mention one, the other or both funds, without changing the design and thereby compromising the recognisability of the brand. The common identity and tools also lead to cost savings due to synergies and economies of scale.

During the interviews, communication professionals described the corporate design as “fresh”, “current”, “sometimes playful”, “adaptable to the different target audiences” (e.g. less colourful for enterprises), and “easy to work with”. They were of the opinion that a specific logo for Saxony (often used in conjunction with the EU flag) is indeed helpful and conveys the message that (a significant amount of) funding is available. The slogan “Europa fördert Sachsen” is very much focused on the EU’s role and the positive difference it makes; reportedly, this is a reflection of a genuine desire to highlight the European idea and to implement a communication approach that is different and separate from that of the regional government as such. It was noted that this is at least partly due to political priorities of the government at the time, which can change. The same can be said of the scope and level of ambition (and budget) of the communication measures as such. Below are images of a series of examples, including the website, a couple of brochures, and – interestingly – a tram carrying advertisement for the Structural Funds (including images of ‘real’ beneficiaries). Three such trams have been in use since 2009 in Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz, and three similarly branded buses are used in rural areas. The routes are changed regularly to maximise exposure of a large share of the population.

## Examples of Saxon communication tools using the corporate identity



### Special newspaper “Sächsische Perspektiven”

For the last three years, the authorities in Saxony have issued a special newspaper on EU funding and its results. The first edition was published in December 2010, the second edition in 2012, and the third and final edition to date (titled “Sächsische Perspektiven”, or “Perspectives from Saxony”; see the cover page below) in April 2013. In each case, the special newspaper was distributed as bulk mail to all households in Saxony (approx. 1.7 million).

The newspaper is lay-outed in the Saxon corporate design for the structural funds, including the specific logo and the typical blue and green colour scheme. It consists of 12 pages, most of which are dedicated to examples of concrete projects that were funded under the ERDF or ESF. It is noteworthy that the EU dimension (i.e. the source of the funding and its contribution to the development of the region) is very prominent throughout the document, both in terms of the design and the content. The content was mostly written by staff of the MA, with an agency providing support to make it visually appealing. The first page includes a foreword / greeting by the responsible State Minister. The middle pages provide general information about the EU Structural Funds, including key statistics for funding in Saxony, and the types of projects that can receive funding, with links to sources of further information. There is also a participatory element (e.g. a quiz in 2012, and a photo competition in 2013) to encourage readers to respond (and thereby also give the MAs a sense of how the information is received). In 2012, this resulted in a total of 656 entries in the competition, in

Special newspaper “Sächsische Perspektiven”		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	✓
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓

addition to an increased number of telephone calls and emails enquiring about funding opportunities.



According to interviewees, the special newspaper represented excellent value for money (when compared to alternatives such as advertisements in commercial publications): for a total cost for production and distribution of less than € 100,000, it reached all households in Saxony. It was noted that the appropriateness of this tool depends on the habits of citizens in the region; in the former East Germany, the number of subscriptions to daily newspapers is lower than in other parts of the country, and as a consequence, people reportedly do tend to read free weekly papers delivered via bulk mail to a significant extent (whereas in other parts of the country, these are often discarded without even being looked at). In this sense, the approach represents good practice in the specific

region in question, but the extent to which it is transferable (i.e. achieve similar results) elsewhere in Europe would need to be considered carefully. In any case, it should be noted that while the financial cost was relatively low, the investment of time to select and develop the content was reportedly significant.

In any case, all interviewees felt that the actual content and design of such publications is key to capturing and retaining the audience's interest. The importance of choosing a good mix of project examples that different parts of the general public could relate to was highlighted. In the presentation of these projects (as well as content in general), the newspaper emphasised the use of pictures and graphical elements, while trying to keep the text simple and brief. Interviewees also reported that response elements (such as a quiz) are useful to engage with the target audience, although some lamented the fact that in this case, it was not possible to offer truly attractive prizes. Instead, the winners only received a bag with the standard promotional ESF/ERDF branded items, which significantly limits the appeal of the competition.

### Events for the general public in Saxony

The authorities in Saxony have tried to enter into direct contact with citizens and inform them about the EU and its funding via a presence at many public events and fairs, including celebrations of Europe Day, the "Day of the Saxons" and the German Unity Day in different parts of Saxony. The MAs in Saxony work with a specialised agency to prepare and implement its (participation in) events. The key messages that the stands attempt to convey relate to the European idea, a positive image of the EU, and basic information about funding opportunities and results in Saxony. At the very least, visitors should take home the idea that Saxony as a whole – as well as him or herself as an individual – benefit from EU funds.

Events for the general public in Saxony		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	

The main challenge in this respect is generating interest from the usually very varied audience, many of whom are reportedly mainly at the events “to eat and take home freebies”. In view of this, the staff at events use a number of techniques to ‘bait’ visitors. One method that has proven quite successful over the years is a short quiz. Passers-by are handed a questionnaire with five short questions on Europe, which can be answered by



consulting a small brochure that’s available at the stand and/or by engaging with staff. Visitors who complete the questionnaire are given a branded gadget or sweet (such as ‘EU (blue) ice cream, gummy bears etc.). Another tool that was introduced to attract visitors is a “photobox” where visitors can have their picture taken with a European capital city in the background, featuring the slogan “Europe is closer than you think”. Event staff tries to build on the contact established by these means to provide additional information and materials.

Experienced staff from the agency tasked with preparing and staffing the events reported that due to the varied target audience (potentially ranging from the unemployed to entrepreneurs), it is crucial that staff engage with visitors to find out about their interests, and have sufficient background knowledge to be able to direct them to information about the specific projects or funding opportunities that might be relevant for them. In this context, it was noted that stands are usually equipped with a wide range of leaflets and brochures, ranging from very basic information about the EU as such, to information about various programmes and funding streams. In some instances, the presence at the stand of actual beneficiaries (e.g. the inventor of a “brick trowel holder”) was found to be very helpful, particularly if they had an engaging personality and stood for simple ideas that people could relate to. As for room for improvement, it was suggested that greater linkages with the internet could be sought, e.g. delivering the quiz via a tablet and/or registering visitors’ email addresses to be able to provide additional information online.

In 2010 and 2011, according to the respective AIRs there were a total of approx. 13,000 visitors at the stand at the six main events at which it was used (three per year: Europe Day, Day of the Saxons and German Unity Day). The cost per event was typically around € 7,500.



### Annual information event of the OP Poland – Germany (Saxony)

As noted previously, both the overall budget and the communication budget of the cross-border OP Poland – Saxony are far smaller than those of the other OPs that were visited; therefore, there is little scope for large-scale publicity campaigns. In this context, conferences and media relations take on an even greater importance. The Joint Technical Secretariat organises one major event each year focused on a specific theme, and invites relevant stakeholders to participate. The most successful such event to date was the 2011 conference, which took place in Görlitz, counted with 140 participants, and was focused on two key themes:

Annual information event of the OP PL-SN (2011)		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

- To present the interim results of what had been achieved up until the midway point of the programming period; and
- To highlight the potential and opportunities the OP provides.

During the first part of the conference, five projects (representing different priorities) were presented by the beneficiaries themselves (in pairs, one from each participating country). Presenters were provided with specific instructions and criteria for how to structure their interventions, namely, to focus on the “secret of a successful partnership”, and to let images do most of the talking. According to the interviewees, all five projects took this message to heart and presented in different, but always very lively and interesting ways. These presentations were followed by a panel discussion where participants shared their views and experiences of cross-border cooperation, with each intervention being limited to two minutes.



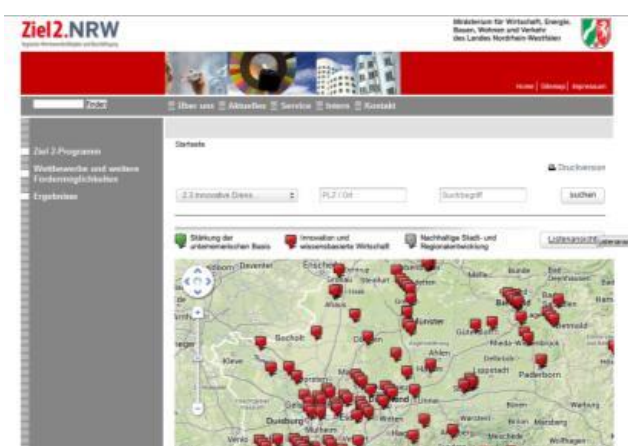
According to interviewees, the reason for the success of this event was the fact that the organisers managed to make it very lively and interesting. Such conferences are often very dry, but in this case, the presentations and debates were lively and had a definite “human touch” that brought the sometimes difficult but ultimate satisfying reality of cross-border cooperation projects to life. Evidence of this were the overwhelmingly positive views expressed by participants in their responses to the evaluation questionnaire. More importantly, the event had an impact beyond its participants, as it counted with the presence of a regional public broadcaster (MDR), which produced a 5 minute radio report with interviews. A regional newspaper also dedicated a major article to the OP following the conference, and several other local / regional media also published information. Such a positive response from the media is unusual, and serves to highlight the potential of using a relatively small-scale event – if it is kept interesting – to reach a much larger audience.

## OP website including projects of the month and project browser (NRW)

Broadly speaking, the website of the OP for North-Rhine Westphalia (<http://www.ziel2.nrw.de/>) is focused on two key objectives: (1) disseminating information on the OP as such and on the specific competitions through which projects are selected in order to foster participation and uptake, and (2) providing information on how the funds are spent in order to ensure transparency. The key vehicle for achieving the latter is data on specific projects, which the website contains in two different forms.

First, a “project of the month” section provides relatively detailed information on one particularly interesting project per month. Depending on the point in time, these can be projects that have just been selected for funding (mainly at the beginning of the funding period) or completed projects. According to the interviewee, NRW was one of the first regions to incorporate “projects of the month” into its website in a systematic way. The pages receive approx. 3,000 visitors per project and month. Although selecting the projects, contacting and getting input from beneficiaries, drafting and editing the text and finding / taking appropriate photos reportedly requires a significant amount of work, the MA feels this is worthwhile, not only because it provides interested parties with very tangible information on what the OP does and how it benefits the region, but also because the contact with beneficiaries gives the MA a good indication of how projects are progressing and how beneficiaries are feeling about the OP. In selected cases, in addition to the dedicated page on the website, a project flyer is also developed and printed for use at events (e.g. the launch of competitions). Finally, a total of ten short films have been / will be produced on a sample of projects, selected so as to ensure the specific project and its results can be visualised effectively and they cover the key OP priorities, intervention areas and sub-regions. These films (duration 2-3 minutes each) can be viewed from the OP website (and in some cases the websites of intermediate bodies involved in specific priorities). On average, each video is viewed online around 30 times per month; the most popular one (more than 60 views per month) relates to a project that developed an artificial heart. The videos are also used at events as an introduction or during breaks. The production cost per video is around € 2,000.

Projects of the month and project browser		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	



The second key tool to ensure transparency is the “project browser”. Users can access key data on each funded projects, either via a map function or via a list. Projects are searchable in various ways (programme priority, location or search term), and the data is updated daily. According to the MA, the browser is used a lot, and is particularly useful to help answer questions from journalists, local authorities, political parties and others regarding projects in



specific sectors or local areas. User statistics show that, on average, the project browser attracts approx. 130 unique users per month, and there are just over 2,000 page requests. The cost of developing and updating the browser was reportedly around € 25,000.

## 5. Conclusions and outlook

This case study provides insights into EU regional policy communication in Germany in practice. It illustrates how the MAs and IBs of different OPs tend to use similar tools and activities to reach the respective target audiences. At the same time, it also shows how, within the bounds of compliance with the formal requirements defined by the EU, there are some differences in terms of communication priorities and approaches. Brandenburg and Saxony are examples where the 'European idea' plays an important role in the communication efforts, which tend to focus not only on the respective OPs, but instead use these to try to convey the idea that the EU in general (and EU funding in particular) brings important benefits to the region in question. This idea is reflected both in the corporate design / branding (with strong visual references to the EU) and in the frequent attempts to reach the general public via events, websites, publications, etc. Some other OPs take a more pragmatic approach that is more focused on using communication to support the effective implementation of the OP, typically with a stronger focus on the OP as such, and less emphasis on campaigns targeting the general public.

The sample of OPs reviewed suggests there is some relation between the communication approach and the size of the budget of an OP; very simply put, the larger the OP (in absolute and/or per capita terms), the more likely it is to be relatively ambitious in its communication to the general public and the type of messages about the EU it tries to convey. However, the available resources cannot explain all of the differences encountered. Instead, the interviews conducted suggest that the political priorities of the regional government (or even the attitude towards the EU of the minister in charge) sometimes play a significant role, and changes in the make-up of the government can lead to changes in the approach. At the same time, it also seems that the enthusiasm of communication officers can make a difference, even in the face of relative indifference at the political level.

Most of the good practices identified in the preceding section come from those regions that are relatively ambitious in terms of their communication to the general public, and that tend to emphasise the EU role / dimension. These good practices stand out for a number of different reasons – some because they are well tailored to a specific sub-group (such as the Brandenburg website "Discover the ERDF"), others because they manage to reach a very large audience (such as the Saxony special newspaper), and yet others because they use 'clever' ideas and concepts to convey the complex reality of regional policy (such as the Brandenburg videos and subsequent campaign). What most have in common is that they went beyond the minimum requirements, and managed to make good use of the (sometimes limited) budget available.

Finally, with a view to the role of DG REGIO in ERDF communication, interviewees tended to have relatively little to say. Communication officers generally felt that the Inforegio website is reasonably comprehensive and user-friendly, but neither the website nor any other

materials on the ERDF produced by the EC centrally play a significant role in the communication efforts at the regional level. In a few cases, interviewees mentioned they use general brochures or leaflets about the EU and/or the ERDF for distribution at (certain) events, but that anything involving details about the ERDF and its concrete benefits for citizens is best developed at the regional level. In this sense, a couple of interviewees noted that publications such as the Panorama magazine are of limited use and interest for stakeholders in the regions.

Interviewees tended to be appreciative of the fact that MAs are given significant leeway to develop and implement communication approaches that suit their respective audiences, and were mostly wary of any stricter regulations or requirements, or of any obligations to use centrally produced materials. On the other hand, several interviewees did mention that most helpful would be a greater, more frequent presence of EU officials in the regions. Reportedly, such a presence can add significant 'clout' to events or press conferences, and give the EU a more human face. In a similar vein, a few communication officials also noted that a closer cooperation / joint communication activities with the EC Representation in Germany could be useful.

Regarding the INFORM network, communication officers from the MAs tended to know about the network and have attended one or more meetings. Their feedback was mostly very positive; reportedly, the network meetings are useful insofar as they provide inspiration, allow one to self-evaluate one's own communication activities against those of others, and generally give communicators the feeling that they are part of a larger community, and that what they do matters. At the same time, it was noted by a few interviewees that there tend to be few tangible outcomes from the meetings, and that after a while, the repeated presentation of 'good practices' can become a bit stale.

## Annex

### List of institutions consulted

Operational Programme	Institution	Role
OP 'Brandenburg'	Brandenburg Ministry of Economic and European Affairs	Managing Authority
OP 'Brandenburg'	Brandenburg Economic Development Board (ZAB)	Intermediate Body (contributes to communication)
OP 'Brandenburg'	Brandenburg Business Development Bank (ILB)	Intermediate Body (contributes to communication)
OP 'North-Rhine Westphalia'	NRW Ministry for the Economy, Energy, Industry, SMEs and Crafts	Managing Authority
OP 'Saxony'	Saxon State Ministry for Economic Affairs, Labour and Transport	Managing Authority
OP 'Saxony'	Blaumond GmbH	Communication agency
OP 'Saxony'	Flaskamp Ummen AG	Communication agency
OP 'Poland – Germany'	Joint Technical Secretariat,	Intermediate Body (mainly

(Saxony)'	Development Agency of Saxony (SAB)	responsible for communication)
N/A	Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology	Co-ordinator, INFORM core member
N/A	European Commission, Representation in Germany	Observer, contributor
N/A	European Commission, DG REGIO	Observer, contributor

NB: Several requests for interviews were sent to journalists nominated by the different MAs, but none of these were available.

## 5 CASE STUDY REPORT: HUNGARY

### 1. Introduction

The aim of this case study is to gather evidence on EU regional policy communication activities targeted at the general public in Hungary, and to identify good practice examples. In order to do so, the evaluation team conducted desk research (reviewing relevant documentation on communication on regional policy in Hungary) and undertook a field visit to Budapest, which took place from 7 to 10 May 2013.

Given the centralised nature of communications targeted at the general public in Hungary, many of the interviews focused on communication tools and activities at the national level (covering all Operational Programmes and financed under the Operational Programme “Implementation”). In addition, some interviews focused on communication tools and activities carried out under the regional Operational Programme “Southern Great Plain” and the sectoral Operational Programme “Economic Development”.

In total, 16 interviews were conducted with officials responsible for communication at the managing authorities and intermediate bodies, as well as with observes / stakeholders (including journalists and evaluators), and EC officials from DG REGIO and the Representation in Hungary. An overview of the interviews conducted in the context of this case study can be found in the annex to this report.

The remainder of this case study report elaborates on the main findings in relation to regional policy communication in Hungary. While section 2 provides the general context for regional policy in Hungary, section 3 discusses the key actors and communication approach and section 4 provides examples of good practices in relation to communicating regional policy to the general public.

### 2. Context for regional policy communication

In order to understand the communication approach as well as key challenges related to communicating regional policy in Hungary, this section discusses the economic and political context in the country, the amount of regional policy funding it receives, and the awareness and perceptions of regional policy among the Hungarian public.

#### Economic and political background

At the beginning of the programming period 2007 – 2013, the social and economic situation in Hungary was characterised by **severe regional disparities in social and economic development**. The level of development in Central Hungary was significantly higher than that of the other regions, and there were also severe disparities *within* regions. Especially the North-Eastern regions and Southern regions were considered as being economically backward. While regions in the West and North-Transdanubia developed faster over the years than the national average, these regions still faced substantial internal disparities. As a consequence, differences in levels of development and economic growth (especially

employment) and substantial social disparities between population groups persisted. This was worsened by the low level of mobility of the workforce and the lack of accessibility of the nearby work opportunities in some of the regions. The geographical concentration of disadvantaged individuals was characterised by, among others, social isolation, insecure income, poor housing, and unemployment.<sup>71</sup>

Initially, the overarching policy framework to address the regional disparities in development was the “**New Hungary Development Plan 2007 - 2013**”<sup>72</sup>. This plan used to be the national strategic reference framework for EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Funds and aimed to improve employment levels and create conditions for long term economic growth. However, with the installation of the new government in 2010 a new development plan was launched in January 2011, called the “**New Széchenyi Plan**”, thereby replacing the national strategic reference framework of Hungary for the last three years of the 2007 – 2013 programming period. The new plan also aims to improve Hungary’s competitiveness by strengthening the economy and increasing employment. The New Széchenyi Plan is based on seven pillars, namely (1) the health industry, (2) the development of green economy, (3) residential property policy, (4) the development of the business environment, (5) the transit economy, (6) science and innovation, and (7) employment.<sup>73</sup>

In Hungary, the Ministry for National Economy (MNE) is responsible for defining the development strategy and thus the priorities and allocating the resources. However, the Ministry of National Development has the overall responsibility of coordinating and supervising the implementation of development policy and the National Development Agency (NDA) directly ensures the implementation of the Operational Programmes.

### EU funding 2007 – 2013

With regard to European regional policy funding, **six out of the seven Hungarian regions had an average per capita GDP of less than 75% of the EU average** between 2000 and 2002 and were therefore eligible to the highest support category, namely the objective of ‘Convergence’ in the period 2007 – 2013. These regions were Central Transdanubia, West-Transdanubia, South Transdanubia, North Hungary, North Great Plain, and South Great Plain. With an average per capita GDP above 75% of the EU average, the region of Central Hungary was considered a “phasing-in region” and was therefore eligible for support under the ‘Regional competitiveness and employment’ objective. In addition, Hungary was eligible to Cohesion Fund instruments.<sup>74</sup>

Hungary was allocated a total of **EUR 25.3 billion in the period of 2007 to 2013**. The bulk of this is financed under the objective of ‘Convergence’, namely EUR 22.9 billion. EUR 2.03 billion is allocated under the objective of ‘Regional competitiveness and employment’ and

<sup>71</sup> Source: Source: Hungarian National Development Agency: [http://www.nfu.hu/the\\_new\\_hungary\\_development\\_plan\\_](http://www.nfu.hu/the_new_hungary_development_plan_).

<sup>72</sup> Source: Hungarian National Development Agency: [http://www.nfu.hu/the\\_new\\_hungary\\_development\\_plan\\_](http://www.nfu.hu/the_new_hungary_development_plan_).

<sup>73</sup> Source: The Hungarian National Innovation Office: <http://www.nih.gov.hu/strategy/new-szechenyi-plan-uszt/new-szechenyi-plan-uszt>.

<sup>74</sup> Source: Source: Hungarian National Development Agency: [http://www.nfu.hu/the\\_new\\_hungary\\_development\\_plan\\_](http://www.nfu.hu/the_new_hungary_development_plan_).

EUR 386 million under the objective of 'European territorial cooperation'. In total, the country has 6 Operational Programmes at national level and 7 Regional Operational Programmes. In addition, Hungary is involved in 8 cross-border, transnational or interregional Operational Programmes.<sup>75</sup> The majority of programmes are financed through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and only 2 Operational Programmes are financed under the European Social Fund (ESF). The table below presents the distribution of regional funding per objective and per type of fund.<sup>76</sup>

**Table 4: Distribution of regional funds in Hungary in EUR billion**

Objective	Fund	EU	National/ Public	Total
Convergence	CF	8.6	1.5	10.1
	ERDF	11.2	2	13.2
	ESF	3.2	0.5	3.7
<b>1. Total Convergence</b>		<b>22.9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>27</b>
Regional Competitiveness and Employment	ERDF	1.5	0.3	1.8
	ESF	0.5	0.1	0.6
<b>2. Total Regional Competitiveness and Employment</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>2.4</b>
European Territorial Cooperation	ERDF	0.4	-	0.4
<b>3. Total European Territorial Cooperation</b>		<b>0.4</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0.4</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>25.3</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>29.7</b>

Source: Website DG REGIO on regional policy in Hungary.<sup>77</sup>

### Awareness and perceptions of the EU and its regional policy

In November 2012, the Eurobarometer found that 54% of the surveyed Hungarian citizens felt that they were a citizen of the European Union, which was lower of the EU-27 average (63%). However, the respondents tended to trust the EU more than their own government, as 44% of the surveyed Hungarians tended to trust the European Union (compared to an EU-27 average of 33%), and only 27% tended to trust their own government.<sup>78</sup> As the table below illustrates, the respondents were somewhat more likely to agree that the EU was portrayed objectively in the Hungarian media than the EU average.

<sup>75</sup> Source:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/country/prordn/details\\_new.cfm?gv\\_PAY=HU&gv\\_reg=ALL&gv\\_PG=1350&LAN=7&gv\\_per=2&gv\\_defL=7](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/country/prordn/details_new.cfm?gv_PAY=HU&gv_reg=ALL&gv_PG=1350&LAN=7&gv_per=2&gv_defL=7).

<sup>76</sup> Source: Hungarian National Development Agency:

[http://www.nfu.hu/the\\_new\\_hungary\\_development\\_plan\\_](http://www.nfu.hu/the_new_hungary_development_plan_).

<sup>77</sup> Source: Website DG REGIO on regional policy in Hungary:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/atlas2007/hungary/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/atlas2007/hungary/index_en.htm).

<sup>78</sup> Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78\\_fact\\_hu\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_fact_hu_en.pdf).



**Table 5: Do you think that the Hungarian media present the EU too positively, objectively or too negatively?**

	Too positively	Objectively	Too negatively
<b>Television</b>	21% (17%)	57% (53%)	11% (15%)
<b>Press</b>	14% (12%)	56% (51%)	8% (14%)
<b>Radio</b>	14% (11%)	54% (52%)	8% (10%)
<b>Websites</b>	8% (6%)	42% (40%)	4% (8%)

( ) = EU-27 average<sup>79</sup>

With regard to EU regional policy more specifically, the Flash Barometer found in June 2010 that there was a **relatively high level of awareness** of EU regional policy in Hungary and citizens were **relatively positive in relation to the benefits** of EU supported projects. Similar to several other countries eligible for support under the Convergence objective, more than half of the Hungarian citizens (59%) reported to be aware of EU regional support projects in their areas, well above the EU average of 34%. The most frequent sources of information were TV, local newspapers and the internet. Many Hungarian citizens also recognised the benefits of this EU support; a large majority (86%) of citizens who had heard of such EU co-financed projects perceived these as being positive for the development of their areas. However, a substantially smaller portion of Hungarian citizens felt that they had personally benefitted from EU regional support projects, namely 24% among all consulted citizens and 36% of those who had heard of specific EU regional support projects. Nevertheless, it should be noted that these percentages were still above the EU averages (being 13% and 30%).

With regard to the preferred beneficiaries, the Eurobarometer (2010) found that the vast majority of Hungarians (91%) agreed that **EU regional support should focus on the poorest regions**. As was to be expected considering the country's relatively high unemployment rate, 93% of the Hungarians felt that EU regional support should focus on regions with high unemployment rates. 61% of the Hungarians felt that EU support should target rural or mountain areas and 69% were of the opinion that deprived urban areas should be the target of EU regional support. While environmental protection, employment training, support for small businesses, and better transport facilities were frequently mentioned as being priority sectors, the areas of research and innovation and tourism and culture were deemed less important.

In line with the findings from the Barometer, the **majority of the interviewees also felt that Hungarian citizens are generally aware** of the fact that many local and regional projects are (co-) financed by the European Union (albeit at a fairly general level rather than in-depth knowledge of the different funds). Several of the interviewees indicated that this was a result of frequent media attention and large billboards which are noticeable across the country. However, some interviewees noted that while most people are aware of the EU funded

<sup>79</sup> Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78\\_media\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_media_en.pdf) Standard Eurobarometer 78 – Media Use - Autumn 2012.

projects, there was a general feeling of disappointment as many citizens felt that the regional funds (sometimes associated with EU membership in general) did not lead to any direct and/or personal changes. In addition, a few individual interviewees noted that there was a lack of interest in EU affairs and policies among Hungarian citizens. Lastly, a few interviewees noted that the recent debates on the amendment of the Hungarian constitution (are likely to) negatively impact on people's general attitude towards the EU, and thus also in relation to EU regional policy.

### 3. Key actors and approaches

With regard to the communication activities, Hungary has a highly centralised structure. The communication activities to the general public and (potential) beneficiaries are mainly carried out at by different actors at three levels:

1. **National level:** The National Development Agency (hereafter NDA) is the institution responsible for the implementation of the EU funds at national level. The Managing Authorities of the Operational Programmes are integrated in this overarching institution. The communication department of this agency has the responsibility for the harmonisation and coordination of the communication activities across all Operational Programmes. The rationale behind this central approach is to ensure high quality and consistent communication and to avoid duplications in communication activities. The agency's communication activities are mainly directed at the general public and aim to enhance the general awareness and knowledge of EU regional funds, and to establish a positive image for regional policy. The NDA employs a variety of communication tools and activities, including events, radio, television, online communication tools, publications, and press conferences. In relation to the latter, the NDA put great emphasis on maintaining good relations with the press (among others by organising press events and Q&A sessions). The Communication Department of the NDA consists of 16 full time employees (FTEs). The annual budget available at national level to target the wider public is approximately EUR 5,000,000 and the annual budget available for communications targeting actual and potential beneficiaries and other stakeholders is EUR 120,000.<sup>80</sup>
2. **Regional level:** The role of the intermediate bodies at the regional level is to be in direct contact with the potential and actual beneficiaries and to supply required information on the Operational Programmes to the National Development Agency. In addition to promoting calls for proposals and providing administrative support and practical advice to (potential) beneficiaries, intermediate bodies have increasingly focused on showcasing projects' achievements to local and regional communities. However, informing the general public is a secondary priority of the intermediate bodies. Some interviewees explained that while the National Development Agency mainly uses national media to convey their messages, intermediate bodies communicate via local newspapers, radio and TV channels. In addition, intermediate bodies often organise workshops and seminars, and sometimes use online tools and publications. At the regional level, a total of 20 FTEs are dedicated to communication activities (spread over the different intermediate bodies). The annual communication

<sup>80</sup> Source: National Development Agency, May 2013.

budget available to each of the intermediate bodies is EUR 50,000, which is financed from the Technical Assistance Operational Programme.

3. **Local level:** In addition to the activities of the NDA and intermediate bodies, communication activities at *project level* are organised by the project beneficiaries and usually aim to promote funded projects. These activities are financed from the part of the project budget that is dedicated to communication (which is specified in an obligatory section in the project proposal) and carried out in line with the information supply obligations for beneficiaries.<sup>81</sup> Communication tools at the project level often include opening and closing ceremonies (at the start and end of projects), press conferences, and publications.

Interviewees at the national as well as the regional level indicated that there is a **close cooperation between the NDA and intermediate bodies**. The communication activities of the intermediate bodies are based on annual communication plans which are submitted for approval to the NDA and contain all the communication tools and activities they intend to carry out in the next year. The NDA provides general guidance in terms of the communication tools to be used and imposes technical requirements (such as the sizes and colours of different components). Some interviewees also indicated that there is frequent communication between the NDA and intermediate bodies on *individual* communication activities, such as events. In addition to the obligations imposed by the NDA, intermediate bodies are asked to propose good practices examples of projects that can be used in communications at national level and to provide their feedback on national campaigns.

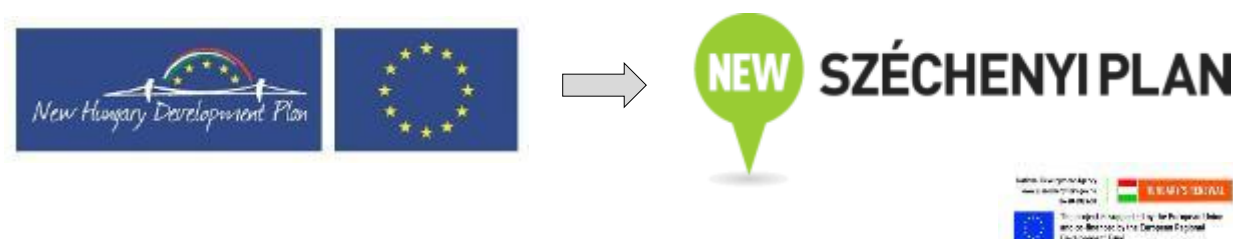
In response to the fact that many citizens did not feel that projects benefitted them personally, **the overall strategic communication approach of the NDA increasingly focused on making results more visible and more tangible**. Therefore, the main message of the communication tools and activities targeted at the general public is that the New Széchenyi Plan (which is largely financed from EU regional policy funds) impacts on everybody's lives and therefore is beneficial for the whole country.

It is interesting to note that along with the introduction of the New Széchenyi Plan (which replaced the previous national strategic reference framework for EU funds) the government also introduced a new logo and visual image of the development plan, as shown in the figure below.

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<sup>81</sup> Depending on the amount of money received, beneficiaries have to implement one of three communication packages, which specify the kinds of communication tools that beneficiaries are obliged to use. Representatives of the NDA indicated that for the next programming period, the selection criteria for which communication package beneficiaries must use are likely to be extended from only "amount of money received" to other criteria such as for example the "type of project". Beneficiaries are also provided with templates for billboards, press releases and recommendations for different communication activities.

**Figure 8: Visual image of the old and the new National Strategic Reference Framework**



Considering that much of the communication material show the two parts of the new logo separately, and in some cases show the upper part (the green logo and the name of the new plan) much more clearly than the lower part (which includes the EU flag), it could be argued that (and some interviewees in fact did) this change diminished the **EU visibility** in the communication material. While some interviewees argued that it is generally known among the population that the New Széchenyi Plan is mostly financed from EU funds (and thus felt that this was not a problem), others argued that political actors as well as beneficiaries are generally inclined to take disproportional ownership of EU-funded achievements. Representatives of the NDA indicated to pay particular attention to this issue by encouraging different actors to emphasise the EU dimension in their communications.

Lastly, interviewees highlighted some general **challenges** in relation to communicating EU regional policy to the Hungarian general public. One challenge mentioned by several interviewees was to make results of projects visible to people, and to help them understand the impact of regional policy on their everyday lives. Another challenge related to the fact that people were not always interested in EU policies or simply took the fact that their region received regional support for granted. A few interviewees noted that the recent political disputes between the EU and Hungary regarding constitutional amendments overshadowed people's perception of the EU, thereby making it difficult to convey positive messages on the benefits of EU regional policy. Lastly, one interviewee noted that the changes in the organisation of the NDA itself, and to some extent to lack of transparency surrounding this, distracted attention from the actual messages that the agency aims to send out.

#### **4. Activities and good practice examples**

The majority of interviewees agreed that the NDA has been successful at communicating key messages, especially in recent years. While the NDA as well as intermediate bodies have employed a range of communication tools and activities targeting different target audiences (including large umbrella-type campaigns, media (TV and radio) advertisements, billboards, online tools, press conferences, and events), the aim of this section is to provide examples of good practices in terms of communicating EU regional policy specifically to the *general public*.

### The “huge numbers” campaign

One of the communication tools mentioned a number of times by interviewees was the “huge numbers” campaign. This campaign, which was launched in the summer of 2012 and cost EUR 285,715, displayed the quantified results of the development policy through seven installations designed by contemporary artists and placed in the seven main regions of Hungary. In doing so, the NDA **aimed to make abstract concepts related to development policy and the impact on people’s lives visible and understandable for the Hungarian citizens.**

The figure below shows two examples of the “huge numbers” campaign, namely in Budapest and Debrecen.

“The huge numbers” campaign		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	✓
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

**Figure 9: Examples of installations designed under the “huge numbers” campaign**

Installation in Budapest showing the average number of tons of greenhouse gases saved annually



Installation in Debrecen showing the exact sum of the length of new and renovated roads in kilometres



The installations were accompanied by information on the meaning of the figures and the installation on the sites, the campaign was promoted through press conferences, PR events and the YouTube and Facebook pages of the New Széchenyi Plan. The campaign was also promoted through videos featuring the artists who created the installations and a game that encouraged people to upload photos of themselves and the installation to the website to take part in a prize draw. After the campaign, the installations were offered to the towns and are in many cases still publicly visible.

According to the interviewees, the “huge numbers” campaign was particularly effective as it responded to the general feeling that regional policy did not benefit people personally, and **presented the results and achievements to the general public in a new, creative, easily understandable, and tangible way.** It was argued that the design of the installations as well as their simple and clear messages (facilitated by their visual formats) contributed to enhancing people’s engagement with and understanding of the results of regional policy. In addition, the installations (which were installed at public places) succeeded at reaching a large portion of the general public (although the exact number of people reached would have been very difficult to measure). The fact that it encouraged local people to develop personal experiences with the effects of regional policy (for example through the photo contest) was also viewed as an important success factor.

An independent evaluation was carried out to assess the **effectiveness** of the “huge numbers” campaign. This evaluation showed that many people did indeed remember the installations, indicating that the campaign reached its target audience.<sup>82</sup> In addition, some interviewees stressed the success of the campaign by highlighting that it was covered broadly by several media, and that a high number of people visited the different installations. In terms of room for improvement, some representatives of the NDA indicated that, as the agency was in the process of contracting a media buying agency, the promotion of this campaign was not optimal and could be carried out more comprehensively in the future.

While some of the interviewees indicated that the **EU dimension** was frequently mentioned in the “huge numbers” campaign, the pictures of the installations as well as an assessment of the website indicate that the campaign is clearly dominated by the green colours and logo of the New Széchenyi Plan. Despite arguments made by some interviewees that this plan is generally known to be related to EU funds, the fact that many of the achievements displayed by the installations were realised with support of the EU seems does not seem to be part of (or explicit in) the core message in this communication campaign.

### “The experience is yours” campaign

Following the success of the “huge numbers” campaign, the NDA launched the so-called “the experience is yours” campaign. This campaign, which was developed by a creative agency commissioned by the NDA, lasted from December 2012 until March 2013 and cost approximately EUR 1,413,000.<sup>83</sup> The campaign targeted the general public and consisted of a range of communication tools and activities, including billboards, videos, radio campaigns, TV spots, events (such as the Open Days which are discussed later in this section), and online tools (for example the Memory Wall which as described below as well).

“The experience is yours” campaign		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	✓
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

By showing people in their every-day lives, **the campaign aimed to bring regional policy closer to the citizens**, and to help them relate to the positive results of regional policy. The slogan of the campaign was *“The memorable experience is personal, but the development was shared”*. The figure below provides a few images of posters and a YouTube video that formed part of the campaign.

<sup>82</sup> Unfortunately, the evaluation team did not have information available on the number of reached through by the Huge Numbers campaign.

<sup>83</sup> Consisting of EUR 320.000 for creative materials and production, EUR 113.000 for PR (integrated PR articles, Press releases, interviews, programmes, PR events, activities), EUR 90.000 for several online communication tools, EUR 90.000 for the Open Day, and EUR 800.000 for media buying (including TV spots, articles in Newspapers, radio spots, and billboards).



Figure 10: Images of “the experience is yours” campaign



The campaign was highlighted as a good practice example by several interviewees, as it was visually very appealing, the images displayed a friendly atmosphere, and most importantly, the campaign **showed the “emotional” side of the effects of regional policy rather than only numbers and rational arguments**. One interviewee stated that the campaign showed that *“EU funds are really there for the people”*. While marketing and communication techniques based on people’s feelings and emotions are employed frequently by many (private) organisations, some interviewees argued that this way of portraying regional policy (and thus EU funds) was innovative as such an approach had not been taken by the NDA before. Also the language was said to be appropriate, as it conveyed simple messages to the general public. A few interviewees highlighted the music used for the TV spots and short videos. It was explained that campaign was based on English music, on purpose sung by a Hungarian singer. In addition, the campaign was successful at reaching a large portion of the general public, as it used a range of different communication tools, including billboards, radio, and TV spots.

The NDA commissioned an independent evaluation company to assess the **effectiveness** of the campaign.<sup>84</sup> While the campaign was praised for its professional visual image (illustrated by the fact that it won a creative prize awarded by an international jury in Hungary), focus groups revealed that the people shown in the campaign represented a middle class that many Hungarians did not believe existed in their country. Also, the evaluation found that people would have preferred more concrete information on *how* regional policy had affected people’s lives as suggested by the images. There was no information available to the evaluation team on the number of people reached by this campaign. In terms of room for improvement, a few individual interviewees argued that the evaluation process of this campaign could have been improved, so as to gather more evidence on the actual impact of the campaign and a better understanding of how to fine-tune the communication message going forward. A few individual interviewees also felt that, in order to make the campaign more interactive and to receive more direct feedback from the general public, more emphasis could have been placed on online tools and social media.<sup>85</sup>

The **EU visibility** in this campaign can be described as limited. The different images of the campaign show that the people portrayed in the images and the green logo of the New Széchenyi Plan were much more visible than the EU logo at the bottom of the pictures. While some interviewees emphasised that the EU logo *is* present in the campaign, some others noted that it is clearly inferior to the other elements displayed on the material. For

<sup>84</sup> As the evaluation is only available in Hungarian, the evaluation team had to rely on interviewees’ reflections on the results of the evaluation study.

<sup>85</sup> In relation to this, some interviewees mentioned the Memory Wall as a good example of an approach that could be taken more frequently in the future. The Memory Wall is described below.

example, one interviewee stated that the EU logo is displayed relatively small and will most likely be noticed lastly, if at all. Here, it should be noted that in the YouTube video, the EU is mentioned quite clearly at the end, although for a relatively short amount of time.

### Open Days of EU Developments – Walk behind the Scenes

The Open Days of EU Developments, which formed part of the “the experience is yours” campaign, consisted of two (weekend) days in March 2013 where people were invited to visit between 20 and 30 EU-funded projects (free of charge) which are not usually accessible. The project was set up as a pilot project, which could (if effective) be repeated in subsequent years. The target audience was the general public and the total costs were EUR 192,800.

Representatives of the NDA indicated that the **main aim of the Open Days was to showcase EU developments across the country to the general public and the press and to highlight the impact of EU developments.** The figure below shows two examples of sites that were open for the general public during the Open Days.

The Open Days of EU Developments		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

**Figure 11: Examples of sites open for visitors during the Open Days of EU Developments**



The Open Days were promoted via several press conferences and advertisements in online and printed newspapers (at local as well as national level). The initiative also encouraged people to create personal memories by uploading pictures on a special website (the so-called Memory Wall) to participate in a prize draw. Lastly, the Open Days were accompanied by videos which were uploaded on YouTube and Facebook pages and on the website of the New Széchenyi Plan.

According to the interviewees, the Open Days were particularly effective at reaching the general public, as they **informed local residents about the results and achievements of EU-funded projects.** This was in line with the NDA’s overall communication strategy to enhance people’s awareness of the impact of EU regional policy in their everyday lives. The

interviewees underlined that the Open Days provided people with first hand personal experience with EU regional policy, and the opportunity to see directly how money was spent on development in their own neighbourhoods. The Open Days also provided beneficiaries with the opportunity to showcase the successes that they had achieved with the money they received.

With regard to the **effectiveness** of the Open Days, representatives of the NDA indicated that the event attracted 6,200 people to visit one of the projects. In addition, 170 journalists were present at 25 venues during those days, which according to a representative of an intermediate body resulted in a large number of articles in the (local) press. The NDA also received substantial positive feedback via the Memory Wall (which is discussed in more detail below). Based on the successes and lessons learned of this pilot project, the NDA is preparing a similar event in June 2013. It indicated to intend to invite a much greater number of projects to enhance the reach of this communication tools, and to provide participating beneficiaries with guidance in relation to their communications about the event.

The **EU visibility** of this communication tool is likely to vary per participating project (depending on the efforts undertaken by the project owners) and therefore was hard to assess for the evaluation team. Several interviewees noted the fact that the results were achieved with EU support was visible and clear. However, an assessment of the summary brochure and the website dedicated to the Open Days shows that these communication materials were very much dominated by the green colours and the logo of the New Széchenyi Plan. Again, while some argued that the Plan is by many citizens associated with EU support, this is not explicit in the communication materials that were seen by the evaluation team.

### Memory wall

The Memory Wall also formed part of “the experience is yours” campaign and was closely linked with the Open Days initiative. The memory wall, which was launched in December 2012 and cost EUR 85,000, invited people to upload their personal memories in the form of text, images and/or videos on a dedicated website. The website is still active to date and the uploaded memories are publically visible.

In line with the main aim of “the experience is yours” campaign to bring regional policy closer to the people, the Memory Wall intended to encourage people to create personal experiences with regional projects. Some interviewees indicated that the Memory Wall was set up **to stimulate positive feelings towards the New Széchenyi Plan (and thus regional policy) and to make it more “likeable”**. The figure below provides some examples of pictures uploaded by Hungarian citizens.

The Memory Wall		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

**Figure 12: Pictures uploaded by Hungarian citizens on the Memory Wall**



While the Memory Wall was initially open to any experiences of citizens in relation to development policy, after the Open Days, people were invited to upload memories in relation to the Open Days.

Several interviewees felt that the Open Days initiative is an example of good communication practice, as it stimulated people to “*express positive experiences offered by projects implemented with EU support*”. In addition, it was considered innovative as it was an **interactive tool and facilitated not only the creation of these memories, but also the sharing of positive memories** between citizens. It was argued that by creating and sharing positive memories, people would become more aware and adopt a more positive attitude towards the New Széchenyi Plan and also EU regional support.

Representatives of the NDA indicated that the Memory Wall generated more than 2,100 uploaded memories (in various forms) since December 2012, making it an **effective** communication tool. In addition, it was argued that a number of people uploaded more than one positive experience. However, there was little evidence or feedback on the actual *impact* of the Memory Wall on people’s perceptions of regional policy. As discussed before, some interviewees also indicated that they received significant positive feedback via the Memory Wall in relation to the Open Days.

This online tool is accessible via the website of the New Széchenyi Plan. In terms of **EU visibility**, while the EU logo is displayed on the front page of the Memory Wall, the website is also dominated by the green colours of the New Széchenyi Plan, which diminishes the EU visibility.



Attendance of summer festivals

Several interviewees referred to the NDA's attendance of two summer festivals of 2012, namely the VOLT festival which took place from 27 to 30 June 2012, and the Sziget Festival which took place from 5 to 12 August 2012. This communication activity mainly targeted the (young) general public and cost EUR 23.215. At the festivals, the NDA provided people at the festivals with bin bags to collect certain types of waste. Full bags could be returned for specific gift coupons. In addition, the NDA focused on "equal opportunities for all", by providing physically impaired festival participants with transport to move across the different sites. **The main aim of this activity was to enhance environmental awareness among the participants and to highlight the importance of equal opportunities for all.**

Attendance of summer festivals		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

Figure 13: Picture of festival participants taking part in the activities organised by the NDA



The NDA's attendance at the two summer festivals was promoted via press releases, its website, and via leaflets. After the festivals, videos on the NDA's presence at the events were uploaded on YouTube.

Interviewees identified the NDA's presence at the summer festivals as a good practice for several reasons. A representative of the NDA indicated that through attending the festivals, **the NDA managed to reach a different target audience, being a younger and more international public.** An individual interviewee argued that young people are especially important for the future, and are also more likely to share their experiences with their friends and family and via social media. In addition, it was argued that, using a game for the festival audience meant that awareness of the key issues covered by regional policy was raised in a relatively easy and enjoyable way.

A few interviewees argued that attending the festivals had been **effective** as the festivals were attended by a very high number of people (namely 95.000 people in the VOLT festival and 380.000 people in the Sziget festival), indicating that the NDA has potentially reached a high number of people. In addition, a total of 4.500 bags of waste were collected and handed in by people attending the festivals. However, there was no information available on the extent to which the messages were actually taken up by the festival participants, and the impact it had on their awareness and perception of regional policy.

Few interviewees commented on the **EU visibility** in this specific event. However the videos uploaded on YouTube suggest that this was similar to the other communication tools and activities of the NDA. While the EU logo is visible on some of the material used at the festivals, the majority of the NDA communications was dominated by the green colours and the logo of the New Széchenyi Plan. Again, while some interviewees argued in general that most Hungarian citizens associate this new plan with EU support, the communication materials suggest that this is not an explicit or primary message sent to the audience.

### Study tours for the press

While most of the intermediate bodies' communication activities mainly targeted potential and actual beneficiaries, several interviewees highlighted the so-called "study tours" as a good practice example targeting the general public at the regional level. In line with the NDA's overall communication approach to maintain close relations with the press, these tours mainly targeted journalists, aiming to reach the general public via press publications. While the cost of these study tours were somewhat different, most of them were in the range of a

Study tours for the press		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

couple of hundreds euros. During the study tours, journalists were invited to the sites of specific projects funded by EU regional policy, and were provided with information on the main achievements of these projects. The **main aim of the study tours was to showcase the results of individual projects in local areas to the press and thus the general public**, ultimately to highlight the importance and positive results of regional policy.<sup>86</sup>

The study tours were identified as good practice examples as they were in line with the NDA's vision **to make regional developments visible and tangible to the public**. It was argued that publications on the achievements of local projects would contribute to enhance the public's understanding on how regional policy led to concrete changes in their living environment. In addition, maintaining good relations with the press and media was perceived as being useful for potential coverage of regional policy in the future.

With regard to **effectiveness**, the study tours were often times attended by a relatively large number of the local press members and media (around 10 to 15 people), who were encouraged to report on the projects that they visited. Several interviewees indicated that the study tours were generally well attended and regularly led to the publication of articles on certain projects. In addition, a few journalists described the tours as being useful and informative.

While the **EU visibility** is likely to depend on the respective study tours, a representative of an intermediate body indicated that the fact that the developments were supported by the

<sup>86</sup> In relation to this, it should be noted that the NDA also organised a number of press conferences and events at national level. The journalists interviewed for this case study all indicated to be appreciative of the NDA's efforts to engage with the press. It was argued that many press conferences and events organised by the NDA were considered to be very informative and also had a good networking function.



EU was clearly mentioned. The evaluation team did not have any materials available to assess in relation to this point.

## 5. Conclusions and outlook

This case study aimed to gather evidence on regional policy communication targeted at the general public in Hungary, and to identify good practice examples. The Flash Eurobarometer as well as the findings from the interviews indicated that while many Hungarian citizens are aware of the fact that many regional projects are funded by EU money, they did not always feel that these projects had a direct impact on their personal lives. With a view to changing the way in which the public perceives regional policy and especially its impact, the National Development Agency (which is the main institution in Hungary communicating to the general public) adopted a **communication approach that was aimed at making the positive results of regional policy visible and tangible** and showcasing developments in people's direct neighbourhoods.

There were a large amount of communication tools and activities targeting the general public in Hungary. These ranged from large umbrella-type campaigns to individual tools or events. Based on desk research and a number of interviews, the evaluation team identified a number of good practices, which were shown to be particularly effective at communicating regional policy to the general public in one or several ways.

The good practice examples all conveyed consistent **messages** that were in line with the NDA's overall communication approach. Especially the tools and activities under "the experience is yours" campaign – such as the posters, videos, Open Days, and the Memory Wall – were clearly aligned with each other and contributed to the same strategic goal. One key lesson learned according to several interviewees was the need to enhance people's awareness and understanding of the results and impact of regional policy in their everyday lives. This was done through showcasing achievements in people's own neighbourhoods in an easily understandable and tangible way as well as by using communication materials that moved away from rational arguments but instead played on people's (positive) emotions. It was argued that making people more aware of the effects of regional policy would lead to a more positive attitude towards regional policy.

With regard to **EU visibility**, several interviewees argued that regional policy in Hungary (currently under the framework of the New Széchenyi Plan) is by many automatically associated with EU funding. While the EU visibility in some cases was hard to assess for the evaluation team<sup>87</sup>, a review of different communication materials shows that, although the European Union was usually mentioned either in the form of the logo or in words, the green colours and logo of the New Széchenyi Plan were much more dominant and visible than the EU. This was especially the case for example for several of the materials under "the experience is yours" campaign and the materials available on the "huge numbers" campaign.

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<sup>87</sup> For example, due to the fact that the evaluation team was not present at several key the events such as the Open Days and the study tours for the press.

Here, the message that regional developments were for a large part financed with EU support did not seem to form part of the *core* message.

The good practice examples showed that several of the NDA's **communication tools and activities** to target the general public were quite innovative. Especially the "huge numbers" campaign, which presented results of regional policy through large installations on the streets, succeeded in communicating regional policy in a new and unusual way. Also the online Memory Wall and the NDA's attendance of the summer festivals were perceived as being innovative ways to reach the general public, as they were highly interactive and allowed for instant feedback from the people.

The NDA as well as intermediate bodies invested significant time and efforts in maintaining good relations with the media. This was done for example through special events where journalists were invited to visit specific projects and were informed about the results and achievements. The fact that the interviewed journalists spoke very positively about this and that these events led to published articles (mainly by the local media) indicates that these communication activities constituted a very successful complementary approach to reaching the general public

The interviewees indicated that communications through local newspapers, TV and radio channels were often *more* effective than using the national media. What is interesting to note is that the representatives of the NDA (being the main institution targeting the general public) mainly communicated via the national media, while the intermediate bodies (for whom the general public was only a secondary priority) mainly communicated via the local media. In relation to this, several interviewees indicated that there is a close cooperation between the NDA and the intermediate bodies, which is based on providing mutual support and feedback.

There was considerable information on the **outputs** of the good practice examples, showing that the NDA (and intermediate bodies) generally managed to reach a large number of people. For example, a total of 6.200 people and 170 journalists visited one or more projects during the Open Days in March 2013, more than 2.100 people uploaded their personal memories to the Memory Wall since December 2012, and 4.500 bags of waste were collected by participants of the festivals in summer 2012. With regard to the **impact**, the NDA commissioned two independent evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the "huge numbers" campaign and "the experience is yours" campaign.<sup>88</sup> The first evaluation found that the "huge numbers" campaign was indeed effective in the sense that people still remembered the installations and the campaign was covered by several media. The evaluation of "the experience is yours" campaign found that, while the actual communication material was of very high quality, the findings of focus groups indicated that many people could not relate to the people portrayed, and preferred more concrete information on *how* regional policy benefitted people directly. The information available on the extent to which the communication campaigns led to an actual change in awareness of perception of regional policy was very limited.

In addition to challenges (and opportunities) in relation to individual tools and activities, interviewees identified a couple of *general challenges* in targeting the general public going forward. For example, one challenge that is related to the relatively low EU visibility is the

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<sup>88</sup> Here, it should be noted that these were only available in the Hungarian language and the evaluation team therefore had to rely on the interviewees' reflections on these studies.

fact that the New Széchenyi Plan is very much politicised, and that political actors are inclined to take disproportional ownership of the achievements of regional policy. The changing image and logo of the Hungarian development plan in January 2011 and the likelihood of it changing again if a different party comes to power in the next elections, can be argued to undermine the consistency in the way in which regional policy is communicated to people.

Another challenge identified by interviewees are the political disagreements with the EU in relation to the recent amendments of the Hungarian constitution. It was argued that these disagreements (are likely to) heavily influence people's perception of the EU, and therefore challenge the NDA's ability improve the awareness of and perceptions on EU regional policy. It can be argued that this challenge even further strengthens the need to ensure EU visibility when communicating positive results of regional development policy.

## Annex

**Table 6: Overview of interviews for case study Hungary**

Category	Interviews conducted	Number of interviewees	Total number of interviewees
<b>1. EU level desk officers</b>	Desk officers at DG REGIO	2	3
	Desk officer at the EC Representation in Hungary	1	
<b>2. Primary communicators</b>	Member of the Hungarian Ministry of National Development	1	6
	Deputy Head of the Communication Department of the National Development Agency	1	
	Staff of the Communication Department of the National Development Agency	3	
	Head of Coordination of EU and International Affairs at the National Development Agency	1	
<b>3. Secondary communicators</b>	Communication officers at intermediate bodies	2	2
<b>4. Independent stakeholders / observers</b>	Evaluator communication tools, commissioned by the National Development Agency	1	5
	Journalists reporting on Regional Policy	3	
	Staff of a PR and creative agency commissioned by the National Development Agency	1	
<b>Total number of interviewees</b>			<b>16</b>

## 6 CASE STUDY REPORT: ITALY

### 1. Introduction

This case study was carried out to document and report good practices on EU regional policy communication initiatives, targeted at the general public, in Italy. It is based on the communication documents available and on meetings and interviews with a number of people responsible for communication activities at managing authorities (MAs) and other stakeholders both at European and regional level in Italy.

The evaluator undertook a field visit to Milan, Rome and Trieste in Italy from 7 to 13 May 2013 and interviewed a total of 29 communication officers and stakeholders (An overview of the interviews conducted can be found in the annex to this report).

In the following paragraphs, this review summarises the local context for regional policy communication, surveys the key actors and their communication approaches and activities. In particular, to highlight good practices in relation to communicating regional policy to the general public for 2007-2013, we selected four Operational Programmes and one Cross Border Cooperation Programme, namely:

- **ROP ERDF Lombardia” (PON FESR)**, operating within the framework laid out for the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective with a total budget of around €532 million.
- **NOP ERDF<sup>89</sup> Research and Competitiveness” (PON REC)** based in Rome, aims to contribute towards the development of a European Union Cohesion Policy for Italy's Southern Italian regions of Calabria, Campania, Puglia and Sicily, within the framework laid out for the Convergence Objective. It has a total budget of around €6.2 billion.
- **NOP ERDF Learning Environments (PON SCUOLA)** a multiregional Operational Programme aimed to improve the accessibility and attractiveness of the school environment for the regions of Calabria, Campania, Puglia and Sicily. This OP is also part of the framework laid out for the Convergence Objective and has a total budget of around €495 million.
- **ROP ERDF Friuli Venezia Giulia**, to create for the entire regional context a lasting and competitive advantage, within the framework laid out for the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective and has a total budget of around €303 million.
- **The Cross-border Cooperation Programme Italy-Slovenia**, is aimed to promote and strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of the high Adriatic region and is financed by ERDF Italian and Slovenian funds totalling €136 million.

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<sup>89</sup> Italy's Operative programmes are divided between Regional Operative Programmes (ROP) and National Operative Programmes (NOP). In the first case the programmes are managed at regional level, while in the second the managing authority is a national institution, as, for example, a Ministry.

## 2. Context for regional policy communication

To introduce the analysis of the approach and the key challenges related to the communication of the EU regional policy, this section contains a summary of the amount of funding allocated within the EU regional policy programmes, a short overview of the national Italian economic context and the perception of the regional policy among the Italian citizens.

### EU Funding 2007- 2013

During the 2007–13 programming period, Italy will receive a total of almost €29 billion in European aid (from the ERDF and the ESF) under the Convergence<sup>1</sup>, Regional Competitiveness and Employment and European Territorial Cooperation Objectives.

In the funding period 2007 – 2013 Italy has been allocated about EUR 29 billion in European aid through 66 Operational Programmes; The OPs are co-financed by a single Structural Fund under the Convergence, Regional Competitiveness and Employment and European Territorial Cooperation Objectives: 42 OPs are financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and 24 OPs financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). The regional cohesion policies are implemented by the competent ministries and regional administrations with a central coordination. Overall, including the national contribution, the financial resources currently available for the programming period, amount to approximately €100 billion<sup>90</sup>.

All the main regional policy priorities in Italy fall within two main areas:

- **The Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective** for all the regions of the Centre-Nord, Abruzzo, Molise and Sardinia. In these areas, the projects are aimed at competitiveness and attractiveness, mainly through investments in research and sustainable development, and employment at the regional level.
- **The Convergence objective** for the five southern regions of Campania, Puglia, Calabria, Sicily and Basilicata. In these regions, with a GDP per capita 75% below the Community average, the projects are designed to promote growth-enhancing conditions and competitiveness, plus ad hoc measures aimed to foster a convergence, in real terms, with the other EU member states.

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<sup>90</sup> The national contribution includes government co-financing to the OPS (for about €27billion), other national funds allocated through CIPE - the Inter-ministerial Committee for Economic Planning, PAC - Action Plan for Cohesion, and other initiatives for about €44 billion.  
<http://www.opencoesione.gov.it/fonti-di-finanziamento/>

**Figure 7: Eligible areas under the Convergence Objective and the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective**



### *Economic Background and Awareness and Perception of EU Policy*

Italy is currently in a recession that has lasted for about two years. According to a report by the national statistics institute, ISTAT, published in May, Italy's economy is expected to shrink by 1.4% in 2013; the jobless rate, currently at 11.9% is expected to rise to 12.3% in 2014. The study shows that Italy has the highest level in Europe of young people who are neither in school nor employed (at 23.9%) and, in the south, one in three people aged 15-29 fall into this group.<sup>91</sup> According to a study, Europe's on-going economic crisis has engendered a crisis of confidence in the European project. Such a recessionary environment has weakened the public trust of Italian citizens in the economic policies of the EU; in 2013 only 11% of Italians think that European economic integration has strengthened their economy<sup>92</sup> and many no longer look favourably on the European Union as an institution.

At a regional level, the awareness of the population of the EU co-financed programmes is still low, considering that Italy is one of the EU funding members and that is the third largest beneficiary of the European Union's Cohesion Policy after Poland and Spain. As suggested by the findings of the Eurobarometer<sup>93</sup>, only 33% of Italian citizens are aware of EU regional support in their area<sup>94</sup> and among them only 56% said that this support had been positive for development in their in their area, compared to an average of European responded of 76%.

On the other side, the regional officials and the stakeholders interviewed to prepare this report believe that the awareness of the general public of European regional funding is growing fast, particularly in the southern regions of Italy benefitting from the Convergence initiatives. As the financed programmes are implemented, the citizens are more actively reaching to the institutions to find financial support and guidance on their own initiative, in particular in the areas of innovation and research, youth employment and tourism. The overall impression is that the EU its regional policies and funding, is starting to be seen as a

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.istat.it/en/>

<sup>92</sup> Compared to a median of 28% of all European countries. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/05/13/the-new-sick-man-of-europe-the-european-union/>

<sup>93</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 298 – The Gallup Organization, 2010

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl\\_298\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_298_en.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> Ranking 17<sup>th</sup> out of 27 European countries and compared to an European average of 34%



great opportunity to promote investments and development, in particular in the most economically depressed areas.

### 3. Key Actors and Approaches

The European cohesion policy establishes guidelines that, in Italy, are gathered in a national strategic framework, a comprehensive proposal for the regional development policy which defines the strategic priorities in the use of EU funds in the programming cycle 2007-2013. At national level, the **Department for Development and Economic Cohesion (DPS)** monitors the expenditure of the EU funds and evaluates regularly the interventions implemented in collaboration with the Regions and the Ministries and in coordination with the European Commission. In 2012, in line with the indications from the EU, the **Action Plan for Cohesion** was launched, outlining the national commitment to employ EU funds and the related national co-financing in a better and faster way. In terms of communication guidance, the plan refers to the indications outlined in the **White Paper on a European Communication Policy**<sup>95</sup>, the base for each communication activity at national and regional level, encouraging Member States to be more independent and active in informing citizens about EU affairs<sup>96</sup>.

The authority responsible for managing the funds allocated to each OP can be a **centralised national institution** in the case of National Operational Programs (NOP) or, for Regional Operational Programmes (ROP) the supervision can be **entrusted to the regions**. Accordingly the arrangements in relation to the communication activities related to the regional policy can be defined at national or regional level. Most OPs have a dedicated Communications Office that coordinates the activities and supervises the drafting and implementation of the Communication Plans. Each Communication Plan is approved at the beginning of the funding period by the EU but it is generally modified and spelled out in more detail during the programming period, with the approval of the EU, with an annual Communication Project Plan. The communication initiatives are often carried out together with the Ministries at national level and also local authorities, economic and social partners, Europe Direct Offices and several networks.

The **networks** in particular may involve **local authorities, sponsors and beneficiaries** and are reinforced with periodical meetings held to exchange best practices and training. One of the common tasks of the Communication Officers is to guarantee the correct implementation of the provisions from the EU<sup>97</sup>, requiring the recipients of funding under the Community programmes to inform the public that the project was carried out with the assistance obtained from European funds through the use of signs and logos. The Managing Authorities visited show a great commitment to ensuring compliance with the European obligations concerning information and publicity of the projects financed, and work closely with the beneficiaries to set up measures to ensure an effective communication strategy. Most of the OPs provide the beneficiaries with guidelines, material and examples on their website or through direct assistance.

<sup>95</sup> [http://europa.eu/documents/comm/white\\_papers/pdf/com2006\\_35\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu/documents/comm/white_papers/pdf/com2006_35_en.pdf)

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> EC Regulation no. 1828/2006

All the OP surveyed employ a number of **external firms**, mainly consulting companies and advertisement agencies, contracted to provide technical assistance to the communication offices, in particular with the set up and maintenance of the OP's website and the coordination of advertisement campaigns. For two of the OPs visited (ROP Lombardy and NOP Learning Environments), the MA integrated in their own campaign the advertisements and the ideas created by the participants of regional contests dedicated to the schools.

At MA level, the communication office is also responsible for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities. All the OPs visited, in line with the indications from DG REGIO and the Communication Plans, implemented a very detailed programme of M&E of their communication activities. On-going M&E initiatives are considered of paramount importance for the success of the multi-year OPs as they enable the MAs to incorporate feedback from the public and the beneficiaries in their strategies, according to the logic of "Plan Do Check Action", opportunely changing their action in the course of its implementation to improve efficiency. Reviews and evaluations of the plans are carried out both internally and outsourced to external companies to monitor independently the effectiveness of the communication actions.

**Table 1: Communication Budgets**

Operational Programme (All numbers in EUR)	Indicative communication budget	Technical assistance budget	Total Programme budget	% of total budget for communication
ROP ERDF Lombardia	2.5 million	20 million	532 million	0.47%
NOP ERDF Research and Competitiveness	19 million	230 million	6,200 million	0.30%
NOP ERDF Learning Environments	3 million	20 million	495 million	0.6%
ROP ERDF Friuli Venezia Giulia	1.1 million	12 million	303 million	0.36%
Cross-border Cooperation Programme Italy-Slovenia	0.6 million	8 million	136 million	0.44%

Sources: OP communication plans 2007-2013 and DG REGIO Website

When asked about the **challenges** encountered communicating the regional policy, at MA level the communicators interviewed agreed that the communication strategy is planned around two main target groups: The beneficiaries (potential or actual) and the general public. When directed to the first target group, the communication strategy is generally considered easier to plan, as the beneficiaries are considered "interested" subjects, potentially actively seeking the EU support, and easily segmented. To capture the attention of the general public, however, can present different challenges and the approaches vary greatly and include contests in schools, to tourism initiatives and events at a local level. At MA level each OP has devised different communication strategies according to the focus of their programme, but generally all present a combination of on-line and off-line activities including the use of printed material, internet portals, social media and newsletters, events, conferences and gadgets. The general impression is that the public reacts more significantly to events and more traditional campaigns and, only in the second instance, reach for web

based initiatives, suggesting that the web portal and the use of social media must be part of a wide, organic and synergic communication plan.

The **key messages** that the communication effort intend to convey to the public and the beneficiaries include the description of the **objectives to be achieved**, of the long term strategies and the expected benefits deriving from the projected promoted by the OPs. The slogans always contain a reference to the fact that **Europe invests in the future of the community** and that Member States and EU can **grow together**. Another of the great themes across the board is the **focus on transparency** and the attempt to achieve a greater awareness of the citizens on how the EU invests the funds, to be able to apply a greater social (and political) control over the spending decisions of the MA. The communication directed to the beneficiaries includes instead more specific information on eligibility and conditions to qualify for financing and description of the procedures; points of support, activities for the beneficiaries; information about the current opportunities and the past projects. Some of the more interesting initiatives directed to the public will be analysed in detail in the following pages.

#### 4. Activities and good practice examples

##### 1. OpenCoesione and Open Data initiatives

One of the most interesting communication initiatives at national level is surely a web portal promoted by the Minister for Territorial Cohesion called **OpenCoesione**<sup>98</sup>. The website gathers organically and in one single location all the data available on European Regional funding and on any single project carried out to implement cohesion policy in the 2007-2013 period.

Although EU Structural Fund regulations already have provisions on data publication, in Italy most of the information is dispersed across a wide number of managing authorities and it is often published in different formats. OpenCoesione is designed in simple and clear way so that the citizen can easily access project fiches, portal geo-referenced images statistics and dynamic graphics and compare different projects in terms of sectors, location and value.

The initiative of OpenCoesione is consistent with “open data” and transparency guidances from the EU, the main targets of the initiative are “researchers, journalists, socio-economic partnerships and associations leaders, local public administrators, as well as government and opposition representatives”.

OpenCoesione Website		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

<sup>98</sup> [www.opencoessione.gov.it](http://www.opencoessione.gov.it) and <http://www.coesioneterritoriale.gov.it/press-release-opencoessione-gov-it-is-born/>

Figure 8: Opencoessione.gov.it homepage



Making available on line the data can certainly encourage the participation of citizens and enhance the debate on the destination and use of the funds related. The innovative concept underlying the OpenCoesione website is that the transparency principle in the policy communication is seen as a pre-requisite for greater control on national and EU policies implemented by institutions. Through user-friendly instruments, the web portal enables the public to approve or dissent from the choices made by the MAs, and appreciate whether consistent “action” does follow. Ultimately, OpenCoesione represents an attempt to improve policy effectiveness through better knowledge on which kind of investment projects are actually carried out in the territory; to enhance coordination among the administrations responsible for implementing the projects; and to provide more public scrutiny on who benefits from the resources (also with the aim of avoiding corruption and fraud).

The MAs consider the feedback and the transparency of its activities of paramount importance to the success of the Programmes. Two of the MAs met specifically included in their website a section dedicated to the full disclosure of data available on all the projects financed: “PON in Chiaro” and “Open Data”. The NOP ERDF “Research and Competitiveness” (PONREC) effort to promote transparency received from the Smart City Research to Business initiative the special mention for: *“A new organizational model for integrated and efficient management of projects in favour of an “Open Public Administration”* in Bologna on June 6<sup>th</sup> to further testify the appreciation of the public of such initiatives.

Figure 9: Open Data logos of similar initiatives on the NOP Research and Competitiveness and NOP Learning Environments



## 2. **SMAU Event: Opportunities and Results presented at the Innovation Expo**

SMAU is an innovation expo held annually at Fiera Milano exhibition centre, Milan since 1967. SMAU is a trade show open to the public targeted at entrepreneurs, operators in the ICT and new technology sectors and, in 2012, more than 53,000 people attended the two days SMAU event. Lombardy region hosted a stand and a series of events organised by the MA of **ROP ERDF Lombardy** as part of the fair exhibit, targeting the general public and potential beneficiaries of the programme with the specific aim of conveying the key messages from EU and in particular:

SMAU Event		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	✓
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	✓

- Presenting the opportunities related to the ERDF funding in the areas of the innovation and competitiveness to support regional development
- Highlight the role of the European Union and the Lombardy Region as major player of the industry
- Raise the awareness of the opportunities and results related to the projects financed through the POR ERDF Lombardy to make a positive difference in people's lives

The events organised included a conference with leaders of the areas of implementation of the ROP ERDF Lombardy, representatives of the European Commission, which brought the priorities of the new EU programming 2014-2020 and beneficiaries. The aim was to answer some key questions such as: What has been achieved in Lombardy? What are the funding opportunities still active? What are the prospects for the 2014-2020 programming period? Following the conference in the "Arena" of the stand of the Lombardy Region, the communication department organised three 'talk show' type meetings, moderated by a journalist of Radio 24. The beneficiaries of the EU regional funds took the stage to present their own experience with the ROP ERDF, explaining first-hand the possibilities of co-financing under the Programme with EU funds. The aim was to stimulate the debate with evidence presented to a public of potential beneficiaries in a language that is easily understandable for them areas of:

- Innovation Communication Technology, with the presentation of two highly specialized projects for the management and optimization of processes in the healthcare and water distribution sectors
- Urban Mobility, with the municipality of Milan presenting its System of Integrated Systems Mobility, a new project for the reduction of environmental impacts from urban mobility and long distance travel
- Organizational Innovation, with two Lombard companies presenting their solutions to promote efficient and sustainable production (of painting on-demand) and distribution (fashion supply chain)

About 100 people took part to the conference, each talk show was fully booked and each was attended by around 50 people. The conference and the debates were transmitted streaming on Triwu, a web channel dedicated to innovation and new technologies and had live twitter coverage, through the Lombardy region account. The total cost of the two days initiative was about €20,000, inclusive of the renting of the stand, the promotional activities



and the personnel. During the event the communication team distributed questionnaires and feedback forms so that it was possible to determine that the initiative was very well received and the MA collected useful suggestions for the future editions of the fair.

### 3. Competition “Discovering ROP Lombardy: the view from your lenses”

“Discovering the ROP Lombardy” is an annual competition aimed at students of the 4th and 5th year of secondary school of Lombardy, organised with the purpose of introducing young people to EU policies and improve the awareness of the initiatives accomplished through the ROP, thanks to the ERDF and the Lombardy Region’s resources. In the academic year 2012/13, the second year of the competition, 20 schools took part and a total of about 180 students and teachers were involved in the preparation of the works. To take part in the contest last year, each school was required to present a project focussed on the **ROP ERDF Lombardy** activities. The work had to address one of the topics related to the activities and the key messages of the EU: the European Union, EU programming, the ROP and its objectives, the projects within it, the impact of regional policy in their local area. The approach and specific topic was chosen by the participants on the basis of their interest and had to respond to one of the questions:

Discovery ROP Lombardy: the view from your lenses		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓

- What is happening in the Lombardy region thanks to the ERDF? Who and to what extent is the area benefiting from the structural funds? How will the EU funded projects help to improve the social and economic environment in which you live?
- How does the ERDF of the Lombardy Region operate and what are the areas of intervention that are crucial for the development of my area?

**Figure 10: The logo of ROP ERDF Lombardia and the booklet prepared for the schools to present the EU Regional policy with the instruction to enter the competition**



Through the annual competition the MA intends to familiarise young people with the EU activities and, in particular, help students understand the role of the European Union in the



socio-economic development of their territory, to discover the mechanism of integration between EU policy and local policy and how they can lead to positive effects in their daily life. The prize was a study trip to visit the EU institutions in Brussels for all the members of the group or the class who participated in preparing the project. The winner of the 2012/13 edition, a class from a town near Bergamo, presented a video on the natural and artistic interventions undertaken in the region with the support of the EU Regional funding and suggested further potential initiatives. The award ceremony was presented by a popular radio host and broadcasted nationally, was also covered live by streaming on the web portal of the Lombardy Region, on Triwu, a web channel dedicated to innovation and new technologies and live on the Lombardy Region Twitter account. Part of the video and other material presented by the participants is currently used as part of the communication campaign of the Lombardy Region and on the Programme website. All the videos and the shortlisted projects can be seen online on the website of the programme and on the Triwu channel on Vimeo.com. The total cost of the event, the coordination of the contest, the publication of the booklet, the final event and the cost of the travel to Brussels for the winning school was €16,500.

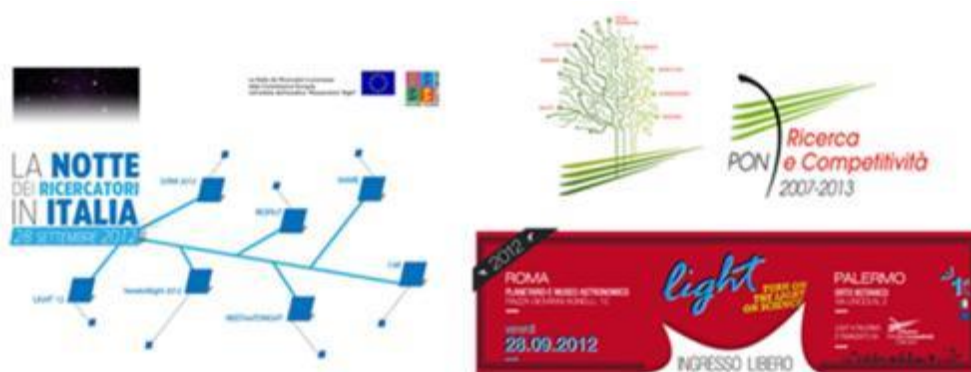
#### 4. **The Night of the Researcher – Light, Turn on The Light on Science**

The Researchers' Night is an EU-wide initiative promoted by DG Research since 2005, each year involving thousands of researchers and research institutions in all European countries. The objective is to create a meeting opportunity between researchers and citizens to spread scientific culture and the knowledge of the professions of research in an informal and stimulating manner. Events include live science experiments and demonstrations, exhibitions and guided tours, educational seminars, shows and concerts. **NOP ERDF Research and Competitiveness** organised the event "Light: Turn on the light of science" in 2011 in all the convergence regions and in 2012 in Rome and Palermo.

##### **Night of the Researcher – Light, Turn on The Light on Science**

<b>Good practice criteria</b>	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

**Figure 11: The Researchers' Night poster, the logo of NOP ERDF Research and Competitiveness and the invite to join the Light 2012 event in Rome and Palermo**



In both cities, the event hosted a total of 20 scientific stands involving more than 80 researchers from universities, associations and government agencies, with an estimated attendance of about 30,000 visitors. From 5 pm until 1 am, the public, walking through booths and stands, was able to interact directly with researchers and admire the results of research projects as well as take part in games for children, workshops and performances.

In 2012 in Rome the event was sponsored mainly by DG Research and the staff of NOP for R&C was in charge of the organisation and presented some of the projects financed through the EU funds, in particular the ones proposed by young entrepreneurs (under 30 years old) and for the Smart Cities and Social Innovation contest. NOP R&C prepared two scientific counters and one stand dedicated to the distribution of information material on the activities of the OP and the EU Regional policy. The two scientific projects selected from all those presented in the Convergence Regions were:

- MONICA "Information from the bottom of the sea", an innovative project for the monitoring of the coastal and marine environment and
- CardioTech, "The Heart in a click", a project for the innovation and optimization of diagnostic, therapeutic and training processes dedicated to the rehabilitation of patients suffering from acute coronary syndromes.

NOP R&C also organised entirely and sponsored fully the event Light'12 in Palermo with 20 stands of which three dedicated to the winners of the Social Innovation competition and one stand dedicated to the distribution of information material. There were 3 projects all from Sicilian participants were:

- L.E.D.A. (Laboratory of Earthquake engineering and Dynamic Analysis) "When the earth shakes", a project that included practical demonstrations of simulated earthquakes;
- PolyBioPlast, Biodegradable Materials, presenting products from biodegradable products from leftover and waste.

To promote the event in Palermo, ROP R&C prepared also 1,000 posters and 15,000 leaflets, a press conference, a dedicated website and a radio spot. The event was covered by 57 articles on the press before and after the event. The total cost of Light'12 was about €200,000 and counted on the collaboration of the local administration, research institutions sponsors and private and public sponsorship and it was attended by about 15,000 people.

During the event the visitors were given a questionnaire that allowed the NOP for Research and Competitiveness to assess the success of LIGHT'12 among the general public: 86.5% of respondents viewed as "good" or "very good" the fact that the projects were funded with the support of the EU Regional Funds, and almost all the respondents (91.8 %) declared a strong interest in participating in other events of scientific information promoted by the NOP for Research and Competitiveness.

## 5. Innovative use of the Social Media

The communication team of **NOP ERDF Research and Competitiveness** make an intense and coordinated use of the social media to promote their activities, share the results and stimulate the debate among potential and actual beneficiaries on the themes of innovation and competitiveness. All the communication activities of the Programme are covered simultaneously on all the different networking platforms and the key message transmitted is that not only does the NOP support regional development (*"We invest in your future"*), but is willing to support the single individual to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the EU Regional fund.

Innovative use of the Social Media		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	✓
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	✓

**Figure 12: NOP ERDF Research and Competitiveness' Storify homepage, YouTube channel and Twitter page**



The **web portal** of the NOP ([www.ponrec.it](http://www.ponrec.it)), on-line from May 2009, is the main communication tool used by the MA to disseminate the information on the programme and its results. From the end of 2012 the website, following the principle of transparency and organisational efficiency, released a new section on the projects financed through the EU regional funds in Open Data format. The analysis of the access data of the website in 2012 revealed a great rise in the number of visitors compared to the previous year. The website recorded 209,243 visitors from January to December 2012 and the data for the first four months of 2013 confirm the positive trend with a monthly average of about 18,000 visitors and a total number of hits equal to 131,472.

From January to April 2013, the most visited pages of the site were:

- The database of the NOP R&C projects - OpenData (23,261 accesses which do not include the individual project sheets displayed)
- The pages for the promotion of the invitation to tender for a Start-up initiative (more than 25,000 pages of overall access)

Through the social media, the NOP team invites each one to give informal live feedback and suggestions about the programme, the opportunities and often kicks off the discussion about the administration's use of public money and their effort to improve transparency. The Programme's **Twitter account** (@PONREC) has 1,100 registered followers. All the members of the team of NOP R&C, including the general manager, are very active on programme Twitter account with an average of 3 tweets a day sent including reminders of events, deadlines of tenders and re-tweets of posts that can be of interest to the community. The frequency of post is generally higher during events and conferences offering a service of live-tweeting, useful also to stimulate a debate from the network. The total number of tweets reached 1,800<sup>99</sup> in the first quarter of 2013. The number of followers during the period reviewed showed an exponential increase (+50%) and the data show a considerable number of mentions (570) and re-tweets (523).

The programme has also a dedicated **YouTube** channel with 68 videos of the main events and conferences and 8 playlists for a total of 7,600 views. The communication team recently introduced the use of **Storify**, a social network service that, using social media such as allow creating stories or timelines unifying the content from all the other different platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. An extra effort of coordination and consolidation of the different media is expected during the final part of 2013, with the launch of video-documentaries on the results and experiences of the research projects supported by the NOP: The material for the documentary film will be the collection of the most interesting and successful projects financed through the NOP R&C, explained directly by the beneficiaries, and the initiative will also count on the so called viral communication techniques and will involve all the members of the community.

#### Gadgets, Socially Engaged, Environmental Friendly

All the OPs visited have created a selection of traditional gadgets (including pens, folders, and notepads) bearing the name, the logo and the slogan of the programme. The most innovative and inspired gadget presented was surely one produced by NOP ERDF Research and Competitiveness: a reusable fabric shopper bag, distributed on the occasion of events and conferences to carry documents, manufactured by women serving a prison sentence near Bari, in Puglia (one of the regions covered by the programme) made with recycled materials. The bags, carrying the logo of the programme along with the EU and the Ministry of University, Research and Innovation, are also branded Made in Prison on the internal label where the initiative is explained.



<sup>99</sup> Including re-tweets

## 6. **National Competition for the Design of the Poster of the NOP (IV Edition) and seminar**

The **NOP ERDF Learning Environments** operates more than 16,000 small projects aimed at providing better infrastructure to contribute to raising basic skill standards of pupils' education in the schools of the convergence objective regions (Campania, Basilicata, Puglia and Sicily). Projects financed through the NOP include initiatives to provide computers to schools, the extension of broadband coverage of schools and energy savings initiatives.

To overcome the practical difficulties of micro-managing the communication activities on such a number of projects financed by EU regional funds, the MA promotes a number of initiatives to equip and to train the beneficiaries, exclusively schools, to advertise the projects in their schools and the achievements locally. One annual activity organised by the MA that was particularly successful in involving the schools in the communication process was a national competition to award the best advertisement posters illustrating the achievements of the projects financed by the Regional Funds in their school and a related training event. In 2012, the pupils of 120 schools took part in the initiative, and designed posters with the collaboration of their teachers. 22 schools received a prize in two different categories (traditional posters and videos). The posters were presented in an exhibition that was open to the public and the awards ceremony, a two day event in Sorrento, Campania, involved pupils, parents and the whole local community. The winning schools last year were awarded prizes offered by local companies involved in the communication business: a printer, a software programme and other technological tools useful to the school. On the second day the MA offered a seminar and a training session to the school managers titled "Traditional and innovative communication: Good practices compared". On that occasion a representative of the EU Commission and DG REGIO together with the programme regional managers illustrated the EU requirements in terms of communication of the project financed by the ERDF and communication experts discussed marketing techniques and strategies. The aim of the conference was to train and prepare the school managers to improve the efficiency of their communication and independently advertise the achievements of the projects financed by the NOP. One hundred school managers took part in the training session and the feedback collected after the two days event was excellent. Following the event, a brochure with the winning projects and the description of the activities was printed and distributed to the schools and the main offices of the local authorities.

Competition for the design of the Poster of the NOP Learning Environments		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓

## 7. **Award “Communicating the Structural Funds 2012”**

In line with the guidance of the EU to promote the initiatives that stimulate access, sharing and communication of information, the MA of the **ROP ERDF Friuli Venezia Giulia** organised a competition at national level for all the MAs of ERDF OPs in Italy to award the best and most innovative information and communication activity, developed on the basis of the ERDF Communication Plans for the 2007 - 2013 programming period. The competition was designed and managed by the Head of the Communication of the Central Directorate for Culture, Sport, International Relations and Community Services in Udine. MA Friuli Venezia Giulia prepared a regulation manual and established a set of criteria to evaluate the initiatives submitted focussed on the following aspects:

Award “Communicating the Structural Funds 2012”		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓

- **Innovation:** extent of the novelty employed, both in term of medium and tools, compared to traditional forms of communication;
- **Consistency with the provisions of the Communication Plan:** in particular with reference to specific articles, macro-area or objectives of the Communication Plan;
- **Impact on the territory:** success of the initiative based on an evaluation of the results in relation to the indicators provided (i.e. increased knowledge of the possibilities offered by the EU funds in the territory).

Six regional governments (Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria, Marche, Basilicata) submitted projects that were examined by a committee composed of the chief press officer of the Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, the head of the Communication of the ERDF Friuli Venezia Giulia and a regional official for the European territorial cooperation. On May 29, 2012 the award, a sculpture of Italian design, was assigned to the head of communications of the MA of the ROP ERDF Emilia – Romagna. The communication initiative awarded in the contest was characterized by the use of mixed media, including a theatrical form used in a modern and innovative way. The communication project developed conveyed, with emotional impact, the concept of the use of structural funds for technological innovation, scientific research, economic development and employment. The novelty of this initiative is that it targets other MAs and acts as a stimulus to share the good practices of the OPs, ultimately contributing to a cross regional collaboration to improve the communication initiatives on key EU messages. The total cost of the first edition of the competition was only EUR 1,300 and currently the MA of ROP FGV, promoter of the contest in 2012, is exploring the possibility of organising again the initiative in the next years, perhaps in cooperation with other regional programs.



*"The story of Carlotta"* is a theatrical piece presented by the communication office of the **Emilia Romagna region winner of the "Communicating the Structural Funds 2012"** award promoted by the MA of Friuli Venezia Giulia. The humorous piece describes the adventures of Carlotta, a biologist that is leaving Italy to take a job as a researcher in the United States. Talking with the people she meets on her journey to the airport she discovers some of the initiatives financed by the EU Regional Funds in a number of areas including staminal research, energy generating tiles, clean public transport. By the end of the show she is convinced, with great relief that she doesn't have to emigrate to find a job suitable to her academic qualification because, thanks to the investments of the OPR EDRF, new valuable employments opportunities are opening in her region.



Video accessible via:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZDI69z85wM>

## 8. A cross-borders Road Atlas

The **Cross-border cooperation programme Italia-Slovenia** prepared a special road atlas of the area between Italy and Slovenia covering the two countries and the 15 regions of the Programme area (about 30 square kilometres and 5.5 million people). The atlas is published with the intent to convey a sense of cohesion within the region and the introductory pages describe clearly the cross border programme, the main areas of intervention, the list of potential beneficiaries and simple instructions on how to present projects to obtain EU Regional support. The text, in English, Italian and Slovenian, is clearly outlined and the language is simple and direct. The innovative idea of the atlas originated by the observation that atlases and maps only detail the territories within a single country and there are not unified maps or charts available for sale of the two countries. Being a useful tool and produced as a durable booklet, it is likely to be kept as a reference by the public, included potential beneficiaries, and the information about the programme will not be lost as it is often the case with regular brochures and leaflets. A further interesting observation is that the book of maps was also intended as a support to the many initiative of the Cooperation programme to promote the touristic routes between the two countries as for example the "Slow Tourism" network in the Upper Adriatic area, an initiative promoting forms of ecological and sustainable tourism. The Atlas was published in 10,000 copies, for a total cost of about €30,000 was distributed to all the events organised by the Cross-border programme both in Italy and Slovenia.

Cross-border Road Atlas		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	✓
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	

**Figure 13: The Road Atlas of the territories of the Cross-border programme**



## 5. Conclusions and outlook

One of the main focuses of the debate over the EU Regional policy is around its efficacy. In Italy, at present, the absorption rate of EU Structural Funds is comparatively low compared to other European countries and this could be attributed to a **lack of awareness** of potential beneficiaries around the availability of the Regional funds, to the **lack of transparency** over the procedures to obtain the subsidies and the utilisation of the funds and the perception of Europe as a **complicated bureaucratic and distant entity**. An effective and coordinated communication strategy can surely help to address and mitigate these issues.

One of the interviewees highlighted the fundamental role of the communication to 'complete' the construction of Europe, meaning that, now that all the European institutions and the political procedures are in place, an effective communication should be able to favour the creation of a community of European citizen, **raising the public awareness** of the European initiatives and interventions and, consequently, their sense of belonging.

The lack of transparency on how public money is spent and the difficult languages used by the public administration are among the reasons indicated by the stakeholders interviewed to explain the low appreciation of the citizens in Italy in the European initiatives and the slow pace in implementing regional development policies and in understanding whether investment projects actually respond to local demand. As seen in this report, **open-data initiatives** like OpenCoesione and the disclosure of the details of the projects financed at OP level are becoming one of the focuses of the communication strategies both to inform the citizen and to have feedback on the work done. The shared hope is that DG REGIO continues in its efforts to promote transparency and to simplify both the language and the procedures so that the public can easily find the information to follow the development projects and stimulate the institutions to make a better use of development resources.

The **participation of EU representatives** in local events and initiatives is seen as paramount to contribute to the responsiveness of the public to the European programmes. Physical spaces dedicated to the discussion around current topics or in particular on issues

of interest to young people, such as Spazio Europa in Rome<sup>100</sup>, are initiatives that are definitely showing good results among the public and that should be replicated also at a regional level.

When questioned about their view on DGREGIO activities and tools, the interviewees shared a generally positive impression, even if they felt that the intervention of DG REGIO in terms of activities and tools was limited. According to the interviewees, DG REGIO is most present guiding the drafting and approval of the Communication Plan and its updates, providing instructions on the formats and the guidance for the EU logos and promoting networking meetings. All the MAs appreciate the degree of independence they are granted from the EU institutions when organising the communication activities. All OP representatives met demonstrated to be very attentive to following the indications of the EC in terms of format and guidance and in most cases, all the communication guidance and formats are available for the beneficiaries to download from the OP website.

The most beneficial and appreciated role of DG REGIO are surely the initiatives to promote multinational networking and sharing of good practices, for example the INFORM network meetings. Not all the communication officers met had taken part in it, but it was a shared opinion that events that favour the dialogue and exchange of best practices are the most useful initiatives promoted by DG REGIO. Some perplexity was raised about RegioStars Awards, an initiative that aims to identify good practices in regional development and to highlight original and innovative projects which could be attractive and inspiring to other regions, as the OPs that took part did not receive a feedback on how the projects were evaluated.

Ahead of the new programming period 2014-2020, the interviewees shared some observations that may be useful to improve the effectiveness of DG REGIO intervention. As discussed above, the absence of strict guidance on the communication strategies by DG REGIO is seen as a positive as it gives the Managing Authorities the freedom to organise the communication activities in a way that best suit the specific of the territory. However, some intervention from DG REGIO would be welcome to guarantee a consistency of the logos among the many different OPs and among different programming periods to maximise the brand awareness. Mostly for programmes that can coexist in the same territory, it would be important that the logos and name had a clear reference to the fact that they share the same European background, so that the EU common message can be more evident and the message to the citizen more effective. Another observation was raised regarding the simplification of names of the programmes; sometimes they are long and contain complicated acronyms, so that they become difficult to memorise from the public and difficult to reproduce effectively on the logos.

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<sup>100</sup> Spazio Europa is a public space managed by Italian Information Officer for the European Parliament and by the European Commission Representation in Italy, with the aim to promote awareness and debate on European issues.

## Annex

### List of institutions consulted

Category	Interviews conducted	Number of interviewees	Total number of interviewees
<b>1. EU level desk officers</b>	Desk officers at DG REGIO	1	2
	Desk officer at the EC Representation in Italy	1	
<b>2. Primary communicators</b>	General Manager at the Managing Authorities	4	17
	Head of the Communication Department of the OPs	4	
	Staff of the Communication Department of the OPs	9	
<b>3. Secondary communicators</b>	Advertisement Agencies and external consultants	8	8
<b>4. Informed independents / observers</b>	Journalists reporting on Regional Policy	1	2
	Evaluators	1	
<b>Total number of interviewees</b>			<b>29</b>

## 7 CASE STUDY REPORT: POLAND

### 1. Introduction

The case study in Poland was conducted in April and May 2013, and covered 4 Operational Programmes (OPs):

- OP Development of Eastern Poland (multi-regional; OP DEP)
- Reg. OP for Silesia (regional; ROP S)
- Reg. OP for Kuyavian-Pommeranian (regional ROP K-P)
- OP Innovative Economy (national OP IE)

During the period of 23.04.2013 and 21.05.2013 we conducted a total of 16 interviews with representatives of the EC in Poland, Managing Authorities, Intermediate Bodies, media, academia, social partners and evaluators.

All respondents were identified as responsible for information and promotion activities in the chosen OPs: managing authorities (MAs) intermediate bodies (IBs), project providers (beneficiaries) or experts on the information and communication (I&C) of the European funds.

The analysis is based on in-depth interviews, external data and questionnaires supplied by the MAs as well as good practice fiches.

### 2. Context for regional policy communication

#### 2.1. EU funding in 2007-2013

In 2007-2013 Poland is the largest beneficiary of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund (receiving 20% of the EU Cohesion Policy budget). The country has been allocated approximately €67.3 billion:

- €66.6 billion under the Convergence objective,
- €731 million under the European Territorial Cooperation objective<sup>101</sup>.

All regions in Poland are eligible under the “Convergence” objective.

#### 2.2. Main regional policy objectives and priorities

Development of regional policy in Poland was dominated by the prospect of EU membership. Consequently, its objectives were reflected in the National Development Plan 2004 – 2006, National Strategic Reference Framework 2007 – 2013 and National Development Strategy 2007 – 2015. However, the policy model over the last ten years has changed from *‘the passive implementation of rules and objectives of the EU Cohesion Policy (...) to the gradual identification of own development vision and elaboration of its*

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<sup>101</sup> Review of EU Cohesion Policy Communication Plans: 2007-2013, Technopolis Group, the final version, 2008, p. 99.

*implementation mechanisms considering modern development approach*<sup>102</sup>. The National Strategy for Regional Development, adopted in July 2010, brought a new way of thinking about development and regional policy in Poland. Currently, regional policy in Poland is based on a new paradigm of a development model<sup>103</sup> promoted by the OECD. It focuses on strengthening the territorial potential of all regions.

The objective of this strategy implies that *'in 2020 Polish regions will constitute a better place to live in, as a result of the enhanced standard and quality of living and through the creation of such a socioeconomic and institutional framework, that will increase the opportunities for the realisation of aspirations and possibilities of entities and local communities'*<sup>104</sup>.

When analysing the condition of the Polish regions and the challenges which regional policy faces, its **strategic objective** has been set as:

***efficient utilisation of specific regional and other territorial development potentials for the purpose of achieving the national development objectives – growth, employment and cohesion – in a long-term perspective***<sup>105</sup>.

The regional policy objectives for 2020 are based on this strategic goal and focus mainly on designated territories, namely the areas of strategic intervention of the State. The following objectives have been specified<sup>106</sup>:

- Support for the regions' growth of competitiveness (**competitiveness**),
- Building territorial cohesion and preventing the marginalization of problematic areas (**cohesion**),
- Creating the conditions for efficient, effective and partnership implementation of development activities targeted at regions (**efficiency**).

According to the adopted territorial approach, planned actions are the result of the development opportunities and the analysis of problems in each region. Regional policy supports the spread of development processes and the improvement of interregional cohesion through **building and developing functional connections between the areas with the largest development potential and the territories struggling with development barriers**<sup>107</sup>. That implies improving the relationship between cities and rural areas, which is reflected in the name of the strategic document: *The NSRD 2010–2020: regions – cities – rural areas*.

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<sup>102</sup> *Regional policy in Poland*, Ministry of Regional Development  
[https://www.mrr.gov.pl/konferencje/eic2011/eng/Documents/Regional\\_policy\\_in\\_Poland\\_FIN.pdf](https://www.mrr.gov.pl/konferencje/eic2011/eng/Documents/Regional_policy_in_Poland_FIN.pdf) p.7, 03.06.2013.

<sup>103</sup> *Regional policy in Poland*, Ministry of Regional Development  
[https://www.mrr.gov.pl/konferencje/eic2011/eng/Documents/Regional\\_policy\\_in\\_Poland\\_FIN.pdf](https://www.mrr.gov.pl/konferencje/eic2011/eng/Documents/Regional_policy_in_Poland_FIN.pdf) p.7, 03.06.2013.

<sup>104</sup> National Regional Development Strategy 2010 – 2020 – region, cities, rural areas, Ministry of Regional Development, Warsaw 2010, p. 65.

<sup>105</sup> National Regional Development Strategy 2010 – 2020, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>106</sup> National Regional Development Strategy 2010 – 2020, op. cit., p. 71.

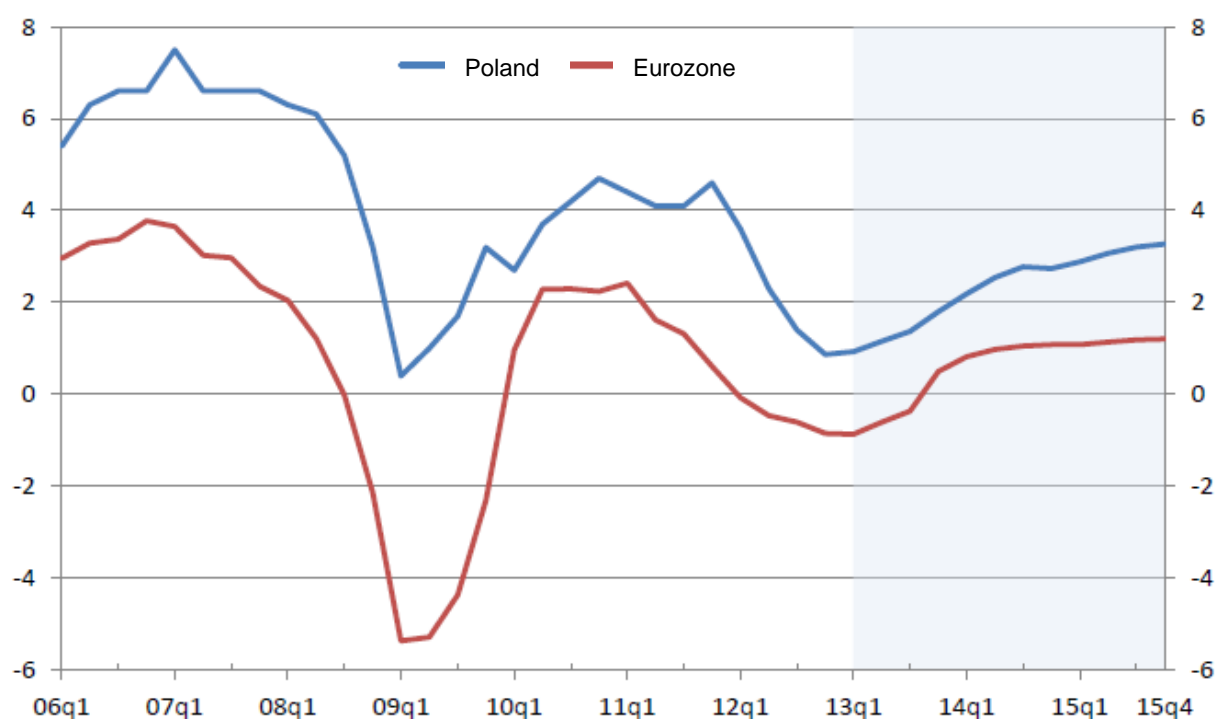
<sup>107</sup> National Regional Development Strategy 2010 – 2020, op. cit., p. 114.



### 2.3. Economic and political environment

Poland is regarded as a stable, democratic country with strong institutions<sup>108</sup>. In spite of its history of fractious national-level politics, the re-election of the PO party in 2011 has ensured the continuity and stability of regional policy. Poland's economy remained stable during the recent economic crisis and it has been the fastest growing member of the EU. Although economic growth is expected to slow to 1.3% in 2013 due to the continuing recession in the Eurozone, it is expected to accelerate in the coming years, expected to reach 3.1% in 2015<sup>109</sup>. Figure 1 shows projected GDP growth in Poland for 2013 – 2015, in comparison with that of the Eurozone.

Figure 1: GDP growth of Poland and Eurozone in 2006 – 2012 and projection for 2013 – 2015 (y/y, %)



Source: *Projection of inflation and economic growth of the National Bank of Poland on the basis of NECMOD model*, Economic Institute of The National Bank of Poland, Warsaw, 2013.

Poland is certainly not immune to the spill-over effects of the European debt crisis. The main factors behind the slowdown in 2013, apart from the unfavourable situation abroad, are<sup>110</sup>:

- reduced consumer spending due to an unfavourable situation in the labour market;
- fiscal tightening; and
- a decline in public investment co-financed by the EU structural funds.

In the longer term, it is projected that the situation will improve thanks to a moderate improvement of the situation in the Eurozone, which will stimulate consumption and private investment, an inflow of EU funds during the financial perspective 2014 – 2020 and a stable exchange rate.

<sup>108</sup> *Poland – country stats*, Economic and Political Intelligence Centre, February 2013.

<sup>109</sup> *Projection of inflation and economic growth of the National Bank of Poland on the basis of NECMOD model*, Economic Institute of The National Bank of Poland, Warsaw, 2013.

<sup>110</sup> *ibidem*.

## 2.4. Attitudes towards the EU, awareness of Regional Policy

Poland is among those Member States where awareness of EU regional support projects is highest. According to data from the 2010 Eurobarometer, 69% of Polish citizens have heard about EU co-financed projects aimed at improving the area they live in<sup>111</sup>. A comparison of the results from 2008 with those of 2010 suggests that, on average, there has been a decrease in awareness of EU regional support projects among EU citizens. Awareness in Poland, however, has risen by 4%. Poles are also the most optimistic about the impact of EU support: 90% of respondents *who had heard about EU co-financed projects in their area* said that this support had been positive for development in their area (the EU-27 average was 76%<sup>112</sup>) and 44% of them claim they have benefited personally (EU-27 average: 13%)<sup>113</sup>.

The research shows that the perception of regional policy is mostly determined by the financial gain a person can obtain from the EU funds. Regional policy is seen as **a source of funding** even if not easy to access. The application procedures to obtain funds are seen as too complicated, and the formal criteria too excessive. This acts in the interest of big companies as they have access to external services. According to some interviewees, interest in regional policy is lowest amongst the general public. It is widely agreed that people are generally uninterested in regional policy, particularly its organisational aspects, unless there is clear and attractive communication behind it, stressing the benefits to their daily lives. Therefore, **communication other than a general reference to the EU and its funds is said to be a futile attempt** of telling people things which do not make a difference to their lives. Such attempts have been made, and according to some of the primary communicators, awareness of the existence of several operational programmes and understanding of their topics, have recently increased due to communication activities focusing on the issues (national campaign “**Not everyone sees it, but everyone benefits**”). The same trend has been observed in all regions, e.g. according to respondents, the quality of works submitted for school contests on the results of the regional policy projects, reflect growing awareness and understanding of the programme goals.

Among the factors influencing the perception of regional policy, development differences between regions have also been mentioned. The positive impact of the funds is more visible in less developed regions e.g. Eastern Poland.

## 3. Key actors and approaches

### 3.1. Coordination and cooperation at national and regional level - roles and responsibilities for implementing communication requirements

There are 21 operational programmes in Poland, including 16 regional programmes (one for each region). There are several layers of coordination within Poland. The Coordinating Authority (CA) of the National Strategic Reference Framework/ National Cohesion Strategy (NSRF/NCS) in the field of information and promotion, based in the Ministry of Regional

<sup>111</sup> *Citizens' awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy, analytical report*, Flash Eurobarometer – The Gallup Organization, 2010, p. 43.

<sup>112</sup> *Citizens' awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy...*, p. 49.

<sup>113</sup> *Citizens' awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy...*, p. 53.

Development, determines the basic strategy – the European Funds Communication Strategy. The respective Ministries handle five national programmes (in case of the OP IE and the OP DEP, the programmes are handled by specific departments of the Ministry of Regional Development). Each regional OP has its own Communication Plan (CP), prepared in cooperation with relevant IBs and implementing authorities, and is responsible for implementing the CP.

A good example of the coordination structure is the **OP IE's** system. With regard to information, promotion and training it operates on two levels:

- The NSRF level focuses on the cooperation of communication activities with regard to European Funds and the cohesion policy. The Information & Promotion Steering Group was appointed to *ensure current updating and mutual consultation of needs for Information & Promotion activities directed at particular target groups*<sup>114</sup>, mostly the general public. The Group is composed of representatives of institutions managing the national and regional operational programmes.
- The MA OP IE level: the Information Working Group is responsible for conducting and coordinating Information & Promotion activities within the OP IE. It consists of MAs, IBs, implementing authorities (IA) and beneficiaries.

**MAs** act as coordinators of activities with regard to information, promotion and training, and delegate certain duties to the IBs. Apart from this, they carry out Information & Promotion activities addressed primarily at a wider public<sup>115</sup>. **IBs** concentrate on communicating directly with (potential) beneficiaries of the Programme. In fact, the interviews have shown that the division of activities by target group is not perfectly respected and is rather fixed on the basis of the communication tools' reach. This causes some problems, as IBs targeting potential beneficiaries are also interested in tools targeting a wider audience. IBs' responsibilities also include providing support to the MAs when communicating with economic and social partners, policy makers and regional opinion leaders. Both MAs and IBs use various media to promote the scope of their activities.

The OP DEP, as a **multi-regional programme**, requires an additional level of coordination: as part of the Information & Promotion Steering Group the Eastern Poland Group has been appointed with the duty to gather I&P officers from the MAs, as well as representatives from voivodeship offices, and from other OPs engaged in the projects conducted in Eastern Poland.

**On the regional level**, the coordination and cooperation schemes differ, hence it is difficult to outline a common framework. The differences lie in the number of institutions included in the scheme and, consequently, the number of people who are directly and fully responsible for developing and implementing the communication activities regarding the Programme e.g. in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship there is no IB, while in the Silesian there is only an IA.

<sup>114</sup> Communication Plan OP IG 2007 – 2013, s. 18.

<sup>115</sup> Communication Plan OP IE 2007 – 2013, s. 24; Communication Plan OP DEP 2007 – 2013, p. 23.

Acting as the MA for the I&C of ROP K-P is the Promotion Department of the regional Marshal Office<sup>116</sup>, which deals with coordination of all the information and promotion activities and dissemination of information on the Programme and its results to the general public. The Promotion Department is supported by other departments of the Marshal Office responsible for managing the EU Funds and projects – the Marshal's Cabinet, spokesperson and beneficiaries. The OP Implementation Department concentrates on information and promotion activities addressed to beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries<sup>117</sup>. Similarly, the regional IBs' main responsibility is to interact, based on the regional CP, within its specific area, mainly with its beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries.

The Coordinating Authority for NSRF, in the field of information and promotion, is obliged to carry out the evaluation of the communication strategy for 2010 and 2013, while the OP MAs are responsible for the evaluation of the programme communication action plan<sup>118</sup>.

**Beneficiaries**<sup>119</sup> form a group that is believed to significantly influence the perception of EU and regional policy among the general public. Apart from obligatory forms of communication (information boards and plaques), they are said to have engaged in various promotional activities, working both for their own and project funders' advantage<sup>120</sup>. However, the level of engagement depends on the type of beneficiary, e.g. entrepreneurs are quite reluctant to communicate on EU financial support.

### 3.2. Communication budgets, approaches and strategies adopted

The basic strategy that underpins all national and regional communication strategies (National Cohesion Strategy, national and regional OPs) is developed by the Ministry of Regional Development. Since the beginning of 2012, a modified version of The European Funds Communication Strategy is in force. The modification resulted from the need to adjust to the current status of the OPs' implementation, recommendations from the evaluation research and a need to implement more up-to-date communication tools<sup>121</sup>.

Communication activities are mainly financed from<sup>122</sup>:

- The Operational Programme 'Technical Assistance 2007-2013' – in the case of tasks carried out by the Coordinating Authority for NSRF and all MAs.
- Components of technical assistance in the national and regional programmes – in the case of activities carried out by MAs and other institutions engaged in the implementation of a programme.

The table below presents the communication budgets of each OP selected for the case study in Poland.

<sup>116</sup> The province's voivode (governor) is assisted in performing his duties by the marshal, the appointed speaker for the executive.

<sup>117</sup> Communication Plan ROP K-P 2007 – 2013

<sup>118</sup> *Review of EU Cohesion Policy Communication Plans...*, p. 99.

<sup>119</sup> Project providers

<sup>120</sup> Among them are: participation in contests, engagement in media relations, TV and radio programmes, project websites.

<sup>121</sup> <http://www.bps.uw.edu.pl/zmodyfikowano-strategie-komunikacji-funduszy-europejskich-w-polsce-w-ramach-narodowej-strategii-spojnosci-na-lata-2007-2013.html>, 05.06.2013.

<sup>122</sup> European Funds Communication Strategy in Poland 2007-2013, p. 49.

**Table 7 Communication budgets vs technical assistance budget and total programme budget of the case study in Poland**

Operational Programme	Indicative communication budget (in EUR)	Technical assistance budget (in EUR)	Total Programme budget (in EUR)	% of total budget for communication
OP Innovative Economy	36.5 million	329.6 million	9,712 million	0.37%
OP Development of Eastern Poland	11.1 million	80.3 million	2,675 million	0.41%
ROP for Slaskie	4 million	43 million	2,017 million	0.19%
ROP for Kujawsko-Pomorskie	4.2 million	33.6 million	1,119 million	0.37%

Sources: *For indicative communication budgets: OP communication plans 2007-2013*

*For TA and OP budgets: InfoREGIO website*

Interviews conducted for this study suggest that **the budget has never been reported as a constraint** for the information and promotion activities. However, it is said to be **insufficient for evaluation and research**, especially on the regional level<sup>123</sup>.

When it comes to the Information & Promotion policy with regard to European Funds and the cohesion policy, the strategy assumes **communication to the general public will be mostly via the national media**. Regarding the visibility of the EU Regional Policy in communications, the messages always refer to the EU and the OP, **but have never conveyed information about the European Commission as a source of funding**. All the analysed examples of communication tools and conducted interviews confirm that **the strategy is rather to minimize the communication ‘overload’**. This was also recommended by stakeholders (e.g. media, marketing specialist) as a good strategy. However, it depends on the tool. In the case of those allowing for more sophisticated messages, the reference to the institutions responsible for regional policy is visible (e.g. extensive brochures).

The communication strategy of the CPs examined seems to incorporate not only the promotion of European citizenship and identifies the EU, but also regional identification. In the case of the OP DEP, it was based on a counter-stereotypical rhetoric, emphasizing the potential for modernity in the region. Hence, all the communication tools adopted strove to create an image of modernity, e.g. social media, product/idea placement in a TV series. The ROP K-P created its communication strategy around the purpose of reintegrating its society within a specific voivodeship and strengthening the sense of regional identity. This is reflected in most of the promotional activities, which have strong educational and patriotic dimensions. **The idea was to engage the general public emotionally in order to attract them with the development perspectives**, resulting from the adoption of the Programme, in the area they live in.

According to the questionnaires, the communication strategy in terms of tools and activities used in order to reach three target audiences (beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries, the

<sup>123</sup> Consequently, the perception of the results of analysed campaigns is based on subjective appraisal of I&P officers and information they had received from contractors.

general public; and, in the case of the national OP, stakeholders), was comprehensive and showed a **deliberate choice of tools to reach specific target groups** e.g. public relations, direct advertising and interactive marketing. The quality of tools has improved significantly in recent years. Some of them also seem to be very innovative. Tools and activities targeted at the general public, and at the youth specifically, reflect an **educational objective** in their message. For mass communication standard channels (press, radio, TV) online and cinema were also planned to be used, which shows again the search for **innovative solutions**.

The **usage of multipliers differs** significantly: from regional programmes which treat good local media relations as a base for effective communication of the regional policy to the authorities of national programmes who find it difficult to gain national media interest in the topic and, consequently, focus on beneficiaries. As respondents stressed, beneficiaries have increasingly understood the importance of multipliers as they became more aware of the positive impact of engagement in promotional activities for their business's stake. In general, it is easier for MAs of regional programmes than national ones to use a wider spectrum of multipliers, as they have reported the engagement of local journalists, public authorities, academics and the research community.

### 3.3. Objectives of communication activities, target audiences and main messages

The strategic goal of information and promotion activities is supporting the National Cohesion Strategy goals' realisation by encouraging potential beneficiaries and project participants to make use of EU Funds. The strategy has a strong educational dimension. It emphasizes dissemination of all necessary information regarding **granting possibilities and information on the effects of EU Funds in Poland**, as well as **education in projects' realisation practices**. It is interesting that in case of the Silesian ROP, *improvement of an internal information system* is one of the communication objectives. The general objectives are common among the programmes analysed, the following box presents the highest priority objectives:

#### ROP K-P:

*(...) to promote European Funds as contributing to the development of the region and future of its inhabitants.*

#### OP IE:

*(...) increasing social awareness and knowledge of the OP IE and NCS, as well as relevant preparation (both substantial and formal) of the beneficiaries to take advantage of the financial support provided by OP IE*

The messages communicated in the programmes analysed focus on the **positive influence of the European Union and its funds on the social and economic growth of the region/country and enhanced quality of life of its citizens**. However, in the case of the OP IE its main slogan ("*European Funds – for the innovative economy's development*") does not correspond with the stated objective, which puts the name of the programme in the first place.

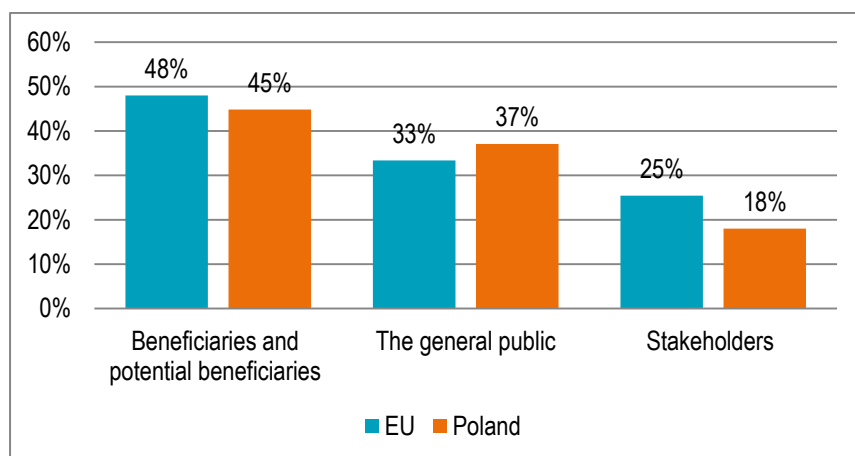


The communication has been mostly directed to groups, which the *European Funds Communication Strategy in Poland 2007-2013*<sup>124</sup> refers to as **principal groups**:

- **the general public** (with two special subgroups differentiated: youths and final beneficiaries);
- **beneficiaries**; and
- **potential beneficiaries of European Funds**.

According to the questionnaires, the share of priority in communication being afforded to each of the group is similar to the average of all respondents, although **the stakeholders**<sup>125</sup> **in Poland are given even less attention**, mostly due to the priorities in national and multi-regional programmes (see Figure 2 and Table 1).

**Figure 2: The importance of target groups in communication about the OP and regional policy in Poland and the EU in general (an average of statements, in %)**



Source: questionnaires, Q5. *How important are the different target groups in your communication efforts? Please try to estimate (in percentage terms) the priority afforded to the groups listed below in your communication.*

<sup>124</sup> European Funds Communication Strategy in Poland 2007-2013, p. 20.

<sup>125</sup> Stakeholders in Poland, according to the European Funds Communication Strategy, include:

- Media
- Social and economic partners
- Institutions involved in the implementation of European Funds
- Policy makers and leaders
- Potential participants of the projects implemented by the beneficiaries
- Participants of the projects implemented by the beneficiaries

**Table 8: The importance of target groups in communication about the OP and regional policy in relation to the programme's geographical scope (an average, %)**

Geographical scope of a programme	Beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries	The general public	Stakeholders
Multi-regional	40	50	10
National	55	35	10
Regional	43	36	21

Source: questionnaires, Q5. *How important are the different target groups in your communication efforts? Please try to estimate (in percentage terms) the priority afforded to the groups listed below in your communication.*

Based on the answers of the Polish respondents it can be said that national OPs in their communication activities focus on beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries, multi-regional programmes on the general public, while the regional OPs' communication outreach is the widest: reaching beneficiaries, the general public and stakeholders. However, the CPs' guidelines are not clear with regard to the targeting strategy, which should be more specific about the principal target groups and relevant tools. Furthermore, the interviewees said that the relatively high focus on informing the general public has left potential beneficiaries with irrelevant knowledge, since the communication overload makes understanding the funding procedure very difficult. Even *googling* how to apply for the funds does not make it easier for the average person who applies for this opportunity for the first time.

### 3.4. Key challenges to communicating Regional Policy

According to the questionnaire responses received from 11 Polish OPs, the top three challenges encountered in informing the general public about regional policy effectively are:

1. **low level of awareness of regional policy**, which has been reported by most of the respondents,
2. **lack of interest from the media**,
3. **complexity of regional policy instruments and interventions.**

The analysis of presented good practices and interviews allows us to conclude that the challenges being addressed in the 2004 – 2006 and 2007 - 2013 periods have been only partly resolved. Unification of the visual identification at the national level did not solve the problem of communication overload. Still, it has been observed that there are some examples of using abstract language, especially in communication with potential beneficiaries. Problems with media relations persisted and the cooperation at all levels needs to be enhanced through constant work on internal communication. The most alarming problems noticed are as follows:

- Complexity of regional policy instruments and interventions resulting in lack of interest and understating among the general public.

According to the MAs, the communication messages touch on the issues that are not only understandable for the wider audience, but also not of great interest to them. There was even a suggestion for reducing the communication to potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries and its multipliers, engaging them fully in the promotion of the funds. Successful attempts by the OP DEP's MAs to increase the general public's interest in the Programme show that it is necessary to abandon the jargon, indirectly sending messages on the benefits and impact of the funds in a more approachable, user-friendly way.

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*Teaching the society the complexity of EU structures and even the name "Regional operational programme" has proved to be pointless*

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- Messages which are not matched to the communication channels and tools.

The results of the 2012 media campaign on the brand of European Funds research shows that its impact on the perception change and understanding of the Funds has been limited<sup>126</sup>. One of the reasons might be inappropriate matching of the communication channels and messages: in the case of the internet, which was chosen as the channel for more complex and comprehensive communication, at the same time being less successful in terms of its outreach to the general public. This results from the relatively low penetration rate of the internet in Poland and insufficient measures taken to redirect communications to the dedicated website.

- Ineffective targeting.

The research shows that the special interest target audience (people aged 20-59 and citizens of Eastern Poland) did not have any specific characteristics with regard to the level of familiarity with the concept of European Funds. Therefore, it would be more reasonable to target people aged 65+, people with primary or vocational education, pensioners and, partly, citizens living in rural areas<sup>127</sup>. Matching content, messages and tools to specific target groups is not always done successfully e.g. an audio-visual campaign featuring a hip-hop musician to target people aged 18-30. Overall, a marketing specialist considered that many communications lack a definite addressee.

- Media's low interest in dissemination of information on the results.

On the basis of the questionnaires, it can be inferred that the media are treated as multipliers of the communication, hence media relations are handled by executing activities like sending newsletters, organising conferences and other events. At the same time, they often seem to have low interest, especially for disseminating information about successful projects *pro public bono*. Nowadays, the low quality of information produced does not seem to be a big problem, as journalists are familiar with the topic e.g. thanks to organised workshops. Definitely, the problem lies with the insufficient human resources in MAs who could perform effective communications. At the same time, the improvement of existing resources in terms of media relations and PR is also necessary, especially in the context of mis-understanding of the concept of PR.

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<sup>126</sup> *Research on the recognition level of the medial campaign "European Funds"*, TNS Poland, Warsaw 2013, p. 121.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid

- Overregulation of the communication policy.

Respondents claimed that overregulation of the communication policy constitutes a barrier for its effective implementation. It concerns especially beneficiaries and their contribution in the promotion of the EU funds. Unclear regulations have already become a burden for the auditors, as well as the MAs and IBs alone. This hinders implementation of innovative approaches due to doubts about whether they are compliant with the regulations.

- Coordination and internal communication problems on all levels of the I&P hierarchy.

Primary communicators often admitted that they did not understand the goal of the communication. This difficult situation could be attributed either to ineffective communication either on the part of the EC or MAs. Poland, having a very complex EU funds coordination and implementation system, is exposed to a risk of communication problems. In fact, the division of tasks between each of the levels was far from being distinct, leading to frequent overlap of the responsibilities and activities, e.g. in the case of OP IE the division was not target groups but tools-based.

- Public Procurement Law obstructs conducting effective and high quality I&C activities

The Public Procurement Law legacy makes it very difficult to choose a professional contractor to run training and promotion activities/ prepare materials of high quality, e.g. because of the 100% price criteria for evaluation tenders. It often results in low-quality materials and limited innovativeness.

### 3.4. Branding

In Poland branding of the EU funds is unified at the national level. All OPs use the same brand meaning the same signage, accompanied with different OPs' names and the EU flag. The graphic sign is well designed. It contains references to the UE (stars, blue colour), and Poland (white and red). It's dynamic and modern. As it is stated in the Visual Identification Guide, the sign represents EU funds being transferred from the West to the East.

Different captions accompany the graphic sign. It is usually the name of the programme or National Cohesion Strategy and the financing period. Apart from the logotype, all texts and items need to be branded with the information on the source of financing and the OP's name (i.e. *The project is co-financed with the European Regional Development Fund within the Operational Programme Innovative Economy for 2007-2013*).

OPs' logotypes usually need to be complemented with not only the EU flag, but also the project providers' and/or MAs' logotypes. Finally the general public sees a banner consisting of (at least) three signs and lots of phrases. A simple example could be found below.

Picture 1 Graphic sign for all of the Polish OPs



As the respondents claimed, the OPs' and funds' names are too long and complicated for the public to remember. This information is important for the project providers and MAs/IBs, not the wider public. Furthermore, most of the media campaigns use a slogan related to the "European Funds". But this brand is not included in the signage system in operation.

Picture 2 Exemplary banner used in one of the programmes at the regional level.



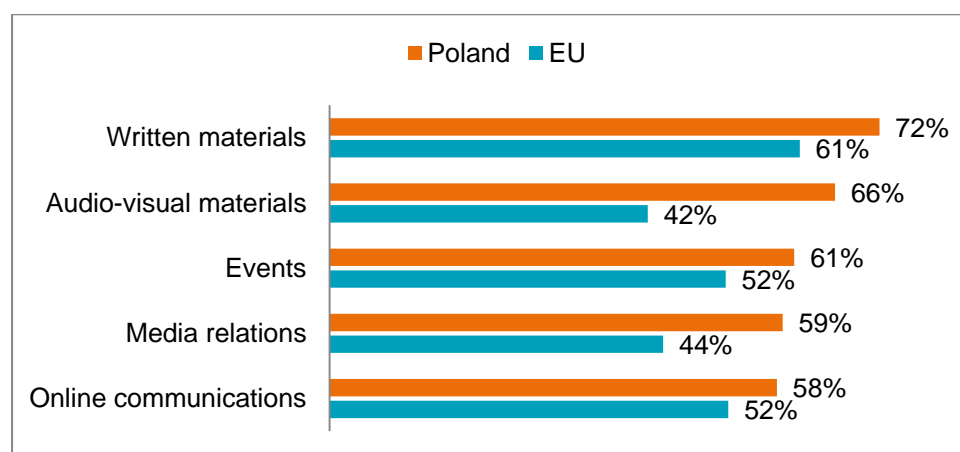
It is advisable to promote a simplified brand including the logotype and the "European Funds" caption for the information issued to the wider public. It must be noted that unifying the visual identification of the EU funds at the national level is a good practice, however it is advisable to simplify the written part of the branding system.

## 4. Activities and good practice examples

### 4.1. Tools and mechanisms used

In terms of tools and activities that have been used in the last three years to communicate the OP and regional policy in Poland **websites, conferences/seminars as well as written materials proved to be most popular** (see Figure 4), which is not different from the EU practices. As can be observed from Figure 4, Polish MAs are most keen on using written and audio-visual materials. The first, are mostly popular in communication directed to beneficiaries, as respondents declare a moderate communication effectiveness of this type of tool in the case of the general public group (see Figure 5).

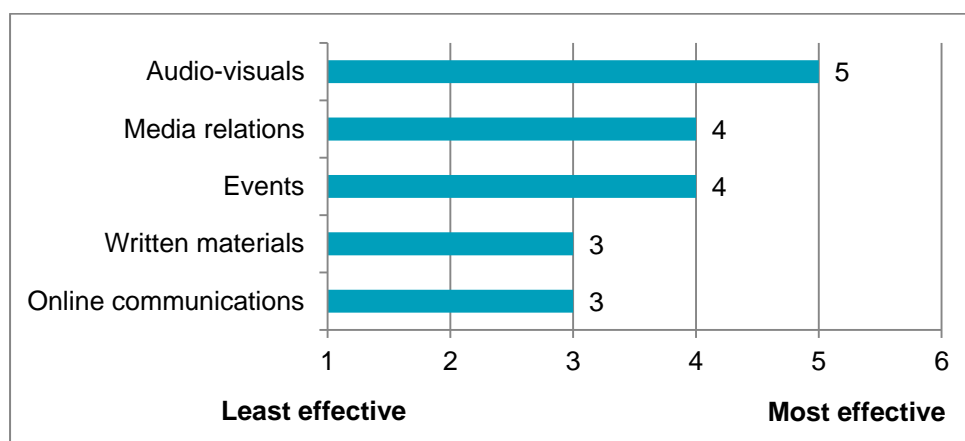
Figure 3: Popularity of tools and activities used in the communication about the OP and regional policy in Poland and in EU in general (average, % of the respondents, N = 106, n = 11)



Source: questionnaires, Q4. *In the last three years, which tools and activities have you used to communicate with the following target audiences about the OP and regional policy?*

In the opinion of Polish respondents, **the most effective type of tools and activities used to raise the awareness of regional policy among the general public are audio-visual materials** (see Figure 5). This is reflected in the popularity of videos, TV programmes, radio and outdoor advertising in communications targeted at the general public. It is worth noting that the Polish MA officers noted **the limited effectiveness of online communication**, which is comparable to written materials.

**Figure 4: Effectiveness of different type of tools and activities in communicating about the OP and regional policy to the general public in Poland (ranking: 6 – most effective, 1 – least effective)**



Source: MA questionnaires

Both when interviewees were asked to rank tools as well as when providing more expansive comment **audio-visual materials emerged as the most attractive tool**. The advantage of audio-visual materials over other tools lies in their capability to assure wide outreach. The tool also provides a ready-to-use and, most often, high quality material which can be broadcast via more than one channel. The example of a campaign against gender discrimination in the labour market, funded by the Human Capital OP, proves that a combination of two channels: TV and cinema for broadcast of the same audio-visual material ensures **high reach** and, in this case, high media interest and response. This tool seems to be best for the communication of simple and short messages targeted at the general public. On the other hand, it is widely known that the cost of the production of materials and media purchase (especially TV) is very high in Poland – the mentioned campaign costs approximately € 463.916.

Idea placement:

*It simplifies the message, but is a very effective way of communicating*

Less costly for using the audio-visual materials for regional policy communication is **product or idea placement**. This very innovative approach requires adoption of a channel (e.g. TV series, programme) for which the targeted audience is consistent with the target audience of the message conveyed.



**Online communication** is preferred because of the possibilities for interaction with the audience (social media) and response/ opinions analysis (social media, online forums), as well as a good source of comprehensive information on regional policy for the potential beneficiaries. On the other hand, the reach is limited as a significant part of society (the elderly and rural areas) is still excluded from the communication. Hence, it is not the best tool for targeting the general public, but is regarded as a good tool for communication to a specific group, e.g. for beneficiaries through the newsletter, taking into account the possibility of using SEO or targeted advertising. The practice shows that it is important to incorporate a dedicated website into a bigger campaign and treating it as a destination for a target group with a mechanism for redirection to the website.

Another online tool, used by the organisers of the communication activities on regional policy, is **social media** e.g. Facebook's fan-pages. Some of the Polish examples show that it is not only used for a more interactive communication with the target group, but also as a way of building a community around the campaign/ product or even development of a brand ('I love Eastern Poland' campaign conducted by the MA of the OP DEP). Fan pages are often used as supporting tools for bigger campaigns. On the other hand, I&P officers at ROP WK-P MA are planning to withdraw from communication on FB, as the channel seems to be already outdated. FB has been overused for the promotion activities and the popularity of "liking" fan pages is decreasing. Apart from that, the engagement of fans with such a topic is difficult to achieve.

Picture 3 I love Eastern Poland FB campaign



Organisation of **events**, although it does not guarantee as wide a reach as the media, has the advantage of providing a more intensive and emotionally engaging communication to a specific target group. The type of message conveyed depends on the character of the event. The analysis of good practices in Poland shows that events may focus on providing entertainment to a target group (e.g. classical music concerts which have taken place in locations connected with projects), communicating messages in the background e.g. the positive impact of the European funds, or it can be aimed exclusively at presenting specific information (e.g. the presence of an opinion leader triggering interest among media who pass on the information). In general, events constitute a communication tool of high potential, eagerly used by the authorities in Poland. Supported by promotional tools of high outreach (media, outdoor), it provides the possibility to educate and communicate more interactively, especially when adapted towards a specific target group. The presented examples prove that it should not be regarded only as a PR tool, supplementing other communication channels but requires an appropriate strategy which does not curtail the event's message (*"People often remember only the surroundings, not the message"*).

A tool which seems to fulfil these guidelines is a **contest** – widely used for the promotion of regional policy in Poland. There have been a number of contests, engaging target groups for gathering knowledge on and promotion of the results of interventions co-funded by the

European funds. The practice shows that it is not necessary to incur big costs (e.g. of awards) to attract the attention of the target audience. The MA of the OP IE has organised a contest on a national-scale on the best promotional activities for the projects supported by the Programme. The contest was designed not only for *raising awareness of the significance of the promotion in the realisation of projects and achieving success*, but also for the promotion of beneficiaries and the Programme itself. Hence, the motivational mechanism was based on beneficiaries' ambition and intention to promote their business.

**Media relations** are rarely used to promote regional policy in Poland. According to the primary and secondary communicators, the reason for the limited number of activities targeted at the media is low interest in the topic among journalists. Focusing on the negative information and intensification of publicity during funds' allocation is characteristic for the media in Poland. Although there were attempts to use the media for dissemination of information of positive results of regional policy implementation (trips for journalists, workshops), the outcome is said to be unsatisfactory.

From the media's side, access to information on regional policy in Poland is easy, both on regional and national levels. More problematic is access to the sources of information at the EC level. The difference in engaging communication activities between MAs in Poland and the EC is significant, especially when taking into account all the sources of information available in the Ministry of Regional Development (e.g. everyday newsletters, weekly bulletins).

**Outdoor advertising** is not being commonly used. The research commissioned by the ROP K-P I&P Department has proved very low effectiveness of this tool.

## 4.2. Examples of good practice

### Product placement

The OP DEP MA has proved that it is possible to communicate about the European funds and regional policy in an accessible, easy to understand way, reaching a wide audience at the same time. They chose one of the most popular **soap operas** broadcast on a national TV station and introduced 'product/idea placement' concerning the OP. The episode was watched by 2.255 million people. According to interviewees, product placement, if constructed and implemented in an intelligent way (avoiding giving the impression of promotion, using easy, natural language) constitutes a great opportunity for regional policy communication. Placing the messages in a TV series can be a successful way to present and convince people about the benefits coming from the EU funds which are presented by the main actors. For example in the TV series 'Plebania' (*Presbytery*) two local leaders are discussing financing broadband internet in Eastern Poland from the EU funds. The conversation lasts for 90 seconds and shows one doubtful interlocutor and one who is well informed. The conversation is as follows:

- *So they [the EU] give us money and we build it?*
- *It cannot be done in a different way. We don't have money for that. Digitalisation is essential for companies to grow. Without this our economy won't catch up with the other regions, to say nothing of the EU.*

Another 60 seconds are filled with **more detailed information** – who would benefit, how and why. The **message is not too insistent**, it is smoothly introduced and closed and, more importantly, **the situation of the conversation fits to the scenario**. There is **no information overload** and **the language is simple yet it remained precise**. And the media – the soap opera targeted older people from small cities and villages, and is often negative about the EU – seems to reach effectively the most sceptical audiences. The rules of effective product placement have been obeyed, as have almost all of the good practice criteria of our study. EU visibility was not possible to fulfil since introducing even a logo would hinder the effect of neutrality.

Idea placement in popular TV series, OP DEP		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	✓
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	✓

Picture 4 Snapshots from the 'Plebania' soap opera which discussed financing broadband internet with EU funds



Source: <http://vod.tvp.pl/serie/obyczajowe/plebania/odcinki-1101-1200/odc-1191/212730>

However product placement is popular in marketing campaigns, idea placement is a novelty, which rises in popularity in Poland<sup>128</sup>. The Polish example shows that product placement can also be executed via **quiz shows**, where participants are asked questions inter alia on the European funds. However, questions need to be asked infrequently in order to avoid a feeling of persistence and information overload.

### TV advertising spots – 2012 media campaign to raise awareness of the European funds

The advantage of the national reach of TV was used in the media campaign *Everyone benefits, not everyone sees it*, aimed at increasing the awareness of personal benefits coming from Polish EU membership. The main goal of the campaign, conducted in 2012 by the CA with cooperation of MAs, was to show the benefits which Polish citizens gain from the European funds' implementation, with regard to innovation, science, transport, universities' development in Eastern Poland, culture, etc.<sup>129</sup>. It was communicated through 3 channels: TV, radio and the internet (target audience: 20 – 59 years old, special interest group: citizens of Eastern Poland).

Audio-visual campaign <i>Everyone benefits, not everyone sees it</i>		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	✓
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓

**TV ads proved to be most popular - more than every third respondent had seen 1 of the 5 advertisements** (the highest rate was recorded by the advertisement on the OP DEP – 43% had seen it), **while only 18% admitted to recognising the radio advertisements and 8% the internet campaign.**

The campaign was very well perceived among external experts. They claim it was based on a very interesting and creative idea, the message was simple and the slogan catchy. Each advertisement in this campaign had the same framework: a person talking about the EU funds and where they think they were applied, not seeing they are using the results while talking. The following text illustrates this creative idea on the example of innovation:

#### Innovation advertisement:

- A woman visiting an eye specialist says: *EU funds? Oh, you see those roads, bridges but you **cannot see** personal benefits* – and she **covers her eye for the eyesight test**. In the



Source:

<http://www.kazdykorzysta.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/okampanii/Strony/start.aspx>

<sup>128</sup> There are some other examples from Poland of idea placement in soap operas although only this one is related to ERDF/CF funds.

<sup>129</sup> The second edition of the campaign featured spots presented here:

<http://www.kazdykorzysta.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/okampanii/Strony/start.aspx>

summary you can see that the consulting room where she was examined was equipped with OP IE co-funded instruments.

- Two aviation technicians are discussing EU funds supporting Polish inventions. They are working in a very noisy aircraft hangar so they are wearing **noise-reduction ear protection**. One of them says: *Polish inventions: you **don't hear about it***. In the summary you can see that the plane they are working on has been co-funded by the ERDF through the OP IE.
- In the cinema a young man watching a 3-D film says: *Polish innovation? Lasers and stuff. **But are there any special effects?*** And you can see in the final credits on the screen that the special effects in this film were co-funded by the EU through the OP IE.

A similar idea was used for advertisements on transportation, medicine and science, training for qualifications, Eastern Poland's higher education institutions, culture and the preservation of monuments.

Worth mentioning is the fact that the recognition of the campaign was higher among those who know the concept of European funds. For those who do not know the meaning of the concept, the messages conveyed in the TV ads could have been too laconic to make them aware of the benefits and, more importantly, the meaning behind the European funds concept. Taking into account the fact that the internet was chosen as a channel for more complex and comprehensive communication, the very low familiarity rate of the campaign run through this channel means that the reach of more complex messages was not sufficient. The ex-ante and ex-post evaluation results show that the percentage of people who know the meaning of the European funds concept has risen – from 48% to 59% (in the targeted audience of 20-50: from 54% to 63%), so the general goal of the campaign has been reached (assuming credibility of the statements of respondents). At the same time it **is hard to evaluate every channel's contribution to the campaign's efficacy** (the evaluation conducted used declarative statements; we should be wary of drawing conclusions from declarative statements used in the evaluation conducted, as well as based on correlation, not causation).

### Co-production and broadcasting of TV programmes

The cooperation of the OP IE MA with two national and one commercial TV stations has resulted in the production and broadcasting of TV programmes presenting selected projects implemented with the support from the OP IE. The TV stations chosen are profiled for different audiences (TVN Turbo –for men interested in new technologies and adventure, TVP 1 – family station, TVP INFO – information programmes), hence the final target audience of the communication was wide. The success factor of the programmes was **its matching of messages, its content and language to the TV stations' audience profiles** while targeting potential beneficiaries and the general audience at the same time. A good example of this was a programme

TV programmes about OP IE		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	✓
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	✓

already popular among the TVN Turbo station audience<sup>130</sup> targeting men “*seeking adventure in their life and eager to discover places worth seeing in Poland*”<sup>131</sup>. The programme was co-produced by the OP IE MA and TV station in order to present projects co-funded by the programme<sup>132</sup>. The results of the projects are visualised and the beneficiaries personalised, as they talk about their passion. Therefore, the content **is interesting for the specific target group**. Moreover, it contains **messages of the RP making a positive difference to people's lives** conveyed in a **simple and engaging language** forming **convincing storytelling**. Some of the episodes were broadcasted in **the primetime** (8.30 pm), others in late afternoon (5.30 pm), which is a great time to reach the specific target group and ensure wide outreach.

Another project was the introduction of a short (6-8 minutes) but regular series of auditions in a morning talk show “Poranek z TVP INFO” (*Morning with TVP INFO*). The programmes were mostly informative and dedicated to details of the OP IE funding procedure and existing projects’ effects. Representatives of the IAs have been invited to the studio to talk about the projects and answer questions from the audience. Programmes were short, but presented regularly. Though the programme has been televised in the early morning, **the regularity of its broadcasting** is an important factor contributing to its success.

What makes this a good practice is again its **content and language, relevant for the target audience**. Key learning points show that when presenting the effects of regional policy it is crucial to match the profile of the audience with that of the beneficiaries. The choice of diverse TV stations allowed the presentation of different projects and targeted various target groups, who could take advantage of the programme’s funding.

The total cost of the projects was estimated at 85,170 euros.

### Contest "Power of promotion - power of a project"

To popularize good practice in the promotional activities among the (potential) beneficiaries and at the same time to promote beneficiaries’ projects, the MA of the OP IE organised an **all-Poland** contest on the programme. As mentioned above, contests are popular in Poland in communications about regional policy, as they incorporate a strong educational dimension. However, this project stands out due to its **practicality and outreach** among the target group. Raising awareness of the significance of project results has been observed to be particularly important in the context of poor quality promotional activities executed by the beneficiaries.

Contest "Power of promotion - power of a project", OP IE		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	

<sup>130</sup> Films available on :

[http://www.poig.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/pojechany\\_likend\\_711.aspx](http://www.poig.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/pojechany_likend_711.aspx),  
[http://www.poig.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/Polak\\_potrafi\\_711.aspx](http://www.poig.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/Strony/Polak_potrafi_711.aspx), 05.06.2013.

<sup>131</sup> OP IE fiche

<sup>132</sup> Programmes available in Polish:

[http://www.poig.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/strony/programytelewizyjne\\_022012.aspx](http://www.poig.gov.pl/dzialaniapromocyjne/strony/programytelewizyjne_022012.aspx)



The promotional mechanism of the event assumed engagement of the media through closer relations with journalists and inviting their representatives to join the contest's jury. According to the respondents, it has triggered **high media coverage** conveying information about the contest, what resulted in ca. 60 applications sent. One of the members of the jury was also a PR expert, who has been assessing applicants' information and promotional activities in terms of:

- effectiveness
- efficacy
- durability
- correctness
- language of messages
- novelty effect
- design
- OP IE visibility
- outreach

what ensured the quality of the assessment and **relevance of the good practice booklet's content**.

The winners were announced during a conference "Project marketing", accompanied by wide media interest. The Programme and EU logos were present on banners placed in the conference hall, in line with the formal guidelines.

Picture 5 Photo from the conference closing the contest "'Power of promotion - power of a project"



As a result of the contest a **booklet** "The power of promotion – the power of a project"<sup>133</sup> was published, presenting best practices, beneficiaries' and experts' advice on the promotion of the initiatives co-funded by the EU. The **messages it conveys are simple and concrete**, focusing on **specific recommendations regarding promotional practices**. This is a great example of **knowledge sharing between specialists, present beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries**. Moreover, the "Guidebook on promotion of the projects co-funded by the OP IE 2007 – 2013 for beneficiaries and institutions engaged in implementation of the Programme" has been updated and **distributed in all Information Points in the country**. Online communication in the form of a **dedicated website** summarizing guidelines and best practices supported the whole project and was to serve present and future beneficiaries.

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<sup>133</sup> Link to the booklet: [http://www.poig.gov.pl/konfszkol/Documents/Sila\\_promocji\\_net\\_27112012.pdf](http://www.poig.gov.pl/konfszkol/Documents/Sila_promocji_net_27112012.pdf) 05.06.2013.

Although EU messages were not present in the contest communication, since it was not in line with the goal of the event, beneficiaries – present and potential ones – have been equipped with a **profound knowledge of the information and promotion mechanisms** and ideas, which would then benefit future regional policy communication.

The total cost of the project was estimated at 23,180 euros.

### “EU touristic passport”

The MA of the ROP K-P highlighted a highly creative and successful means of engaging the general public in discovering the effects of regional policy. The campaign was conducted in 5 voivodeships making up the region of Eastern Poland and promoted projects with the goal of revitalising tourist sites in the region. The target group consisted of not only Eastern Poland’s citizens, but also tourists from other parts of the country. The objective was to make the general public aware of the variety of objects and places which have been revitalized with the European funds and, consequently, their positive impact on the region’s attractiveness. This is not fully in line the messages defined by the DG REGIO, but the tool is worth recognition for its desing, language and content criteria, as well as for its novelty effect.

Campaign “EU tourist passport”, ROP K-P		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	✓
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

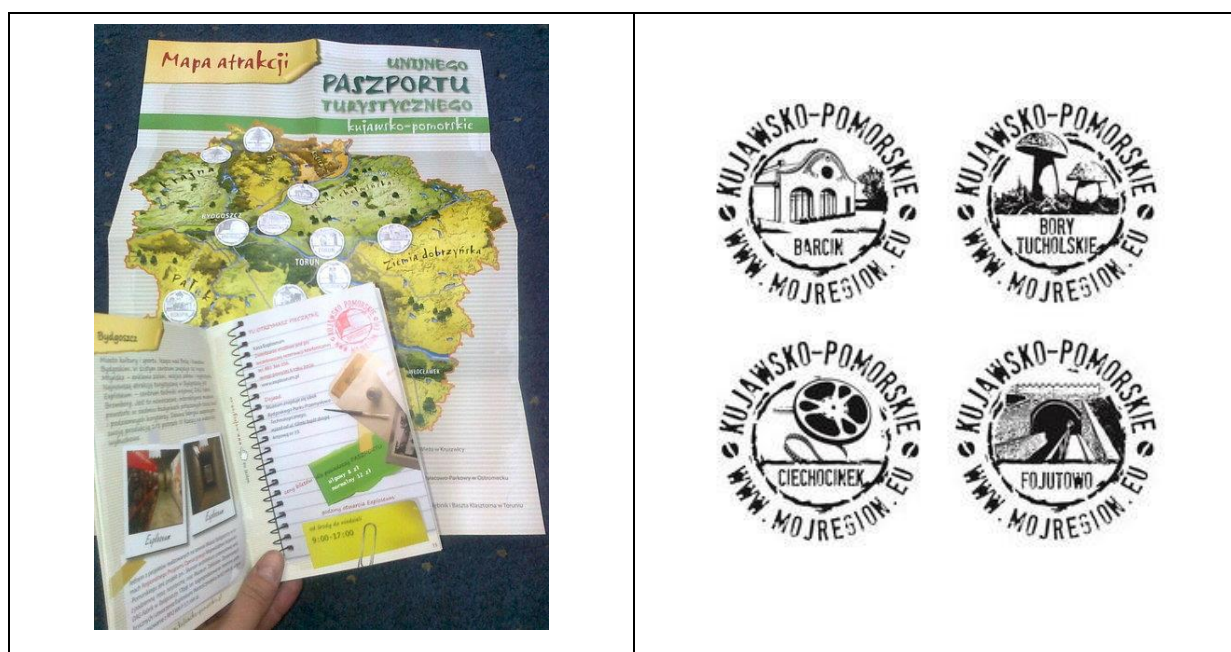
The main tool of the campaign was a **booklet** “EU tourist passport” which served as a means of gathering stamps that could be collected in the promoted tourist sites. Promotional tools included discounts on the entrance to places and other attractions (gifts, contests) for those who gathered all possible stamps. This **loyalty system** was supported by a **wide distribution channel** for the booklets (e.g. tourist information offices, passports could be downloaded from a **dedicated website** as well: [www.paszport.com.pl](http://www.paszport.com.pl)) and other communication channels: **social media** (Facebook fan page), **press and radio releases** and **6 outdoor events** and **contests**. One of them was a photo contest for the submission of photos of the revitalised places in the region. The Facebook fan page played the role of youth engagement facilitator, as the organisers observed lower interest in the “EU tourist passport” activity among this group. Taking advantage of the popularity of the fan page, it has been used to promote the event and educate young citizens about the region’s heritage by conducting engaging knowledge contests.

Picture 6 EU tourist passport with touristic places revitalized from the EU Funds and gathered stamps



The campaign proved to be very successful, as the MA received a number of enquiries from tourists from all over the country about a second edition and with contest applications, as well as from other regions on possibilities to copy it. The idea and its implementation is a great example of engaging both the general public and media interest in the results of regional policy, by attractive and **non-standard activity** referring to the cultural heritage (stamp collecting was popular in the 1970s and 80s e.g. among hitchhikers from Central and Eastern Europe) matching the content conveyed and target audience. Though the key success driver was **an innovative desing of the tool and attractive graphics**, its success comes also from the **simple, adequate language and interesting, engaging content**. The professionally designed booklets are full of interesting facts about the heritage sites and additional materials (a map, stamps) ensure an exceptional experience.

Picture 7 Map and booklet with stamps presenting each of the heritage sites



Source: <http://www.paszport.com.pl/miejsca-i-znizki>,  
[http://www.paszport.com.pl/img/galeria/big/1\\_4\\_-\\_kopia.jpg?1344798192752](http://www.paszport.com.pl/img/galeria/big/1_4_-_kopia.jpg?1344798192752), 05.07.2013.

The matching of the activity to its target group has been a source of learning to the OP MAs. According to the project fiche, the campaign was targeted at the youth and young families. It turned out that while there has been smaller interest among the youth, the elderly proved to be very engaged in sightseeing, taking advantage of discounts offered. Consequently, it is already planned to involve this group in future communication activities. Moreover, to attract attention of young people, and provide more flexibility, a **mobile application** will be produced, which will play the role of a brochure.

The total cost of the project was estimated at 10,370 euros.

### Trips for journalists as a media relations tool

The I&P officers of the ROP for Lubuskie Voivodeship have realised the potential of media relations activities to promote the results of regional policy. As a representative of the MA observed, activities aimed at journalists are rare in Poland. The problem of bad media relations is worsened by the low interest in positive coverage of EU funds and co-financed projects' results. To solve this problem, two trips for regional journalists have been organised in order to present to them the effects of the interventions. They have been equipped with **information and promotional materials**, also on the RPO's **website**, and driven around the region. Although the number of participants was not high (ca. 40 journalists in two trips), **they played the role of communication multipliers**, spreading the information gathered via **local media (press, TV, radio, online)**. Consequently, the media coverage was high.

Media trip, ROP Lubuskie		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	✓
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	✓

Picture 8 Media trip resulted in high media coverage presenting relevant information from project sites



Source: [http://www.lrpo.lubuskie.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=698:lrpo-media-trip-po-raz-drugi&catid=121:aktualnoci&Itemid=81](http://www.lrpo.lubuskie.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=698:lrpo-media-trip-po-raz-drugi&catid=121:aktualnoci&Itemid=81),  
[http://www.lrpo.lubuskie.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=739:echa-media-trip&catid=75:wydarzenia&Itemid=143](http://www.lrpo.lubuskie.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=739:echa-media-trip&catid=75:wydarzenia&Itemid=143), 05.07.2013.



The key learning point from this activity is that it is important to enable journalists to experience EU funding first hand as well as arrange meetings with local authorities and citizens so that it results in **relevant, interesting and accurate information**. Journalists have not only made use of the prepared materials and digitalised the observed interventions, but also **interviewed local people**, what was used as a material for press, radio and TV releases. **The language, coming from the real people experiences**, provides credibility to the content of the communication targeted at the general public and covers the criteria of conveying **the essence of the regional policy**.

The event proved to be **very cost-effective**. For a total cost of only 4,900 euro it resulted in:

- Free air time (regional/local radio and TV)
- Free press releases.
- Good PR among the regional and local journalists.

The **relations established with some of the journalists** have been maintained to form direct and continuing media relations. This presents a way for improving negative coverage or triggering media interest while at the same time communicating to the general public.

### Contest for promotional advertisements on the European funds

This practice, *“Power of promotion - power of a project”*, has a strong educational objective and has been chosen (although not selected by the ROP K-P MA as a good practice example for the study) because of its target group – I&P officer at the MAs. The creative team of I&P officers at the MA of the ROP K-P thought about their colleagues from other programmes and their training needs and organised a contest that forms part of the popular **film festival** (Plus Cameraimage). The goal of the contest, according to its statute, was to *exchange experiences between the staff of the public administration involved in the implementation of the European funds and to promote good practices in informing the general public through audio-visual materials about the social and economic benefits associated with the use of EU funds*<sup>134</sup>.

Contest for promotional advertisements on the European Funds - Plus Cameraimage film festival , ROP K-P		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

Authorities of all Operational Programmes were requested to submit their best promotional advertisements concerning regional policy and the European funds. A jury consisting of marketing, promotion and design specialists assessed the ads on the basis of **creativity of the idea and novelty effect in the production**. Identification of good practices was to contribute to enhanced quality of the ads and the professionalization of information and promotion activities.

The activity stands out obviously in terms of the high rank of the festival, as such a big-scale event has not been used so far in Poland (and other EU countries) for the purpose of EU-

<sup>134</sup> The status of the contest for promotional spots “European Funds in a cadre”, [https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/4FFE/Documents/Regulamin\\_camerimage\\_911.pdf](https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/4FFE/Documents/Regulamin_camerimage_911.pdf), p. 1.

staff learning. So the **novelty effect and professional design** determined its success. The results of the project are most accurately reflected by the comment of one of the jury members, a marketing specialist:

*Just before the screening of the ads I asked the organisers if it would be possible not to give any award at all. To date I didn't have good associations with the ads funded by EU funds – I remembered the style of the early 90s. But it turned out that I was wrong. So wrong. (...) It is clear that cities [authorities] grew to understand a need to professionalise their approach to the topic and finally started to employ creative agencies (...) While watching the ads I thought that there are a lot of beautiful places in Poland, which I have not seen so far. And eventually – that there have been a lot of projects co-financed from the European funds. This means, that the ads have reached their goals, mostly the informative one<sup>135</sup>.*

Natalia Hatałska, blog: <http://hatałska.com>

According to the primary communicators, the difference in the ads' quality between the first and third edition of the contest is astonishing and shows the positive effect of using the principles of marketing for promotion of regional policy. However, it is also an **evidence of the relevant content** of the inspirational and educational **workshops** organised additionally for the Steering Group and conducted by professionals making up the jury. According to the organisers, the workshops are focused on communication of clear recommendations that form rules of successful promotion design via audio-visual campaigns.

Picture 9 Poster of the 2012 edition of the 3rd contest of promotional spots "European Funds in a cadre"



<sup>135</sup> <http://hatałska.com/2012/12/04/po-konkursie-spotow-reklamowych-na-festiwalu-plus-camerimage-2012/>, 04.06.2013.



## The European Funds Lesson

This educational and promotional activity targeted young people - students of primary schools and high schools in the Eastern Poland region, and included an innovative and creative tool: **the comic book**. The topic, which is hard to understand for pupils and triggers little interest, has been communicated in an approachable and attractive way. Teachers were asked to conduct a lesson on the basis of a script, equipped with teaching materials and presentations. The comic book presents a story of teenagers invited to the places of investments supported by the European funds. They see the effects of regional policy and understand its positive influence on their lives. At the end of the classes students were asked to solve a task based on the content from the comic.

The European Funds Lesson, OP DEP		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	✓
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	✓

So far, there have been two editions of the European Funds Lesson: 2011 and 2012 which resulted in 23,000 pupils participating in the event. Due to the high interest both in the region and other parts of the country it has already been planned to be expanded. This kind of activity has a special impact, as by engagement it creates a positive image of the EU in the minds of the youth and they pass it on to their parents. The success factor of the activity lies in the **design of the tool** and its **relevance to the target group**. It is crucial to understand the needs of the target audience, which in this case are **simple language, pictorial design and fun time**.

The total cost of the project was estimated at 30,000 euros.

**Picture 10 A comic-book “Histories on the European Funds in Eastern Poland” used during the classes**



## Media relations in the Silesian region

The Silesian case study proved that this region is strong in the area of media relations. The MA of ROP Silesia acts deliberately to **attract the attention of local media**. The Information and Promotion Team in the Department of Regional Development issues a bulletin on the ROP 4 times a year. These bulletins are tools for attracting media attention. The MA I&P Team organises **meetings in 4 sub-regions** inviting journalists to attend the press conference. But the success of this initiative lies in a very well organised process. In the first place the team **identifies local media**: cable TVs broadcasters, local press, internet sites and portals. They **contact journalists directly** and invite them to the **meeting with the Marshal**<sup>136</sup> of the region. They organise **meetings in premises which have been built or renovated with ROP** implemented projects. The meetings are not typical press conferences. They resemble a dialogue between local authorities, regional authority representatives and local media. The discussion is focused on local needs and changes in the locality with EU funds.

Media relations in Silesian region, ROP S		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

The MA received good feedback from the conferences. Lots of information was published. Journalists are eager to be kept informed about attention-grabbing initiatives in their sub-regions. They know how to write about the projects and their impact on people's everyday lives and they understand the EU funds.

A similar approach has been implemented in one of the biggest projects: The Scientific Information Centre and Academic Library (Polish acronym: CINIbA). It is a joint project of the University of Silesia and the University of Economics in Katowice under ROP Silesia.<sup>137</sup> A PR specialist employed for the project applied a similar strategy of including media as important multipliers. When the project began she used

**Picture 11 The Scientific Information Centre and Academic Library won a "Building of the Year" contest in 2013.**

personal contacts obtained from the spokesmen of both universities to create a network of journalists. Those journalists were not only receiving information on the progression of the project but also were involved in actions organised during the realisation of the project. They learned about this particular initiative, understood the idea of an 'open library' and why it is unique. This resulted in multiplying information on this project to a wider public, including both stakeholders and the general population of the region.



The success with media relations lies not only in very good organisation and implementation of the I&C strategy but also thanks to high quality non-obligatory and innovative tools and actions accompanying implementation of the project. The head of the I&C Team, with

<sup>136</sup> One of the most important authorities in the region with 4.6 million inhabitants

<sup>137</sup> Total cost of the project: 20 million €

expertise in PR, worked together with the employed designer, philologist, computer scientist and a few other specialists who helped to prepare attractive and innovative tools and activities. Engagement of the employees responsible for the project's PR contributed to the success.

The outreach of the messages in the Silesia region was huge owing to the systematic approach. Regular meetings with journalists and involving them into the projects, informing about projects' lifecycle helped them to learn about the EU funds and how to speak about them. Along with precise targeting and message design media relations ensured a wide outreach.

## 5. Conclusions and outlook

### 5.1. *Role of the EC and views on DG REGIO activities and tools*

Expectations with regard to the role of the EC in regional policy communication concern both internal and external communication.

#### **External communication**

There has been an opinion, that when it comes to EC engagement in communication on regional policy to the general public in Poland, the situation of messages overlapping should be avoided. Although the communication ought to be even more generic than that generated by the CA and MAs, there are certain messages that should come directly from the EC. These could concern the recent situation of the EU, its approach to solve the crisis problems, its perspective for the future and Poland's stake in that. **DG REGIO should focus on building the awareness of solidarity within the Union and other benefits resulting from Polish EU membership.** In the case of Poland it is also important to prepare society for the time when the country ceases to be a net recipient.

Interviews with stakeholders also revealed some expectations towards the EC. Journalists stressed **a need for more accurate and regular information sharing from the EC.** I&P officers at the EC should organise press conferences more frequently than once a half-year and information on some important events should be released in advance. Apart from that, the EC as a primary source of information should make aggregate data for a wider use available.

#### **Internal communication**

From the point of view of MA Information & Promotion Officers, DG REGIO should enhance the knowledge and expertise exchange. There is a need to share good practices and even to develop its database. Officers regret that the category of Information and Promotion Activities has been removed from the RegioStars contest.

When it comes to INFORM meetings, all its participants support the idea, but suggest including more workshops. Some information-sharing problems on the line CA – MA have been reported, that prevented some of the regional delegation from taking part in the INFORM meetings.

In finding a solution for better support of MAs in their communication efforts on the EC's part, it has been suggested that the *EC mainly communicate with Coordination Units in order to explain the problem / queries/ interpretation*. That observation was reaffirmed by the primary and secondary communicators, who expressed a wish of **more direct and quick response to the queries** from the Member States.

## 5.2. Future challenges and opportunities

The analysis of case studies and identified challenges suggests the following recommendations:

- Defining the right and specific target groups and adjusting proper communication channels and tools should constitute a basis for future communication activities;

An example of good strategic thinking could involve engaging churches and religious associations (opinion leaders) as multipliers of communication in rural areas, where tools used for targeting the general public proved to be unsuccessful.

- More concentrated and less overloaded communication

It was suggested that the unification of the communication formula in Poland should encompass not only the logos, but should also be branded under the umbrella of the European funds, not dividing the messages between each programme. Taking into account the number of OPs in Poland, this recommendation seems to be worth considering. Apart from that, the usage of several logos results in a conflict of interest between the national and regional OPs, which could be avoided by combining all the communication campaigns under the banner of a single EU brand.

It is also believed, that a **more concentrated, goals-oriented message** would have a stronger impact on the level of awareness of the general public. **Fewer communication goals (messages) and fewer advertisements would reduce the risk of communication overload.** The main solution to the problem of an overload of advertisements and other information is **to communicate in a non-standard way, using alternative channels or eye-catching forms**. It is crucial to communicate and realise the potential of marketing.

- Leveraging the experience of professionals and good-practices in the development of communication activities/materials

Commercial marketing principles could be successfully employed in communications on regional policy. The way the information and promotion system is constructed within the EU and Poland requires MAs' officers to have a profound, working knowledge of marketing that would enable them to build a strategy and then choose the right contractor to develop high-quality, attractive products. It is then recommended to **provide relevant training for Information and Promotion officers** or, at least, **to organise occasions for knowledge and expertise exchange** e.g. a contest of advertisements such as "the European Fund in a nutshell", part of the Plus Camerimage, where the jury consists of high-calibre marketing and promotion specialists, as well as workshops for the Steering Group.

- Develop direct and continuing media relations with journalists

What is crucial is **to improve knowledge about the tools and benefits of media engagement (especially radio journalists) in the regional policy communication**. It is worth considering establishing a position among the EU regional policy promotion and information department, responsible for media relations. So far, in the case of national programmes, media relations have been coordinated by the media relations departments of MAs, while on the regional level respondents stressed the challenges of insufficient human resources. The experience shows that the most effective way of triggering media interest is generation of non-standard, eye-catching ideas on communication activities, e.g. organising the conference on the project-place (airport – RPO K-P), or inviting policy makers, opinion leaders.

- Engage the general public

Experience shows that in case of a sophisticated message or difficult topic it is necessary to engage the audience emotions or give it an incentive. It especially concerns events, but is also possible with online and audio-visual communication. Because of limited knowledge, and even more importantly, interest in regional policy among the general public, it is important not to let the audience forget about the message, which boils down to extending the length of exposure to messages or their intensification.

- Enhanced cooperation and communication between CA and MAs, MAs and IB, including clear division of tasks

As the representatives of the MA stress the importance of communication activities co-ordinated with the CA, the IBs regret such cooperation does not exist between IB and MAs (PO IG). They believe that apart from defining a clear division of the communication tasks, it is necessary to increase the leverage on each of the levels' activities to make the communication more coherent. Respondents suggested closer cooperation in co-promotion of MAs and IBs activities.

- More specific communication goals and measurable effects, stated as guidelines, not regulation from the EC

MAs admitted that they were unsure of what the real goal of the communication was. This leads to a situation of confusion, which could be attributed to ineffective communication within the MS or at EC level. Understanding of the communication goals at a strategic level and profound knowledge of the state of awareness and the needs of target audiences should be a priority in I&P officers' trainings.

- Readable and simple language

This recommendation reoccurs in every communication guideline. There is still room for improvement in this area in communication practice. To cite the contractor of a project

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*"We are a pictorial society"*

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“Classes on the European Funds”: *“We are a pictorial society, more eager to watch than read. The topic of the European Funds is not an easy one. That is why we decided to reach the students with a comic book<sup>138</sup>.”*

## Annex

Table 9: Overview of interviews for case study Poland

Category	Interviews conducted	Number of interviews	Total
<b>1. EU level desk officers</b>	Desk officer at the EC Representation in Poland, Head of Information & Communication Section	1	1
<b>2. Primary communicators</b>	Specialist in Department for Information, Promotion and Trainings (CA)	1	5
	Head of the Information and Promotion Department of the Ministry of Regional Development (MA OP DEP)	1	
	Head Information and Promotion Team at the Silesian Voivodeship Office (MA ROP S)	1	
	Vice Director of the Promotion Division at Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship Office (MA ROP K-P)	1	
	Specialist in Information and Promotion Division at the Ministry of Regional Development (MA OP IE)	1	
<b>3. Secondary communicators</b>	Vice Director of the External Communication Department at the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (IB OP DEP)	1	5
	Head Information and Promotion Team at the Silesian Centre of Entrepreneurship (IB2 ROP S)	1	
	Project provider at The Scientific Information Centre and Academic Library (IB ROP S)	1	
	Project provider – Astrobaza (ROP K-P)	1	
	Specialist in Information and Promotion Division at The National Centre for Research and Development (IB OP IE)	1	
<b>4. Independent stakeholders / observers</b>	Evaluator, ex-journalist, CEO for 'Media for European Integration' NGO, evaluator and consultant	1	6
	Evaluator of the I&C in Silesian ROP and Kuyavian-Pomeranian ROP	1	
	Journalists (national media)	1	

138

[http://lublin.gazeta.pl/lublin/1,48724,10269940,Komiksowe\\_lekcje\\_o\\_funduszach\\_europejskich.html#ixzz2StfixlDW](http://lublin.gazeta.pl/lublin/1,48724,10269940,Komiksowe_lekcje_o_funduszach_europejskich.html#ixzz2StfixlDW)



	Academia/journalist (regional media), PhD, Member of Polish Society for Political Consulting, journalist	1	
	Academia, Professor EU information systems expert, Warsaw University	1	
	Social partner, Director of European Union Funds Department Polish Confederation of Private Employers Lewiatan, European Funds Division	1	
<b>Total number of interviews</b>			<b>17</b>

## 8 CASE STUDY REPORT: SPAIN

### 1. Introduction

Fieldwork in Spain was conducted between 6 and 10 May 2013. The evaluation team visited the regions of Andalucía and Castilla-La Mancha to cover the Operational Programmes (OPs) of these two regions. In addition, interviews were carried out in Madrid with the Managing Authority (MA) at national level and the implementing bodies who are responsible for coordinating the national OP 'Cohesion Fund' and the two multiregional OPs 'Knowledge-Based Economy' and 'Research, Development and Innovation for and by Enterprises – Technology Fund'.

A total of 16 face-to-face interviews were conducted with the MA, intermediate bodies, implementing bodies and independent observers and stakeholders, including journalists, evaluators and NGOs. Preparatory telephone interviews were also carried out before the fieldwork with DG REGIO's Programme Assistant for Spain and with the Press Officer of the Representation of the European Commission in Spain.

An overview of the interviews conducted in the context of this case study can be found in the annex to this report.

In addition to the fieldwork and the interviews, the evaluation team reviewed the following sources of information:

- Info regio website: information and publications available on the Spanish OPs
- Spanish managing authority website (<http://www.dgfc.sqpg.meh.es>)
- All 21 communication plans for the current programming period
- Results of the interim evaluations carried out in 2010
- Good practice communication fiches available in the Spanish MA website and developed by the managing and regional authorities in response to the evaluation

### 2. Context for regional policy communication

#### EU funding in 2007 – 2013

Between 2007 and 2013 Spain has been allocated a total of €35.217 billion of EU regional policy funds. This sum represents slightly more than 10% of the total EU budget of €347 billion for regional and cohesion policy for the current programming period, and positions the country as the second largest recipient of EU cohesion funds after Poland.

EU funds in Spain have been distributed between the three main objectives as follows:

- €26.2 billion under the Convergence Objective (€3.5 billion from the Cohesion Fund);
- €8.5 billion under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective; and
- €559 million under the European Territorial Cooperation Objective.

The Spanish regions of Andalucía, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura and Galicia –with a per capita GDP less than 75% of the EU average– fall fully under the Convergence objective.

Asturias, Ceuta, Melilla and Murcia are receiving "phasing out" assistance, as they were covered by the Convergence objective in the EU with 15 members, but not the EU with 25. Aragón, Baleares, Cantabria, Cataluña, Madrid, Navarra, País Vasco, La Rioja are eligible under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective. Canarias, Castilla y León and Comunidad Valenciana are "statistical phasing-in" regions, with assistance available until 2013.

### Main regional policy objectives and priorities

As laid down in the Spanish National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), EU funding priorities for this period have substantially refocused from physical infrastructure in transport and environment towards the core Lisbon objectives, in particular in the areas of research, innovation and the information society. In financial terms, 79% of the funding in the 'Convergence regions' and 81% in the 'Regional Competitiveness and Employment regions' will be invested in Lisbon-related priorities. In line with this shift, two new multi-objective programmes have been launched: the 'Technology Fund' programme, devoted to research and innovation for and by enterprises, and the 'Knowledge Economy' programme.

The three strategic target priorities for this period are:

- Making Spain a more attractive place to invest and work in;
- Improving knowledge and innovation to boost growth;
- More and better jobs.

These priorities have been translated into 45 operational programmes, of which 23 are supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and 22 are supported by the European Social Fund (ESF).

### Attitudes towards the EU, awareness of Regional Policy

The latest Eurobarometer report on citizens' awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy<sup>139</sup> positioned Spain above the EU average in terms of the proportion of citizens aware of EU regional support projects in their area. According to the report, 43% of Spanish citizens claimed that they had heard about EU co-financed projects to improve the area in which they lived.

Nearly eight out of every ten Spanish respondents who were aware of EU funding considered that the support had had a positive impact in their city or region. However, the survey also captured citizens with negative or with no opinions formed on the impact of EU funds (21%). A smaller proportion of those who had heard about EU funds (39%) highlighted that they had personally benefitted from an EU project.

Considering that Spain is the second largest recipient of EU funds, awareness and positive attitudes were comparatively lower than in countries that received a lesser proportion of funds, in particular in new Member States. Also worrying is that awareness of EU regional support projects in Spain experienced a decline of nearly 20 points (from 62 to 43%) in

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<sup>139</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 298, Citizens' awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy, Analytical report, published in October 2010 (fieldwork carried out in June 2010), The Gallup Organization.

comparison to the previous Eurobarometer report carried out in 2008. There is consensus among interviewees that this downward trend has further sharpened in recent years with the decline of the Spanish economy since 2009 which turned into a full-scale political crisis in 2012.

### Economic and political environment

The collapse of the housing and banking markets, the Eurozone bailout, the budget deficit-reduction plan introduced by the government and the rise of the unemployment rate to levels above 25% have eroded the trust of Spanish citizens in political institutions. The current discontent translates in historical levels of distrust towards the EU, which according to Eurobarometer data have risen from 23% in May 2007 to 72% in November 2012.<sup>140</sup> Traditionally a pro-European country, Spain currently experiences higher levels of distrust towards the EU than Eurosceptic countries like the United Kingdom.

According to EC officials interviewed, the current discontent with the European Union leads to a number of misconceptions about the role played by DG REGIO, in particular because messages coming from the EU tend to be questioned and because people tend to attribute responsibilities to the DG that are not really in its realm. Policy implementation has become more difficult as there is less money than there was in the past and the results are not always easy to communicate (i.e. there are many unfinished projects hence it is not possible to publicise their results).

## **3. Key actors and approaches**

### Roles and responsibilities for implementing communication requirements

The national Ministry of Finance and Public Administration acts as the MA for all the OPs in Spain, coordinating the work of the autonomous communities in their role as intermediate bodies responsible for regional implementation of the programmes.

Regional policy communication is structured along similar lines: a partnership approach exists between the MA and the autonomous communities where each community plans, implements and evaluates its communication strategy and plan, but where the MA exercises a coordinating role and retains ultimate responsibility for the adequate implementation of the communication plans. In practice, the autonomous communities have delegated powers of the MA in terms of the implementation of communication requirements.

Interviewees agree that communication of EU structural funds in Spain gained impetus at the outset of the current programming period, following DG REGIO requirements. Until then, the priorities had been the adequate programming and implementation of EU funds, and the audit and control of the projects and the funds. Some regions, like Andalucía, had already developed communication strategies and structures in the 2000 – 2006 programming period, but for many communities this was a new area of work that was developed formally in the period 2007 – 2013.

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<sup>140</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 78, Europeans, the European Union and the Crisis, November 2012, TNS Opinion & Social at the request of the European Commission.

### Coordination and cooperation at national and regional level

One of the first initiatives launched by the MA in 2007 was the setting up of 'GERIP'<sup>141</sup>, a national communication network between those responsible for communication of ERDF and ESF funds within the managing authority and the autonomous communities. Since its inception, the network has held between 3 and 4 meetings every year. The first objective of the network was to drive the elaboration of the communication plans of the OPs, and to provide common guidelines for the implementation of these plans. In total, 21 communication plans were developed, in their majority joint plans to communicate ERDF and ESF funds.

It was foreseen that all communication plans would be subject to external interim and final evaluations in 2010 and 2013 respectively, in the framework of the general evaluations of the OPs. The results of the 2010 evaluations were presented and discussed, and in many cases the key recommendations stemming from these reports were instrumented in the second half of the programming period. The final evaluations are currently taking place, and the results will be made available in the second half of 2013.

Other initiatives developed in the framework of the GERIP network have been:

- The design of an online application to register communication indicators related to events, publications, web tools, press activities, publicity actions, internal communication, etc.
- The design of good practice communication fiches.

The GERIP network also works as a forum to present information from the INFORM network and annual meetings, to discuss future communication priorities in the context of the next programming period, and to bring up any ad hoc issues of relevance.

In addition to GERIP, the 'GRECO-AGE'<sup>142</sup> network was also set up in 2007 and brings together those responsible for communication in the implementing bodies, who are the link with the final beneficiaries of the funds. The GRECO-AGE network is larger in size, with around 100 member organisations, and has met in average between 2 to 4 times every year, usually after GERIP meetings take place. The agenda and issues discussed are similar to those discussed at GERIP meetings, and implementing bodies are also tasked with registering communication indicators and completing good practice communication fiches. The GRECO-AGE network is responsible for organising the annual communication meeting which brings together all intermediate and implementing bodies in Spain to present key communication achievements and to share selected best practices. This event is open to stakeholders, including the academic and business communities and the media.

Following the GERIP and GRECO-AGE examples, regional communication networks have also been set up in communities where there are numerous implementing bodies. While these networks are not compulsory, they have proved useful to structure communication requirements at local levels.

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<sup>141</sup> Grupo Español de Responsables en materia de Información y Publicidad.

<sup>142</sup> Grupo de Responsables de Comunicación de la Administración General del Estado.

### Communication budgets, approaches and strategies adopted

The communication budgets for each Operational Programme are proportional to the overall budget available. The table below provides an indication of the communication budgets as registered in each communication plan. As can be seen, the variations are significant, with the ERDF OP in Andalucía spending nearly €6 million in communication activities and the region of Rioja devoting €10,000 to communication activities.

Total budgets are also provided for the current programming period, as well as the percentages of the total budgets projected for communication, which range from 0.01% of the overall programme's budget in the cases of Galicia and Canarias, to 0.85% in the case of the Technology Fund and 0.57% for Andalucía.

**Table 10 – Indicative communication and total budgets per OP (2007 – 2013)**

Operational Programme	Indicative communication budget (in EUR)	Technical assistance budget (in EUR)	Total Programme budget (in EUR)	% of total budget for communication of ERDF funds
Knowledge Economy	5.2 million	14.6 million	2,100 million	0.25%
Technology Fund	2.8 million	28.2 million	3,300 million	0.08%
Cohesion Fund	4 million	61.5 million	6,100 million	0.07%
Andalucía	5.6 million	46.7 million	9,840 million	0.06%
Murcia	4.5 million (ERDF + ESF) <sup>143</sup>	5.3 million	744 million	N/A
Castilla-La Mancha	2.5 million	6.5 million	2,100 million	0.12%
Castilla y León	1.8 million	5.1 million	1,200 million	0.15%
Extremadura	637,719	1.3 million	2,300 million	0.03%
ETC Spain – Portugal	650,000	13.2 million	354 million	0.18%
Madrid	282,450	600,000	694 million	0.04%
Galicia	446,340	5.1 million	3,200 million	0.01%
Baleares	420,000	1.7 million	226 million	0.19%
País Vasco	400,000	2.4 million	500 million	0.08%
Catalunya	397,000	6 million	1,400 million	0.03%
Aragón	140,000	2.1 million	326 million	0.04%
Canarias	80,000	1.1 million	1,670 million	0.01%
Asturias	250,000	1 million	554 million	0.05%
Cantabria	250,000	649,941	178 million	0.14%
Navarra	60,000	292,075	94,000,000	0.06%
Ceuta	46,225	193,403	65,400,000	0.07%
Melilla	55,300	337,500	63,500,000	0.09%
Rioja	10,000	123,859	65,000,000	0.02%

Sources: For indicative communication budgets: OP communication plans 2007-2013  
For TA and OP budgets: European Commission, Inforegio website

<sup>143</sup> The communication plan for Murcia does not differentiate (as is the case with the other plans) the amounts of money to be used by ERDF and ESF funds, so the percentage of the total budget for communication of ERDF funds cannot be calculated.



As a result of the joint elaboration of the communication plans for this period under the umbrella of GERIP, the approaches and strategies adopted follow similar lines, even with the substantial budgetary differences.

In overall terms, the communication strategies and approaches adopted have structured their activities around three distinct phases:

- Launch of the 2007 – 2013 programming period and the OPs, with communication focused on presenting the objectives of the current period and disseminating information on the OPs (e.g. objectives, rules, procedures, funding available, etc.);
- Implementation of the OPs, with regular and ad-hoc activities organised;
- Closure of the OPs, with a focus on communicating the results of the programming period and of the projects funded.

Activities under each phase have been designed and tailored for different target groups, as discussed in the next section.

In addition, each OP has developed a slogan and a visual logo that is used in all communications. In many cases, the slogan is the same across programmes, in line with the slogan adopted by the MA (*“Una manera de hacer Europa”* – loosely translated as *“A way of making Europe”*), but there are some OPs that have decided to maintain the slogan that they used in the previous period to maintain the same communication line:

- *“Andalucía se mueve con Europa”* which can be translated as *“Andalucía moves with Europe”* (Andalucía)
- *“Europa impulsa nuestro crecimiento”* translated as *“Europe motivates our growth”* (Castilla y León)
- *“Crecemos con Europa”* or *“We grow with Europe”* (Murcia)

### Objectives of communication activities, target audiences and main messages

The objectives of the communication activities can be clustered in three main groups:

- To provide transparent, detailed and concise information on the programme and the funds;
- To increase visibility and knowledge of the role played by the EU in co-financing the projects and of the importance of cohesion policy for the economic and social development of Spain and its regions;
- To increase visibility and knowledge of the OPs and of the projects funded (including their results).

The first objective is directed at beneficiaries, potential beneficiaries and implementing bodies. The second and third objectives are of a more general nature and are targeted at the general public.

The table below illustrates the target groups that were identified in the communication plans. As can be seen, direct beneficiaries of the funding and the general public are recognised as

key targets in all the communication plans. Implementing bodies are also considered to be important targets of the communication activities and messages. Other target groups include economic and social partners, business and industry players, public authorities (at national, regional and local levels), the academic community, media, multipliers and opinion leaders, and the European Commission.

**Table 11 – Target groups identified in the communication plans**

OP Communication Plan	Target groups									
	Beneficiaries	Implementing bodies	Economic & social partners	Business and industry	Public authorities	Academic community	Media	Multipliers / Opinion leaders	European Commission	General public
Murcia (ERDF + ESF)	x	x	x	x	x					x
Melilla (ERDF + ESF)	x	x	x	x						x
Ceuta (ERDF + ESF)	x		x	x	x		x			x
Asturias (ERDF only)	x									x
Galicia (ERDF only)	x	x								x
Extremadura (ERDF + ESF)	x	x								x
Andalucía (ERDF + ESF)	x						x	x		x
Cantabria (ERDF only)	x	x								x
País Vasco (ERDF only)	x	x	x				x		x	x
Navarra (ERDF + ESF)	x	x								x
Rioja (ERDF + ESF)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Baleares (ERDF only)	x									x
Aragón (ERDF + ESF)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Castilla y León (ERDF + ESF)	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
Canarias (ERDF + ESF)	x									x
Castilla-La Mancha (ERDF + ESF)	x	x	x	x	x		x			x
Catalunya (ERDF only)	x	x								x
Madrid (ERDF + ESF)	x									x
ETC Spain – Portugal (ERDF only)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Cohesion Fund (National OP)	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x
Knowledge Economy & Technology Fund (Multiregional OPs)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

In line with the objectives, key messages highlighted in the plans include some of a more general nature focused on the role played by the EU funds in boosting the economic development and social cohesion of Spanish regions in line with the EU's cohesion policy and the Lisbon strategy. Messages also focus on the importance of the partnership approach between the EU, national, regional and local authorities. At a more specific level, messages emphasise the instruments and the results of the policy, including the objectives and rules of the pluriannual programmes and information about the projects funded.

### Key challenges to communicating Regional Policy

There is consensus among interviewees that communicating regional policy in Spain has been traditionally difficult due to the complexity of EU funds and the intangible nature of some of the results (in particular those linked to research and innovation), which requires pre-existing levels of information and knowledge from the target audiences. Spain is also a complex country from a geographical and territorial point of view, with strong cultural differences between autonomous communities and complex relationships between the national and regional governments.

However, despite the inherent complexities of regional policy messages and the Spanish political and regional structure, there has been in the past a positive attitude towards Europe among Spanish citizens in general. EU messages were well received, and people knew about roads, infrastructure and projects implemented with EU funds.

The current critical social and economic situation in the country has brought about new challenges. Public opinion and national media in Spain are now increasingly more critical towards the EU, hence regional policy receives little or no media coverage and when it does receive media treatment, this is usually in negative terms to highlight irregularities. The managing authority and autonomous communities are also more cautious in terms of what and how they communicate, as they are conscious of the sensitivity of positive messages related to regional development at a time when many citizens are going through rough times and do not perceive any personal benefits.

The managing authority and the autonomous communities are facing increasing budgetary cuts and difficulties, which tend to impact negatively on communication budgets and activities. Interviewees tend to agree that higher levels of EU co-financing and advance payments would alleviate the situation and give new impulse to the communication activities. The region of Castilla-La Mancha is an example of how the budgetary restrictions affected the implementation of the communication plan in recent years: they were forced to discontinue the external communication support they were receiving and to discontinue their media plan.

Regardless of the historical and present challenges to communicating regional policy, the current programming period has witnessed a positive collaboration between the managing authority and the autonomous communities and an alignment of communication plans, objectives and messages. The two communication networks set up by the national government have facilitated the work of intermediate and implementing bodies and have helped to get the messages across. Many regions have adopted the network modality by setting up their own regional networks of communication representatives.

#### **4. Activities and good practice examples**

##### **Tools and mechanisms used**

Diverse tools and mechanisms are used to communicate about regional policy in Spain, including:

- Online communication: websites, Intranet, social media;
- Publications: leaflets, brochures, reports, studies, magazines, newsletters, manuals of procedure, plans;

- Events: information events, conferences, seminars, courses, acts (e.g. Europe Day), competitions, visits, bus tours;
- Audiovisual material: videos, documentaries;
- Promotional material: gadgets, banners, signs;
- Media: paid advertising campaigns, relations with the press, segments on TV and radio.

Regions and programmes with larger budgets naturally have more resources available to spend on communication activities and tools, but smaller regions with fewer resources have found creative strategies to communicate with their target audiences in an effective way. In fact, the results of the mid-term evaluations of the communication plans confirmed that awareness of regional policy tended to be high in a number of regions that did not necessarily have strong budgets to communicate their OPs.

### Examples of good practice

#### *“About to. Twenty-five years of European Funds in Andalucía” video*

This video was developed in the framework of the OP in Andalucía, and was launched by the regional government in December 2011 on occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Spain’s entry into the EU. The main objective of the video was to show in perspective the social and economic changes that have taken place in the region of Andalucía in the last 25 years as a result of cohesion policy and EU funds. The video, which was mainly targeted at potential beneficiaries and stakeholders and to some degree to the general public (though it lacked a dissemination strategy in the media), cost approximately € 59,270. Dissemination took place at diverse fora and events (including local events and Open Days 2011) and through specific websites and social media channels.

<b><i>“About to. Twenty-five years of European Funds in Andalucía” video</i></b>		
<b>Good practice criteria</b>	Design	✓
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

The video captures the evolution of the region of Andalucía since Spain’s entry into the EU back in 1986. The first part of the video features a grandfather who has decided to record a video for his granddaughter living abroad, and who speaks about how things have changed from his personal perspective. The second part shows a succession of day-to-day images accompanied by a series of relevant indicators featuring the most important achievements in terms of employment, external trade, public health, research and innovation, transport, etc. The video closes with the granddaughter receiving and viewing the video from her grandfather, which features the succession of images shown before. The video closes with the message: “Thanks Europa. Twenty-five years of European funds”.

**Figure 14: Image of the video “About to. Twenty-five years of European Funds in Andalucía”**

The key strengths of the video are its strong, moving and eye-catching images and music. The first part of the video (when the grandfather speaks) has a simple and accessible language. The content is relevant and there is a focus on simple and clear messages that are attractive to potential viewers. The idea of the grandfather remembering how life was 25 years ago is innovative in that it portrays the achievements of the region in a wider perspective and gives prominence to the message that regional policy makes a difference on people's lives.

On the other hand, some of the indicators and percentages that accompany the images in the second part of the video are not easily understandable. There are also a few images that do not give the impression to be capturing local people (as is the case of the grandfather). Even though the EU flag is displayed at the top-right end of the screen throughout the video and the slogan appears at the end, people are required to make inferences when watching the video to fully grasp the role played by the EU in supporting regional policy. In terms of dissemination channels, these have been restricted to events and online networks; hence, the potential to attract the broader public has remained limited.

Overall, this video is a good, touching and effective piece (in particular the first part), but there is scope for some of the indicators and images in the second part to be clearer and more familiar. The EU image is present all throughout the video but the EU's role is not entirely discernible.

#### *“Andalucía se mueve con Europa” anual school contest*

The annual school contest “*Andalucía se mueve con Europa*”, also developed in the framework of the OP in Andalucía, is undergoing its third edition this year. The main objective of the contest is to raise awareness and increase knowledge about the EU and in particular its role in the field of regional policy among the general public and secondary school children in the region. The event is targeted at the general public and has a budget of €54,334 per annual edition.

The contest is based on the game “*Andalucía se mueve con Europa*” and is addressed at students in the first and second years of secondary in all educational centres in the region. The first phase of the contest takes place in the participating schools. The competition in the second phase is between schools and results in

<b>“Andalucía se mueve con Europa” anual school contest</b>		
<b>Good practice criteria</b>	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	

8 finalist teams. The third and final phase is televised in Canal Sur TV, a regional channel, and the team that wins travels to Brussels to visit the European Commission and the European Parliament. The contest has grown in popularity, and is now being organised in other regions.

Since its first edition, nearly 9,000 students from more than 120 educational centres have participated in the contest. Each annual edition is widely promoted in the regional media (TV, radio, print media), and the regional finals are televised. There's a specific website of the contest (<http://www.andaluciasemueveconeuropa.com/>) which features the relevant information, images and videos on the subsequent editions.

**Figure 15: Images of the school contest “Andalucía se mueve con Europa”**



This competition is a very effective and well-designed activity. It is an extremely didactic event, with content that is highly relevant for the target audience of secondary school children. The contest has trespassed schools' frontiers and the regional finals currently reach wider audiences in televised format. The fact that it is an annual event gives regularity to the activity and helps to reinforce awareness of the EU. The visibility of the EU stands out quite prominently in all the promotional material, and in the content of the competition.

#### *“How does the EU contribute to the development of the Spanish high-speed rail?” brochure*

This brochure was developed in the framework of the national OP Cohesion Fund. It was produced by ADIF, the Spanish public entity that administrates the rail infrastructure in the country, to explain the objectives pursued by the EU in financing the Spanish high-speed rail, and the type of financial support that ADIF has received in the current programming period.

The brochure features information on the EU funds that finance the Spanish high-speed rails, the objectives to be achieved with EU support, the reasons why the EU supports this project, the amounts that ADIF will receive from the EU, and the percentage that EU funds represent as part of the total investment. The brochure was disseminated in ADIF public attention centres in co-financed lines throughout the country and in specific events.

#### ***“How does the EU contribute to the development of the Spanish high-speed rail?” brochure***

<b>Good practice criteria</b>	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓



**Figure 16: Images of the brochure “How does the EU contribute to the development of the Spanish high-speed rail?”**



High-speed rails in Spain are a very relevant area where much progress has been made in the past years and that is a matter of pride to Spanish citizens. Highlighting the important role played by the EU in the financing of the high-speed rails is a key priority, which the interim evaluations showed that was not sufficiently promoted. EU messages are very clear and highly visible in the brochure, and the fact that the brochure was distributed in railway stations reinforces the idea that it reached interested passengers.

Considering that the brochure is targeted at the general public, the wording could have been simpler and clearer. Additional support graphs or images could have helped to better explain the objectives. Even though the outreach strategy was effective, a broader distribution (online and on-site at more events) could have helped to reinforce this important message and to generating a stronger impact.

EU visibility and messages are both highly prominent in the brochure, from the title of the brochure, to the EU flag, and the messages communicated.

### “GETAFE IN” cinema festival

The “GETAFE IN” cinema festival was developed in the framework of the ERDF OP in Madrid as part of the Urban Initiative for the regeneration of a urban neighbourhood in Getafe. The objective was to increase the cultural offer and to encourage the participation of citizens in this type of events.

The first edition of the cinema festival, organised in 2011, featured 40 selected Spanish short movies out of a total of 255 movies that participated in the competition. The festival, which was free of charge, also included a series of seminars, exhibitions and shows.

The event was widely disseminated in the regional and local media (TV, radio and press) and through online channels (website and blog of the festival and social media, including Twitter and Facebook). The second edition of the festival took place in 2012, and the third edition is already planned for end 2013.

“GETAFE IN” cinema festival		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

**Figure 17: Promotional poster of the “GETAFE IN” cinema festival 2011 edition**

Overall, it is an attractive cultural activity which captures the attention of the traditional media and is widely disseminated through social media. This type of activity is innovative in that it supports the urban regeneration of a neighbourhood through the consolidation of an annual cultural flagship event that gives visibility and encourages progress in other areas. The model has the potential to be copied in other regions.

In terms of the main drawbacks observed, even though the EU's logo is present in the promotional material, overall EU visibility and messages have not been sufficiently prominent in the past editions of the festival.

### Planetarium and scientific dissemination activities

The planetarium was developed in the framework of the multiregional OPs Knowledge Economy and Technology Funds and it seeks to disseminate the scientific activities carried out by CETA<sup>144</sup> to the general public, in particular children and adolescents. It opened in late 2009 and it currently functions three times a week, receiving schools, families, tourists and general public. Movies in full-dome format are projected on diverse scientific topics. In addition, different types of parallel activities are organised, including fora and discussions with experts. The planetarium's dome is movable, which allows visiting different places.

Planetarium and scientific dissemination activities		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	

**Figure 18: Images of the CETA planetarium**

<sup>144</sup> The acronym stands for Centro Extremeño de Tecnologías Avanzadas. This is a scientific research centre that operates in the field of information technologies.

The planetarium and its activities receive media dissemination and there is an active online communication through a website and social media. More than 30.000 people have visited it to date.

Overall, it is an attractive and innovative cultural activity which makes accessible science to the general public, in particular to children and adolescents. It is a permanent exposition and its movable dome provides the planetarium with flexibility to visit different places. The EU is highly visible in the planetarium's communications. Key EU messages on regional policy are also part of the CETA's communication.

### *“Contigo más que nunca” advertising campaign*

The advertising campaign in media *“Contigo más que nunca”* was developed by the High Council of Chambers of Spain in the framework of different regional OPs including in Melilla, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León, Canarias, Extremadura and Andalucía.

Targeted at business and industry, SMEs, entrepreneurs and the general public, the objective of the campaign was to raise awareness of the activities carried out by the Spanish Chambers Commerce across the country with ERDF and ESF funds. The campaign was launched in traditional and digital national and local media outlets throughout 2010 to publicise the important role played by EU funds and the opportunities offered to SMEs and entrepreneurs, in particular in a context of crisis.

<b><i>“Contigo más que nunca” advertising campaign</i></b>		
<b>Good practice criteria</b>	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	

Dissemination was carried out in print national and local media and in online outlets. The ads were also distributed among participating Chambers of Commerce in Spain for local promotion in magazines, newsletters and websites. A giant billboard was displayed outside the building of the High Council's headquarters in Madrid.

**Figure 19: Images of the *“Contigo más que nunca”* advertising campaign**



The campaign had a powerful slogan and a relevant message disseminated among an important and numerous audience in Spain (SMEs, entrepreneurs and business). The campaign's timing and tone were appropriate, as they made emphasis on the contention and support role that EU funding could provide at a time of crisis. The dissemination strategy carried out through multiple channels and through a strong network of multipliers, was effective. EU visibility and key messages were highly visible as well. More detailed

information on the types of projects co-financed by the EU could have been made available through other support channels such as interviews or newsletters, etc.

### **“GERIP” and “GRECO-AGE” internal communication networks**

These two internal communication networks were set up in 2007, at the outset of the current programming period, with the following key objectives:

- To support the development of a joint communication strategy for all Spanish OPs, including the drafting of communication plans, and to consolidate a forum for discussion of relevant communication topics between those responsible for communicating the OPs (GERIP).
- To open a forum for transmission of guidelines to the more than 100 implementing bodies working on the different OPs (GRECO-AGE).

<b>“GERIP” and “GRECO-AGE” internal communication networks</b>		
<b>Good practice criteria</b>	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓

GERIP and GRECO-AGE meetings (3 to 4 per year) have provided a forum for discussion, development and implementation of the communication plans, strategies, approaches and procedures, indicators, external evaluations, and best practices. News and latest developments from DG REGIO and the INFORM network are also discussed in the framework of these two networks. The agendas, minutes and relevant presentations or background documentation of each meeting are publicly available on the website of the MA.

**Figure 20: Logos of the “GERIP” and “GRECO-AGE” communication networks**



GERIP and GRECO-AGE have been constitutive tools for the organisation and alignment of communication in the current programming period. The networks and their content have been highly instrumental for the development, implementation and evaluation of communication plans, and for the dissemination of disciplined and uniform messages among key multipliers. Both networks have been an innovative solution in the Spanish context as they have helped to reinforce the importance of communication across the autonomous communities. EU visibility and messages have been strongly enhanced among members of the two networks, and it is confirmed that messages have in turn been communicated more widely with the support of the networks.

There are concerns that GERIP has lost its initial direction as it is currently now strongly focused on the discussion around the reporting of indicators of implementation and results, and there is little information on the impact of the activities undertaken. Even though GERIP functions as a link between the autonomous communities and DG REGIO, both (the regions and DG REGIO) would like to find more opportunities to interact. GERIP meetings could be an ideal setting for a more fluent communication with the regions.

In the case of GRECO-AGE, it would be advisable if, with a view to the next programming period, the network could re-assess its priorities and objectives with a view to be less dependent on the work of GERIP and to consolidating its role in the longer term.

### *“El Gancho” newspaper for school children*

Developed in the framework of the OP in Andalucía, “*El Gancho*” is a print and digital publication for school children aged 7 to 13. The key objective of this newspaper is to raise awareness and increase knowledge about the EU and in particular its role in the field of regional policy among primary and secondary school children in the region.

The first edition of this free of charge newspaper was published in 2006-2007. Nine print editions are produced per year at a unitary cost of € 9,000 per edition, and the online edition is updated every week. It provides information about the EU through interviews, games, videos and a comic “*Los Ganchos y Europa*”. It also provides news and organises competitions on the EU, for example covering celebrations on the EU Day.<sup>145</sup> The newspaper’s team also organises regular visits to schools in the region to motivate children to follow the comic and to participate in the annual competitions organised.

The newspaper is widely disseminated in all schools and educational institutions in Andalucía, and also in children’s hospitals, sport institutions and libraries. At present, 95,000 print editions are distributed every month, and the publication has an audience of 310,000 readers. The print edition has a downloadable version in PDF. The online edition can be accessed at <http://www.elgancho.es/espana>. The newspaper has also been disseminated in children’s shows in regional TV.

<b>“El Gancho” newspaper for school children</b>		
<b>Good practice criteria</b>	Design	✓
	Language	✓
	Content	✓
	Outreach	✓
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓

**Figure 21: Images of the newspaper “El Gancho”**



“*El Gancho*” is a very effective, well-designed and highly professional publication with an engaging and appropriate language supported by attractive visual images and relevant content that has consolidated among the audience of school children through a didactic offer. The fact that it is published 9 times per year (and that it has an online edition with

<sup>145</sup> The annual EU Day competition summons school children in Andalucía to submit songs, drawings and slogans among others on the EU and Andalucía.



weekly updates) gives regularity to the tool and helps to reinforce awareness of the EU. As confirmed by available numbers, it reaches a significant number of school children in the region. The newspaper is innovative in that it is available in different formats and that it proposes interaction with its audience, both through the website, the annual contests, and the school visits organised. The comic is particularly appealing and effective to reinforce the visibility of the EU and its role in supporting regional policy.

### *“Huella” magazine*

*“Huella”* is a quarterly magazine available in print and more recently digital formats developed in the framework of the OP in Andalucía. The aim is to raise awareness and increase knowledge and transparency about the implementation and results of EU regional policy funds in the region among diverse target audiences, including authorities, beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries.

Launched in the previous programming period, its content was updated in the current period. The magazine features news on events and projects related to EU funds. It offers interviews, examples of good communication practices, and relevant information on the OP.

In terms of distribution figures, around 3,500 print editions are sent to local governments and delegations, regional media outlets, NGOs and businesses, the academic community, social partners and EC information centres. The magazine is also available online on the webpage of the regional government of Andalucía. The unitary cost of each edition of the magazine ascends to € 37,500.

<i>“Huella”</i> magazine		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	✓

**Figure 22 *“Huella”* magazine cover**



A well-established publication, with an attractive design and appropriate language and with highly relevant content, it reaches decision-makers and multipliers across the region of Andalucía through an effective dissemination strategy. Its quarterly frequency confers the tool with regularity and helps to reinforce awareness of the EU. With a key focus on the EU and its role in supporting regional policy, EU messages are highly visible. Having developed a digital edition, an active social media strategy to further disseminate the content of the magazine could be explored.



Web portal of the structural funds OPs of Castilla-La Mancha

The web portal of the EU structural funds of the OP in Castilla-La Mancha was launched in 2008 and it is structured to provide information to implementing bodies and beneficiaries (through an Intranet of restricted access) and to inform the general public on the main actions, projects, events and issues related to the implementation of the structural funds. The website is available in Spanish and English. A Facebook page was also launched recently.

The website has an attractive, modern and dynamic design and images. The homepage includes video and photo libraries, a calendar with main events, a news section and a menu to the main sections. The Intranet works as an effective communication channel among implementing bodies and beneficiaries. The Facebook page supports the online communication strategy of the region. The EU and its role in supporting regional policy are highly visible.

Web portal of the structural funds OPs of Castilla-La Mancha		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	

**Figure 23 Snapshot of the homepage of the website**



At a time of budgetary cuts in communication, the web portal could gain more prominence by including a section for the media with press releases and material of relevance for journalists. Stronger interaction with and greater visibility of social media tools could be added.

Internal software application to register communication activities

This internal software application was developed by Puertos del Estado, the public entity in Spain that manages the country's port system, to register communication activities carried out by each port. The application captures details of all communication activities related to EU funds undertaken by the Spanish port authorities across the country, including descriptions of each activity, costs and relevant documents and examples that can illustrate the activities. This serves as an internal management tool for enhanced external communication of the role played by EU funds and the main achievements.

All Spanish port authorities are requested to provide information to feed the tool every 6 months. There are no details on the use that is made of the information provided by this tool.

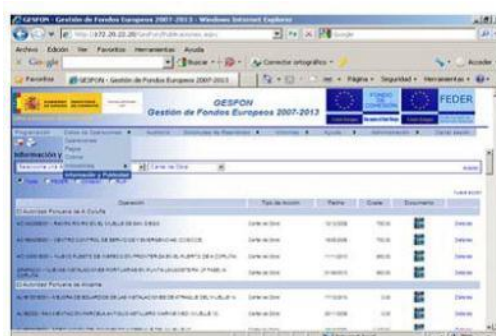
In terms of the key strengths of the application, it is a useful management tool to capture information on the communication of EU funds of an umbrella organisation like Puertos del Estado. It is intended to provide aggregated data and to facilitate the centralised external communication of the activities of Spanish port authorities.

There is no information on how this internal tool is exploited, in particular what uses are made of the information captured in the application.

#### Internal software application to register communication activities

Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

Figure 24 Snapshot of the software application



In overall terms, the tool has the potential to be replicated by other implementing bodies to increase knowledge of communication activities carried out by beneficiaries. However, usefulness of the tool depends on the uses made of the information provided by the application.

## 5. Conclusions and outlook

### Summary of key findings

The current programming period (2007-2013) has witnessed the set-up and consolidation of two national communication networks (GERIP and GRECO-AGE), both under the coordination of the management authority and bringing together those responsible for communication in the autonomous communities (GERIP) and in the implementing bodies (GRECO-AGE). Both networks have been highly instrumental in raising awareness among regional governments and implementing bodies of the importance of communicating about the regional policy funds and about the co-financing role played by the EU. These entities have in turn gradually improved their skills as multipliers of the messages among beneficiaries, other stakeholders and the general public in the different regions of Spain.

Key achievements of the work of the networks have been:

- The upsurge of organised communication plans and strategies for all the OPs in Spain developed in partnership under the umbrella of the GERIP network. All communication plans (21 in total) were drafted following a similar structure outlining the objectives, target audiences, the communication approach and strategic considerations, communication activities, indicative budget and monitoring and evaluation plan – including a series of management and result indicators.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the plans. All plans have been subject to interim evaluations conducted by independent external evaluators back in 2010, and are currently undergoing final evaluations.
- The development of an online software application to capture management and result indicators for all communication activities undertaken under the different OPs. This application is supervised by the managing authority and is intended to provide consolidated information on the communication performance, effectiveness and reach of the different OPs, activities and regions.
- The development and dissemination of good practice communication fiches per region / OP and per year. These fiches are publicly available on the website of the managing authority and reflect the wide menu of activities (media campaigns, press actions, events, contests, publications, websites and online social media tools, videos, documentaries, promotional tools, billboards, applications, networks, etc.) that have taken place in the current programming period.
- The organisation of an annual communication event which brings together autonomous communities, implementing bodies and beneficiaries and provides an opportunity to reflect on the key achievements per communication plan and to discuss and exchange best practice experiences.

Despite the positive role played by the communication networks, there are concerns among regional authorities interviewed that GERIP has lost its initial direction and that it currently lacks the strategic focus that it had during its initial years. Even though GERIP functions as a link between the autonomous communities and DG REGIO, both (the regions and DG REGIO) would like to find more opportunities to interact. GERIP meetings could be an ideal setting for a more fluent communication with the regions.

At a more general level, even though much progress has been made in the realm of communications Spain faces a critical juncture that threatens the advancements achieved. With the economic, social and political crisis in the country, the traditional pro-European feeling has given place to a predominantly sceptic mood towards the EU, its institutions and policies. EU regional policy is not immune to this change of humour. Citizens are finding it hard to receive positive messages about regional development and advancements at a time when their personal situations are complicated and when they don't perceive the benefits of the achievements.

Historically, regional policy issues and information on regional funds have been difficult to grasp for Spanish citizens. The multiple funds, the many acronyms, the lack of immediacy of some of the areas and projects financed have been obstacles in generating increased

awareness among the wider audiences. According to the results of the interim evaluations, women, young people and the elderly are among the less informed segments.

National media, which have always been a difficult target due to low interest in the coverage of regional policy topics, are predominantly focused on the political debate around the EU and the discussions around the financial help to Spain.

Regional and local media are traditionally more prone to covering regional policy issues but regional authorities find it difficult to install their messages in the public agenda. Journalists on the other hand claim that the EU lacks a visible face in the Spanish autonomous communities. The lack of presence of DG REGIO representatives from Brussels contributes to filtrated and diluted messages. Local politicians in particular tend to want to take the credits on projects funded. As one journalist argued: *“Brussels lacks a face in this region; usually when we publish a piece of news on the EU we include a photograph of an EU building or institution. We lack EU referents.”*

### Role of the EC and views on DG REGIO activities and tools

The shared view among Spanish stakeholders interviewed is that the EC and DG REGIO do not have a strong presence in Spain. Regional and local authorities, as well as journalists interviewed, would value more frequent visits of the Commissioner or of other high level REGIO representatives. The majority complain that interaction with the EC is low, and that DG REGIO is not aware of the work of the regions in the area of communication. Those regions who received visits in the past confirm their success and broad coverage.

Regional authorities would like to have more direct access to DG REGIO representatives and to be more informed of (and if possible involved in) discussions with respect to the next programming period. One interviewee suggested that workshops could be organised to discuss future priorities and rules. At present, only the managing authority in Spain maintains regular communication with the Commission and notifies the regions and implementing bodies of any developments at GERIP and GRECO-AGE meetings. The Commission is invited to the annual communication act which takes place every year, but this is a highly crowded event and does not allow for individual interactions.

There is a widespread lack of knowledge of DG REGIO activities and tools. Awareness is stronger among national and regional authorities, and decreases among local authorities and implementing bodies. In general, people are most aware of the Inforegio website, the RegioFlash newsletter, the Panorama magazine and DG REGIO's Open Days and Regiostars awards, but only a minority of those interviewed consult the website, read the newsletter or the magazine on a regular basis, or have attended the Open Days event. The INFORM meetings and the Regionetwork group on Yammer are less known.

- Inforegio website: those who use the website more frequently find that there is too much information and that it is not sufficiently systematised. This leads to long and complex searches which are not always successful. It is also difficult for users to discriminate between updated information and information that is no longer valid. A more organised search functionality would be highly valued, as well as a clear prioritisation of valid and most updated documentation. A special section (or website)

on comparative best practices across countries would also be valued, with common criteria and useful recommendations and advice for emulating successful examples elsewhere.

- RegioFlash newsletter: people are aware of the newsletter and those who receive it consider that it is a useful source of information to stay abreast of regional news and developments but the majority do not have the time to read the editions in detail, except if there are issues of relevance to their work or region.
- Panorama magazine: there is consensus among interviewees that this is a high quality publication, and some regions (Andalucía and Castilla-La Mancha) have published articles in the magazine, but the shared perception is that Panorama is mainly read in Brussels and would benefit from a more effective outreach strategy at national and regional levels.
- DG REGIO's Open Days: those who have attended the Open Days have a high opinion of the event, but do acknowledge that the Open Days have now grown into a massive event and that the networking of the initial editions has now been replaced by more a more impersonal type of event.
- Regiostars awards: there is a widespread feeling among stakeholders that Spain has been unfairly treated in the Regiostars awards, as Spanish candidates have been finalists but have never won the awards. In recent years, partly as a result of the crisis and the reduced resources, there have been less Spanish candidates to the awards.
- INFORM meetings: the managing authority and some of the regional authorities who have attended the annual INFORM meetings in the past highlight that the decision to hold the meetings in English and to discontinue simultaneous translation of the meeting's sessions to other languages has been a huge obstacle for Spanish representatives, most of whom are not fluent in English. This year's meeting will only be attended by one or two representatives, who complain that they will not be able to attend all the parallel sessions but will have to select a few. With the budgetary restrictions in Spain, annual meetings in countries other than Brussels are also more complicated to attend as they require more days out of the office and a higher budget to cover travel costs. Even though INFORM meetings provide Spanish attendees the possibility to meet and exchange views and experiences with colleagues in other countries, many of the debates and presentations are judged to be repetitive and not sufficiently strategic. The profile of attendees to the meetings is considered to be disparate, with many people working in communication but not knowledgeable of structural funds. This is seen to hinder the discussions, as the focus is moved from more strategic debates on the communication of structural funds to general communication principles. It was also highlighted that the INFORM network is currently too focused on the new Member States.
- Regionetwork on Yammer: language is once again a barrier for Spanish stakeholders, who find it difficult to follow the debates in English. Whilst some

interviewees find it more confusing to follow on a day-to-day basis, others think that the format is attractive and similar to Facebook. The shared view is that only a few participate in the Yammer debate, but the majority are not following on a regular basis.

### Future challenges and opportunities

Future challenges for communicating about EU structural funds in Spain are mainly related to the critical situation that the country is facing, which affects citizens' perceptions towards the EU but also translates in overall budgetary restrictions on OPs and on communication plans and activities. Authorities interviewed highlight that budgetary constraints could be overcome if the Commission financed the totality of the communication budget and if the funds were to be transferred to Spain in advance of the expenditures.

Despite the difficulties, Spain has accomplished many positive things in the sphere of communication of EU regional funds in the current programming period. Under the umbrella of the two communication networks that were created, the partnership approach has made possible to design a coherent communication approach, with communication plans designed jointly, implemented and evaluated.

Opportunities for the upcoming programming period lie in redefining and consolidating the role of the two networks, including discussing the possibility of involving DG REGIO in some of the meetings that take place to generate a more fluent interaction with regional and local stakeholders.

With budgetary restrictions, Spanish authorities should also reflect on creative ways to raise awareness of the EU structural funds. Many good ideas have been implemented in the past years, and there would certainly be a benefit to replicating them in different regions. The database of best practices is a relevant source of inspiration, but the two networks could more actively explore and discuss best practices with a view to adapting them to different regional contexts.

The relation with the media and with traditionally distant stakeholder groups including business and industry and the academic community should also be reassessed. There are regions that have developed innovative ideas to strengthen links with each of these groups that can be shared with others.

In terms of paid communication campaigns in the media, there is scope for joining efforts and planning bigger campaigns at national level. There are best practice examples of campaigns and tools launched as part of the Cohesion and the multiregional funds that have proved very effective because they disseminated a uniform message and image across the country.



## ANNEX – Overview of case study interviews

The table below presents the details of the interviews conducted as part of the Spanish case study.

**Table 12 – Overview of case study interviews**

Operational Programme	Interviews with	Stakeholder type
N/A	Julián Espina Casabonne Masonnave, Programme Assistant EU Policies, DG REGIO, Unit G2 Spain	EC Official
	Miguel Puente-Pattison, Press Officer in the European Commission's Representation in Madrid, Spain	EC Official
Regional OP Andalucía	Junta de Andalucía, Dirección General de Fondos Europeos y Planificación	Intermediate Body
	Europa Press	Media
	Regio Plus Consulting	External Evaluators
	Junta de Andalucía, Secretaria General de Acción Exterior, Consejería de Presidencia e Igualdad	Implementing Body
	Junta de Andalucía, EXTENDA, Agencia Andaluza de Promoción Exterior	Implementing Body
Regional OP Castilla-La Mancha	Castilla-La Mancha, Servicio de Coordinación Regional Fondos Europeos	Intermediate Body
	Consejería de Educación, Cultura y Deportes	Implementing Body
	Sociedad para el Desarrollo Industrial de Castilla La Mancha	Implementing Body
	Regio Plus Consulting	External Evaluators
	Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza	NGO
	La Tribuna de Toledo	Media
National OP Cohesion Fund – ERDF	Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda, Dirección General de Fondos Comunitarios	Managing Authority
	ADIF - Administrador de Infraestructuras Ferroviarias de España	Implementing Body
	Puertos del Estado	Implementing Body
	Ayuntamiento de Barcelona	Implementing Body
	Ayuntamiento de Palma de Mallorca	Implementing Body
	Confederación Hidrográfica del Guadalquivir	Implementing Body
	ACUASUR - Sociedad Estatal Aguas de las Cuencas del Sur	Implementing Body
	Fundación INCYDE - Instituto Cameral para la Creación y Desarrollo de la Empresa	Implementing Body
	Ayuntamiento de la Iniciativa Urban@ de Cuenca	Implementing Body
Multiregional OPs Knowledge Economy and Technology Fund	Red.es, Ministerio de Industria, Energía y Turismo	Implementing Body
	CIEMAT - Centro de Investigaciones Energéticas, Medioambientales y Tecnológicas	Implementing Body
	CDTI - Centro para el Desarrollo Tecnológico Industrial	Implementing Body

## 9 CASE STUDY REPORT: SWEDEN

### 1. Introduction

The research for this case study has taken the form of face to face and telephone interviews and a review of information relating to regional policy communications in Sweden.

#### Interviews

Face to face interviews took place in Sweden between 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013. A member of the evaluation team visited Stockholm and Östersund, where the Regional Policy Communication Unit in the Tillväxtverket (The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth) is based. The Tillväxtverket plays the role of the Managing Authority in Sweden.

A total of eight face-to-face interviews were conducted with staff at the Tillväxtverket Communication Unit, Regional Programme Managers and a senior manager responsible for Regional Policy in Sweden. One telephone interview was conducted (DG Regio desk officer) and several attempts were made to conduct a further four interviews with independent stakeholders such as journalists. Unfortunately these individuals did not have the time to speak to the evaluation team. A table detailing the interviewees can be found in Annex 1.

#### Desk Research

In addition to the interviews, the evaluation team reviewed the following sources of information:

- Inforegio website: documentation on the Swedish Regional Policy
- Tillväxtverket website (The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth) <http://www.tillvaxtverket.se>
- Documentation produced by the Tillväxtverket on Region Policy
- Good practice communication fiches submitted by the Tillväxtverket Communication Unit in response to the evaluation

### 2. Context for regional policy communication

#### Introduction

The Structural Funds are among the European Union's most important instruments for implementing the cohesion policy. Reducing the economic and social differences between European regions and inhabitants is central to succeeding in the overall goal of the Lisbon Strategy - to become "the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and improved jobs and greater social cohesion".

#### Objectives

Sweden is eligible for support under two of the three main objectives of the EU's Cohesion Policy; 1. "Regional competitiveness and employment" and 2. "European territorial

cooperation". The third and most prioritised objective is "Convergence" and it aims to stimulate growth and employment in the least developed European regions.

### Structural Funds in Sweden

As per the table below, Sweden has been allocated €1.9 billion in total Cohesion Policy funding for the 2007 to 2013 Programming period. €1.6 billion has been allocated under the *Regional Competitiveness and Employment* Objective and €265 million under the *European Territorial Cooperation* Objective.

Objective	Fund	EU contribution (in million EUR)	National contribution (in million EUR)	Total (in million EUR)
Regional Competitiveness and Employment	ERDF	900	1,100	2,000
	ESF	700	700	1,400
European Territorial Cooperation*	ERDF	300		
Total		<b>1,900</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>3,700</b>

*Please note all figures have been rounded.*

*\* Each Territorial Cooperation programme includes a minimum of 15% co-financing from each participating Member State.*

*Source: European Commission, Info regio website*

Sweden is divided into eight regions that all work with regional competitiveness and employment. Each region has a Regional Structural Fund Programme that is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and a nationwide European Social Fund Programme with regional priorities.

### **Objective: Regional Competitiveness and Employment**

In Sweden, one national and eight regional programmes are working under the "Regional competitiveness and employment" objective.

The eight regional programmes are called Regional Structural Fund programmes for regional competitiveness and employment. They work on the "Innovation and renewal" and "Accessibility" priorities. Measures are adapted to suit the specific regional and local conditions. The sparsely populated regions in the north of Sweden and the three metropolitan regions need special attention and have supplementary guidelines. The regional programmes are funded by the European Regional Development Fund and Tillväxtverket is the managing authority.

The National Structural Fund programme for regional competitiveness and employment works on the "Skills supply and improved workforce supply" priority. It is funded by the European Social Fund and the managing authority is the Swedish ESF Council.

### **Objective: Territorial Cooperation**

The "Territorial cooperation" objective is financed by the European Regional Development Fund. It coincides with the fourth priority of the Swedish government, "Strategic cross-border cooperation". Sweden participates in nine-teen territorial cooperation programmes and Tillväxtverket is the managing authority of one of the programmes, the cross-border programme Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak.

### **Implementing the programmes**

The organisational structure for implementing the regional programmes is made up of Tillväxtverket as the Managing Authority, eight Structural Fund partnerships, responsible for setting priorities among the approved projects, and three monitoring committees ensuring the quality of the implementation. The Managing Authority has one joint unit, supporting the eight units situated in each regional programme area.

## **3. Key actors and approaches**

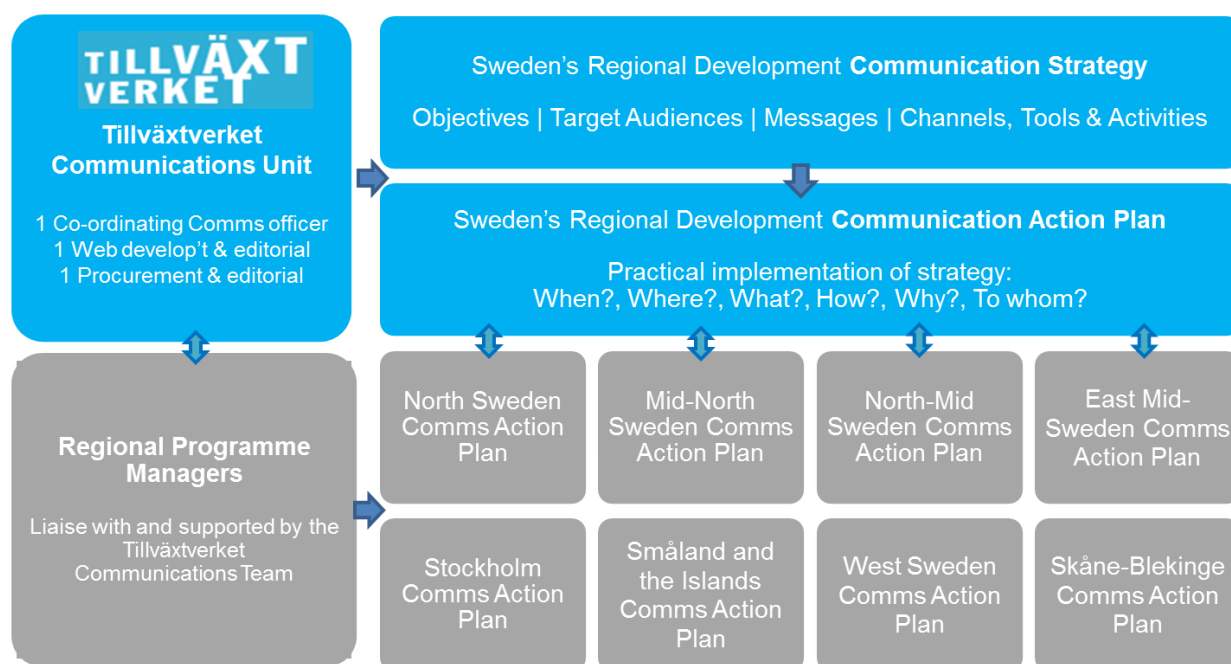
### **Arrangements in relation to Regional Policy communication:**

#### **- Roles and responsibilities for implementing communication requirements**

A centralised approach is taken to communicating regional policy in Sweden with a dedicated Communications Unit in the Tillväxtverket (The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth) taking responsibility for this. The Unit is comprised of three full time staff: 1. a co-ordinating communication officer, 2. a web developer with editorial responsibilities and 3. a general editor who is also responsible for procurement. The Tillväxtverket Communication Unit works closely with and provide support to the Regional Programme Managers to communicate the work being co-financed by the EU.

#### **- Coordination and cooperation at national and regional level**

The diagram below depicts the structure of the Regional Policy communication "set-up" in Sweden. Taking a centralised approach means that the Tillväxtverket has to be in close and regular contact with the regions. At an operational level this contact can be daily but there also needs to be a strategy and plan to guide the work of all parties.



Source: TEP based on interviews with Tillväxtverket Communication Unit

A national level *Regional Development Communications Strategy* and *Action Plan* is developed and implemented by the central Communications Unit in the Tillväxtverket. These documents are shared with the regions so that all parties have a clear understanding of the strategic objectives as well as the planned activities during the year. Additionally, most Regions develop their own *Action Plan* in cooperation with the central Communications Unit detailing their communication activities. There appears to be a very systematic, open and transparent approach which leads to everyone having sight of what everyone else is doing. Based on feedback from interviewees the approach and way of working is deemed very efficient in that there is little duplication of efforts or overlap.

One point that came out particularly strongly through interviews with the Tillväxtverket Communication Unit was the importance of working very closely with those in the regions. It was clear that a centralised operation would not be able to function without the programme offices providing the vital input for effective communication.

*"The importance of regional presence has to be stressed. It is one of the most important ways for the EU to be anchored in every small town in a region. The EU starts to become a lot less alien to people if we can communicate on project results at a local level"* (Tillväxtverket Communication Unit)

#### - Communication budgets, approaches and strategies adopted

Operational Programme	Indicative communication budget (in EUR)	Technical assistance budget (in EUR)	Total Programme budget (in EUR)	% of total budget for communication
Sweden (covering all OPs)	1.16 million	65 million	1,900 million	0.06%

Sources: For indicative communication budget: Tillväxtverket, Sweden

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*For TA and OP budgets: European Commission, Info regio website*

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The annual communication budget for Sweden is approximately EUR 166,000 per year over the seven year programming period. This budget covers communications across the eight regional programmes. The Tillväxtverket Communication Unit feel that the budget for communication is currently on the low side and this has been a constraining factor in what it has been able to do. At the same time no-one called for or feels that a substantial increase in budget is required going forward. An uplift in budget has been proposed for the next programming period and the ideal situation described was to employ a further two people in the central communications team and have 25% of a FTE dedicated to communication in each of the regional offices.

**- Objectives of communication activities, target audiences and main messages**

The approach to regional policy communication can be characterised in the following way:

Target Audiences: The primary target audiences are considered to be potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries, government officials and politicians (particularly, at regional and local level), business and business associations, and the media (again, particularly at regional and local level). The general public is also seen as a target audience but one that is primarily targeted via the media.

Messages: The focus in Sweden is very much about communicating the results of EU funded projects. Those responsible for communication believe that providing concrete examples of how EU funding has achieved results (e.g. stimulated innovation, created growth and jobs) resonates best with the audiences they are targeting.

Activities: The communication activities are geared towards delivering the messages to the target audiences in the most effective and efficient way. Many of the communication tools employed are interlinked and will be used in conjunction with one other. For example, the website not only provides a wealth of information on the Structural Funds in Sweden but it also hosts videos and publications that are used at events or at conferences to illustrate project results.

All interviewees in Sweden explained that understanding and appreciating the context is key to effective communication and particularly in the case of region policy communication. They'd all expect that communication in one Member State looks very different to that in another. For example, in the Swedish context spending money on glossy brochures or putting an advert on at the cinema would generally be perceived negatively in that there would be a certain level of scepticism about the messages themselves and the fact that public funds are being spent in such a way. The general consensus was that utilising the media to present facts and figures is far more convincing and acceptable for general public in Sweden. To some extent this is backed up by a Eurobarometer poll<sup>146</sup> which found that local newspapers were the most frequently mentioned source of information about EU regional support projects in Sweden (46% of respondents responded in this way).

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<sup>146</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 298, Citizens' awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy, Analytical report, published in October 2010 (fieldwork carried out in June 2010), The Gallup Organization.



For target audiences such as potential beneficiaries, government officials etc. a more direct and corporate approach is taken. For example, hosting events and workshops, showing concrete results through presentations and video.

- **Key challenges to communicating Regional Policy**

EU scepticism in Sweden: A poll carried out in early 2013 by the University of Gothenburg showed that Swedish support for the EU is declining and support for the Euro has never been lower. 42% of those surveyed support EU membership, down from 53% in 2010 and only 9% of Swedes would want the Euro as their national currency. Aligned with those findings interviewees consulted in Sweden described the Swedish context where questions such as *“Why do we pay more in that we get back from the EU?, Wouldn’t we better off just doing it ourselves?”* are being raised more and more.

With this kind of public sentiment those involved in communicating Structural Funds feel that there is a place for communicating EU funded projects in Sweden but it has to be carried out carefully. In particular the focus has to be on the kind of results and benefits being reaped from these investments. Added to this, interviewees also mentioned that importance of communicating the “cohesion” aspect. All recognised that this was a much greater communication challenge as most want to know what the funding might be able to do for them or their community.

Abstract nature of the EU: All those interviewed raised the subject of the “Brussels” being far removed from the reality of daily life in towns and cities across the EU. They not only referred to citizens and businesses but also to actors in local and regional government. This is where the Tillväxtverket Communications Unit in conjunction with the Regional Programme Managers felt that they have had some success in showing that EU funding can make a difference and that the EU is more in touch with what actually matters.

## 4. Activities and good practice examples

### Communication activities in Sweden:

The following communication tools and activities have been developed to communicate regional policy in Sweden:

Types of Communication	Specific Tools and Activities
Online	Tillväxtverket website, e-newsletter, TEMPO magazine, social media
Events	Corporate story telling workshops, regional events with beneficiaries / potential beneficiaries, conferences presentations
Media	Contacts with the Media / Press, Media Content Analysis
Publications	TEMPO magazine
Audiovisual communication	Project videos
Internal communication resources	Central Communication Strategy and Communication Plan, Regional Action Plans, Staff as ambassador workshops, Approach to dealing with the media, Intranet

### - Examples of good practice

#### Tillväxtverket website

All information relating to EU Structural Funds in Sweden is hosted on the Tillväxtverket website. The website was revamped in 2009 and the general consensus among interviewees is that it has improved significantly. These improvements have come in the form of its “look and feel” but also in terms of its usability and ease of navigating to the information that users require. This has made it more



accessible to the general public. In terms of picking out good practice what is striking is the emphasis put on communicating results.

Tillväxtverket website		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

*Good practice: Specific focus on communicating concrete results and demonstrating how EU funds have made a difference. It has been made more accessible to the general public but it's really more for those with knowledge of or likely to be, or become, involved with EU Structural Funds in some form or other.*

## TEMPO magazine

TEMPO<sup>147</sup> is a digital magazine sent out to approximately 2,000 people. It is also printed in small numbers for distribution at events, conferences and monitoring committee meetings. The magazine contains articles written by professional writers on project results and current affairs concerning the cohesion policy in Sweden. These articles are also used on the Tillväxtverket website. There is a



special issue of the magazine on every theme, which is linked to information on the website by links or QR-codes. Tempo is also translated into English. As with many of the communication tools there is a focus on conveying results of the projects through the people involved. There are also interviews with a multitude of stakeholders. For example, programme managers, local, regional and national politicians and government officials. The design of the magazine is another attribute that stands out. TEMPO “looks and feels” professional and of high quality in terms of the photos, graphics, info graphics that appear in the magazine. EU visibility is also quite high with an EU flag and reference to the ERDF featuring prominently on every front cover.

*Good practice: Content on project results packaged in an engaging and professional way. The publication combines an attractive design with meaningful content on projects. It also makes a point of introducing the “people” involved at all levels, from those working in projects to government Ministers.*

TEMPO magazine		
Good practice criteria	Design	✓
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

## Corporate Story Telling Workshops

Funded projects are invited to participate in a free workshop to report on the results of their work. After an opening address from an inspirational speaker the participants are divided into small groups where they talk about the results of their projects – it becomes a forum for sharing their successes and challenges. The best stories are selected and turned into a 3 to 5 minute professional video. The stories not selected are documented by smartphone filming, and written up subsequently.

The workshops are reported to be popular with beneficiaries and a very useful way of capturing concrete information about project results.

Story Telling Workshops		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

<sup>147</sup> TEMPO examples:

No 3/2012:

[http://www.tillvaxtverket.se/download/18.5a5c099513972cd7fea31bae/Tempo\\_webb\\_130118\\_eng.pdf](http://www.tillvaxtverket.se/download/18.5a5c099513972cd7fea31bae/Tempo_webb_130118_eng.pdf)

No 2/2012:

[http://www.tillvaxtverket.se/download/18.5a5c099513972cd7fea2cf61/Tempo\\_2\\_2012\\_webb\\_eng.pdf](http://www.tillvaxtverket.se/download/18.5a5c099513972cd7fea2cf61/Tempo_2_2012_webb_eng.pdf)

The fact that the workshops pro-actively involve project beneficiaries, that all stories are used in some shape or form and that EU funding [EU visibility] is brought to life through real project stories are perceived as the major benefits to this approach.

The workshops have also been a great opportunity for the Managing Authority to meet with project participants and to hear stories directly from them. The project videos and write-up are also used by the projects themselves which providing an additional channel to spread the word particularly to a local audience and potential beneficiaries.

*Good practice: Generating rich content on project results in a novel way. Close interaction with those involved on the ground has proven a successful way of capturing the real impact of projects.*

## Videos – Communicating the results across different themes

As described above the best project stories are selected and turned into a 3 to 5 minute professional video. Video is deemed an effective medium through which to showcase the results of cohesion policy in Sweden. The information is easier to digest through video and the subject is brought to life conveying what EU funding has meant for businesses and communities and what it could, potentially, mean for others in the future.

The videos are versatile in the way that they have been made in that they can be used and disseminated via a range of channels for a variety of target audiences. For example, they are hosted on websites, on You Tube, used at events and by Regional Programme Managers in communicating to potential beneficiaries and local stakeholders for instance.



or other.

<http://www.tillvaxtverket.se/huvudmeny/euprogram/resultat/projektenberattar/filmadeberattelser.4.3c075973137a2e9d3a8af.html>

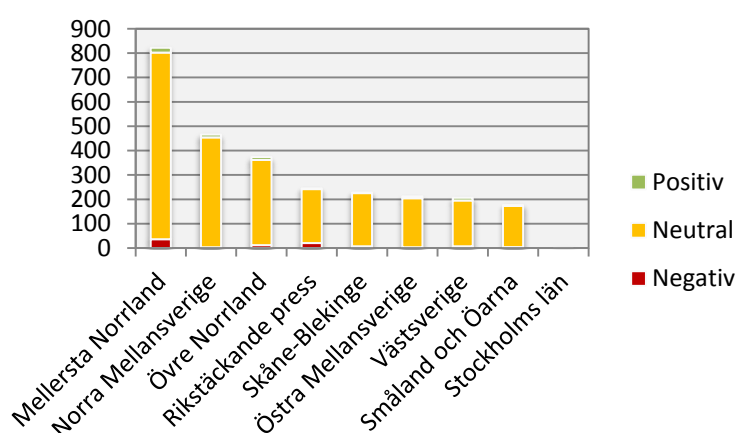
Project Videos		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

*Good practice: Focus on communicating concrete results through a video with versatility in mind (i.e. making best use of the video in terms of being able to use it in multiple situations). The videos are accessible to the general public but they are really more for those with knowledge of or likely to be, or become, involved with EU Structural Funds in some form*

## Media Analysis

In 2012 the Tillväxtverket Communication Unit commissioned a media analysis study. This consisted of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the articles generated in print and online, relating to EU Funding across the eight regional programmes between 2007 and 2011. The Agency has found the analysis very useful, particularly as it has not had the resources to carry out a large scale evaluation of its activities. The analysis has provided some insight into what has happened as a result of its communications efforts and has highlighted where there is more work to do in certain areas. It has also provided some evidence for substantiating decision making. For example, a media relations strategy (see below) which dictates a protocol for systematically sending press releases to local media on project results is proving successful (the analysis has found that the quantity of articles has increased and the quality of, in terms of factual reporting, has improved). It is likely that more resources will be dedicated to such initiatives going forward.

Media Analysis		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	



Source: Retriever Media Analysis of EU Structural Funds 2007 -2011

An extract from the media analysis shows the quantity and the positivity of articles in the regions between 2007 and 2011. The study concluded that the levels of negative reporting had fallen over this time period and that the high degree of neutral reporting should be viewed positively. It demonstrates the reporting is very “facts” based as opposed to being seen as pro-EU or anti-EU propaganda.

*Good Practice: Media analysis has guided the media strategy (e.g. content of press releases is results focussed and facts based) leading to increase in reach and increased EU visibility.*

## Media relations strategy

The Tillväxtverket has developed a strategy and defined process for how it communicates with and handles the media, particularly in the context of bad news. In most cases, the bad news results from a decision to stop project funding because the project has been consistently flouting procurement rules. Such a situation is now dealt with a very systematic way. In summary there are meetings held with the project management team to talk through the issues that have arisen. This will be followed by an official letter detailing the infringements or areas of non-compliance. At the same time the Agency sends a press release to the local media laying down the facts of the case and providing the contact details of a spokesperson.

This approach is proving to be successful in that the media takes more of a fact based approach to reporting. By its very nature the reporting has also become more neutral and less confrontational towards the EU and the Tillväxtverket.

The approach for tackling adverse situations was borne out of an incident where local media took a sensational approach to reporting. The reporting was emotionally charged and driven by political rhetoric and as opposed to outlining the facts of what has actually happened. This generated a fair amount of negative press towards the EU and the Tillväxtverket who were portrayed as bureaucratic and inflexible. With the new approach in place there has not been another incident like it.

*Good Practice: Media relations strategy has led to fewer negative articles and an increased number of balanced articles in the press leading to increase in reach and EU visibility*

Media relations strategy		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	
	EU visibility	✓
	EU messages	

## Internal communication workshops

The Tillväxtverket runs internal workshops to help staff speak about their jobs, the Agency as a whole and its purpose. Structural funding is brought into this. The Agency is keen to present a joined up approach and a consistent message. This is particularly important when speaking to a non-familiar audience. There is a strong feeling that this “staff as ambassadors” approach has brought people together as well as benefitting the external communication efforts of the Agency. The initiative started in the latter half of 2012 and it has been made compulsory for staff to attend.

Internal communication workshops		
Good practice criteria	Design	
	Language	
	Content	✓
	Outreach	
	Novelty	✓
	EU visibility	
	EU messages	

*Good Practice: The premise behind such an initiative is that good external communication starts internally. If the majority of Tillväxtverket staff are able to deliver consistent messages on what the Agency does and to explain the benefits of Structural Funds this can only have a positive external communication effect over time.*



## 5. Conclusions and outlook

### Summary of key findings

- *EU scepticism in Sweden:* With a relatively high level of negative public sentiment towards the EU in Sweden, communicating about EU Structural Funds has to be undertaken in a sensitive and careful way.
- *Centralised approach:* A centralised approach is taken to communicating regional policy in Sweden with a dedicated Communications Unit in the Tillväxtverket (The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth) taking responsibility for this. In this context, the Tillväxtverket has to be in close and regular contact with the regions. Additionally, there is a strategy and plan in place to guide the work of all parties.
- *Target Audiences:* The primary target audiences are considered to be potential beneficiaries, government officials and politicians (particularly, at regional and local level), business and business associations, and the media (again, particularly at regional and local level). The general public is also seen as a target audience but one that is primarily targeted via the media.
- *Messages – a focus on results:* Over the last programming period, the focus of communications has been on the kind of results and benefits coming from funds. This approach appears to be working well. Providing concrete examples of how EU funding has achieved results (e.g. stimulated innovation, created growth and jobs) resonates best with Swedish audiences.
- *Good practice:* Communication activities in Sweden are geared towards delivering messages to the target audiences in the most effective and efficient way. Many of the communication tools employed are interlinked and will be used in conjunction with one other. There are several activities that stood out in particular:
  - *Media analysis and media relations strategy:* The media is the main conduit to communicating with the general public in Sweden. Therefore tracking media coverage (both in terms of quantitative and qualitative data) has become an important evidence base on which to make decisions and formulate a communications strategy.
  - *Internal communication workshops:* The premise behind such an initiative is that good external communication starts internally. If staff can explain what they do and why, in a clear and concise way there are significant external communication benefits to this.
  - *Corporate story telling workshops:* Hearing about project results first hand from those directly involved is proving to be a successful way of capturing the impact Structural funds have had in Sweden. This method has proved beneficial in that projects are brought to life and are far easier for audiences to comprehend.

## **- Role of the EC and views on DG REGIO activities and tools**

The views expressed in this section came mainly from the Tillväxtverket Communication Unit who work most closely with DG REGIO in Sweden.

### **Inform Network**

Overall, the Tillväxtverket has a very positive view of the Inform network and sees it as the most important channel through which the Member States can interact with DG REGIO and the European Commission. More specifically, feedback on the Inform network included:

- Network meetings strike the right balance between dealing with 1. the strategic issues and 2. “on the ground” practical points. The meeting agendas are well structured.
- At the strategic level the Inform Network provides a good opportunity to meet and work with like-minded people with similar issues and challenges. Opportunities to do this for most Inform network members are few and far between yet taking a step back and looking at the bigger picture is particularly important in the context of communication.
- On a practical level, the network offers valuable insight into the communication activities of many Member States. This stimulates ideas for use in other Member States;

In terms of the role of DG REGIO, the view from Sweden is that the Inform network meetings are professional, inclusive and not too formal. The environment is very much conducive to participants being able to voice their ideas and opinions freely.

Another positively perceived aspect of network meetings is that every second meeting is held in a different Member State. To date, the host Member States have used this as an opportunity to showcase the work they have done and heighten awareness within their own countries. There has also been participation from high level officials from the host country. The advantage of holding meetings in Brussels is that it represents an opportunity for Member State representatives to meet with DG REGIO desk officers which is deemed very useful. While there is always one eye on cost, the importance of face to face meetings should not be downplayed.

### **Yammer Network**

Making use of an interactive channel like Yammer is perceived positively. In principle such a mechanism means that people do not face a barrage of emails and that information can be sought and debates had when it's convenient for them. There was a feeling that it would be better if more people used it and the way in which information is structured on the site needs to be looked at it could be made to be more user friendly. The information is not categorised as well as it could be and if this changed the network might attract more users.

### **Info regio website**

The Tillväxtverket Communication Unit make good use of the Info regio website. They find a lot of the information hosted on the site relevant to their work and feel that the site itself has improved significantly since the beginning of the programme period.

## **- Future challenges and opportunities**

The following section is presented in the form of suggestions for DG REGIO to consider going forward. They have been derived from feedback provided by multiple interviewees.

### **1. DG REGIO should consider openly sharing their Annual Communication plans**

This would provide Member States insight into what DG REGIO has planned for the year ahead and would be particularly useful if there are Commission communication activities planned in certain Member States. An annual plan does not have to be set in stone but should be an evolving document. Having this information up front would enable communicators in the Member States to plan their activities around and in conjunction with Commission interventions.

### **2. Scope for improving categorisation of information on Yammer:** While Yammer is viewed positively those who use it feel that information could be categorised more appropriately. For example, currently information about Inform Meetings is mixed with updates on what has been going on in MSs or a new policy paper. In a sense all information is on a similar level and has equal worth. When users have little time it's difficult to filter content and get to the information that is being searched for quickly.

### **3. Workshop / Presentation on to get more from Yammer:** Users feel that they are currently not getting the most from Yammer. They have suggested that it might be useful for DG REGIO to hold a workshop (at an Inform meeting, for example) on how users can make better use of the tool.

### **4. Development of simple introduction to EC regional policy and funding:**

There was consensus among interviewees with regard to the need for a communication tool to present a clear and concise view on EU Structural funds and how this relates to the funding in the MSs – getting the big picture. One way of doing this that several stakeholders suggested would be through a short video.

### **5. Development of a toolkit for new projects:**

It was suggested that a practical toolkit for new projects would be useful including general guidance as well as some specific advice on communications. General guidance might cover information on how to fill in the economic forms and details on what kind of costs are supported. Guidance on communications might include ideas on ways and means of communicating and promoting the project. More specifically, project participants could be provided templates for dealing with the media, developing press releases, what to do and what to say and what contact information to provide.

### **6. Hosting media events at the beginning of the programming period and fostering these relationships throughout**

There was a general view that engaging with the media as much as possible at the outset of a programming period and ensuring regular contact throughout would be an effective way of establishing and building a strong relationship with a key information and communication multiplier. In many ways the programming period could be seen as a story, with scene setting at the beginning (priorities, areas of focus, budgets, parties

involved etc.), the activities during implementation and the results / benefits reaped, towards the end and subsequent to the programming period.

### Annex: Interviewees

Name	Position	Date
Primary communicators	Coordinating Communication Officer The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional growth	22/05
	Editor and Procurement officer Tillväxtverket (The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth)	22/05
	Web developer and Editor Tillväxtverket (The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth)	22/05
Secondary communicators	Programme manager North Sweden	21/05
	Programme manager Skåne-Blekinge	21/05
	Interviewed as Programme manager in Mid North Sweden and in context of being former Head of unit Programme support Knowledge and dissemination of experiences	21/05
European Commission	Desk Officer for Sweden DG REGIO	15/05

NB: Several requests for interviews were sent to beneficiaries, co-financiers and journalists nominated by the MAs, but none of these were available.